SLOTH 'ZINE DIGITIZATION PROJECT

ISSUE #6

Introductory Notes

Well, here we are at the end of the Sloth Highway. Issue #6, both the pinnacle and the swansong. Here's some backstory on how it came together and why I decided to give up the ghost.

In the fall of 1998 I was back on campus in Miami for my sophomore year taking important new classes in creative writing and photojournalism, as well as working at the Wellness Center and DJing at the radio station once a week. Between this workload and having published 2 issues of Sloth virtually back-to-back in the spring and summer, I needed a break from the zine.

But within a few months I was refreshed and dove back into the trenches to produce this enthusiastic issue which rightly foresaw metal boiling over into the renaissance which began in the early 2000s. (And even though I soon stepped away great new publications like Lamentations of the Flame Princess, BW&BK, and Satan Stole My Teddybear were worthy stewards in the coming years.)

The Sloth interviews with future genre stalwarts like Soilwork, Evergrey, and Katatonia were testament to the fact that in my most insightful, non-silly moments I had a good sense of what was fresh and relevant. Album reviews for upcoming bands of note include Extol, Satariel, and Thyrfing. For demo bands who went on to have accomplished careers see Fall of the Leafe, Moonsorrow, Nomad, and Unholy Cadaver (better known as Hammers of Misfortune).

This issue also saw my friend Juan Suarez take on a significant role reviewing albums in subgenres I either didn't care for or have much knowledge about, such as power metal, hardcore, and doom. He also interviewed Solitude Aeternus and designed that page. Years later Juan and I fulfilled a dream and opened Stone Heavy Sound recording studio in Burbank, CA.

The cover design was more bold and artistic, featuring a "haunted" image of the Virginia woods in winter as well as including spot color. I do wish I'd thought to utilize page bleed so that only the Sloth logo was orange, but that's hindsight for ya...

Sloth #6 came out in April of 1999. At 64 packed pages it matched issue #4 for girth, and the 7500 print run equaled that of issue #5. Again distro took the form of various metal mail-order companies, local shops, fans, and bands.

Interesting tidbits:
-In the mad scramble to finish the issue—doing final edits, printouts, and driving across a smoke-filled Alligator Alley to drop it off at the Small Publishers Co-Op—all told I didn't sleep for nearly 40 hours.

-Considering that Borknagar was this issue's featured band I really regret missing their summer tour with Emperor by just a few days, but the fact I got to go to Australia for a semester was about as good a consolation as one could hope for!

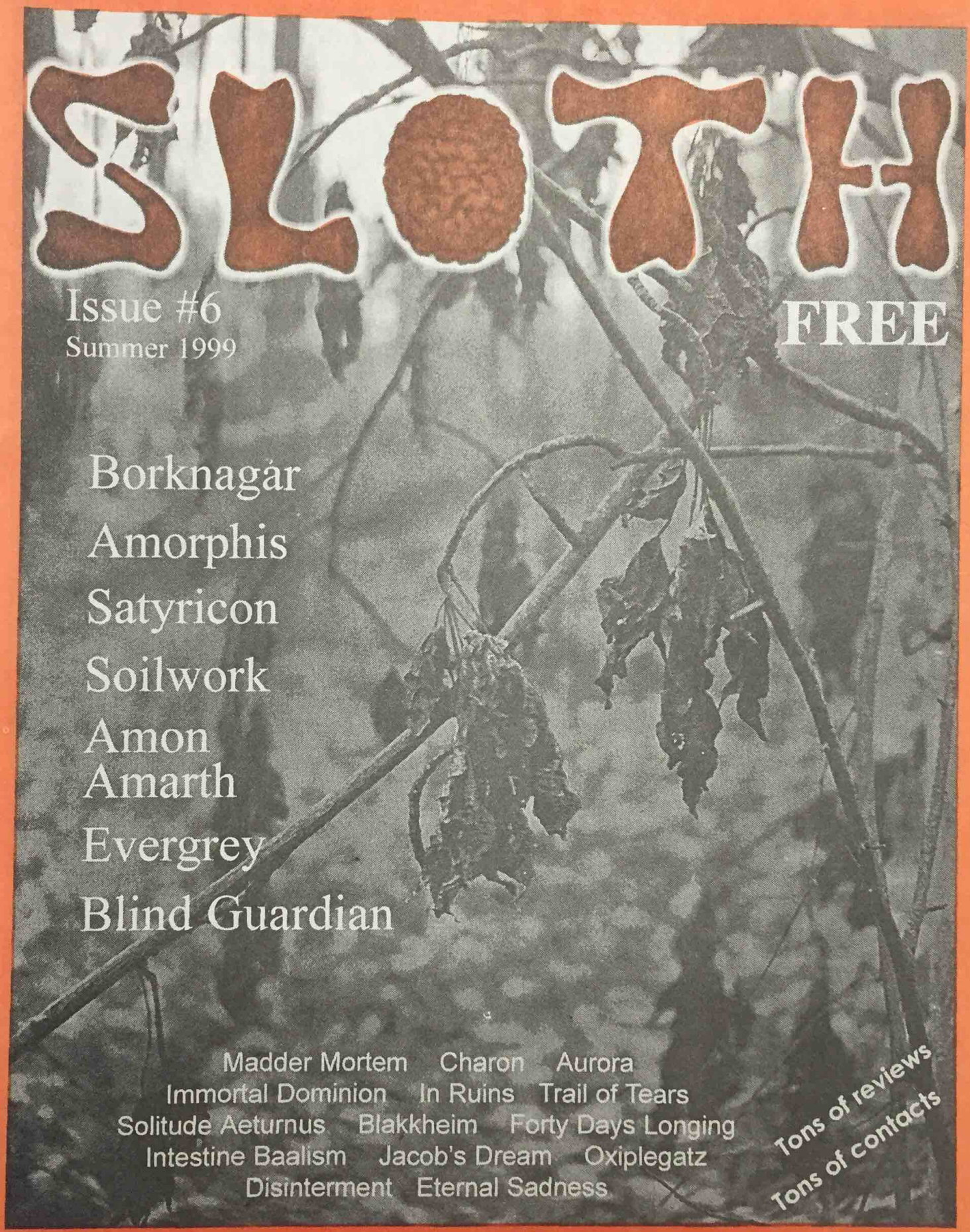
-While in Australia I dropped in on the Warhead Records shop in Sydney and gave them the last copy of Sloth #6 I had kept over the previous 6 months. I also partied with Blood Duster and Volatile when they played in Melbourne.

So to wrap up let me explain why this was the final issue. The semester I spent abroad in Australia was something I had dreamed of for years and it was an eye-opening life experience. It also gave me time away from the millstone that Sloth sometimes felt like, but as the time approached for me to return home I was getting excited about the prospect of taking Sloth to the big time. I remember fantasizing about myself walking around the Miami campus doing deals on a flip-phone, no joke!

But the moment I got home in January 2000 and opened my bedroom door, I saw that pile of mail on the desk and my heart just sank. Been there, done that, no more! And as difficult as it was to close down something I had spent over 5 years building the truth is that looking back on the past 17 years I made the right decision. I could not have pursued the many other avenues of life which have caused me to mature if I had continued on as a more glamorous version of the high school recluse banging out borderline-Asperger's rants on his computer. (Though apparently between blogging and YouTube that has become a legitimate career path...)

Thank you so much for taking the time to explore the history of Sloth 'zine. For all its faults I have to remind myself that all six issues were published before I turned 20 years old. If only we could have so much passion, energy, and focus in all pursuits!

-Phil Alterman
February 26, 2017


SLOTH
Issue #6
Summer 1999
FREE
Borknagar
Amorphis
Satyricon
Soilwork
Amon Amarth
Evergrey
Blind Guardian
Madder Mortem Charon Aurora
Immortal Dominion In Ruins Trail of Tears
Solitude Aeturnus Blakkheim Forty Days Longing
Intestine Baalism Jacob's Dream Oxiplegatz
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SLOTH

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Phil Alterman

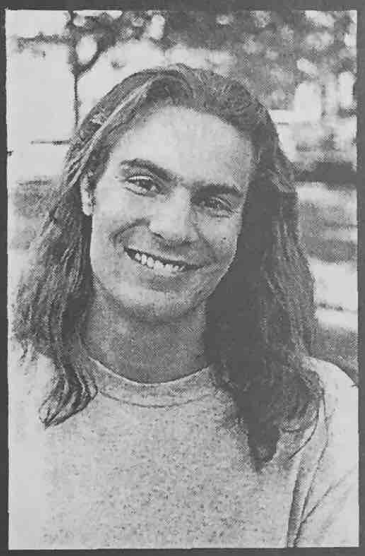
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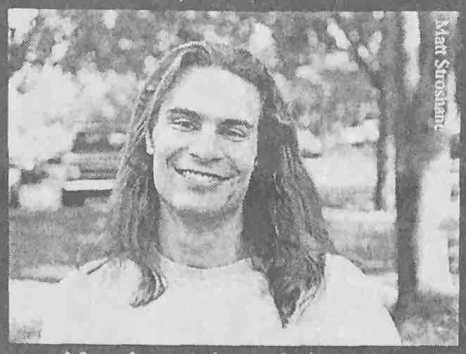
Cover photo and Sloth logo
by Phil Alterman

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Circulation: 7500 copies



At college without a piercing or a tattoo. What a freak!



Not the scariest of pictures...

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFO!

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*I will be in Virginia from May through June. If you get the mag and want to harass me, send stuff there. From July to like May of 2000 all mail should go to the Florida address. Juan will be getting all the mail until I return to school in January. If ever in doubt, call the Virginia phone number.

Welcome to issue #6! Or for obligatory evil, issue #666! (Sorry, I've got to make up for forgetting to scan in the picture of me posing with horns up and my tongue out. I don't think the ladies would like it much, though...) Oh yeah, I've been up for over 24 hours now trying to finish the mag, so I hope you like it. I usually say lots here to pump you up for reading this comprehensive underground zine, but I'm too tired. It should speak for itself. I'm really pleased with all the stuff I crammed in here, from the diverse bands to more album reviews than ever, so hopefully you'll enjoy all that's inside this issue of *Sloth*.

I love metal! I think this year there will be the start of a comeback for it all. There are too many quality bands all over the world for the masses to ignore them forever. Musicianship reigns supreme for the best metal bands — the same cannot be said for what they're playing on the radio. So I encourage you to get as involved as you truly can be. A lot of people pretend to be into it all — beyond just writing "support the underground" on their fliers, ha! — but when it comes to crunch time they bail. If the music owns you, then you have no choice but to act at its command. *Sloth* may be the testament to how much joy the music brings me. Or what I'm saying could be crap due to the lack of food and sleep.

Here are my goals for the mag. I am trying to bring the great European bands to American eyes. Too many zines in this country don't try very hard at this and it's long overdue for you all to read about bands from a scene superior to our own. Also, I want to stick a copy of *Sloth* into the hands of any wannabe headbanger in a Metallica *Load* t-shirt. Show'em what the real heavy is about! If you want to help with distro, let us know and we'll cut you a deal.

I'd better get going, and it will be early next year when the next issue will be out. That's because in July I will be studying in Australia for six months. Freedom! I've found a good friend (and writer) in Juan Suarez so he will be handling the duties while I'm gone. He lives near Miami anyway, so after July he'll get the mail. Check the website for updates and news — he and I want to make that more than another lame website with cool graphics and no info.

So long, metal-heads! I venture Down Under till after the new millennium...please don't blow everything up. In 8th grade I read *On the Beach* where all the Aussies die from the radiation fallout after nuclear war in the other continents. If that's my oracle I'm going to be pissed! See ya...

-Phil Alterman

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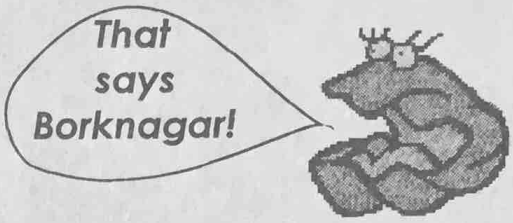
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Norwegian black metal. We read this damn phrase a lot these days. There are so many bands, plenty of them not even on the same continent, proclaiming to play this style with 'true' and 'pure' feeling. Well, whenever you get fed up with all this mediocrity and want to hear a band that's actually from Norway and isn't playing the same old thing, give Borknagar a ring. Their self-titled debut of a few years back was certainly within the standard black metal realm, but 1997's *The Olden Domain* and late 1998's *The Archaic Course* are fine demonstrations of the band venturing into unexplored territory. *Olden* was musically a pretty aggressive album but the guitar sound was fleshed out and vocalist Grim crooned as much as he screamed. *Archaic* is an opus in every sense as Borknagar found an even better singer in I.C.S. Vortex and polished its riffs off with '70s keyboards. Therefore the Borknagar of today are anything but a product of black metal's trendiness, instead deciding their fate and giving us brilliant music. Guitarist and founder Oystein G. Brun speaks his mind below...

First off, do people ever call you Oyster?
(laughs) No, actually sometimes they call me "Ostin," which in Norwegian means, like a cheese. So it's very often people when they write me letters they write: "Ostin." Also they like my second name, Brun; they say "Burn" instead of Brun. (laughs) So sometimes it's like "Burning Cheese."

That's very evil.
Yeah, it's quite cool! (chuckles)

People always ask you about the history of all your bands in interviews, but I just want to ask you one thing. I love Molested, that's like one of the few CDs that actually scares me...
Okay...

What is the chance of just anything with that band in the future or that kind of music again from you?
I am planning, with all the remaining members in the band, to kind of release all the stuff we did on one CD, including the first the CD and the mini-CD. Also we did some demos, some unreleased recordings like that, so we are planning to re-release it because people are still asking me for it. We (Borknagar) did the tour in December with Cradle of Filth and actually there were a lot of people asking me about this. (He sounds pretty awed by the fans' reaction–ed.) It seems like people want it, so yeah!

That's got to make you feel real good!
Yeah, it's very cool. (pronounced "wery kyool") Because at that time we printed a thousand copies of the CD and we'd sort of go, "Agh! What the fuck? This is just not working, blah, blah, blah." So it's a little bit amazing that people come to me like four years after and say, "Wow, this was great." I met one guy in Austria who had tattooed one of the covers on his arm. It was a bit amazing... and well, it's a bit flattering, yes.

What do you do besides the band? Do you have to work a regular daily job?
Yeah, I have a job, sure.

And what is that?
I work at an institution for mentally ill people, and... that's about all I can say, actually. So it's a little bit dangerous sometimes, but I like it. It's interesting and it's also about seeing the dark side of life.

Do you get any story or song ideas from working with these patients?
No! My work and my music are two totally different worlds for me. It's two worlds in which I can relax in both. When I am a little tired or fucked up from the music and all that stuff I just work a lot, and when I work too much and am fucked up and tired about that I just do a lot of music. So for me it's a kind of therapy, it works perfectly. And I think even if I could (afford to live) from music I would still keep my job.

So it keeps you grounded in sanity?
I think so. It's kind of therapy for me because sometimes it can be too much of music and sometimes too much of the gray life and work, so it's good for me.

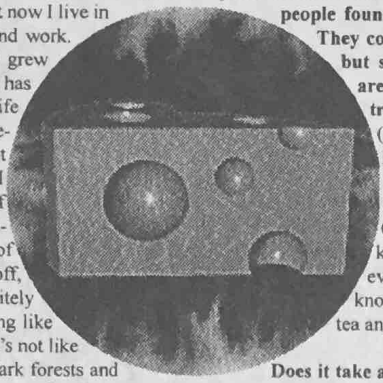
One of the big things circling around Borknagar is the concept of nature. Could you explain that a little?
People sometimes misunderstand that because we aren't exactly writing about mountains, skies, and winds all the time. It's more like this is the way we like to express ourselves. It feels more natural for me... it's my way to frame my expressions, so to speak, and I think also if you read the lyrics from Molested you'll see it's the same type. It's a kind of manifestation of feelings and philosophic ideas. But we are not a band which wants to have this big message and be some prophets about what is good and what is evil, what you should do and what you should not do, and Jesus Christ, blah, blah, blah. It's more like we want to present a more pure form of art.

Is it that you're against the destruction of nature or is it really not that far?
No, it's not that way. I am not politically concerned with my music at all. I don't care about things like that, they don't exist in my mind or musical world at all. It's more like I use all this nature and the forces of nature to reveal or, you can say, frame my expression. And I think the meaning in the lyrics is more thoughtful indeed. You have to dig a little bit deeper behind the lines, I think.



With Fear I Kiss the Burning Cheese

A lot of the bands from Scandinavia always take their pictures posing in the woods. Do you like to spend a lot of time out there in reality?
Sometimes, actually. A lot of time before because I lived in the countryside, but just now I live in the city because of the band and work. It's more practical that way. I grew up in the countryside so nature has always been a great part of my life and I've had a lot of great experiences in nature. I've seen a lot and I've experienced a lot, and I think my lyrics include a lot of nostalgia (pronounced "nost-al-gee-uh") from that period of time. If I have a Sunday off, which I very seldom do, I definitely go to the mountain or something like that. I enjoy it very much but it's not like I want to be evil and walk in dark forests and blah, blah. It's a way of being comfortable and relaxing.



Let's talk about the new album because I absolutely love it.
That's cool.

I have *The Olden Domain* and I don't like that as much. Do you think that I.C.S. Vortex was the missing link with the vocals?
Definitely. It's just so... I don't know what I should say... It's more satisfying to work with him because he is so extremely dedicated, he's really into the lyrical and musical concept of the band, and he has a musical potential which is enormous. He's a multi-musician: he plays drums, guitars, bass, everything. So the lineup is definitely fulfilled and the collaboration between me and him as songwriters – because he also wrote some stuff on the new album – it's just perfect. I hope that we can continue with that in the future; and we will definitely.

So you're the happiest you could be musically?
Yeah, I'm totally satisfied. It's going really good! I'm writing new music these days and he's also writing some new music. So for us and the band it's really nice.

I read that you have some '70s psychedelic influences in the music now?
I think that's more like Simen's (a.k.a. I.C.S.) thing, because he's into the '70s, but I'm not familiar with all the names. Like the song "Ad Noctum" is written by him, so you can hear the synth from this period of time. I think that he contributes most of those influences, though also maybe a little bit me too because I'm into Pink Floyd and stuff like that. We draw influences from all kinds of music and that's also the intention behind the band, that we don't limit the influential side of the band. We just do what we think is good and that's it. We don't think of rejecting any ideas if it sounds like something we shouldn't do. We are kind of doing whatever we feel sounds good.

Do you feel yourself straying from the speedy black metal stuff because of your guitar sound and the chords and the folk roots you're now putting in?
Yeah, definitely. I've been into the scene since '88 and I've always done my thing my way. That also comes from the band. I've tried to distance myself a little bit from this overwhelming Norwegian black metal thing because I'm a little bit tired and fucked up of the media. They always say you're supposed to sound like this and that and you're always supposed to use corpse-paint because you're coming from Norway. I try to concentrate on keeping things in our own direction.

I heard that a lot of black metal people wear corpse-paint because it's damaging to their reputation if people found out they were in these bands. They cover their faces not just to be evil but so people won't know who they are in such a small country. Is that true?
(chuckles) It might be, I don't know. But I think it doesn't matter too much because it's Norway and the music scenes in Bergen and Oslo are so small that everyone knows who everyone is anyway, even if they use corpse-paint. I don't know, it might be. It's not my cup of tea anyway.

Does it take a long time to put that stuff on?
I don't know because I don't use it, I don't care. I've actually heard of some people, but I don't want to mention any names, but they spend three or four hours in front of the mirror before they go on stage. And well, that's a little bit too girly for me.

I have a friend who has been a musician for about 20 years now and I played a couple of your songs for him. He was wowed by the time changes. What kind of time signatures do you stick into the songs that are so weird?
I don't know! That's always a difficult question about music when people ask me how it comes. We just do it; I write music on instinct and basically that's that. It's nothing deep or philosophically grounded – we just do it. It's a little bit amazing for me because it seems like people sometimes think that we are so strange and have strange ideas and work really hard at them. For us it's quite simple, really. I just make the music on my acoustic guitar and present it to the band, and that's it!

Tell the readers something about yourself that has nothing to do with the band that would surprise them.
Wow... (whispers low) what the fuck... what do you want me to say?

Just maybe a crazy story that's happened...
Ah... crazy stories that happened...

Nothing crazy to do with alcohol?
Ah, well that's private. (laughs) Actually I'm not drinking too much these days. I drink a lot on tours because it becomes a... lifestyle on the tour. When I am off the tour I don't drink too much... um... I don't fucking know... I have two cats, small cats which I love very much.

Are you married?
Almost. I'm engaged.

What's a 'Borknagar'?
It's just a fantasy name, actually. It doesn't mean anything. It's a name invented in my head and the intention behind it is that we wanted a name that was a little bit airy sounding, as well as one without only one association. Like if you are called Napalm Death you will always be stuck to what you started out with, it gives you certain associations. In the future people cannot nail us to the wall and say you are supposed to play like this because of your name. This name avoids any sort of musical limitation.

What if there was a porn star with the name Borknagar, what would he be like?
(laughs) Um... I don't know... I guess a big dick!

What are you plans for the band in the next six months?
We don't have exact plans. Right now we are making new music and that's basically it. People have asked us if we want to do some headlining tours in Europe, and we will see what's happening with the offers. There are no concrete plans actually, we'll just be writing new music and I guess a new album will be issued early next year or something.

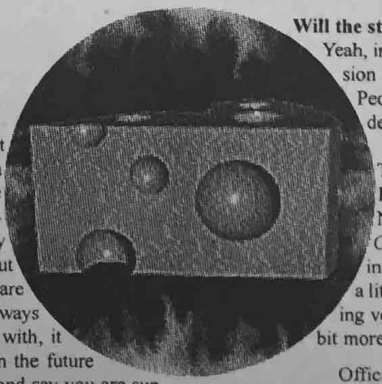
Are there any plans to come to America?
No, no plans. I've asked Century Media about this several times and they claim it's expensive and doesn't make sense. A lot of business-talk like that so we'll see. It would be nice because we have already done two tours in Europe so it would be nice to tour in other places as well. I actually heard some rumors we're supposed to play the Milwaukee festivals but I don't think so. I wouldn't be surprised though because we are always the ones to hear about it last!

I have a question about the song "Universal." I don't have a lyric sheet and it's such an amazing song I want to know what the words are.
I think that's the song that's most representative of the whole concept of the album. Sometimes I was thinking of calling the album 'Universal', but it didn't happen. I think the title describes very much what it deals with. It's very philosophic, I think the lyrics are flying, so to speak, it's like going to a different dimension. It's maybe the song with the deepest lyrics, though when I look at it today I think it's a little bit strange because when I wrote it, it was a special period of time for me.

One last question: *The Archaic Course*; is that sort of a lifestyle recommendation?
Basically it's meant to be a follow-up title to *The Olden Domain*, to show the fans we kept our roots and the musical style. I think it gives the people an idea of what the album deals with.

What label would you release the Molested stuff on?
I don't know. I'm supposed to do some deal with some label. Maybe I'll get in touch with Repulse Records in Spain because we were supposed to do an album with them. I don't know if they're still interested.

Any final comments?
Hello to all the fans in the US. We're going to release a new album in the not-so-distant time.



Will the style be pretty much the same?
Yeah, in the same direction but progression is also very important for me. People who like this album will definitely like the new one.

The clean vocals will definitely be more up front than before?
No, I think for me *Archaic Course* is the most epic album we intend to do. So maybe we will go a little bit back and do more screaming vocals and make the music a little bit more raw and rough. We'll see!

Official Borknagar website:
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Blind Guardian

Sensational Power Metal!

Blind Guardian have been around since 1986 and have released six studio albums. The German quartet are gods worldwide so only in America do they remain unheralded. Century Media has bravely released *Nightfall in Middle-Earth* stateside and we here at *Sloth* will do our part in increasing awareness of these giants with the following interview. A very excited Marcus Siepen spoke with us recently, so check out what the guitar wizard had to say...

So how have you been?
I've been fine! Did I call you last time?

Yeah, I think somebody screwed up with the time.
Yah, hee hee! Last time was great. I was about to do six interviews last time, which none of them worked. And Hansi (Kürsch – vocals) did another three and one of them worked, I guess. Something with the time schedule was totally wrong but I just kept calling people in the States. Nobody was there except the answering machine. I woke up two guys at five o'clock in the morning your time. (laughs) Nobody knew about anything, but well, today it works, I guess.

I guess you guys are glad people actually wanted to interview you again.
Yes, of course!

Judging by the CD I can see why. I don't like power metal too much but I can't stop playing your CD.
Great.

I think it's sort of different than a lot of power metal.
I hope so. We try to be different, that's what we would want to be. (chuckles) We try to be unique. (chuckles)

You guys have been around for so long that I guess you know what to do by now.
I hope so, yes.

You used Flemming Rasmussen on the new CD. Has he just been sitting on his *Master of Puppets* royalty checks since then?
(laughs) No, actually not! Actually, we did the album before the latest one with him, too. We also recorded the one before completely in his studio. He does a lot of stuff. He did some stuff for Pretty Maids and he does a lot of stuff for Danish bands which have got nothing to do with metal. He doesn't like to do a lot of metal because most of the metal bands today he doesn't like very much, so he picks the bands he likes and that's fine with him. I guess he doesn't have to work anymore since Metallica but he likes his job.

Do you have to work?
Um, no. All of us are living off the music since nine years or something like that. We could live off the music since our third album, *Tales from the Twilight World*, which was released originally in 1990.

That's incredible!
That's great. It would be a big problem for us if we would have to work because we have to spend so much time first of all on writing the music, which takes a lot of time for us, unfortunately...

But your songs are so easy!
They are? (laughs) Of course this takes a lot of time and then we've been on the road last year for about seven months, so there's no time to work in a normal job. So we're lucky to live off the music, so that's fine, that's great! (laughs)

I can't believe that your band has lived off its music for nine years and practically no one in America knows about you guys. That's embarrassing.
It is. The funny thing is, in the early days *Tales from the Twilight World* was signed to a small indie label in Germany that was called No Remorse Records. But we were already distributed by Virgin and Virgin in the US liked this album very much. They wanted to release us but they did not do it because we were not actually signed to Virgin. And half a year later No Remorse went bankrupt and we signed a real deal with Virgin, but since then they have had no interest in us anymore. I don't know why. What changed their mind I have no idea, but since then they kept telling us that's no music for the American market, we don't want to release it. Finally Century Media did it and we'll see what's gonna happen.

Were any other American labels interested in you or was it just Century Media?
I don't know all the names right now but Century Media did a very good offer for us and we've known the label since 1990, I guess. We toured a lot with other Century Media bands, like Iced Earth toured twice with us and Nevermore toured with us. So we knew the guys, we liked them, and as I said they made a good offer so we'll see what happens. The album's been out for six weeks now so we don't know what we can sell in the States, but at least we're released there now.

When did Virgin say you weren't good for the American market?
The last nine years. (laughs)

It's because you guys are too complicated and the majority of the people are simpleminded and can't handle the complicated nature of the music.
Maybe, I don't know why they thought this. Everybody we knew from the States concerning bands like Nevermore and Iced Earth and some other guys from the States who listened to the album, everybody liked it and said, "Great. Why don't you get it released here? It's great music." I don't know what they want us to sound like. I don't care what they want because we play our music and if Virgin says they won't release it then fuck them, but finally Century Media did it and we're happy.

I guess in Germany and Japan Blind Guardian are huge. How big are your live shows in Germany and Japan?
We play in front of two to four thousand people – it depends where we are. We played for the first time in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico on the last tour. When we came to Brazil for the first time we didn't know what to expect because we've never been there and we played the first show in front of 4000 people which were totally raging. It was great! It's pretty good for us right now all over Europe. We played a sold-out tour in Spain and Greece in front of, I don't know, two to three thousand people a night. It's great.

When you guys play live, do you line up together and rock back and forth?
Um, no. (laughs) Actually not.

Are you friends with the Scorpions?
Um, we don't know them personally but I like their old stuff like the *Virgin Killer* (1976) stuff or *In Trance* (1975) and older stuff. But I don't like the stuff since...I guess *Love at First Sting* (1984) was the last album I bought and I didn't like it very much. Since then I don't like them too much, I mean they've been a very important band, especially for German metal bands because they opened up the doors for everybody. But maybe they should listen to their old stuff again and try to change their music again a little bit.

I find it funny that one of their guitarists has a Flying V and they have one of the wimpiest guitar sounds in the world.
Yes, true. (laughs) I like their old stuff, it's pretty cool. Songs like "The Zoo" or "Make it Real" (both from 1980's *Animal Magnetism*), it's great stuff but they don't play these songs anymore. Unfortunately they changed their style. I heard some strange rumors about drum loops on their next album, so I don't know.

Let me ask you something about the album, since I'm interviewing you not just to get your opinion on other bands. (we laugh) What was the idea behind



bringing medieval vocals as well as the voice-overs? What was the concept behind bringing them in?
We like it. I guess we have found our style. On the first two albums (1988's *Battalions of Fear* and 1989's *Follow the Blind*) we were looking for style, I would say we were a normal melodic speed band. And someday we found our style using these huge choir arrangements and lots of harmonies with guitars. We always



liked this kind of classical stuff and thought it would fit to our music so we just tried it and it worked, I guess. There's no real concept behind it so that we say, "Oh, on the next album there have to be two songs with a huge orchestra and there have to be two fast songs and two ballads and whatever." We just write what comes to our minds and we'll see what comes out in the end. It's just the kind of music we like most.

I haven't heard any of the older albums yet. Would you say there's a big difference between each of them in style?
The funny thing is always two match together. For the first two we were looking for a style and they were very fast and aggressive and of course there was melody in there because melodies are very important for us, but we didn't use these big arrangements and choirs in those days. These were the two looking-for-a-style albums, I would call them, and the next two albums which were called *Tales from Twilight World* and *Somewhere far Beyond*, we found our style at that time, so they finally had these choir arrangements and lots of guitar harmonies. But, for example, they didn't have so many classical influences there. We had some folk stuff in there; we used some bagpipes in there too. And the last two albums, *Imaginations from the Other Side* and *Nightfall in Middle-Earth*, had the classical stuff. So this period is over, I guess. (laughs) I don't know, we'll see what happens on the next one but as I said, we have no master plan when we write. We're just about to start songwriting for the next album right now, so we're just collecting ideas and will see what they sound like.

Do you do any research for albums? Do you listen to classical composers, or what goes into that?
Um, no real research. I have some CDs from classical composers but it's not like I sit down to find out if I could use something for own music. We have our own studio where we do most of the writing, so you just go there, get your guitar and play around to anything and suddenly get the idea, you record it, and you work around it. So it's not that I sit down with a bunch of CDs and try to pick some parts.

When did the Queen vocals start to come into your music?
With the third album when we started to like this choir stuff. By the way, we also did a cover of a Queen song on *Somewhere far Beyond* – we did "Spread your Wings." Of course Queen is a very big influence for us, not just vocally but also with the guitar harmonies and other stuff, so Queen has been really great.

It really adds to the uplifting, spiritual nature of the songs, I think.
Mm-hm.

What is your favorite song from the new album?
That's difficult. I guess today I would say "Time Stands Still," but if you ask me tomorrow I pick another song. It depends on my moods. It's hard to say because I normally don't listen to our own albums because you spend so much time working on the stuff, then you spend so much time recording the stuff, then you spend so much time on tour playing the stuff so you don't really listen to it at home. But right now I would prefer "Time Stands Still."

Do you guys need any new members?
If we need any new members?

Do need any new members?
No.

I mean, I'm pretty good.
(laughs in disbelief that I've saying this)
So what do you play?

I play the mouth guitar.
Ah, cool.

I could harmonize with you, you know...(I proceed to give my rendition of the solo from the 3:45 mark in "Noldor.")
Ah, great! If we tour the States one day I'll give you a call and we can do a session. (laughs)

Really?
Why not? (laughs) But right now we're pretty set with the lineup, so no new members.

I figured I had to try.
No problem!

"Condemned we are..." (line from intro track "Nom the Wise.")
Yes! (laughs)

I love the little voice-overs on the CD.
Yeah, it's nice.

Are you going to have them next time too?
Maybe, I don't know.

What do you want to say to the American audience because we're so ignorant?
Well, give our albums a chance, listen to them. If you like them, buy them! (laughs) Make us rich...no, kidding. I hope the guys like the stuff we do, I hope if we get the chance to play in the States they'll come check us out.

Any tour in the works for the States?
Not yet. Century Media asked us if we would like to tour with Iced Earth and I guess Nevermore earlier this year but we didn't have time. For this year there are just festivals in Europe planned because we want to focus on songwriting right now, but I hope we can tour the States for the next album, which will be out, I don't know, sometime in the year 2000. So I hope we can come to the States next year. We'll wait and see.

One more thing. How would you describe your style?
That's the most difficult question. We definitely started as a kind of speed metal band but – of course we still have some fast stuff – you can't call us just speed metal because there's too much other stuff in our music, like the ballad stuff and mid-tempo stuff. So I would just call it powerful melodic metal. I don't know. It's hard to say something about your own music because you're too much into the stuff to be able to speak without any prejudices or whatever. Powerful melodic metal, I don't know...(laughs)

One of the things I noticed is that it sounds so current while a lot of bands, like Iced Earth, sound kind of old to me.
They are definitely different, that's true. When we write the songs, we don't care if they sound like the nineties or if they sound trendy or old fashioned or whatever. We just do what we like, so if someone calls it modern or trendy, that's fine. An if somebody calls it old kind of metal that's fine with me too.

I hear in Germany there are a lot o trendy black metal bands now.
It's a kind of trend right now, that's true Bands like Dimmu Borgir and Cradle o Filth, they are the trendy stuff right here a the moment. These kind of bands and these so-called "true metal" bands like Hammerfall, that's the trend right now. I guess all these trends will be gone someday sooner or later and the next trend will start, when it will be I don't know. (laughs) It's a trend right now and I'm not too much into this black metal stuff.

So what do you listen tot? What would you recommend to a Blind Guardian fan?
I like all kinds of music. I like a lot of metal stuff, especially a lot of the '80s stuff. The old Maiden stuff and Fates Warning. I actually don't like too many of the younger metal bands because most of them don't play anything new to me. This true metal stuff, I mean that's not really bad music to me but it's nothing new. A lot of them are just copying bands from the eighties and I prefer the originals.

And they can play solos too.
Yes. And there's also a lot of good stuff not in metal, for example Pink Floyd, Genesis, Jethro Tull, Rush, Bad Religion. All kinds of stuff, like Tori Amos, there's a lot of good music around.

Well Marcus, I want thank you very much for your time.
Thank you very much! I'm glad it worked today. I was afraid to reach the answering machine again. (we laugh) Okay, we'll see you sometime in the States.

I look forward to it.
I hope so. (laughs) And you're gonna come on stage for a session?

Oh yeah, definitely!
Okay!



SOILWORK

Sweden's Soilwork stormed onto the overcrowded melodic death metal scene last year with all guns blazing and unashamedly ripping out inspirational leads while the compeition could only cover up their inadequacies with fumbled harmonics and endless screams. They play feel-good death metal! *Steel Bath Suicide* came out around the same time as Arch Enemy's *Stigmata* and while the albums are similar and the latter features ex-Carcass guitar wizard Michael Amott, I still feel Soilwork are more memorable and exciting. This year sees the release of *The Chainheart Machine*, the sextet's second destructive album that's sure to turn heads. Meanwhile, I'll be banging mine! Vocalist Björn "Speed" Strid spoke his mind on all things Soilwork, so read on...

There are obvious influences in your music from At the Gates and Arch Enemy. Do some people just write you off as another Swedish band?
Yes, there have been some reviews saying: "Just another copycat from Sweden." I think that the guys who did those reviews hadn't listened to the album more than once and that's a must, because after a few more listens, you will realize that we ain't just another copycat.

Have you had to scrap songs that you felt might draw claims of being a rip-off?
No, we play metal the way we want and we don't care if people think that our songs might be a rip-off. Of course we have some influences from those bands but we also have our own ideas. Our next album, *The Chainheart Machine*, will really prove that Soilwork has a more "personal" sound.

Did the name Soilwork come from Carcass's *Heartwork*? What exactly does it mean?
The name Soilwork stands for "filthy work". We fight to keep metal alive, and that's a "filthy" work. Or as Bon Scott would have said: "It's a long way to the top if you wanna rock'n'roll!"

The fantastic solos on your album are really defining of its quality. Was a conscious effort made to play lots of leads? Most death/thrash bands shy away from soloing these days; do you think that is because they are separating themselves from the '80s or just can't play the parts?
I think that some of the bands don't want to have any solos because they're afraid that they don't sound brutal enough and of course there are some bands who can't play solos and therefore they have no solos in their songs. We're building up our songs just like the metal bands on the eighties with a lot of solos and that's the way we want to play our metal.



Where has the band been best received? Have you done a number of interviews? Have you gotten much American support? What do you want all the new readers from America to know about Soilwork?
I think we've gotten the best response from Belgium, Holland, Italy, Greece, Japan, and from the US too so we're very happy about that. We're receiving of about two interviews a week since we released *Steelbath*, so we're rather busy, but we enjoy it very much. In December, January, and February we have received very many interviews from the US, and that's great 'cause I didn't think that people in the US liked melodic death/thrash, so it seems like I was wrong. I think you can like Soilwork's music even if you listen to Cannibal Corpse or Helloween 'cause Soilwork has influences from all types of metal and hard rock. So you who haven't checked us out: Give it a try!



Have you toured or have plans to? With what bands? You've certainly played live, correct? Got any great stories to tell about these experiences?
We toured in Europe with the Brazilian band Krisiun in December and it was really great. The guys from Krisiun were just great, so we had a very good time. A few days before Christmas Eve, we had a barbecue-party with the guys from Krisiun in their manager's garden in Eindhoven (Holland). Can you believe it, a barbecue party in December! Man it was cold! We're going to do five shows in Holland and Belgium with Naglfar and Darkane in the end of March. We haven't played live that much and that's a shame cause we fuckin' love it. It would be great to go touring in the States so we'll just wait and see.

From the one photo I saw of the band, you guys have a 1950s New York "greaser" look going with the sunglasses and gelled back hair. Are you modeling an original look for the '90s metal band? How did this come about, considering Soilwork is about two years old?
One thing that separates us from most of the other metal bands is that only one of six members has long hair and that's rather unusual these days. Every member in the band used to have long hair but we got tired of looking similar to other metal bands, so we cut our hair. I think we look like an industrial metal band or something like that and who knows, maybe that's the way for a metal band to look in 2000. There's some metal-heads just saying: "Look they're shorthaired, they can't play metal!" I mean, wouldn't it be boring if almost every metal band would look the same? And sometimes when we play live there's some metal-heads standing staring at us with angry eyes. After a while when they've heard some songs, they finally start to bang their heads too, so after all it depends on the music, not the look.

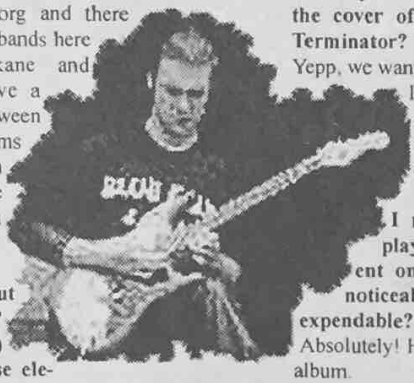
So are you all a bunch of party animals? What jobs do you work normally? Give me some background on each of Soilwork's members (including full names). Are there any unique characteristics or stories that would entertain our readers?
Three of us are working and three of us are unemployed. Ola Frenning, 32, guitar, working as a teacher and is always arguing with his girlfriend; Björn "Speed" Strid, 21, vocals, I'm unemployed, always making my own metal collections; Peter Wichers, 20, guitar, unemployed, always sitting at home and playing solos and he's always arguing with his girlfriend too; Ola Flink, 22, bass, working at a warehouse, often drinking whiskey and listening to Motörhead; Carlos Del-Olmo, 22, synthesizers, unemployed, spends his free time with his girlfriend listening to Accept; Henry Ranta, 22, drums, working with cleaning, often watching movies with his girlfriend. We seem to be a bunch of geeks, right? But one thing is for sure: we drink our heads off as often we can and we fuckin' love metal! Everybody in the band used to play in different bands before Soilwork but I really don't know much about those bands.

As we know, a band's second album is critical to its success, especially after a well-received debut. Just look at Gorefest's *False*. Has work begun on your next release? What changes can we expect? Will we find you've tried to shed any comparisons to At the Gates, Carcass, Arch Enemy, or other bands? There will still be ripping solos, right!?

We have just recorded our second album, *The Chainheart Machine*. It contains 9 new songs. The new material is a little more brutal with very many solos and a lot more synthesizers. As I said before the new material is a little more personal. I hope that the people who liked our debut album will like our new material just as much as we do, so we'll just wait and see.

Since Sweden has so many amazing metal bands, more than most countries (including America) and with a small population, would you say the feeling between groups is camaraderie, competition, or jealousy?

Well the bands in Sweden seem to get along very well. We live in the southern part of Sweden in a town called Helsingborg and there aren't too many metal bands here but we have Darkane and Darksend and we have a rather good contact between the bands. There seems to be much jealousy in the black metal scene here but maybe I'm wrong.



How do you feel about a) clean male vocals? b) female vocals? c) violins? Would these elements take away from the thrashy, more rockin' vibe of your songs?

a) I love old heavy metal but I also like modern acts like Primal Fear, Hammerfall etc., so I like metal with both clean or screamy vocals. b) Well, it can be rather beautiful sometimes, especially when you play goth and stuff like that. We used female vocals when we covered Deep Purple's "Burn" and it went out great. c) I like violins. We're using violins on the last track on our new album, "Room No.99." The violins made the song turn out very sad and hateful.



Being a fan of Judas Priest, were you heartbroken to learn that Rob Halford is gay? Makes you wonder what '80s metal fashion was all about!

I don't really care 'cause Judas Priest is one of my favorite metal bands and they will always be. Nobody can sing like Rob Halford so I don't care if he's gay.

Has anyone mentioned that the guy on the cover of *Steel Bath Suicide* looks like the Terminator?

Yepp, we wanted it to be a little Terminator- inspired. It's Carlos's cousin who has made the cover. He has done some fantasy comic books so he's a rather good drawer.

I noticed that you have a keyboard player. His role is practically nonexistent on the first album. Will he play a noticeable part on the next CD or is he expendable?

Absolutely! He will be much more busy on the next album.

Why did you sign with Listenable? Were there any better offers? Chris Forbes runs the American office, and he's a very cool guy. Do you know him? He also puts out Metal-Core fanzine, which has 25 issues out. How do you feel about someone who's that dedicated to the underground? Do you think there are a lot of fakes in the metal scene, even though it is not a mainstream market anymore?

Listenable had the best deal and wanted to release our debut album at once so it was a simple choice. Chris seems to be a very great guy and he often sends us interviews from the States and he seems to like Soilwork very much. It's great that he's so dedicated to the underground scene 'cause that's where the roots are, and they are very important. The underground scene keeps metal alive. Of course there are some bands just making music to earn big cash and that's a shame 'cause it will bring the metal scene to its knees.

Further, do you see a sizeable comeback for metal? Apparently Hammerfall is experiencing great success and Germany is very proud to raise the metal banner...

I don't know really. I do hope so cause the German people never seem to get tired of metal and that's great. Hammerfall seems to be popular in the whole world now so maybe there'll be a comeback for metal. In the eighties everybody seemed to love metal and maybe we will get a new '80s feeling in the future.

All right, thanks a lot for the interview. If there's anything I didn't cover, mention it here!

Take care all you metal-heads out there and remember to keep the metal scene alive!

soilwork@hotmail.com



SATYRICON

They Are Not Going To Heaven

Satyricon. Probably the fiercest force in Norwegian black metal today. *Nemesis Divina* was their crowning achievement of brutality in blackness that left many a metal-head frightened and hugging a teddy bear. After a break from the music following the *Megiddo* CD EP they are back, the core members Satyr and Frost again playing from the depths of their black hearts on the *Intermezzo II* CD EP. This release will only be a taste of the blasphemous storm to come because as the millennium draws near the world will have to reckon with the forthcoming full-length album *Rebel Extravaganza*. I spoke with a surprisingly friendly Satyr about the coming storm. Hold on to your soul, it's going to be a hellish thousand years.

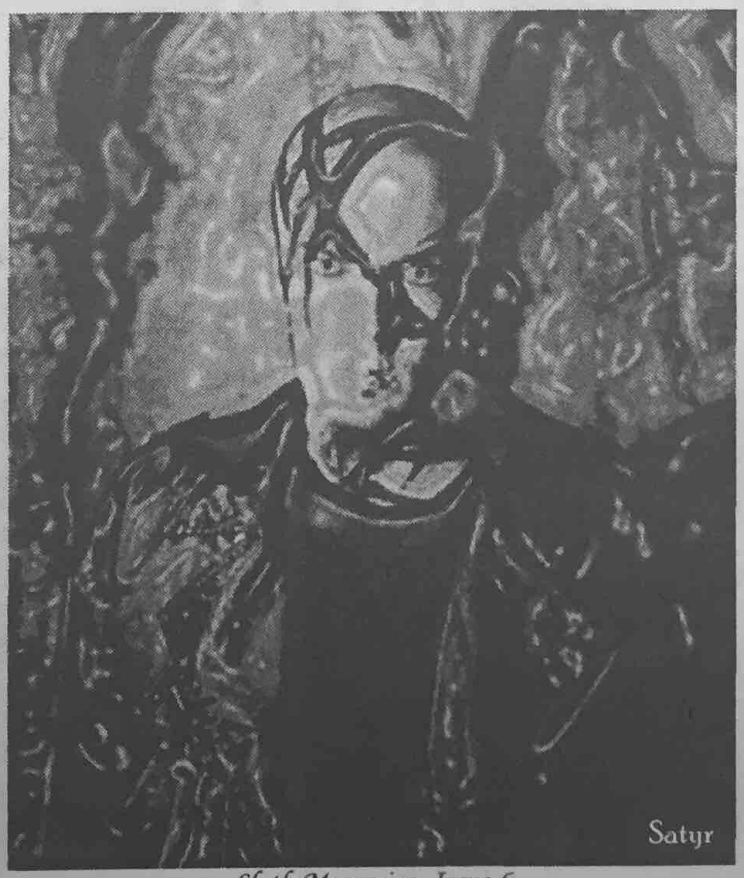
It's been a long time since *Nemesis Divina* came out. What have you been up to?
A lot of things really. In '97 we basically concentrated on the *Megiddo* mini-CD and we also played the Dynamo festival and a couple of gigs in Scandinavia. For example, the gig we played here in Oslo took a lot of preparation. It was not like a usual gig, it was like a big event so it took quite a lot of time to do the live things though there weren't a lot of gigs. In the last half of '96 we really needed a break after touring for *Nemesis Divina* and rehearsing a lot and recording. In '98 we've been rehearsing to make the album ready and I guess we would have been ready if we hadn't thrown away as many songs as we have, but as it is now we have recorded a new mini-CD called *Intermezzo II* which will be released on the 10th of May. Let's see, we're going into the studio again to record the new full-length album *Rebel Extravaganza*, which is due to be released in Europe in either late August or early September.

When you said you had to take a break from the music, what were you doing at the time? We were working a regular job or playing in other bands?
Exercising and jogging and playing soccer and hanging out with my girlfriend and nothing really. Everything apart from music because I was really sick of the other people that I played with and the whole thing. I'd had too much because in '95 we rehearsed all the time – for a period we rehearsed everyday seven days a week for several months and directly after the album we started rehearsing for our live set and then we went on tour. The candle was burning at both ends really, and I felt I needed to get away. You have to be hungry and I wasn't hungry at all. I just felt burned out and not really interested. I needed some sort of break to get the passion for this kind of music back.

So what happened that made it come back for you?
The fact that I relaxed. I just think that with my not having anything to do with it I started missing it and wanting to work again and play music. It wasn't that dramatic really, I was just fed up and really needed a break and after having a break I felt hungry and just started going back to the same procedure as usual.

During this time were you listening to metal or were you completely out of the scene.
I don't remember really. Like I said it wasn't that dramatic or a deliberate choice. It just happened and after a while I realized I might as well continue having some time off from the whole thing. I enjoyed just relaxing and doing nothing. I remember at the end of the period I got a lot of those first tapes from Fenris (of Darkthrone), his DJ tapes and I enjoyed them a lot. That's the only thing I remember musically from that period, but like I said, it wasn't that dramatic.

Is the music on the new EP going to be as extreme as on the last album? Because I think *Nemesis Divina* is brutal black metal and you don't see that too often.
It's going to be a little bit of everything, I guess. The first song is called "A Moment of Clarity" and it's also the first song we made for the new album but we recorded the first version for the mini. We're going to do another version again for the album but the first version has got a lot of punch and it's pretty aggressive. But I'm sure we will make it more aggressive on the album version. The second song is a cover of the old Brazilian band Sarcophago which I guess most people don't know even though they should as it is a great band. We covered the title track of their first album, *INRI*, and that one is extremely brutal. It's about as brutal as is it possible to be! The third track is a different mix out of the *Nemesis Divina* title track. It was a mix we didn't like when we mixed the album and didn't use it but while listening to it afterwards I found out that I actually thought it was very good. Frost felt the same way, like, "Well why didn't we use this? This is really cool." So we decided to use that one and the last track is called "Blessed from Below" (?) and it's a bit more an ambient/industrial song – it's an experimental song. It's pretty extreme. All in all, I am very satisfied with the mini, but I feel we've got a solid fundament because we know exactly what worked out very well and we'll continue to do that on the album and the things that didn't work out as we'd hoped we know why they didn't and we're gonna correct them on the album. So the mini-CD's very good indeed and the album's gonna be extremely good.


Satyr

So you guys aren't going to pull an Ulver on us?
I don't think so! I think their thing is

like...I don't know what their thing is like but my impression is that they basically do what they feel at the moment but for us it's a bit different because we've been building our own style and trademark through several years and what we burn for is to develop and progress. That's the kind of trademark we have now and but it's not like that I want to change it but develop it into something fresh and new. But it's not like we're gonna do an Ulver, no.

Are you writing all the songs still or do you have the other guys helping you out?
I still write all the songs. Actually I think they will contribute a little bit more than before. I know that there will be probably five or six riffs in the new stuff not made by myself, but all in all it's not that much, really.

What is the current lineup now?
It's the same as on the *Megiddo* CD: it's me and Frost. We have a live lineup that consists of the same keyboard guy we always use live who's not really into the whole thing we're into. He's just a classically trained musician and he's the only one who's good enough to play what is required. Tchort, who used to play bass in Emperor, plays bass for us live. And his friend Daniel, a very good guitarist, plays with us, and we're also gonna use Sanrabb from Gehenna live. But in the studio it's me and Frost and we're using some different session people on the album. On this mini we used Sanrabb and a guy called Ingar (?) who used to play in a Norwegian power metal band called Conception. He also has his own death metal project or whatever called Crest of Darkness (?). He's also going play on the album too; Sanrabb is not going to play on the album, he just played rhythm guitar on the mini. We're gonna have Crypt from Fortes (?), the old black metal band, to play some session guitar on the album. And on the album Onbum (?) from the old Earache death metal band Cadaver, he's gonna play some rhythm guitar. And Fenris from Darkthrone is gonna do some percussion and we're gonna have a girl from a Norwegian rock band to do some vocals. Not like the Paradise Lost style, she's gonna sing in a bit more extreme way. And there's a guy who's gonna do some analogs and special effects. And myself, I'm going to do some of those effects and sing and play the lead guitar. Frost will do the drums as usual. So we will use lots of people with lots of different qualities on the album.

Now that bands like Dissection have folded do you think there's a waiting feeling for you guys to pump some blood back into the scene?
I haven't thought about that really. I guess one of my main goals with the new album is to – obviously I want to make the best possible album and hope that people like it. That goes without saying, really. Apart from that my goal is to try to turn around this gothic flower crap which is invading the black metal scene. It seems like everybody's been really hating what's been going on for the last five years and now suddenly they feel that it's justifiable to do this Cradle of Filth kind of thing with roses and women and gothic romantic darkness, blah, blah, you know, fuck off! I would like to burn that whole thing. I want to try to help, together with bands such as Darkthrone, to make the thing become hard and harsh. This thing is not supposed to be gothic or romantic. That is a total misconception by people. It's supposed to hard, grim, evil, and brutal. It's not supposed to be a thing like for women and if I can help influence other bands and try to influence this it would be great.

So you want it to be less accessible? More into the late '80s, early '90s kind of sickness?
Not really because I think there are lots of different ways of doing music in an extreme manner. I think that Diamanda Galás on Mute records, if you don't know her you should really check her out, she's basically been all singing – no guitars or anything – but I think it's about the most extreme thing I ever heard. My point is that the extremity of your music is not dependent upon how much distortion you have on your guitar or how loud you can scream or how many times you can sing "Satan". There are a lot of different ways of approaching extremity and what I think that for what we will do is there's going to be attitude in the music, a rough attitude. And it's gonna be a diehard attitude to the whole thing and we're really going to give everything and try to get that harsh and grim attitude through the music and the lyrics and the cover, everything, really. I'm pretty sure it will work and I'm just looking forward to seeing people's reactions. I think I will be very happy myself, I have a very good feeling about the album recording and I look forward to starting up.

What do you mean by grim imagery?
We've just been in London taking tons of photos for the mini-CD and the album but we haven't processed many of them yet. The album photos are going to be somewhat special – shocking actually. They're going to be messy, filthy, ugly, reaking of decay and blood and filth and evil.

I hit the Moonfog website to get some photos. Did you shave your head?
Yes I did.

How come?
No specific reason. I was tired of it so I cut it a year ago. I'd been having long hair since elementary school. And besides, I looked like everyone else. If you talk about trends, all metal kids look the same with long hair, and I didn't want to be part of the mass. So having a shaved head is more extreme because everybody has long hair in the metal scene. But if this was just about hair I wouldn't be interested in it.

Do you have to psyche yourself up for when you're about to play some music? You sound pretty calm and relaxed right now but on the CD you're screaming, "This is Armegeddon."
(chuckles) Well I am a pretty laid-back person. When I go into the studio and I put on those headphones...I always have some special arrangements in the studio to make it just right. I place the mic exactly where I want it and make the lights just the way I want them and I put the lyrics up in the right place. I bring my water and bring a cigarette and listen to the headphones, then I tell the engineer to rewind the tape and I'm really there and I just get up and do the business and...I probably need ten minutes to get into the feeling and just sit there listening through the headphones to the guitars and the drums. Then I'm really there and the moment I've started singing I'm totally there!

Is there any actual clean singing from you this time or is it still the sick growl and rasp?
On the mini it's just black metal vox and apart from the last song, "Blessed from Below," which doesn't have any black metal vox at all, just spoken words and guttural expressions. I don't know really about the album because it's not recorded yet but I do have ideas. I think it's gotta be extreme but not in a traditional way. I'm gonna work with distortion on the vocals, which I've tried in the past, and I also did that on the mini and I think it sounds kind of cool. There's gonna be like a bit more regular screaming, not like just singing but more screaming. And I'm also gonna work a bit more on spoken parts and use vocalders (?) to get that right atmosphere. There's thousands of ways to do it, actually. I want to produce the vocals a lot; I've been talking to the engineer about this because I want to work with overdubs and effects and lots of different tracks with different kinds of sounds and voices. I haven't done it before and I think I can do it in a good way.

Do you think you might do what Peter Tägtgren of Hypocrisy and Dan Swano (ex-Edge of Sanity) did and get your own studio to rent out to bands and record?
Well, all the engineers I know in Norway, and I know quite a few, they have all told me to never start a studio, never! It's like the dumbest thing you can do because you can't make any money. I don't know, really, but I don't think I have the patience to get into all that technical shit. I'm going to get Cubase soon for hard disk recording because I have a Macintosh GE3 which is a machine advanced enough for this kind of hard disk recording system. I'm not gonna like record professionally on it, just for demo stuff instead of using my 4-track. So I'm not going to start my own studio.


Frost

Do you even like the other styles of music that Peter has to deal with, like light rock?
Not really. I've never been much into rock music. I've got to say that the stuff that interests me apart from old black metal is...lots of different stuff, you know, but I really like the new Massive Attack stuff. I think it's way darker than a lot of black metal that occurred in the last few years, and I like the old Marilyn Manson and I like NIN, and some of the new Laibach stuff. I'm very much into drum and bass, very much into psychedelic trance. I also enjoy lis-

tening to classic bands like The Doors. I'm basically pretty open-minded and I think you have to be if you want to grow as a musician. You have to know what's going on. I've worked with people who only listen to metal music and they're basically only capable of understanding...if I say, "Can you play blah,blah,blah, or whatever?" it can be the easiest thing in the world but they don't know how to because they only know how to play metal because it's the only thing they've ever heard.

Is that why you did the Storm project, because it's more folk influenced?
No, that's not why. That was just a nice thing to do because some of these old folk songs are really cool and I felt that it was possible to do them cooler. When I talked to Fenris about it the first time we were originally going to do it on this Moonfog compilation together and he actually started talking about doing a whole album because he was so enthusiastic about the first demo we recorded, which was just one song. I had a lot of ideas too and we just came up with a lot of songs and put new parts in and just found that we might as well do it in the proper way and went into the studio. There wasn't a huge idea behind but it was the right thing to do and it felt good. A nice experience.

Would you do it again on a second album?
Not really, not in the way that we did it the first time because that album is about as close as I have come to perfect in terms of what I have wanted. I'm not saying it's the album I am most happy with but it's the album which is closest to my perfect vision of how good it can be.

What sort of folk CDs would you recommend to a reader who wants to get into folk music?
There's a Norwegian band which is actually called Folq and I think they spilt in the early '80s. Not folk with a 'k' but with a 'q'; it's a great band. They've also done versions out of some of the stuff we did. You also have tons of compilations with this kind of music.

I want to ask you about Norwegians' impressions of Americans concerning metal. What do you think of our metal scene (if you think there is one? And how important is it for you guys to get your music to American listeners?
First of all, I think the American metal scene is somewhere between three and five years behind Europe. Basically it's like this: when death metal was the big thing here, thrash metal seemed to be the big thing in the States. And when people got into black metal here, death metal took off in the States. And now as black metal is developing into something else – some bands are going more extreme, some bands are moving into the gothic thing, and some are moving into the industrial thing – seems like now traditional black metal is getting more and more popular in the United States. I know that you have some pioneers like Morbid Angel and Metallica but it seems like these bands were way bigger in Europe when they came than in the US. So I don't know what the reason is, but it seems kind of strange that are so few magazines and happenings when it comes to metal when it comes to the US because it's such an enormous country.

It's the pop culture that rules it. MTV tells us that we're not supposed to listen to metal.
I know, but so does MTV in Europe but the underground is so strong – well, at least it used to be that it could exist regardless of what MTV would say or do or try to influence people. I think the main thing is that the distributors in the US, it's really up to them because they're in the position to influence you guys who do the magazines and influence the retailers and radio stations. There's a lot of quality to pick from and a lot of European labels willing to spend money on the European market but it depends on what labels like Caroline and others will do.

Do you have any final comments? What would you like to say to the readers, primarily an American audience, who are gonna be checking you out?
I don't have any bombastic message for the readers, but I got a message for the magazines, actually. I think the magazines should work harder to help European metal bands become bigger in the States because I think everybody's gonna benefit from that in the end. So that would be my message.

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madder mortem

It's always exciting to introduce new bands to you and it's even better when they are doing something original. This is the case with Madder Mortem, a band that calls Norway home but are corpse-paint free. Their vocalist is in fact not a hellish demon but a skilled female singer by the name of Agnete M. Kirkevaag. The music backing her up is mid-paced and personal, possibly "suave metal"? All I know is that it is finely crafted and soothing to the soul. Let's see what Agnete has to say about it and their new album *Mercury*...

We might as well start with the Madder Mortem story. When did you form?
We formed in December '93 under the name of Mystery Tribe (the name was changed for the *Misty Sleep* MCD).

Did you play a different style?
Yes, I would say the music was quite different. It's hard to describe, but I'd say it was sort of grungy, death metal-inspired, with growling male vocals, etc. For instance, the melodic guitar parts that I find to be an important part of our sound had not developed. We also used a lot of simple rhythm patterns while we now move more towards complexity and multi-layered parts. In addition, my voice was too young to sound good in '93.

What were the defining moments that have shaped the band as it is today?
I would say that the line-up changes were important. Getting a functioning band together is never easy, but I think we have found a good combination now. All the members of the band have different tastes in music, though with some common references, and I think this contributes to the diversity of our songs. I think we have enhanced both the technical abilities and the communication within the band. Another important issue for us has been different recording situations. We recorded *Misty Sleep* in '97, and then we did a pre-production for *Mercury* in '98. Recording songs several times is really useful. When you have a song on tape, you can listen to it in an entirely different way (without being absorbed in playing), and maybe weed out some "diseases" that you wouldn't have noticed otherwise. (The stuff that's fun to play isn't necessarily good for the song.)

How did being from Norway and not black metal affect things? Or did it not?
Well, I haven't noticed any effects – yet. What surprises me a bit is that a lot of the people I have talked to in interviews, etc. seem to think that there's a musician on every street corner here in Norway. Being born and raised out in the countryside, I'd have to disagree...But I can also see the reasons for the fuzz about Norway. After all, black metal, being extreme music, has gotten an enormous lot of attention and popularity here, in addition to all the media attention around Vikernes, etc. I also think that certain record companies should take their share of responsibility for this, seemingly signing bands not entirely because of their musical qualities.



What is the lineup?
Agnete M. Kirkevaag – vocals
BP M. Kirkevaag – guitars
Christian Ruud – guitars
Boye Nyberg – bass
Sigurd Nilsen – drums
In addition, Henning Ramseth is doing the synth on *Mercury*, except on "Under another moon," where BP takes care of the keyboard.

Was it a long and hard road to get to the point where you are now, having released an album and getting worldwide distribution? Is there any story behind your 'getting signed by Misanthropy.
Weeeeellllll, this is a little embarrassing. As much as I would have liked to have a heartbreaking story of struggle and endurance to tell, that is not the truth. What happened was this: we sent *Misty Sleep* to Misanthropy, they wrote us a letter asking if we'd like to work with them, we said yes and started looking for a studio.

Were they the only offering label?
Yes, they were. I don't think that the larger companies are too interested in stuff they get by mail; they're probably receiving loads of demos anyhow.

Are you being recognized by the press in your own country?
Not much yet. I hope there will be some more articles and interviews later on, but the local newspapers are interested, though. The only problem is that local newspapers seldom have much knowledge of non-pop music.

The bio stresses that although your music is dark, you want the listener to draw positive feelings from the negative. I definitely see a subtle form of triumph as the songs end. Explain your motives and goals.
I have no other motive than hopefully to move the listener in one way or another.

Further, do you think the feeling you evoke is more dependent on how the vocals are delivered than the riffs?
I would say it's symbiotic. I love heavy guitars, and it's a really expressive instrument, but if you then add indifferent vocals without any feeling at all, you ruin a great foundation. (I sincerely believe that feeling is much more important than technique in music.) The main difference is that being expressive is in one way easier with vocal cords, as catches and intensity in a voice is a common language for everybody.

There seems to be a current trend in metal bands with female lead singers but most of them really have something to offer. Were you one of the founding members of the band?
Yes, I was. Besides, I was already in a band when we started up, so I feel I have my cred covered.

How long have you been singing in your life? Did you sing in school or with nonmetal bands?
Well, I've always been singing, I guess, but I did not start singing in bands before I was 14. I've been singing in a lot of different bands of various styles, and I've also had some years of classical training at school. I still go to a voice teacher from time to time, in order to stretch the possibilities of my voice. I think it' important to draw inspiration from every possible style, and then make your own blend out of it, because then you can go on improving and exploring your voice and not set unnecessary limits for yourself.

The bands that use female backing vocals usually have them sing like angels. Your delivery is more straightforward as well as varied. What do you model your own sound and patterns after?
I'm very interested in changing my voice from song to song, to best fit the mood of the moment. I will probably do some more experimental stuff further on. Singing like an angel is extremely boring, and not very emotionally communicative. Besides, my personality is not very angel-like, so I'd just be lying.

I have some favorite vocalists, but they're mostly not metal. I would cite women like Bjørk, PJ Harvey, Annie Lennox (who has a great voice but quite a bad taste in songs), and Anneli Drecker from the Norwegian band Bel Canto. Male singers: Garm from Arcturus, Bruce Dickinson, Dio, etc.

There's an American band called 40 Days Longing (featured in this issue) whose female singer rips out these awesome growls and never sings. Do you ever get the urge to just let loose with a brutal growl or black metal shriek?
Oh, yes I do. I'd do it a lot too, if I didn't start coughing each and every time I tried. I'm trying to find some sort of





technique so that I can do it, but so far I haven't been lucky. I think it could be really cool, since I have a gift for drama and volume....

Will there ever be male vocals of any sort in the future?
Oh, yes. There are some on this record, too, but they're quite low, so you can't hear it at once. Listen to: "Undertow" (the last verse), "These Mortal Sins" and "Loss," and also the choir in the last part of "The Grinding Silence." This is probably the kind of thing we will use male vocals for; mostly background vocals and effects.

I have had an impossible time describing what the musical style of the band is. Definitely not black metal nor is it traditional heavy metal. The guitars are heavy but very under control, as if every single note were carefully planned and played deliberately. Did you always play at a moderate pace?
Hmm, never thought about it, actually. The songs just demand different tempi, and we'll play it. I think your description of the guitars is quite accurate, we are mostly not an improvising band. How would you describe the music? We try getting away with just saying "metal"...This is maybe the most difficult question in the world. I tried getting a bit poetic when Brian from Misanthropy asked me the same. I somehow feel that this is the closest I've ever gotten: If you – allegorically speaking – say that our music is a tree, then it would have its roots firmly planted in metal, but its branches are out in the wind, gathering impulses. I know it sounds like bullshit, but...The only certainties are: it's metal, and it's quite melodic – and we like it. (P.S. If anyone can come up with a really good description, I'm willing to do strange stuff to hear it.)

Has anyone pointed out that they sense a light Tool feel in the songs? ("The Grinding Silence" comes to mind.) It's so slight but affects the way a song can just suspend itself so well. It may also play a part in the dark atmosphere. (Plus, though I'm sure it's coincidental, the opener is "Undertow.")
No, I've never heard anyone compare us to just that band. Actually, I've never heard Tool, just read about them. Did know about the Undertow situation, but none of us thought it mattered, since the songs probably sound quite different.

Also, any comparisons to Metallica's *Black* album?
Hmmm....I listened a lot to that album when it came out, but I haven't heard it for at least a year now. I've been very fond of Metallica for several years, though, but I still prefer *Master of Puppets* and *...And Justice for All*.

You seem like a friendly person from the e-mails (but maybe that's just because I'm going to promote your band, haha!). Are you and the rest of Madder Mortem just average happy people with a desire to play emotional dark music?
(This will not be a very serious answer, if you were looking for such, mail me back!) I think the reason for us playing such depressive music, is a shared love for the minor keys... (Well, that's not *entirely* untrue, as you may know, d minor is the saddest of all keys. Everybody who plays or has ever played in a rock or metal band *should* have the knowledge to recognize this quote.) If you judge by the entire population in Norway, we're absolutely not average. If you compare us to the inmates of the local nuthouse, though, I suppose we're beyond average and out on the other side. We're sometimes happy, except from very early in the morning, when I'm happy and the guys are angry (mostly because I'm happy, that is). I guess we have developed into this kind of music, liking heavier and heavier and sadder and sadder music along the way.

So, my assumption is that everybody is human, and therefore changeable in their moods, except Lemmy, maybe, who is either God or an alien. We eat, drink and breathe, and some of us even smile...even though we play music that would sound good with a funeral or a horror movie.

Explain the cover of Mercury to us. Who are the people?
That's us!!
What is that dirty white thing in the middle?
That is, if you look closely, an M on a background of burnt paper. We'll be using that M as a logo, I think, always nice to have some kind of symbol.
Any specific reason behind the rust-colored trees?
Actually, the cover is a photo, taken with ordinary color film, but developed in a completely wrong way (on purpose). I think it was quite cool. Since you probably have the promo version, I guess you haven't seen the other pages of the cover. There you can find more pictures developed in the same way.

What music do you listen to? I am always interested because many of my favorites don't follow the current metal scene as closely as one would think.
I listen to nearly all kinds of music, but some of my favorites are: Arcturus, Samael, Emperor, Darkthrone, Rainbow, Kiss, Seigmen, Monumentum, Bel Canto, Death, Faith No More. In addition to bands such as these, I'm very fond of classical music, especially the baroque era and some modern composers.

Is there a maddest mortem? What makes your band only a madder mortem?
Actually, "madder' is a color, a deep red which I find very beautiful. I think both the word and the meaning of it is good, as it can set your thoughts on to several different things. Also, red is a powerful color, with lots of symbolism and connections.

Well, this is your podium to speak to America. What do they need to know? We are very ignorant as to the ways of quality metal, so any wisdom you can share with us is helpful. Any final info about Madder Mortem concerning tours, new music, merchandise, etc., can be mentioned here.
Touring...oh, sweet dream. We'd really like to go on some sort of tour, but right now I know nothing about the future in that respect. We'll play wherever we can, as long as we can get there. As for merchandise: we've still got some copies of the *Misty Sleep* MCD for sale, contact address below. Anyone who has any questions or simply wants to get in touch, mail us or write us a letter.

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mad hatter mortem

CD REVIEWS

ACHERON
Those who have Risen
1998 Full Moon Productions
99 tracks – 73:40

I'm gonna have the balls to say it: **Acheron** fucking sucks! Despite whatever musical skills they've gained over the years, the fact is that they are endlessly boring. The days of cheesy satanic invocations are over and Floridian death metal had its pinnacle years ago. To expect someone to listen 50 minutes of generic death metal (there's a 20-minute gap between the last song and some evil backwards message) is an insult. Oh, I'd better mention the haunting keyboards or be called an unfair reviewer. I think it was unfair that I had to sit through this album more than once. ¾

ABSU
In the Eyes of Joldánach
1998 Osmose Productions
4 tracks – 17:34

Absu are one of the longest standing American black metal forces, having released their first demo back in 1991. Since then the three-piece have been blazing ahead with unconventional songs highlighted by amazing drummer Proscriptor (whose experimental side project of the same name totally sucks and if you ever see it should run to the hills, run for your life, dug-a-dung dug-a-dung...). Obvious **Slayer** and **Kreator** influences propel the frantic but tight songs like a chase through a crowded house, the only shortcomings being the thin production and distracting raspy vocals. Shut up and play!

Absu have not always been my favorite but this EP is plain evidence that they spend their time practicing hard and avoiding all the trends. Not a keyboard to be found here, and you know Proscriptor cares because he wears Easton gloves. I wore those to bat in baseball. I was pretty good for a while; even hit a grand slam once. My throwing arm suffered some damage when I slid into home headfirst to impress a pair of girls once, but that's another story. Oh well, at least I was safe...

ADVERSARY
We Must be in Hell
1999 Cursed Productions
4 tracks – 21:31

Featuring Ray Miller of *Metal Curse* zine and Jack Botos of *Portrait of Defiance* zine, **Adversary** are quite active members of the underground. Their band **Adversary** got a lot of praise for debut album *The Winter's Harvest* and are now shopping around this demo-CD. The album is reported to have had many keyboard parts but you'll find none of that here. Just old school underground death metal with a meatiness comparable to **Cianide** and some black metal riffing. There's doom and there's even a section reminiscent of **Katatonia** on "Suffering." The main aspect I don't like are Ray's growls. For some reason they irk me – they just don't fit and it's hard to explain why. The music would lose something if there were clean high vocals but for now he sounds a bit infantile. I don't know if the kiddies can handle how "pure" Adversary are because *We Must be in Hell* isn't about being pretty. The guitars and drums could use more depth but the sound itself is sick, though it takes some getting used to. A nice change of pace for sure. 1/3

AETERNUS
And So the Night Became
1999 Hammerheart Records
8 tracks – 63:42

I am a huge fan of this appropriately labeled Norwegian dark metal band's debut, *Beyond the Wandering Moon*. You can't call the music death metal, though the vocals are growled and the guitars are chunky and low, because of the subtle folk influences and epic feelings that are evoked. *Beyond* has grown on me in the year that I've had it – the only part of the album I don't like is the cover painting which looks like the guitarist's brother did it for his high school art class – and whenever I hear it I am instantly transported to an emotional, floating place. That album is a truly memorable experience.

Naturally **Aeternus** had an impossible task of topping such a gem but they returned well with an album that is far from disappointing. Their trademark thick guitar sound, basically unheard of coming from Norway, broods confidently amid another fine performance from the drummer while occasional keyboard and acoustic touches add flavor without pretension.

Beyond has grown favorably from the 4/5 rating I gave it in *Sloth* #4; perhaps *And So the Night Became* shall do the same.

AMORPHIS
Tuonela
1999 Relapse Records
10 tracks – 46:50

Okay, I finally get it! It took about thirty listens but I finally love *Tuonela*. This was so hard because I am a *Tales from the Thousand Lakes* addict, the last album from **Amorphis** with the real death metal roots. Of course it is the melody and folk influences that make it a classic, and enough of these elements and keyboard wizardry had me loving *Elegy* too. The biggest jump on *Elegy* was the hiring of a clean vocalist, but there were plenty of growls and many wonderful songs. *Tuonela* works much more subtly than songs like "Black Winter Day," "Forgotten Sunrise," "On Rich and Poor," and "Weeper on the Shore." The accessibility factor played a role in my battle to accept or reject, too, because the music is a far cry from the *Privilege of Evil* days. But I kept listening and listening to the album, not because I was forcing myself to like it but because I *wanted* to hear it, and finally it clicked.

Fans of *Elegy* will eat *Tuonela* up because it's a continuation of where they were going with that album and the *My Kantele* EP. The band's overall musical skill is unbeatable and enables them to do stuff most metal bands would never do. (I just wish the guitars were higher in the mix.) "Greed" even has some grooviness and death metal growls while Pasi's voice shines on opener "The Way." My favorite song is the emotional "Rusty Moon" with its lively flute work and **Skyclad** feel; it's the bonafide classic of the album.

Where Amorphis will go no one can predict but chances are whatever they release will win you over. Rack up another victory for Finland! ¼

ANASARCA
Godmachine
1998 Repulse America
11 tracks – 39:36

Repulse Records is having a revival of sorts after releasing a lot of crap, Germany's **Anasarca** being one of the bands ushering in a hopefully lengthy era of solid death metal. *Godmachine* is all about controlled but very upbeat music that is more note-than riff-based. The songs are fun and well done, but you can choose a track at random and probably be just as pleased with it as any other. Still these guys outdo so many American death metal bands it's a reflection of how in yet another genre of metal we suck. It's time Americans threw away their satellite dishes and learned to play heavy metal again.

A talented drummer who keeps a solid 1-2, 1-2 **Eucharist** surge gives a tight performance through the album, leading the fast guitars whose touches of *Bleeding*-era **Cannibal Corpse** are evident in their frantic fiddling delivery. Yet they never tread water or stumble over one another! This is by far one of the most consistent death metal albums on the market today.

ANATA
The Infernal Depths of Hatred
1999 Season of Mist
8 tracks – 42:16

They're touting **Anata** as a great combo of Swedish and US death metal, which was surprising considering the band's name, album title, and the blasphemous cover art of silhouetted monks invoking limp bodies to swirl in a threatening yellow sky. But no, black metal this is not, nor is it terrible death metal either. The album actually gets better towards the end, when Anata sound more like **Sacrilege** than the first songs that steal a little **Ablaze my Sorrow** and **Dissection** but primarily sound like **The Everdawn**. This means they resemble an **At the Gates** clone more than At the Gates themselves. This is an odd reflection of Swedish death metal today.

The first songs are also not good because they have no focus and are just full of riffs, growls, and screams for the hell of it. The later songs have just enough melody, catchiness, and flow to even make Anata worthy of a chance. There are still a lot of bands playing this better though. ¼

ANCIENT RITES
Fatherland
1998 Mascot Records
10 tracks – 46:01

What **Ancient Rites** have in musical skills goes to waste because they write silly songs. They would be awesome as either a straightforward power metal band or a melodic black metal band, but as they are currently trying to do both, *Fatherland* sounds like a joke. The first few songs work pretty well but after a while it's like hearing speed metal riffs with Udo and black metal vocals, and you get an empty feeling from the production. Folk elements and acoustic intros lead to further confusion – what the hell are they doing? Maybe there's hope for these schizophrenic metallers, but I won't be waiting around. ½

...AND HERE I LIE
Regrets
1998 – 9 tracks – 52:42

I can't believe how original sounding this band is! From Upstate New York come **...And Here I Lie**, a gothic doom metal band. What? The sick thing is how good their album is. *Regrets* is slow doom led by soulful, clean male vocals. However young the band may be they are far ahead of the game on the American musical front. You just don't hear native bands with this kind of vision or uniqueness very much. They get all my respect and anyone into slow, emotional doom should definitely pick this CD up. Damn!

$10 (US) / $12 (world) to:
Noah Yousey
3057 Clarkson-Parma T.L. Road
Brockport, NY 14420 USA

ANOTHER NOTHING
New Breed
1998 Chord Recordings
8 tracks – 35:30

Here's one for all you hardcore kiddies out there, but before you rush out and buy it, here's my take. The current trends in hardcore appear to be harsh, indecipherable screams that rival any black metal blasphemer, the use of discord and sounds over musicianship, and stagnant riffs that leave the drummer lost in a maze of cymbal crashes. What **Another Nothing** include to differentiate themselves are **Helmet** guitars and some **Jane's Addiction** clean vocals. Further, a few of the songs venture from common hardcore pastures.

The first song to do this is "Still the Same," which sounds more like a Jane's Addiction song because there's nothing hard or heavy about it. Next comes "Façade," a goddamn glorious gem! I'm talking fast and furious riffs a la speed metal as the vocalist decries the fake people within the scene. It's one of the most exciting songs I've heard in a while.

Here's what pisses me off about Another Nothing. First, the closer is ten minutes of nonmusical sounds, so you're really only getting 25 minutes of music for 13 bucks. Also, "Compassionless" is an okay song and the vocals shine sometimes, but the subject matter is so stupid and unoriginal that I can't listen to it. These guys are yet another voice within the hardcore scene moaning and groaning about how we should stop killing animals and how dare we be so cruel as to kill what we eat. Shut the fuck up! I am so sick of these say-everything, do-nothing pricks who act like they have some deep wisdom that is only gained by playing in a hardcore band. Fuck you! It makes me happy that I have a friend who doesn't like vegetables so he eats primarily meat, and though not out of spite he's still counteracting and subverting you with every passing meal. How does it feel? ¼

ANTHRAX
Volume 8 – The Threat is Real
1998 Ignition Records
15 tracks – 61:21

The past couple of years have been trying times for seminal band **Anthrax**; things having changed ever since that appearance on Headbanger's Ball on the set of "Married... with Children." Since then singer Joey Belladonna departed, John Bush stepped in, guitarist Danny Spitz exited, disputes with Elektra left the band without contract, and finally guitarist Scott Ian was out of control and ended up arrested while trespassing at the New York Yankees training facility. 1998 signaled an emotional comeback after the recent setbacks that included *Stomp 442* going virtually unnoticed to most Anthrax fans because Elektra barely promoted it. Signed to a new record label and filled with renewed energy, the quartet are very proud of their eighth album, aptly titled *Volume 8 – The Threat is Real*.

Realistically speaking from a metal fan's standpoint, forget Anthrax! The wild days of the '80s are over. Do you think

these men are capable of another *State of Euphoria* or *Among the Living*? Could you imagine them pulling off a convincing version of "I'm the Man?" Hell, no! So what does the new album offer? Decent hard rock, for sure, and a number of catchy bits are strewn throughout. But sometimes Bush sounds like an Eddie Vedder (**Pearl Jam**)/Steven Tyler (**Aerosmith**) hybrid and there are many **Pantera** riffs with **Life of Agony** production! This is most irking and confusing, and at 14 songs, the album is too much to stomach when one can barely make it through a half at a time as it putters out with increasingly average songs. Anthrax's musicianship never comes into question, but their relevance to metal certainly does. 🎸🎸🎸

APOPHIS
Heliopolis
1999 Morbid Records/Pavement Music
9 tracks – 48:15

It took a while but I finally got into **Apophis**. What did it for me? Well, I set *Heliopolis* aside and went onto other reviewing duties, poring through countless albums from other bands. Then when I threw on this one again the quality about smacked me in face saying, "Phil, you are so stupid!" It may be but at least I've seen the light. Apophis play addictive catchy death metal with the production a key to their success. The guitars are chunky but clear enough to give you a feel that there is an army of guitars plunging you into battle. I got the same feeling from *The Other Side* by **The Abyss**, though Apophis are not black metal. The vocalist ensures that, growling like David Vincent but not as distractingly. A sparing use of melody and leads fleshes out *Heliopolis*, leaving me one happy camper after the album's through. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¼

ARTROSIS
Hidden Dimension
1999 Hall of Sermon
10 tracks – 49:11

Hall of Sermon is a label that seems to specialize in groups with female lead vocalists, Poland's **Artrosis** one of its latest signings. Corralling influences ranging from classical to gothic to metal with Magdelena Dobosz's vocals at the forefront, the band create an album that's easy to enjoy while overly ambitiously experimental. The music is all professionally prepared and performed but some of the songs aren't memorable, hindered by the dreaded drum programming. Understanding this, we see the importance of Dobosz, both her voice and when she expands delivery beyond conventional restraints. She is the reason "Black and White Dreams," "Dance," and "Epitafium" make the listener stop what he's doing and take it all in. So while *Hidden Dimension* is a soothing and enjoyable album, it is hopefully only an early chapter in the history of a band with much ability. 🎸🎸🎸 ¾

ASGAROTH
Absence Spells Beyond
1999 Abstract Emotions
20 tracks – 70:34

Beware of Lord Lupus! Aha! I reviewed **Asgaroth**'s debut *The Quest for Eldenhor* a few issues ago, when they were young and hadn't completely shed all ties to Spain and adopted their current form as a symphonic Norwegain black metal band. That first CD is pretty silly looking back but I kept it for a while before realizing it just sat in my shelf for a reason – it was lame even if one of the members does call himself Lord Lupus. But the year is 1999 and Asgaroth are proudly waving the **Dismal Borgir of Emperor Filth**. Strong influenes from Dimmu Borgir's *Enthrone Darkness Triumphant* show in the upfront keyboards ("Sinking Trails of Wisdom"), Cradle of Filth vocals pop up when the band run out of musical ideas, and whenever the female vocals begin Dismal Euphony come to mind.

Absence Spells Beyond is a four-song EP with the added bonus of the unreleased full-length *Trapped in the Depths of Eve*. This latter batch shows the band a step behind where they are now, the newer tracks more focused and interesting, and within these some of the Emperor influence is evident. The production is crystal clear on all fronts, but *Trapped* is still pretty boring despite all the great flute sounds that pop up to accompany gerbil-like rasps. This is beyond my mere mortal's comprehension.

So *Absence Spells Beyond* is a decent example of as-accessible-as-you're-going-to-get black metal, and I think Abstract Emotions is selling it at the MCD (which is a misnomer, it is really a CD EP because the CD is physically the same as any other) price. 🎸🎸🎸 1/3

ASHES YOU LEAVE
The Passage Back to Life
1998 Morbid Records
7 tracks – 47:33

Surely many of you doom fans have felt alienated for a few years as **My Dying Bride**, **Cathedral**, and **Anathema** have strayed far from their roots. I think **Ashes You Leave** is just what you need to rekindle your faith in the genre. You've got the sludgy riffs, violin melodies, male vocals both sung and growled, and a decent amount of female vocals. Most of all, the songs are long and focused on creating atmospheres and moods. This concept has been lost on far too many bands in the past few years so it's no wonder critics worldwide have praised this young Croatian septet. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¼

AURA NOIR
Deep Tracts of Hell
1999 Hammerheart Records
10 tracks – 37:14

Obviously influenced by **Slayer** and other seminal bands of the early '80s with a dirty guitar sound part beehive and part **Malevolent Creation**'s *The Ten Commandments*' "Sacrificial Annihilation"(?), **Aura Noir** don't look to paint a pretty picture. Some bands can truly pull off this style, usually the ones who invented it years ago, but these guys can't. "Blood Unity" has a catchy, primitive riff to it, but '80s metal like **Celtic Frost** and **Venom** are a definite, pervading influence, and since neither of these bands are what I like (just ask Raul at Dwell Records and he'll give you a earful about me!), I find *Deep Tracts of Hell* an impossible listen.

Not to say this isn't overwhelming aggressiveness in the primitive black metal vein, for it is crazy, but it's not memorable at all. I find myself nitpicking to find something good here or there, but is that my job? Isn't songwriting the band's process of weeding out the nonsense? These days nothing is obvious and that's why you read zines to ward you away from Aura Noir. 🎸🎸

AURORA
Sadiam
1999 Serious Entertainment
4 tracks – 17:55

Even though this CD is only 4 songs I had to interview **Aurora**, so you know they are good. Imagine **Dark Tranquility** when they played technical lead-note melodies (instead of the same old Swedish nonsense they're doing now, so think *Skydancer* and *The Gallery*) and an impassioned Tomas from **At the Gates**, held together by a fine, active drummer. That's why I'm so psyched about *Sadiam* because it's been injected with the large dose of emotion that most bands don't have. The tragic middle passage of "To Hell" is an example of Aurora's strength: the singer moans over a smooth bass lick and in comes a haunting guitar line that holds you. Awesome! The final element that makes Aurora so appealing their stripped-down style; even though the guitarist and drummer are very busy, you never feel overwhelmed by or lost in the music. See the title track for proof. I'm sure the band's next full-length will only be another mighty step in this direction and I cannot wait! 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¾

AURORA BOREALIS
Praise the Archaic Lights Embrace
1998 – 9 tracks – 38:09

This guy Ron has been the brain behind **Aurora Borealis** for a few years and I hear that he is finally finding some permanent members to play with. *Praise the Archaic Lights Embrace* is his fist full-length CD after the highly praised *Mansions of Eternity* CD EP, and anyone familiar with his old school combination of thrash, black, and death metal will be pleased. He's stayed true to his guns with the raspy vocals, early '90s Florida death metal drumming, and '80s thrash guitar influences. The black metal influences are felt throughout the album. I'm not big on the totally straightforward approach of these styles anymore, so it's hard to get into it, but there's no denying Ron's paid his dues and has come out with a tight and professional piece of brutal metal. 🎸🎸🎸 1/3

$12 (US) / $14 (world) to:
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AVULSED
Cybergore
1998 Repulse Records
10 tracks + CD-ROM – 49:10

I find it hilarious that a + b = c! Maybe we need a definition of terms.

a: **Avulsed**'s brand of generic death metal has been stagnant for years.

b: Avulsed remixed *Eminence in Putrescence* with Techno.

c: It's their best work yet!

All of a sudden the rehashed riffs and cloudy growls are given life by rearrangement with electronic beats. **Malevolent Creation** did this with three tracks from *Eternal* on *Joe Black* with better results, but someone else did the remixes for them, unlike Avulsed. They undertook this project themselves in a "self-financed experiment (with the help of Repulse Records)". Hello? Dave Rotten, vocalist, you are Repulse Records! Remember, you started the label because no one would sign your band?

So with this in mind, perhaps Avulsed have turned over a new leaf, though the latest newsletter reports they will travel to Sweden to record the new album. Great, boring death metal with the same production as everyone else. Sign me up!

Oh yeah, I forgot that I'm actually praising Avulsed in this review. This CD is pretty cool because you hear simple riffs that aren't so bad in this environment intertwined with all kinds of beats and sounds. And everything for the most part is surprisingly catchy. Strange. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

BABYLON WHORES
Deggael
1998 Misanthropy Records
6 tracks + CD-ROM – 20:58

The last song has this line, "I want to be high as the suns that shine / All the time," and though mountains are also mentioned later, judging by the looks of these dudes (this guy Jake has fluorescent green hair like lettuce) and their lame gothic rock, I'd say they're stoners. And it got me thinking about all the benefits of doing drugs. There was this girl I went to high school with, a totally beautiful blond who was probably on track to be in the running for valedictorian, and in 10th or 11th grade she started doing drugs. She changed her looks and attitude into this freaky Woodstock beatnik and walked around with that super-important air that hippies do for some reason – though I don't think she was even crusading for trees or animals. Probably not since she worked for an ice cream shop, and one Saturday night during senior year I was out with a couple guys I knew and they wanted to see her there. She was just about to go on break so we went to the back alley, full of old boxes and spilled trash, and I sat there watching them all smoke the little marijuana they'd spared. I could not believe that this is what people do with their lives: fucking sit around and space out and talk about total drivel for hours on end. The last I heard this girl was off working in an Alaskan fishery, reaping the benefits of her high school diploma.

And as for **Babylon Whores**, I have never been as bored by pop-goth music than this. These guys sound so lame! I can't imagine having to sit through a full album of this nonsense – imagine a goth band trying to write radio hits but of course failing miserably. 🎸 ½

BESEECH
From a Bleeding Heart
1998 Metal Blade Records
10 tracks – 43:58

A couple things about Sweden's **Beseech**. I'll admit they're kind of cool, this whole dressing up for the imagery thing, but these guys just look gay! Too much fluff with the frilly collars and poofed-out sleeves. They look more ready to indulge in a sparsely attended Renaissance festival than to rock out. Therefore I say with reservations I approve of *From a Bleeding Heart* because as appealing and soothing the music is, it feels contrived. I don't feel that the band's heart and soul were put into crafting the songs. You've got your clean male and female ballads on "The Winterflame" and one minus the girl

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with "Inhuman Desire," plus some *Amok*-era **Sentenced** on "In Her Arms" and throughout the disc, but it's not heavy. I'd call Beseech easy listening for metal-heads. So yeah, the album is cool and I'll keep it around, but it is so slow and not heavy that I wonder why they even plugged into an amp. I'd be much happier if they played acoustically; their girly getups would be more appropriate then, too. 🔊🔊🔊 ¾

BETWEEN THE FROST
Instinct of Surliness
1998 Abstract Emotions
9 tracks – 48:17

You could call **Between the Frost**'s black metal attack fierce and raw and evil and sure to break the will of Christ. But the songs are too long and full of not-so-dramatic breaks ushering in yet another riff of mindless fiddling; laughable background screams a la **Cradle of Filth**, and when each song ends you just sit there unaffected. The guitarists are average but have no sense of composition, as evidenced by their haphazard combination of riffs and the startling resemblance from song to song. Drummer Asier is plain awful and thankfully is left low in the mix. I'm not sure there even is a bass player here.

Picking through the mess that is *Instinct of Surliness* – goddamn that is an *evil* title – one could generously point out that the guitarists are trying very hard to do something brutal, black, and melodic all at the same time. Right now it is a jumbled mess further weakened by the drummer and Roman's vocals, so maybe in a couple of albums they'll have settled down and written some real songs. For now the only evil thing about Between the Frost is the album cover: a goat with bloody horns stands atop a hill overlooking a burning and bleeding crucified Jesus. Sick! 🔊🔊

BIOHAZARD
New World Disorder
1999 Mercury Records
13 tracks – 48:53

Oh yeah! **Biohazard** is back. I don't mean they just have a new record, I mean they're in full effect. These chaps are starting to show experience. The most noticeable aspect of this CD is the professional feel. The music is well versed and ha a seasoned flavor. They seem to have gone back to their raw roots. The quite perfect "Switchback" will surely become a hardcore classic. Basically, the riffs on this album are very simple, clear, and hard. The whole sound is right from the streets. It's a soundtrack for Brooklyn. Basically, if you're not stomping your swinging to this. The emotion comes across in full force. This is a very pleasant change from "Mata Leao", which in my opinion was missing something. This record has a very complete feel. The basslines are pronounced, and add a sweet rumble to the already molasses-thick guitar work. It makes me want to shave my head and tattoo it! A great group just became legendary. I think this release officially put them in my great bands of all time list. 🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊 (Jaun Suarez)

BLIND GUARDIAN
Nightfall in Middle-Earth
1999 Century Media
22 tracks – 65:42

This is such a hard review to write. How can I convince you to unquestioningly go buy this album? You see, **Blind Guardian** are so good that they changed how I viewed power metal. I always got the feeling of cheese left over from the '80s that didn't seem to fit in the music, as if it weren't totally serious. And this frustrated me because I still love to hear guitarists rip out solos; most death metal bands don't do this so I've been trapped for some time. Thanks to *Nightfall in Middle Earth* my yearnings are no more!

I am writing this review right before deadline time and my needless to say my passion for review-writing is dwindling again, but I must forge on and convey the glory that is Blind Guardian. So much passion, care, and invention went into the ten songs here that beyond the brilliant musicianship lies a beautiful creating soul. I raise my fist in triumph with every chorus and play air-guitar with every solo. And about these solos: every time I hear **Judas Priest**'s *Painkiller* I quit playing guitar out of frustration, and now I can add *Nightfall* to the list. I suck, noise-soloing death metal bands should be ashamed, and you ought to buy this album!

Blind Guardian are bonafide gods in their German homeland, Europe, and Japan. Only in America are we too retarded to even have their stuff available for under 20 bucks (though Century Media is soon to change that with some re-releases). The last times I got as excited about an album as a pinnacle for its genre were *Eternal Death* by **Crown of Thorns** for death metal and *Dictus te Necare* by **Bethlehem** for black metal. *Nightfall* goes beyond the standard power metal limitations, incorporating folk and vocal choirs a la **Queen**. Blind Guardian are the Queen of power metal and with no STDs to boot.

"Nightfall" has exceptional leads and a soul-piercing chorus that will make even the most painted of black metallers shed a tear. "Mirror Mirror" continues in the mighty tradition of guitar and vocal prowess, also showcasing Blind Guardian's driving power metal rhythm background. The solo in this one just throbs with fervor and joy. It, like the whole album, makes me happy to be alive! "The Eldar" is the only ballad and it kicked my ass quite hard. I could talk about all of the songs but I'll only mention one more, "A Dark Passage," for it closes the album and embodies all of Blind Guardian's glory. It is performed in the key non-repetitive but memorable style, replete with vocal harmonies and guitar wizardry played with class. The lead dual-axe harmonization rises into a passionate crescendo and after that, forget it, you're in tears. Blind Guardian represent all that is good about metal and life. Go buy the album – it will change you. 🔊🔊🔊🔊🔊

BLOOD RITUAL
At the Mountains of Madness
1998 Moribund Records
8 tracks – 42:31

I ripped this band's demo apart three issues ago and will be a bit kinder this time. **Blood Ritual** still play unholy blackened death metal, but now they don't suck as bad at it. The first few songs actually have good riffs where everyone is in-sync, but I got tired of the generic brutality quickly. Blood Ritual are a prime example of what I think is wrong with so many bands and why they're going nowhere. They focus way too much on the vocals. A catchy riff is so much more important to hear than a guy growl on and on about Satan and rebirth or whatever. It's just not cool – it's damn boring!

So in four years Blood Ritual have slightly improved from garbage to barely tolerable, rehashed death metal. Maybe in 2002 I'll make it through their whole album and enjoy myself. 🔊🔊

BLOOD STAINED HOST
Individual Theatre
1998 The Twelfth Planet Records
8 tracks – 47:25

It would be irresponsible of me to recommend music as unfocused as this. One minute you've got an attempt at **Moonspell**, the next some groovy riff, a little **Fear Factory** and **Mindrot**, and finally an all-but sweeping black metal movement. And while I don't think only Scandinavians should play black metal, this band shows an utter lack of soul for and comprehension of the style. And good God, "Self Isolation" is such an example of scatterbrained composition...ugh! To imagine this picture, combine clean **Fear Factory** vocals, a lost keyboardist, a jazz bassist whose input only distracts from any flow, average guitarists who would've played thrash in the eighties or death in the early nineties and of course are influenced by black metal today. Maybe this empty-sounding sextet is trying to be overly progressive, but no matter what the case I would be upset if I bought this. 🔊🔊

BOLT THROWER
Mercenary
1998 Metal Blade Records
9 tracks – 46:45

The first song I ever heard by **Bolt Thrower** was "Where Next to Conquer" from the *The Ivth Crusade*. The way the guitars rumbled and Karl Willets roared as the drums pounded in the background changed the way I looked at heavy metal. That was war! I had these mix tapes from an underground radio station and I used to rewind that song over and over and play it at a deafening level. Since then I've owned *Realm of Chaos*, *Warmaster*, *The Ivth Crusade*, and *...For Victory*. *Realm* didn't impress me, *Warmaster* is a classic slab of Bolt Thrower destruction, *Crusade* wasn't all I expected, and *Victory* was a polished and at times very memorable album – the title track by far one of the band's best songs ever.

Bolt Thrower have built their reputation on playing formulated death metal: a low riff complemented by a higher melody while Willets barks. That is how almost every song has gone, and until recently this approach has been successful. But what makes *Mercenary* such a distasteful listen is that all the brutality, rage, and war that made listening to Bolt Thrower a frightening and powerful experience are gone. They've gotten lazy! All the songs are restrained because the quintet has become comfortable with each one's level of musicianship, afraid to push the limits and experiment. And nowadays reviewers are making excuses for the giants like Bolt Thrower, **Deicide**, and **Obituary** who have stagnated, giving them a pass because of past glories and saying, "Any fan of classic death metal will enjoy this album." Forget that pussy shit! You are not going to be happy spending fifteen dollars on *Mercenary* and there are simply too many exciting new bands reviewed in these pages for me to give the impression that Bolt Thrower is just as worthy a purchase as **Sad Legend** or **Garden of Shadows**. 🔊 ¾

BORKNAGAR
The Archaic Course
1998 Century Media
8 tracks – 37:48

In the span of just three albums **Borknagar** have managed *not* to break up and in the process evolve into a creative groundbreaker within the confines of black metal, which has culminated in *The Archaic Course*, a brilliant album of genre-defying magnitude. Led by guitarist Oystein G. Brun of **Molested** infamy (see interview for all the info) and newly acquired vocalist I.C.S. Vortex – or Simen from *The Masquerade Infernale* by **Arcturus** – the band have tied up all the loose ends from hit-and-miss but full-of-potential *The Olden Domain*. The results are addictive to say the least!

The guitar sound is more appropriate for the floating passages, folk melodies, and discordant chords, meaning that Borknagar are straying far from the black metal roots on their self-titled debut. I.C.S. replaces Garm's rasps and low-end



yodeling with occasional rasps but more importantly a clear and inventive mid-range voice that is original but not too far of a stretch for fans of the older material.

Borknagar's lyrics are also refreshing as they ignore trends and paint positive, majestic pictures of the glories of nature without preaching or sounding cheesy. "Universal" is the best song on this classic album, with I.C.S. performing the following lines incredibly and in increasing intensity: "I can smell the air / I can taste the soil / I can tame all fire / I am the spine of the reversal of nature / The blinding forces of complete defeat."

The Archaic Course is the cure for any metal fan who feels the scene is dying from stagnation. Borknagar is a most exciting Norwegian band defying all the trends and forging its own path which is anything but well-worn. 🎸🎸🎸🎸🎸

BURN IT DOWN
Eat Sleep Mate Defend
1999 Escape Artist Records
7 tracks – 14:22

Wow, a hardcore band with understandable vocals. It would be even more daring if the guy said something original other than, "Kill their idols...I refuse...Rise up." And judging by the music, **Burn it Down** appear to believe they can get away with totally unoriginal mosh riffs behind the intended-to-be-profound (but also borrowed) vocal exclamations. Sometimes this CD is okay, but come on, 15 minutes!? I guess they ran out of shocking new ideas of how we can liberate our minds and unshackle ourselves from the oppression of (insert ominous manmade force here.) 🎸🎸 ¾

CALLENISH CIRCLE
Escape
1998 Polar Bear Records
4 tracks – 21:33

Here's a nice band from the Netherlands that doesn't confine itself to one style while not trying to be the all-encompassing metal expert. Solid musicianship takes **Callenish Circle** though three songs and a thankfully short nothing piece of what a mountain lake sounds like at night, or something like that. But the meat of the band lies in their light melodies, chunky upbeat riffs, and a vocalist who growls deeply but crisply. The production is professional and I even hear some **Anathema** in the band's doomy moments. Callenish Circle are worth checking out and a new album will be out in May, though not on Polar Bear. 🎸🎸🎸🎸

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CARNAL FORGE vs. THE HAUNTED
Who's Gonna Burn vs. The Haunted
1999 WAR Music vs. 1998 Earache
10 tracks – 29:09 vs. 12 tracks – 41:03

This is becoming a *Sloth* tradition of sorts, pitting bands with multiple similarities against one another for a battle of comparisons. Both quintets are Swedish (though **The Haunted**'s vocalist Peter Dolving has herded himself to new pastures), have been praised by *Terrorizer* magazine, and The Haunted has bassist Jonas Bjorler while **Carnal Forge** has vocalist Jonas Kjellgren.

But here the similarities end, because while Carnal Forge "go back to square one...back to basic brutality," The Haunted "bring back the fun into metal – alongside the obvious brutality." Carnal Forge "add a taste of true hardcore attitude" but The Haunted have "hardcore vocals," further for Carnal Forge "it's time to *burn down* the weak shit" while The Haunted are "like a diamond in shit."

Now that you know this info, we can proceed with the review! The Haunted rose from the ashes of scene-reviving-but-multiple-clone-engendering **At the Gates**, and now specialize in bringing thrash back to life over melodic death metal. They do a great job and ATG fans of old will surely find something to love on an album that shows the bands **Slayer**, **Pantera**, and **Exodus** that they have strayed far from the path of excellence and it's not as if the fans have failed them. The Haunted are a band that rise to the listener's expectations rather than change looks, smoke tons of marijuana, break up and have a pitiful reunion, or put out punk covers. Dolving's vocals are a high, angry, fairly intelligible yell that fits well within the band's modern thrash assault that is firmly rooted in the '90s.

Carnal Forge are a lot more fierce, aggressive, angry, and underground than The Haunted. Kjellgren's vocals are that much more extreme and hate-filled, the riffs more punishing than they are catchy. I see *Who's Gonna Burn* as **Machine Head** taken to the next level, along with **Meshuggah** and the usual thrash and Swedish influences that warranted this battle review.

The only weak link is drummer Stefan Westerberg, and just in the super fast parts. It's one of his toms, or possibly a very dry snare, but that is all I hear! Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap! Thank the influences of thrash to slow the band down during each song just a little bit so that Westerberg can get a hold of himself and crank out some tight beats utilizing his double bass drums and cymbals.

This was a great competition! The Haunted squeeze out a close victory based on their members' experience, but Carnal Forge is definitely more abrasive and brutal. Or, *The Haunted* "is the album metal-heads everywhere have been waiting for...so listen," but "this is only the beginning of the Carnal Forge attack...there is so much more to come." Carnal Forge: 🎸🎸🎸🎸 The Haunted: 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ½

CENITEX
Reborn through Flames
1998 Repulse Records
8 tracks – 40:18

Not to be mistaken with the Mexican band of the same name, this **Cenitex** is Swedish and plays middle age **Hypocrisy** death metal with vocals ranging from **Dismember** to standard early '90s growls. Of the four members, not one plays drums so we must deal with artificial drums, and though they are programmed well they just sound fake as always. That irks me! Because Cenitex have been at it since 1990 and this is their fourth album proudly playing the same style of Swedish death since the beginning, you can be sure the guitarists are able and neither is sloppy. There are a number of great riffs out of Hypocrisy's *Inferior Devotees* days as well as some unique harmonies that are heavy at the same time.

You've got some old **Entombed** in there at times, which could also mean old Dismember, but Cenitex don't sound that unoriginal. Their problem is that they're not exciting enough to warrant repeated listens. Halfway through and I'm tanked out, man! So it's cool that these are some of the original guys and all, but I'd much rather spend my money on another band that can hold my attention time and again. 🎸🎸🎸 ½

CENTURIAN
Of Purest Hate
1998 Full Moon Productions
8 tracks – 26:34

They used to be **Inquisitor**, a harsh band I heard once on the first *Sometimes Death is Better* compilation that had a unique sound. I remember the raspy vocals were especially unique. Now **Centurian** (sic), they play immeasurably fast and completely forgettable death metal full of blast beats and anti-Christian growling. It would take a label as lame as Full Moon to sign this band. They also got offers from JL America but that company went out of business. (If any of you remember JL I would love to hear from you!) 🎸

CHARON
Sorrowburn
1998 Diehard Music
10 tracks – 45:54

The more I listen to this album a) the more I see that I have no business liking it, and b) the more I like it. But maybe I should since **Sentenced**'s *Amok* is one of my favorites and Diehard Music has brought us surprising bands like **Dominus** and **POV Secondhand**. **Charon** are on the surface an accessible band but the vocalist sings (sometimes like James Hetfield and Peter Steele) just as much as he yells/growls, and for any gothic influence, there is twice as much metal and rock. What sold me were the catchy vocal lines (I sing along to them quite embarrassingly) and lead guitar lines.

"Burndown" opens *Sorrowburn* simply with acoustics and awesome low vocals, probably one of the best "intros" I've heard. "To Serve You" and "Nightwing" are the album's best and appear in the middle, both with which I sing unsuccessfully, worse on "Nightwing." The next song is "Neverbirth" and it's too cheesy for me, but "Keimos" follows it and sounds a lot like *Amok*. It's grrreat!

Overall I was totally impressed with Charon – obviously because I interviewed them – and can only hope they harness the good while weeding out the bad, but never relinquish their metal roots. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 1/3

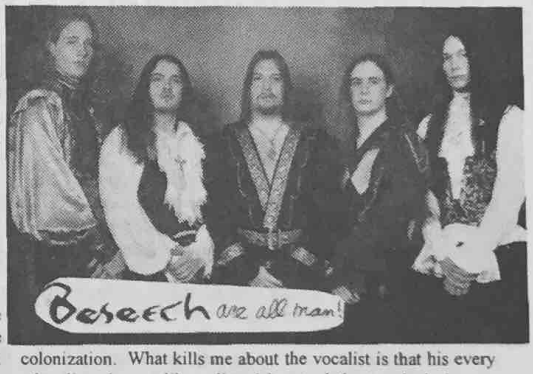
CHRIST AGONY
Trilogy
1998 Pagan Records
11 tracks – 52:56

Pagan Records has a reputation for releasing the worst metal albums. I think the only one I've genuinely liked is **Trauma**, reviewed below. **Christ Agony** feature this guy Caesar who has an embarrassingly thick neck and has supposedly been a great influence in the Polish metal scene. That itself should be the biggest joke, but no! Pagan Records writes on the bio sheet that this band is black metal, which is a blatant lie, and they also say Christ Agony have reached cult status, which means the band have been around for a long time and put out many records but still failed to gain any respect in the underground because their music sucks.

Trilogy is terrible for a number of reasons. The first is the drum programming – it always sounds fake and mechanical and is therefore distracting. Then you have all these slow songs of simple death metal riffs that try to create some atmosphere. Imagine **Malevolent Creation** mixed with **Mindrot** and **Fear Factory**. You will be bored to tears! If I paid $15 for an album this pathetic I would be filled with that brooding, burning anger that doesn't go away even after you've broken something else you spent good money on. I hope America puts a trade embargo on Pagan Records. 🎸

CLAWFINGER
Self-titled
1999 The Music Cartel
12 tracks – 43:30

I must be completely out of touch. Maybe *Sloth* needs to just call it a day because **Clawfinger** have sold over a million records worldwide and I can't stop laughing at how stupid the lyrics are. Clawfinger are a crossover group incorporating metal and rock riffs with rapped vocals. Remember that these guys are from Sweden and we all know how poorly foreigners act like Americans – a sore product of this country's ongoing cultural



colonization. What kills me about the vocalist is that his every other line rhymes like a limerick. And the trendy lyrics are equally stupid, ranging from "hold your head up" pride nonsense to the stale my-friend-committed-suicide-and-this-song-is-out-to-him-and-all-the-kids-who-are-sad. I can hear the singer whining in an interview: "Well, we just hope that maybe this song will help some kid out there who's having a hard time, get him to reconsider ending it all, you know." Shut up! I've got to stop this review or I will get too mad, so to conclude here are some choice lyrics from "Biggest & the Best":

Nobody is perfect but I'm pretty fucking close / and I'm here to give you a heavenly dose / I think you better listen 'cos I know who you are / and I think that you should treat me like a superstar /...I couldn't care less about what you achieve / and there's only one thing that you have to believe / the only important thing that you have to understand / is that no matter what you say it's still a god I really am...

If some aspiring rapper brought these lyrics to his friends they'd laugh him out of the room and probably give him the beating he deserves. Clawfinger represent all that is trendy, ignorant, and how easily swayed the majority of people are. Now you must ask yourself, "Am I one of them?" 🎸🎸

COMPRESSION
Self-titled
1998 Chord Recordings
20 tracks – 51:30

I've been following this Baltimore group for a couple years now and after a number of ups and downs **Compression** finally have a label and an album. The music they play isn't what you normally read about in *Sloth* but what the hell. There's hardcore, hard rock, and '90s metal sounds. But there's a dark atmosphere inside of it all that makes this more than the usual accessible metal you hear. The band have gotten slower than before and I can't handle fifty minutes of them at once, but they're not bad for the style. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

CONQUEST
Rage – 1998
10 tracks – 34:37

Have you ever been to a show where a local band opens, and

they try to promote CDs for sale at the stand, and you wonder, "Who buys those CDs?" Nobody does! They send them to me! And so here I have **Conquest**'s disc. It looks like an amateur release, so I figured it might be something new. The album can be summed up quickly. Good drummer, ugly Al Jorgensen style vocals. The guitar riffs are like the ones I used to write when I first started playing guitar. It's simpleton stuff. These guys might be able to rock a sixth grade heavy metal birthday party at best. 🎸

Write for info to:
6054 Odell St.
St. Louis, MO 63139 USA

CONSOLATION
Stahlplaat
1998 Displeased Records
14 tracks – 42:55

This being the third **Consolation** album and their reputation one that has grown over the years, *Stahplaat* is naturally their most musically proficient and diverse to date. The extreme grindcore is unashamedly there, no doubt, but accompanied by old **Dominus** and **Hypocrisy** brutality; some tasty rock 'n roll elements; actual clean vocals (a la John Bush of **Anthrax**) on "Camel Song"; and black metal on the "Hellwalker" trilogy. I have a hard time getting all-out excited over Consolation because the guitar sound is crisp and tightly processed (think **Fear Factory**'s *Remanufacture*) while Arjan's inhumanly guttural growls echo and reverberate (think an exaggerated **Gorefest**'s *False*), creating an annoying imbalance. Therefore we must check the scales before buying. These guys are just as sick but much tighter than the average American grindcore machine; many of you will love the vocals; and there's both diversity and catchiness. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

CRACK UP
Heads will Roll
1999 Nuclear Blast
14 tracks – 53:59

Crack Up are known for their groovy death metal but I was unimpressed with their sophomore *From the Ground* album. The idea of playing this style was cool but they were too lethargic to pull it off, which annoyed me especially because I saw connections to the mighty **Gorefest**'s *Mindloss* and *False* albums. Back for more, Crack Up have injected themselves with a dose of **Blood Duster** that has livened them up more than expected. Now the groovy death metal actually packs some punch but alas, the album is too long and some of the later songs sound like radio rock disguised by distorted guitars and growls. *Heads will Roll* is better and not as boring, but still not exciting enough for the discerning metal fan. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

CREATIVE PAIN
Scarred
1998 Conquest Music Group
8 tracks – 33:25

This is the antithesis of hardcore. **Creative Pain** are part of this new breed of Florida hardcore which mixes thrash, Latin influences, and rehashed pit riffs, not to mention stupid lyrics about pride and unity and other stereotypical nonsense. When was the last time any of these people had an original thought? I'd like to see a hardcore band advocating meat eating or Satan or governmental oppression. The band photo has these dudes posed with their crew cuts and goatees standing in front of "unity" sprayed on an American flag. Quick, go buy their CD!

I'll get off the soapbox momentarily to dissect *Scarred*, which obviously is the product of years studying the classics. Yeah, right. You've got old **Suicidal Tendencies**, *Vulgar Display of Power*-era **Pantera** machismo, and barking-dog choruses performed in a slow, monotone tempo that proves Creative Pain is not only musically incapable but utterly *un*creative. If you really enjoy hearing old riffs played by a lesser group trying to be the **Biohazard** of South Florida, welcome to *Scarred*. I live in Miami and the music scene sucks because all people listen to is booty and *Romanticas, uno-cero-seis-punto-siete* Spanish radio, but I would still prefer the status quo over Creative Pain succeeding. 🎸🎸

CREMATORY
Act Seven
1999 Nuclear Blast
10 tracks – 49:37

They've been at it for a long time now, Germany's **Crematory**. And they have honed that symphonic metal well, so I found it surprising they've kept the growled vocals this long. A hefty dose of easy male singing did make their way onto *Act Seven* but I wonder if the band, now leaning toward more accessible compositions, might benefit from scrapping the death vocals, not for the sake of sales, but for the songs. That's my take. 🎸🎸🎸 2/3

CRIMINAL
Dead Soul
1999 Metal Blade Records
12 tracks – 40:03

Well, the **Sepultura** revival is in full effect! I guess since Sepultura no longer kicks around brutal speed metal, **Criminal** felt obligated to fill the position. Oddly enough, it's tasteful. I enjoyed the thrashy drums that supported some speedy quick guitar riffs. Plus, the bass player has the same name as me! It's been a while since guys who can play have come around. They're a South American outfit that has been together for about 6 years now. They claim influences from **At the Gates** and **Dismember**, and it comes through. The songs work well, and are in a pretty traditional format, complete with mindless noisy guitar solos. A nice mix of polka, half tempo and double bass beats combine to provide a nice rhythmic variety. The guitars provide a nice thick aural point, and the project comes together. Very well done! 🎸🎸🎸🎸 (Jaun Suarez)

THE CROWN
Hell is Here
1999 Metal Blade Records
11 tracks – 47:11

Formerly **Crown of Thorns** until a financially backed Christian group of the same name filed suit and the band just decided to officially use their nickname, **The Crown**. *Sloth* interviewed guitarist Marko Tervonen in issue #4 after we were floored by sophomore effort *Eternal Death*, a hateful death metal album highlighted by puncturing riffs, technical solos, **Metallica** and other '80s influences, impassioned wails, and ungodly drumming. Marko told us the new material was sounding shorter and more energetic, more like "Kill (The Priest" than the other songs on *Eternal Death*.

Come 1999 The Crown leapt from promising upstart label Black Sun to tested Metal Blade and now *Hell is Here* is here. So what's the verdict? The first few listens were tough, especially for such a big fan of the band's refined, technical style. "The Poison" opened up seemingly out of control, with Johan Lindstrand's vocals sounding rougher, the guitars lower in the mix, and drummer Janne Saarenpää sounding live. But in an era of metal when every band is focusing on extreme musicianship and polished performances, The Crown have not forgotten that metal was forged by raw energy and emotion with a wild live setting in mind. Classic '80s-style riffs kick in songs like "Electric Night" and crazy real drums (which Marko stressed give a "dynamic feeling") fill some of the lack the guitars may have left. But if there is one big problem here it's the production – the guitars must be bigger!

"Give You Hell" will surely satisfy fans of *Eternal Death* with its extended vocal notes and addictive chorus. One of the most entertaining tracks is "1999 – Revolution 666" and you'll be hearing the title chanted in your head for hours. Being so raw and unbridled, *Hell is Here* works especially because all members have been playing together for years and have solid backgrounds with their respective instruments. Pray for a US tour, for seeing The Crown live would be a devastating experience. Verdict: Not nearly as good as *Eternal Death*, but what is? That is one of my favorite albums ever. *Hell is Here* is a recommended purchase for fans of ferocious, musically grounded death metal with '80s roots. I was hoping for something else though. 🎸🎸🎸 ¾

DAEMON
The Second Coming
1999 Diehard Music
9 tracks – 31:41

Daemon are Danish death metal mongers playing particularly in the style of older Swedish sounds a la *Left Hand Path* **Entombed**. Led by Anders Lundemark, king of **Konkhra** – I don't care what they say, *Weed out the Weak* was a failure compared to the classic *Spit or Swallow* – these boys bounce through nine raucous romps of simplistic but catchy death fueled by less structured mentality. I was not too impressed by the unoriginal goals of Daemon but I came around after a few listens because of the catchy riffs and commendable execution. "The Prince of Lies" made me extra excited because it sounds like **Darkified**, an intense but long-dead Swedish death band whose sole demo and EP were released by Repulse in 1994 and titled *A Dance on the Grave*.

Problems arise when they slow down the upbeat rhythms in favor of something groovy because Anders sings stupidly and the songs aren't too memorable as a whole. "My Kingdom is a Sacred Place" and "Make Me Bleed" come to mind. And as the album progresses it loses it charm due to groovy **Pantera** riffs and boring vocals, so you've got a few nice old school ditties at the beginning but not enough to sustain the whole album, which is not a good sign when it clocks in at just over thirty minutes. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

DAEMONARCH
Hermeticum
1998 Century Media
9 tracks – 44:51

They say that **Moonspell** are putting this album out because vocalist Langsuyar had all these great poems he wrote when he was fifteen and that they had old black metal songs they wanted to play. In reality, **Daemonarch** is sort of an apology to all the fans who have watched Moonspell abandon metal and pander to the, someone save us, goth kids. Look, there's Langsuyar, guitarist Ricardo, and synth man Pedro waving at us, "Sorry! We were very poor and we needed the money."

Exploring *Hermeticum* one notices that the music does hark back the *Wolfheart* days, and what a brilliant album that is, but its charm and memorable qualities are sorely lacking. It's as if the guitarist is afraid to take the stage from Langsuyar, whose *brilliant* poetry is incomprehensible. I think that he missed screaming so much that he went buck wild in the studio without any concern for standout vocal patterns.

Not to say the album's all bad. It's great to hear Moonspell sounding like they used to, though there is a strong **Samael** influence and that guitar sound that a lot of Century Media bands have these days. The drum programming is annoying too, as always (Samael's *Passage* the lone exception). I've listed a lot of criticisms so far which is probably because this album could have been so much, and is a pretty sick listen, but Moonspell's old black metal feelings just aren't there. It's not that heavy and falls apart at the end, "The Seventh Daemonarch" excluded since it truly recaptures that *Wolfheart* atmosphere.

So, Daemonarch are cool but just don't live up to the hype. Smile, at least you have *Wolfheart* and *Irreligious* (possibly even *Under the Moonspell*) on your shelf; I hope by now your copy of *Sin – Pecado* rests with some *Crow*-loving freak. 🎸🎸🎸 1/3

DAN SWANÖ
Moontower
1998 Black Mark
8 tracks – 43:46

Dan Swanö is God. There is no need for an exclamation point – this is just a fact. He is a musical genius and is involved with countless projects. He is the Swedish scene as far as I'm concerned. From his immortal albums in core group **Edge of Sanity** to the mind-blowing originality of side project **Pan-Thy-Monium** to his latest masterpiece, *Moontower*, Swanö has made an indelible mark on the underground scene. At last check I have at least ten albums on which he is an active member, not even counting all the great ones he produced at his Unisound studio. Hell, I even have that old **Darkified** Repulse re-release from 1995. The scariest thing about all of this is that Dan is only 25. Imagine how much awesome music is yet to come from him...

Okay, you want to know what this *Moontower* album is all about. Dan is no longer in **Edge of Sanity** and he is involved in a couple of other projects, but this is a solo album where he did everything. It was at first intended to be death metal but only when he injected an overdose of '70s prog did he find himself satisfied. And you won't believe how awesome it is hearing these huge keyboards alongside Dan's familiar growl. I think his voice should be required household knowledge so it was a great moment to hear his triumphant return to the microphone.

My favorite song is "Uncreation" because the keyboard melody is beautiful and the echoing vocals add another key element. I read that Dan locked himself away with **Genesis** and **Rush** albums before recording the album and the influence is profound. I guess it shows I am open-minded but at the same time a real death metal fan because I love *Moontower*'s experimental musical approach but would not have enjoyed it so much were there not that heaviness and the extreme vocals. Only in a few short sections does Dan use his wonderful clean voice (remember "Enigma"? What a song!), but he is planning to use more of these on the next album. He says it will be out in early 2000, arranged like **Edge of Sanity**'s *Crimson*, but this time with track divisions. In the next issue of *Sloth* you can expect a chat with Dan Swanö – he is God and I intend to worship. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ½ Oh, if you're into big keyboards check out the **Paraxism** *Xism Excursion* 3" CD. It is awesome!

DARK FUNERAL
Vobiscum Satanas
1998 No Fashion/Metal Blade

8 tracks – 35:08

These anti-Christian Swedish purveyors of black metal have been getting a lot of underground attention lately. I cannot fathom what the writers of *Metal Maniacs* would find intriguing about **Dark Funeral**'s jumbled attack of one-speed fury to warrant an interview. This is a band you don't mind seeing live after having your ears blasted out by five other bands; you stumble through a sweaty crowd and guys with bad teeth and old t-shirts are smiling while the bad musicians make faces through the ridiculous looking corpse-paint. Yeah, it looks kind of evil and scary in a magazine photo because it's a close-up, but when you see a person in full gear and the only part of him that is white is his face, you say to yourself, "Damn, that ain't evil!" I saw **Mayhem** at the Milwaukee Metalfest and the singer looked ridiculous, prancing around in his life's biggest ego trip, flanked by rotting cow heads and belching to a crowd of people rejoicing that the throng of American Midwest death metal bands were finally off the stage.

So, I was talking about *Vobiscum Satanas*. It suffers from the same syndrome as does a refrigerator: that of emitting a constant stream of sound so that it becomes a forgettable background constant. I have tried so hard to discern any sort of memorable guitar riff or melody, but all I can find is the occasional rise in tone that resonates back and forth, like a person breathing in and out. In, high; out, low. Over and over, with incessant chaotic drums and high-pitch "waah" vocals.

Dark Funeral can play fast, fairly in-synch, and at high volumes you might find yourself posing like an evil Swede. But when all one of this genre's forerunners can boast is 35 minutes of unvaried chaos, black metal may really have peaked. 🎸🎸

DARKLANDS

A Memory of You

1998 Heathendoom Music

3 tracks – 12:36

The first track on this three song CD EP was a decent, doomy piece. The second was a sixties cry for peace, and the third sounded like a diarrhea peanut splashing in an empty bowl. The duplication cost will never be worth what's on this C.D. How embarrassing. Of course I can never let a review go empty handed. 🎗

DEATH

The Sound of Perseverance

1998 Nuclear Blast

9 tracks – 56:14

When I was a young teen getting into metal I would sit in the dark watching Headbanger's Ball, cold in the basement but glued to the show from start to finish. One of the first death metal videos I saw was **Death**'s "Lack of Comprehension" and it scared the hell out of me! Chuck Shuldiner standing there looking monstrous and ripping out his lines, then the camera would flash to this insane bass player hunched over his instrument, hair flying every which way, and then grainy black-and-white shots of this woman smoking cigarettes. It was enough to make sure my parents never knew of this beast called death metal.

I was never a big Death fan, however. The albums friends played for me just weren't hitting me, and only a couple songs from *Individual Thought Patterns* were any good. Come Milwaukee Metalfest 1998, my friend Sean and I found comfortable seats in the upper balcony and I nearly fell asleep when Death played. In between songs Chuck would talk and I really thought he spoke like the guys who wander around South Beach in disappearing thongs. So when Nuclear Blast finally sent me a copy of *The Sound of Perserverance* – they for some reason just stopped sending stuff and are now thankfully under the able management of Paula Hogan and Liz Ciavarella – I had no desire to hear it.

I am eternally thankful to Chuck for taking a break from Death because the time off did him some real good. This new album smokes! The opener is full of those "Death runs" where the tempo just goes and he growls (?) overtop, not to mention his and the others' superb musicianship. How can this be the same band that acted like flower children in Milwaukee? The only bad parts on the album are occasionally Chuck's vocals (he sounds like he's inhaled some helium) and the cover of **Judas Priest**'s "Painkiller." It totally blows, but no mind since "Scavenger of Human Sorrow," "Spirit Crusher," and "To Forgive is to Suffer" certainly rule the day. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ½

DEATH PENALTY

Conviction

1999 Wild Rags

9 tracks – 30:33

I've been following these guys for a year now and have heard their two demos and now this "full-length" album. **Death Penalty** are hardcore with a ton of metal fueling their blood. "False Life" even has a riff that brutal pit-riff bands might use. The vocalist mixes his singular delivery with the two styles as well, not quite shouting but not totally growling. And despite the straightforward nature of *Conviction*'s music I did get into the songs fairly well – more than I expected, too. The biggest drawback is that there are a number of familiar riffs throughout the disc, so while you're nodding your head you know you heard the same thing somewhere else. Death Penalty have gotten much better and are close to breaking through. 🎸🎸🎸 1/3

DEICIDE

When Satan Lives

1998 Roadrunner Records

17 tracks – 55:22

Thank god I was able to save this one from Phil's tyranny! Basically, I was completely amazed at how well these guys can play. (I hope I never hear it was doctored.) The band pounds out a brutal live set, including all the hits, from "Deicide" to "Dead but Dreaming" to "Children of the Underworld." It's intense! There's practically no warning besides a little crowd noise before the opening "When Satan Rules His World" kicks you in the ass and makes you pay attention. You can't "blink" your ears for a second. Hell, the disc sounds better than their studio recordings, both in quality and musicianship. To add, there are several pictures in the booklet of Glen Benton's face; I'm convinced! He really does have an upside-down cross branded into his forehead! [For those who joined the scene after Deicide stopped releasing good albums, it was once common knowledge that Benton ritualistically branded an inverted cross into his forehead on a number of occasions. – Deicide-hatin' ed.] Overall, it's like having a **Deicide**'s greatest hits CD. If you're in the mood for a good live album, don't pass it up. It's fierce! 🎸🎸🎸 ½ (Juan Suarez)

DERANGED

High on Blood

1998 Regain Records

11 tracks – 40:52

Many of you know about the Swedish brutality machine known as **Deranged**, but on a very special "Mad About You" you can truly get to know the emotional side of the band. Uh, just kidding. The style of brutal death metal that got them recognized involves frantic, swirling guitars without too much low-end, complimented by an unintelligible vocalist growling the ugliest of things. Immediate comparisons always jump to **Cannibal Corpse** because of the false harmonic-aided riffs and Corpsegrinder-like vocal delivery, but the production is much cleaner on *High on Blood* – the cover picture features a cocked syringe (but stupidly *empty*!) surrounded by drops of blood on a white surface – and the singer does mix up his barks a bit more.

So Deranged are definitely brutal and stand out from most Swedish bands, but are they that memorable? Most of the songs really don't sound different and only a couple big riffs here and there stand out. Deranged can be instantly recognized for style and sound but not for individual songs, and that is where they fall short and will therefore simply remain a cult band. "By Knife..." is the only song I was hooked on the whole time, and 1 out of 11 is not a good number when considering whether to buy an album. 🎸🎸🎸 ¼

DESCEND

Beyond the Realm of Throes

1998 Black Lotus Records

10 tracks – 46:12

I don't know if I would have even reviewed this but I told one of the members I would, so what the hell...Greece's **Descend** play melodic thrash with raspy vocals. Thrash is of course not a popular style these days and what further hurts the Descend cause is their thin guitar sound typical of Greek metal bands. The whole production is weak actually, bringing to mind a number of South American bands that suffer the same unfortunate setback. Basically this is a boring release from a mediocre band not ready to bring their music to the world-wide metal stage. The thrash isn't that catchy, the melodies aren't very pretty, and the **Rotting Christ** vocals don't fit anywhere in between. 🎸 2/3

DESEKRATOR

Metal for Demons

1998 Hammerheart Records

11 tracks – 33:01

The title track is the opener and from it you get the impression you're in for thirty minutes of rocking old school insanity. By the fourth track you're wondering how any person at a record label would invest in this and then write a positive press sheet in good conscience. I'm glad none of my cash is behind **Desekrator** because they are *bad*. Rarely does something this sloppy and unprofessional come out unless it bears the appropriate warning: "Necropolis Records". ¾

DESTINY

The Undiscovered Country

1998 Gothenburg Noiseworks

8 tracks – 50:15

Apparently these guys have been around since 1982. That tells me they shouldn't be making music. Well, I gave the disc a chance, and it was obvious; old guys trying to sound like new school. The worst part was, while I was listening I flipped through the CD booklet only to find pictures of the band playing chess...on every goddamn page! They're not even good pictures. They also could've superimposed some hair on their balding heads. The only plus about these guys is that they do have musical talent, they just can't write a song. It's too bad. The music is just as stale as their leather vests with the stringy pieces hanging off. Maybe this will get the point across. The first song reads "Don't dare to look away, I'm gonna make you stay, you can't deny my spell, I'm gonna do you well." 🎸🎸

DEVIATE

Darkened World

1999 I Scream Records

7 tracks + CD-ROM – 26:53

Deviate are billed as one of Europe's top hardcore bands and *Darkened World* is their formal introduction to the US, the CD containing songs from their three albums and an EP. Track one is my favorite because it's so lively and is catchy throughout. The next song is pretty cool as well, but track three from the second album is lethargic like **Pro-Pain** and too structured for its own good. It's not *hard*core. Song four is better and takes from **Clutch**. Track five sees Pro-Pain reenter the fray with lifeless music where the cymbals just crash and crash because the guitars take you nowhere but the drummer's got to do something! Six is a bit better, with some speedy stuff and good vocals. The last song is from their latest album and not only is it harsher but also shows the band shying away from conventional material. But Deviate are still addicted to playing standard catchy hardcore riffs over speed sections. So overall, it's pretty decent hard music but a little too polished. Someone is obviously trying to market these guys as accessible. 🎸🎸🎸 1/3

DIABOLIC

Supreme Evil

1999 Conquest Music

10 tracks – 32:17

Florida used to be a death metal kingdom and **Diabolic** are doing a good job at proving there's still something to be said for the scene here. Mixing the complexity of **Morbid Angel** with the straight-forwardness of **Vader**, the quartet don't fall into the trap of technicality over enjoyability. The drummer smokes and there are even a decent amount of solos, though they do tend to be of the "Florida noise" sort. Elements of **Malevolent Creation**, **Cannibal Corpse**, and even **Gutted** appear throughout the album, further helping to mix things up. Not that you're getting operatic vocals here – Diabolic are pure early '90s death. 🎸🎸🎸 ¾

DIABOLICAL MASQUERADE

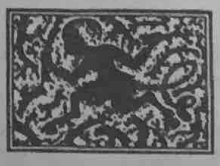
Nightwork

1998 Avantgarde Music

7 tracks – 39:04

I think Blakkheim and Dan Swanö are trying to get a monopoly on my CD collection. The men, of **Katatonia** and **Edge of**

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Sanity fame, respectively, are musical geniuses and in more than just these bands. **Diabolical Masquerade** was created by Blakkheim as his black metal alter ego to the (at the time) crushingly doomy death metal of Katatonia. Now that Katatonia are walking different paths (see the interview for all the info), he has made this project his all-encompassing outlet for extremity.

Ravendusk in my Heart was quite primitive and occasionally showed signs of genius – "Blakkheim's Hunt for Noctunral Grace" – and it was on *The Phantom Lodge* that everything fell together. In a frenzy of old school, black metal, and a possessed demonstration of voice-cracking evilness Blakkheim showed the world that you could put passion into black and heavy metal without sounding stupid. Buy that album!

Nightwork is Blakkheim's return to the fray, again aided by the multi-talented Swanö who handles the drumming, production, and backing vocal duties. The album has the band's best sound yet, the drier guitars clear enough to hear each ripping stroke but not missing an ounce of brutality. Swanö is a madman on the skins, and the keyboards, previously used in the traditional black metal vein, now lead the songs into transitions and aid in creating eerie atmospheres.

The first three songs are very good but each has something about it that feels awkward. "Dreadventurouz" is the worst because it's too slow even though the tempos are slower overall than on *The Phantom Lodge*; Swanö's vocal talents go to waste here. That said, the last four songs are great. "The Eerie Obzidian Circuz" is probably as close to the insanity of *Phantom* and "Haunted by Horror" is the best example of where we can expect Diabolical Masquerade to go. The sick rasps are the same but more atmospheric keyboards and guitar melodies are laced throughout, and the song ends in dramatic fashion as all the elements build up and Blakkheim screams something (most likely) evil. *Nightwork* is not as perfect as *The Phantom Lodge* but it's damn close and Diabolical Masquerade are progressing impressively – this is a highly recommended buy. 1/3

THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN
Under the Running Board
1998 Relapse Records
3 tracks – 7:37

Wanted to mention these crazy guys quickly. I saw them at the Milwaukee Metalfest last year and was blown away. One of the guitarists was literally in the crowd half the time but still managed to play his complex parts. I wish the CD were longer because **The Dillinger Escape Plan** have all the skills and anger necessary to kick the asses of metal and hardcore kids alike.

DIMMU BORGIR
Spiritual Black Dimensions
1999 Nuclear Blast
9 tracks – 49:19

I am a huge fan of *Enthrone Darkness Triumphant*, **Dimmu Borgir**'s fourth release. It was their first on a big label and admittedly accessible for a black metal album. The album has the harsh vocals, a stellar guitar sound, and active and prominent keyboards. For all the aggression there was just as much atmosphere, but I don't see where critics got off saying Dimmu were too accessible. If playing pure black metal means having the lame production and high mortality rate of bands like **Mayhem** and **Enthroned**, I think some people need their heads checked.

Spiritual Black Dimensions is a more aggressive album than the last, the galloping guitars' riffs heavier than ever and there are less atmospheric passages. They've taken their music to the next level comparable to what **Emperor** have done on their new album, though the keyboards are not at all diminished. I still like *Enthrone* is better right now, not because this album is worse but because that one is such an accomplishment. If you like the direction Dimmu have been heading in for the past couple releases, *Spiritual Black Dimensions* is a lock for your collection.

DISMAL EUPHONY
All Little Devils
1999 Nuclear Blast
9 tracks – 39:08

I have the band's *Autumn Leaves* album and was anxious to hear *All Little Devils* because this unconventional operatic Norwegian black metal band showed a lot of promise. There were some great songs led by female vocalist Keltziva and what lacked was prowess in the guitar department. **Dismal Euphony** went to Woodhouse Studios to capture a brilliantly clear sound on the new album, so right there things are improved drastically. The raspy male vocals that resemble an old man whispering have stepped further back to allow new member Anja Natasha to sing, her voice beautiful and strong but her words dark and dramatic. She replaces Keltziva, who I thought was very passionate, and does resemble Anneke from **The Gathering**. So a definite gothic influence has worked its way into the Dismal Euphony sound, which is not necessarily a bad thing. "Psycho Path" is the best song here and it is structured very thematically. The title track is also like this and is a fine example of where the band are going. Further, now they are obviously trying to reach a broader audience and I don't know if "Days of Sodom" and "Lunatic" will fly when they're caught in between black metal and accessibility. I still enjoy this polished album plenty, though. ¼

DIVINE EMPIRE
Redemption
1998 Olympic Recordings
11 tracks – 33:57

The first time I heard *Redemption* all I could think was how much this sounded like **Malevolent Creation**. Lo and behold when I opened the booklet and I was met by the trademark snarling face of none other than former Malevolent bassist and vocalist Jason Blachowicz! With this fact tucked away I again listened to **Divine Empire**, then listened some more, again and again. This is the shit! This is what Malevolent Creation should be sounding like. Anyone who's as disgusted with *The Fine Art of Murder* should pawn that off and put the proceeds toward *Redemption*.

If you have also found that **Deicide** sucks a fat one, this too is the album for you. Imagine both of the Floridian greats at their prime mixed together into a driving force of succinct and sick tunes and you've got Divine Empire. I could not be more pleased! Straight ahead death metal that is memorable and played well like this is a great throwback to the early nineties when bands were all these. I saw them live a week ago and they were equally good. The drummer blew everyone away with his inhuman abilities. 1/3

DOG FACED GODS
Random Chaos Theory in Action
1998 Gothenburg Noiseworks/Black Sun
11 tracks – 47:32

Explain to my why Swedish guys are wearing New York Yankees, Philadelphia Flyers, and Pittsburgh Pirates hats. While you're at it, tell me why two members of **Ebony Tears**, a heavy but melodic death metal band just about to reach the next level, would put that on hold and take up playing stuttering, mechanized metal that rips off **Meshuggah**. This is so upsetting. Ebony Tears are on layaway, according to bassist Peter Tuthill when I wrote concerning an interview, as they're spending 200% of their time on Dog Faced Gods. Yes, Meshuggah's guitar patterns are very hard to learn, so I can see why...

Okay, I'll try to look upon this like a totally different band. They're a tight group, that's for sure, and I found promise on "Fractured Image" when the tempo slows down and notes are actually held for a few seconds, the instrumental "Prozac ›3105," and the groovy "Purge." "Swallowtail" shows some signs of the past with electric violin use, so maybe the Dog Faced Gods can find a middle ground, because they have definitely gone off the deep end and left too much potential behind in postponing Ebony Tears. *Random Chaos Theory in Action* is too tough to hear, its musicianship not enough to save it. ¾ (Hey! If you like Ebony Tears you'll be happy to know that they hit the studio in March to record *A Handful of Nothing*.)

DREAMS OF SANITY
Masquerade
1999 Hall of Sermon
10 tracks – 54:55

If there were any more space left in this issue, there would have been a **Dream of Sanity** interview – that's how good they are. Sounding nothing like Sweden's deathly **Edge of Sanity**, they are a female-fronted German (?) band rooted in classically operatic themes with a metal backbone. Sandra Schleret's trained voice is not only beautiful to hear but an adventuresome experience because she makes inventive use of her skills. Backing her up is a full band including a keyboardist, but without their powerful and memorable music Dreams of Sanity would not be as complete as they are.

The album is based around *The Phantom of the Opera*, and within there is a five-part "Masquerade" piece. But the first song is a stunning rendition of "The Phantom of the Opera" itself, in which Schleret duets with **Lacrimosa**'s Tilo Wolff. What proved to me how true to the original the song is here happened a few weekends ago when I was at my grandpa's house. I was flipping through the TV and on a PBS type channel was the dramatic conclusion to the song where the man evokes increasingly intense notes from the woman. I really thought I was hearing Dreams of Sanity!

The metal guitars have an eighties feel to them, not like glam but the thinner production of classic bands. Occasional leads and heavier parts do pop up but to be realistic, Ms. Schleret is the core of the music and rightfully so. If there is a new wave of female vocalists taking over metal, Dreams of Sanity are one of the premier ones in the mix and anyone interested in a polished, emotional album of avant-garde operatic metal should buy *Masquerade*.

DYING FETUS
Killing on Adrenaline
1998 Morbid Records
8 tracks – 34:33

It's not easy to be a brutal death metal band and make the cut in *Sloth* anymore because my tastes are evolving and plenty of these bands aren't. **Dying Fetus** play the extremely brutal, grinding death and they know how to do it without getting too boring. That is the key! This music is not *Sesame Street* and Dying Fetus don't subject us Cookie Monster teaching us the alphabet. John Gallagher is still unintelligible but while groups such as **Internal Bleeding** tread water with endlessly slow pit riffs, Dying Fetus throw in one of those then take a nail and drive it into your skull with a steaming hot, speedy riff.

I have trouble telling one song from the next, but "Procreate the Malformed" and "Fornication Terrorist" are my



favorites. The fact that this is a straightforward and repetitive band is countered by their tightness and competence in handling of rapid transitions without stumbling. 2/3

EMBODYMENT
Embrace the Eternal
1999 Solid State Records
9 tracks – 44:16

I really try not to compare bands, but sometimes it helps paint a picture. This sounds like **Korn** covering **Cannibal Corpse** tunes. It's actually a really neat sound. The only problem is the songwriting. It could be a little sharper. On a side note, there is a lack of good producers out there. That sucks because there are cool bands like this that show some promise, but they didn't have an expert to show them the ropes. It's too rough, as are many other potentially good bands. The music is brutal though. The guitars grind engines and chug like a train. The drummer impressed me with some furious speed hits and double bass as well. In passing, I thik these guys are added to my list of groups to look out for in the future. If they clean up their songs a little they could be really good! 1/3 (Jaun Suarez)

EMPEROR
IX Equilibrium
1999 Century Media
9 tracks – 44:05

It's safe to say this is the most anticipated release in the metal community for the year and since I love *Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk*, my desire to hear *IX Equilibrium* was up there. Hell, I saw **Emperor** at the Milwaukee Metalfest last year and thought their set was great – even though the keyboardist forgot his international socket adapter and Ihsahn was sporting a freshly shaved head and those Road Warrior shoulder pads though he probably weighs 150, tops. So what is the album like? Much more guitar oriented and aggressive. I barely notice the keyboards, an element so revered by Emperor fans. I know you're going to hate me for saying this but the music isn't that interesting as before. There are diverse elements and the musicianship is great, but by the fourth track I look up to my stereo with boredom! I am simply not captured by any atmospheres or great riffs!

It had been my understanding from the interview I read in *Worm Gear* a while ago that the new Emperor would have many of the band's developing clean choir vocals. However, Ihsahn's apocalyptic rasps are again the dominant voice here and there isn't enough awesome music to back him up like on *Anthems*. Another thing I noticed is certain sections of a song will feature differing guitar patterns and while one is doing something cool, the other is fiddling off in La-La land. Also, "Of Blindness" seems like a black metal version of **Mindrot**'s "Internal Isolation" from *Forlorn*. Check the passage starting at around the 6-minute mark in the Mindrot song.

If *IX Equilibrium* were coming from another band I'd probably like it better, but Emperor has a reputation and lives by it, so this album seems disappointing and not up to their obvious creative potential. They're not as focused or ingenious as I thought. ½

EPOCH OF UNLIGHT
What will be has Been
1998 The End Records
10 tracks – 47:56

These Tennessee boys have been getting some praise lately and I finally got to hear them. The first thing you notice about **Epoch of Unlight** is that they don't sound particularly American, but you can't say they're strictly European. I hear a strong similarity to the new **Death** album as well as black metal influences, but not blatant like so many bands. The musicianship is technical and top-notch, so you'll never have to worry about a song's repetitiveness. I am fairly indifferent to this album, though. It's good but I have plenty of other CDs I'd rather be cranking right now. The brutality becomes a bit mind numbing. ½

ESQARIAL
Amorphous
1999 Pagan Records
11 tracks – 36:12

The next time someone tells me death metal is dead I *will* give it a second thought now that I have heard **Esqarial**. What is this crap? It's supposed to be chunky and choppy but they forgot the catchy, so look for it in the bargain bin selling cheaply. And what are these pseudo-**Dream Theater** melodies that pop up for no reason between fumbled boring death? I don't even care. ¾

E VIII
Save
1998 Lucretia Records
3 tracks – 11:53

I guess this is progressive hard rock with a metal edge. The only reason I'm including it is the great title track's chorus. I love it! The second song is catchy metal in the same vein, but not as cool. Then there's a remix version of "Save," so they obviously know they have a hit with this one. I don't see why the label doesn't send the whole album to me, unless **E VIII** are a true radio band with one hit. All Lucretia has sent me are these singles and this has been the only decent one, so I better stop wasting space. (rating not applicable)

EXTOL
Burial
1998 Tooth & Nail/ Solid State
12 tracks – 62:08

It's about damn time but the world finally has reason to open its arms to Christian death metal again. Not since **Mortification** stomped around brutally early this decade have I felt any sort of affection toward some of God's crusaders. With the exception of **Living Sacrifice** and **Pauper's Field**, Christian metal has left me feeling rather sheepish.

Calling Norway home, these five guys probably haven't gotten much support from their metal countrymen, but this may have been a blessing in disguise because they don't play simplistic, generic, and incompetent black metal where makeup comes first. Extol instead play a complex hybrid of progressive death and black metal full of melodies and is characterized by a peppiness unique to this band. During a listen you'll point out similarities to **Carcass**'s *Heartwork*, **Eucharist, Edge of Sanity**'s drummer, **Sentenced**, and the catchy downpicking made famous by **Katatonia** on *Brave Murder Day*. Vocals resemble King Fowley from **Deceased** and Martin Van Drunen, ex-**Bolt Thrower**, **Comecon, Asphyx, Submission**, and **Pestilence**.

So why do I really like this? Because it's weird! You don't hear bands like this often, those who can play, take diverse influences, and keep their music interesting. Extol are one of them and every time I play *Burial* there is more I like. Take a chance and pick this up, I'm sure no scrawny black metaller will threaten you. And even if he does, remember that all Americans can beat up a European. (How's that for blatant ignorance and stupidity? It's a joke!) ¾

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM
Unnatural Selection
1999 Metal Blade Records
10 tracks – 45:18

I don't tell many people about the time I forgot to call this girl that wanted me (bad) so instead of getting some, I went to my friend's house and watched Bill Cosby do standup. She called me, and told me she would have nailed by brains out, but I missed my chance, then she told me to *%^$ off. I felt as bad then as I did when I heard this disc. I tried to force myself to listen, but I couldn't. If the album was a bowl of cold soup, I'd say, "Take it back!" Basically, the drummer tries soooo desperately to be Vinny Paul (**Pantera**), right down to the sound of his drum kit. Right from the first riff, the thing sounds like a high school garage band that cut a 4-track demo. I'll give them credit for actually taking the time to do the whole project. Might as well have let Ross Robinson produce and throw some bass notes in there. I think that guy listens to more rap music than metal. And so we lament the passing of another good band... ½ (Juan Suarez)

FREDRIK THORDENDAL'S SPECIAL DEFECTS
Sol Niger Within Version 3.33
1999 Relapse Records
28 tracks – 50:21

Well, ex-**Meshuggah** brain let me have it here. The music makes as much sense as the title does. I would call this a musical novel. It's essentially one piece of music divided into chapters of sorts. *Modern Drummer* calls this "Thick as a Brick on bad acid." Well, in my opinion, **Jethro Tull** was on bad acid when they made *Thick as a Brick*, so this would in effect be *Thick as a Brick* after a heroin overdose, waking up from the comatose only to find it's testicles gently held in the clamp of a vice, with a demonic circus midget threatening to tighten it if he feels you're staring at him. Sense can be made out of this work at some points though. Otherwise the style is more progressive than Lars Ulrich's receding hairline! The music is very far out, but at the same time is full of eerily massive riffing. To sum up what one might expect here, take some of the stranger, more confusing Meshuggah songs, and combine them into a non-stop 50 minute sound-scape. **Zappa** or **Mr. Bungle** fans might enjoy this very heavy experimental style. Meshuggah fans might also find some value here. The musicianship is outstanding. The sound quality is also very well done. The start-stop format can become frustrating to listen to at times.
½ (Jaun Suarez)

THE GALLERY
Fateful Passion
1998 Hall of Sermon
8 tracks – 40:54

There seems to be a common thread with a lot of these European bands: if your singer is a woman and your music isn't too heavy, you're also very professional. So we have **The Gallery**, a gothic metal group featuring the brother and sister vocal team of guitarist Gunnar and Antje Mothes. Like I said, the music is totally professional and features some nice guitar melodies, but overall *Fateful Passion* lacks the power of its title. None of the songs will evoke much emotion from you the way **Trail of Tears** and **Dreams of Sanity** do, making The Gallery more like latter-day **Theatre of Tragedy**, who have lost most of their power indeed. 1/3

GAMMA RAY
Power Plant
1999 Noise Records
11 tracks – 70:31

Splendid! Like fine Literature, **Gamma Ray** appropriately titled the record. This is certainly powerful. This group really has a grip on power metal. The disc opens with a brilliant piece that boasts musical virtuosity, wonderful melody, and a great



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chanting chorus "Anywhere in the galaxy" I also had a great time listening to their cover of the **Pet Shop Boys**' "It's a Sin." This release makes clear the experience this band has. After a huge list of releases and numerous tours (I'd kill to see them) these lads have the game down. This disc makes me want to go buy a suit of armor and ride my steed through a dark forest! The ultra-clean production is complimented by nice subtle synth work. Not much more can be said. It's epic in all proportions. I even have to listen to it in portions because it's a lot to take in at one seating. Just to top thing off, Derek Riggs, who did the **Iron Maiden** covers, does the artwork for this CD. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¾ (Jaun Suarez)

GARDEN OF SHADOWS
Heart of the Corona
1998 X-Rated Records
6 tracks – 39:19

My good friends in **Garden of Shadows** put out this glorious demo a while ago and thanks to Mathias at X-Rated Records they are getting deserved worldwide exposure. They have done countless interviews with zines everywhere, but I think the pressing of the re-mastered *Heart of the Corona* on CD with an awesome eight-minute bonus track will once and for all solidify Garden of Shadows as the best new band in metal. Printed below is the original review of the demo, which appeared in *Sloth* #4 with an interview with guitarist Brian.

"This is the best demo of all time. This is why I put up with many worthless bands again and again, for that chance occurrence that some unknown musicians are out there and ready to take over the scene. That band is **Garden of Shadows**. How many demos have brought you to the edge of death and back? Can you remember being close to tears after listening to an unsigned band? I have heard *Heart of the Corona* a hundred times and seen the band live four times. Each is as refreshing as the first, when the quintet essentially stole the show from **My Dying Bride** at only its second gig. Amazing!

"Fans of all the different metals will unite as one to celebrate Garden of Shadows. Death, doom, atmospheric, and the melodic Swedish style are all mixed into thirty minutes of gripping orchestration. The fury of American death metal is combined with the melody of Europe's finest, with vocalist Chad growling to the depths and guitarists Brian and Mary weaving intricate passages of melodious bliss.

"The title track starts off in a refined manner but soon leaps from the norm and into ferocious territory. The same cannot be said for "Company in Solitude," which never sticks to the rules, instead driving forward like a runaway train. The song goes on and on, tearing at your emotions sadistically as it plunges the knife deeper into your vulnerable heart. Deprive yourself of Garden of Shadows and you shall remain an untouched soul, I assure you." 🎸🎸🎸🎸🎸

THE GATHERING
How to Measure a Planet?
1999 Century Media
2CD – 14 tracks – 104:12

Ever since I heard *Mandylion*, **The Gathering**'s first album with female singer Anneke van Giersbergen, I have always felt something was *off* in the music. The same feeling held true on *Nighttime Birds*, as if the music and vocals weren't clicking (except for "Shrink"). They've returned this year with positively their best effort in *How to Measure a Planet?* Over 100 minutes in length and divided into two CDs (nine songs on the first, five on the second), the album shows them adopting a groovier guitar sound close to **Celestial Season**'s *Solar Lovers* and straying from conventional rock/metal structures. The first CD is more normal in terms of delivery, song length, and experimentation, so if you liked The Gathering in the past this will please you. I tend to listen to the second disc since it takes the unconventionality to another level, not relying merely on the power of van Giersbergen's voice to sell each song, though she has found a much better niche within the band this go round (at times resembling **Alanis Morrisette**). The vibe is laidback throughout, but on this second disc the band can let everything out without restriction or hesitancy, so the last two songs are the best. The title-track closer is nearly 30 minutes long and I pray that this is a sign of where The Gathering are going with their music. Forget writing three-minute radio hits, that's not enough time to put in and capture the soul. 🎸🎸🎸🎸¼

GEHENNA
Admiron Black
1998 Moonfog Productions
7 tracks – 36:14

Gehenna means ugly Norwegain black metal with grimy vocals and impressive musicianship. What's missing are the hooks and definite purpose within the songs that give them personality. That is too bad since the guitarists have an appealing chugging style and are totally in sync with the drummer, who is also very good. The early songs don't go anywhere, which might be a product of Gehenna's strict adherence to their Norwegian roots, though it must be noted that *Admiron Black* closes strongly with the dark "Slowly Being Poisoned" and brooding "Eater of the Dead." It's almost as if the album builds purpose, as the middle songs show signs of promise, and then you really get it in the end. People not into the high-pitched black metal will want to check this out too, but the final impression is that Gehenna are still working on mastering their dark art.

The twisted album cover photo is outrageous: it features an emotionally drained shirtless man sitting on the floor by a bed on which lays the naked woman he just shot for some reason. It will scar children! 🎸🎸🎸½

GOOSEFLESH
Welcome to Suffer Age
1998 Goldtrack Records
5 tracks – 20:29

Right off the bat, these guys sound like your everyday metal. Nothing new really considering they sound like a lot of other bands. The music just doesn't stand out. Instrumentally, the band is pretty talented though. They have an excellent sound as well. The CD is a collection of five songs that hit hard, but lose you in between. Every so often a nice stomp riff will catch my attention, but the songs dissolve and you never really feel a sense of completeness. The songs need to be more defined. Too many riffs for their own good, and some even seem do drag. Otherwise, the disc does pack a punch. With a little work on song composition, these guys could probably kick some ass. 🎸🎸🎸 (Juan Suarez)

THE GREAT KAT
Bloody Vivaldi – 1998
4 tracks – 7:13

Everyone's favorite whip-cracking, guitar-shredding, slave-stomping, violin-raping, blood dripping, teeth-and-cleavage-showing goddess of cyber metal is back with another short CD. *Bloody Vivaldi* clocks in at seven minutes and thirteen seconds, three of which are fairly avoidable, but you sometimes can't blame the vicious self-promoter who maintains an impressive website – www.greatkat.com – and corals her lust-filled legions of Kat Slaves, all the while performing the fastest renditions of your favorite classical compositions.

First is the **Great Kat**'s rendition of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" for violin, chamber orchestra, and band, of which the Kat plays all guitars, three violins and a viola, and programs the MIDI cello and double bass. And it is awesome, breathtaking! You will shudder from the utter speed and virtuoso technicality that would drop **Ynwgwie Malmsteen**'s jaw as the piece blazes through in just two-and-a-quarter minutes.

The disc's closer, Sarasate's "Carmen Fantasy" for violin and band, is even better and more addictive. I get shudders down my spine after the opening violin melody passes and supreme speed kicks in with distorted guitars and hyper drums, all frenzying to more and more terrifyingly grand heights of sonic bliss so that you are no doubt as spent as the Kat's bowing arm by song's end two minutes later. Repeated listens are imperative!!!

The two tracks in between these joyful expressions of extreme bliss are what are hard to stomach about the Great Kat. "Torture Chamber" and "Blood" pander to the sanguinary desires of her rapid slaves who crave to be whipped and stomped by her heels. In these songs, however, her real strengths – god-like guitar and violin prowess, plus arrangement capabilities – take a back seat while she indulges in screams and a less structured composition. "Torture Chamber" is admittedly funny, but "Blood" just plain sucks, all 39 seconds of it. In these original compositions the Kat isn't as visionary as the composers she worships and to which she compares herself. (Let it be known that "Dominatrix" and "Feast of the Dead" from 1997's *Guitar Goddess* are much better originals.)

All said with the Great Kat's inability to put out a CD exceeding 10 minutes and her erratic original compositions, *Bloody Vivaldi* and *Guitar Goddess* are still essential purchases because she plays the classics so wonderfully fast, extreme, and most of all, so damn heavy! 🎸🎸🎸🎸

GRIEF OF EMERALD
Nightspawn
1999 Listenable Records
9 tracks – 43:09

All the elements are here for your modern Scandinavian album: keyboards, atmospheric black metal production, and even a dark feel to it all. I still find myself quite bored by it all. **Grief of Emerald** are not intense and it's rare that you'll find a song that holds your attention the whole time. It seems like these guys don't know what they're trying to accomplish and when you're unfocused playing at high speeds that only makes matters worse. They are pretty tight but when it comes to writing memorable music they fail miserably. 🎸🎸

GRIP INC.
Solidify
1999 Metal Blade Records
11 tracks – 46:37

Anyone who has listened to **Grip** before knows about guitarist/songwriter/genius Waldemar Sorychta. If you don't, well this guy is Grip Inc. and he writes and performs for many other bands. I give him a round of applause in celebrating Grip's third and best release, Solidify. Basically, the sound is there. Dave Lombardo's drumming is sharper than ever (the double bass on *Amped* almost split my head in half). The guitars sound amazing; a very ballsy tone and clean, meaty riffs. The recording is phenomenal. The style of music has turned slightly toward the more American type pit riffing, but still maintains the melodic, sometimes keyboard textured riffs. Overall, it seems that the band has finally discovered its sound. I think that was the problem with the first records. The band was too new. It was 3 guys playing Waldemar's stuff. There seems to be a more comfortable feel here. The only minus on the disc is the shy singer. He doesn't seem confident in his voice, and really just yells or talks in key- he doesn't *sing*! 🎸🎸🎸🎸 (Jaun Suarez)

GRONE
Chucklepatch
1998 – 16 tracks – 70:46

After 11 years of going at it, you can bet **Grone** are sure of what they're about. Picture those sludgy industrial albums Earache released earlier this decade, add another thousand pounds of desolation and desperation – then you're in the ballpark. Most of the vocals are gross growls akin to the genre but during some of the odder passages you'll find whispers and spoken words. And though they shoot off into experimental tangents from time to time, Grone always keep it musical. The sheer length of *Chucklepatch* is another imposing aspect of it all because song after song just crushes you slowly, like the way that machine clamped down on the Terminator's head in the first movie. "Reptilikus" is my favorite song because the riff is so damn heavy, but the other 15 are just as killer. The days of **Godflesh** and **Meathook Seed** are over, but Grone trudge on... 🎸🎸🎸🎸

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GWAR
We Kill Everything
1999 Metal Blade Records
17 tracks –57:32

I have some issues to deal with concerning **GWAR**. When I first bought *America Must be Destroyed* in the summer after 7th grade they stole my innocence and I don't know how deeply the lyrics and booklet drawings scarred me. On that note I wish they had had the balls to shock the world like that again *and* write so many classic songs. Practically every track on there rules, like "Ham on the Bone," "Crack in the Egg," "Have You seen Me," the title track, "Blimey," and of course "Gor-Gor." *This Toilet Earth* had some gems like "Saddam-A-Go-Go" and "Jack the World," but ever since they've been utterly stale.

Just released is *We Kill Everything* and after some serious listens I say that GWAR are back on the right path. There aren't as many sing-along anthems and the guitars aren't as heavy, but there are more than enough stupid songs here to make you laugh. I guess the biggest hurdle is that GWAR rip off the pop-punk bands more than metal bands for their riffs, so unless you go for that stuff you might want to hunt out the older albums. The best songs are "Fishfuck," "My Girly Ways," and instant hit "Fuckin' an Animal." I only wish GWAR would get sick again, maybe scar me a little more... 🎸🎸🎸¼

HADES
SaviorSelf
1999 Metal Blade
11 tracks – 36:07

Hades were around in the latter part of the '80s and have reunited on *SaviorSelf*, which has its underlying theme as man's self-destructiveness and ignorance and how we are heading to a frightening date with the new millennium. Boosted by a crunchy modern production, the group go through a hard set of rocking tunes that are probably not considered too heavy by



today's standards. Another thing is that a number of the songs aren't even complete – there are too many intro-type tracks for an album this short. Vocalist Alan Tecchio sings his lines powerfully when the band gets going though, and I found the album more appealing than I thought possible. If you do buy the album, check out the acoustic beginning of the opener and their rendition of "Our Father." 🎸🎸🎸 ½

HAEMORRHAGE
Anatomical Inferno
1999 Morbid Records
14 tracks – 30:31

I practically crapped my pants while listening to the band's previous grind shocker, *Grume*, and was anxiously awaiting *Anatomical Inferno*. I didn't think it was possible to top *Grume*'s sick madness – and I wasn't even supposed the *like* the CD let alone worship it – yet **Haemorrhage** have come back and kicked my ass again! *Anatomical* may not have *Grume*'s charm but it delivers the old-**Carcass** filth by the wheelbarrow, dripping guts and eyeballs. My favorites are "Worminfested Cavities" and "Witness of Forensic Horror," but you've got a bunch to choose from. Behold the modern torchbearers of sickness! 🎸🎸🎸🎸

HAMMERFALL
Legacy of Kings
1998 Nuclear Blast
10 tracks – 45:13

You've got your retro-thrash bands who revel in the rawness of underground '80s metal and you've got your modern power metal bands who take their influences and run, looking ever ahead. And you also have **Hammerfall**, an immensely successful young Swedish quintet who play '80s heavy metal just as it once was. The issue involves the following questions:

Are they too '80s? Is playing this style cheesy? The vocals beg for big arenas and audience sing-alongs, but are those days over, and rightfully? Aren't people in America too bitter and self-loathing for that?

I can't find much on *Legacy of Kings* that calls out, "This is definitely an original element from the '90s." But from people's reactions worldwide they are devouring Hammerfall's straightforward delivery of simply structured, old school heavy metal. This may be that attending a death metal show isn't too conducive to kicking back and singing along, and not many of them have the stage presence of **Cryptopsy** either. And I find myself nodding my head to the easy, catchy riffs that remind me of old **Judas Priest**, not to mention I love the leads. It's a shame bands don't play solos anymore and I wish there were more on *Legacy of Kings*.

I know that Hammerfall are good for metal, and I know that all the members are committed and fine musicians. However I believe it would demonstrate much better how heavy metal is an evolving genre if **Blind Guardian** were to get the push and recognition they deserve. They are superb musicians, brilliant songwriters, full of passion, and always looking to the future. I pray metal's legacy isn't that its failed comeback at the close of this century was a laughable grasping at straws of the past. 🎸🎸🎸 2/3

HATE
2 Wrongs = Right
1998 – 11 tracks – 46:44

I love when I review a young band and they come back to totally blow me away. I reviewed **HATE**'s *Rage* in *Sloth* #3 and while that demo was a "hint of what's to come," *2 Wrongs = Right* has come! I cannot begin to tell you how consistently heavy this CD is. I have just listened to it four times in a row and refuse to stop. HATE play sick hardcore death metal with an unbeatable chugging sensibility. While most hardcore bands stop every cool riff with needless breakdowns, this punishing quartet instead turn up the intensity with perhaps a heavier riff or maybe a faster tempo. Expect more from your hardcore bands than insane liberal calls to action; demand that they play good fucking music!

HATE are the answer! Explain why I, a person who is addicted to the European metal scene, would get so taken by an American band with thrash and hardcore roots in their death metal. When I hear every song on this CD, from "Cringe" to "Beat'um to a Bloody Death" to "Wrong" to "Crippled Mind," I want to jump into the pit and bang my goddamn head. Highest *Sloth* recommendations! 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¼

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HATRED
The Offering – 1999
10 tracks – 38:52

I first saw **Hatred** live in 1995 and have followed them from the thrashy and a bit silly *Daze of Darkness* demo to the much improved and serious *Suffer* CD EP. We featured them a year ago in issue #4 and since then it has been a struggle to release *The Offering*, their self-financed debut album. After having their hopes toyed with by having a spot on a Black Mark compilation to endless complications in the studio, the album will finally be out soon (probably by the time you read this). I got my hands on an advance copy from guitarist Joe Jablonski so here goes.

Having been together for about eight years and with a stable lineup for four, Hatred are now a *tight* unit. Their formerly prominent thrash influences are subtler within the songs that can best be classified aggressive, mid-paced death metal. Guitarist/vocalist Tim Clayborne (who my friend Eric and I used to worship way back when for his super tight pants and small forehead) uses a high, raspy scream – his trademark delivery long before the black metal craze hit these shores. I even hear some *Peace Sells*-era **Megadeth** influences in the driving songs as Hatred know how to play their death metal and are really trying not to sound generic. Their efforts are commendable because *The Offering* again shows them refusing to rehash old material. Of course a few shortcomings here and there need work, but Hatred deserve so much respect for not jumping on the black metal bandwagon or playing the same old death metal. 🎸🎸🎸 2/3

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HECATE ENTHRONED
Dark Requiems and Unsilent Massacre
1999 Metal Blade Records
10 tracks – 42:59

Who says bats can't play metal? 'Cause this guy Jon really invokes those cave-dwelling spirits with his sonar interpretation of **Cradle of Filth**'s Dani's rasp. He's so constant and unwavering you wonder if the keyboardist isn't just playing his instrument on the "demonic bat" setting. Of all the bands that are forced to use a drum machine these days I can't believe **Hecate Enthroned** (erringly referred to as *Hectate* Enthroned in these pages in the past) is not one of them. But this black metal is so boring that Rob must be in it only for the money.

You know how many bands, in a demonstration of their overpowering evilness and brutality, will describe the members' roles as some dramatic martial tactic? Like Necroslaughterhouser doesn't just play guitar, he "wields the six-string impaler of 69 jesuit monks while they pray," or drummer Tetrisizer really is a "pounder of Christian skulls." But you can always tell what they do, right? Explain to me what Michael does with his "luciferian requiems." I've figured out all the others, even the tricky Dylan, whose "distorted presence of thunder" is actually bass. Anyway, this album sucks. One of their older releases, *Slaughter of Innocence*, is actually okay despite the studio's rampant rat on vocals. 🎸

HUMAN DISORDER
Ugly Modern Aggression
1998 Blue Summit
12 tracks – 43:18

With a name like this could it possibly be anything *but* hardcore? I forgive them though because they are a quality band. Their promo package was the best one I got! So add four bald guys plus one long-hair and you got good inspiration for a mosh pit. These guys basically pound out a splendid blend of hard riffs and stompin grooves. The appropriately titled opener *Head On* really socks it to you, and the rest of the record is stomp after stomp that'll definitely take the shine out of your boots. As a pessimist I would have to say that like so many hardcore projects, the blatant heaviness can become monotonous. The **Phil Anselmo** wannabe act has to stop! Otherwise, this is a brutal one. The feeling is there. The grooves fall in the right places, and this is one you might want to be careful to leave in your car; I start self-moshing as I drive and it's not safe. 🎸🎸🎸 ½

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IMMORTAL DOMINION
Endure
1998 – 10 tracks – 43:44

Some albums you just can't be prepared for. I can tell you how incredible *Endure* is and how from Ray Smith's first wail you'll know you're in to be abused, but words can never convey what the music does. Bands aren't allowed to be this good and remain unsigned! The sheer brutality of the riffs is testament alone, but add on Ray's insane screams and it's almost too much to bear. I would be frightened to attend an **Immortal Dominion** live show because I'm afraid someone in the crowd would become frenzied and try to bite into my skull.

There is some diversity to the Immortal Dominion camp in the form of some clean guitar action here and there. But ten seconds later you're banging your head, so I see these other elements as merely strengthening elements. "Brighter Days" is a noteworthy song because it is the band's lightest – it sounds like they could play it on the radio because of the clean singing and light guitars. But then Ray starts to scream and yup, you're banging your head again. "Time to Die," "Water of Life," and the title track are classic slabs of Immortal Dominion ferocity as well. If this issue prompts you to considering buying ten albums, make this one of them. 🎸🎸🎸🎸🎸 (See interview for info.)

IN RUINS
Four Seasons of Grey
1998 Metal Blade Records
8 tracks – 44:49

Four Seasons of Grey is one of my new favorites! It has all the stuff I like: heavy and melodic guitars, atmospheres, harsh vocals that fit, and skilled composition. **In Ruins** are all these things, whose mastermind, J. Michael, is not from the frozen shores of some European metal outpost but the unlikely state of Pennsylvania. After reading this review, you can read all about the band in its interview elsewhere.

Most of the lengthy songs are mid-paced but things do get a bit crazy on the title track and especially "The Gathering Storm." There are many layers within the music as well, a keyboard line sticking out here or a guitar harmony there. My favorite times for listening to In Ruins are late at night when I'm writing a story or doing mag layout. They take you to another world of misty forests and floating atmospheres without sacrificing the heaviness. Nice folk and acoustic touches add depth to this already classic album, and I can only hold my breath for the next gift of musical expression in store from In Ruins. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ½

IRON SAVIOR
Unification
1999 Noise Records
15 tracks – 73:15

The thing about these power metal groups is that rarely can you call their musical abilities into question. They all can play! I just wish some of them would start up a death metal project. Every song has these explosive, searing solos the way I love 'em! And the guys in **Iron Savior** are all old Germans, so you just know they rock! And while a band like **Stratovarious** will not push themselves because they're already such good musicians, Iron Savior intensely challenge themselves the way **Judas Priest** did with their ungodly leads on the classic *Painkiller*. I think *Painkiller* is why I have no confidence in playing guitar – I know that no matter how good I get there is absolutely no way I could play anything off of that album.

You will want to buckle into your seats for *Unification* for it's a long album overflowing with active heavy metal for listeners not content with the current revival of bands like Hammerfall that don't tackle any new challenges. The band features two of power/speed metal's most prominent members, though: Kai Hansen of **Helloween** and **Gamma Ray** fame, and Piet Sielck, who has produced for **Blind Guardian** and **Saxon**.

So *Unification* not only guarantees brilliant guitar playing but also the best sound around. You guys know I'm not a huge fan of classic metal but Iron Savior have me floored! The choruses are cool and not cheesy, every lead is exciting, and I absolutely love the driving guitars and drums behind it all. It's official, I am going to stop trying to be a good guitarist because I could never do what Iron Savior do. I am an American, so maybe I'll start a '90s punk/metal/hardcore band and become famous, that is if I'm willing to pierce my tongue. 👍👍👍 ¾

JAG PANZER
The Age of Mastery
1998 Century Media
12 tracks 57:20

Not bad for a power metal album. These guys have been around for quite a while it seems. I give them big credit off the bat for making a successful transition into the 90's. So many bands were or are stuck in the olden times. This album is pretty cool, but tends to be a little generic at parts. This isn't necessarily a bad thing though. I mean, it's a cool style of music. These guys happen to be decent at it. The way I look at it though, is that these guys had their heyday. Give someone else a chance. I don't think old bands should stick around unless they're topping each album. When the albums start getting worse, give up. **Kiss** learned that the hard way. Anyway, the opening "Iron Eagle" has a nice, classic power vibe to it. The rest of the songs will have a nice intro perhaps, but a quarter of the way into the song, you forget what your focusing on, and then the guitar solo snaps you out of your daydream. I think there's too many bands out to bother with decent stuff. The virtuoso guitar playing was a bit muddy at times too. The record does have a fair "castle" feel to it though, i.e. it sets the mood well. 👍👍👍 (Jaun Suarez)

JUNLGE ROT
Slaughter the Weak
1998 Pavement Music
10 tracks – 33:38

Simply put, **Jungle Rot** have been at this forever and know what they're doing! Good chunky death metal that never gets caught up in blast beat insanity or mosh-riff monotony, the ten songs of *Slaughter the Weak* make it an album even I can't resist. The four men responsible for this destruction have been a beacon of consistency through the years and are among the most respected members of the underground today. They've even got a comic book out through *SOD* that illustrates visually the graphic war tales Jungle Rot always sing about (especially Vietnam savagery). So check out these American death merchants for proof that brutality still thrives on this continent. 👍👍👍 ¾

KATAKLYSM
Victims of this Fallen World
1998 Hypnotic Hard Stuff
12 tracks – 52:11

I fell in love with **Kataklysm** back in 1993 when I heard "Shrine of Life" on the *5 Years Nuclear Blast* compilation, so I bought the *Mystical Gate of Reincarnation* EP. The whirlwind and crushing guitars, Sylvain Houde's bear-like guttural call, Max Duhamel's fiery drum performance, and Mauricio Iacono as the sludgy bass rumbler...ah!! I was starting to get into the really heavy stuff that year, discovering **Deicide** and **Cannibal Corpse**, and Kataklysm introduced me to a new style of metal that was complex, totally brutal, memorable, and so gripping.

Fast forward to 1998: Houde has left the band and Duhamel returns to replace his replacement, Nick Miller. The albums *Sorcery* and *The Temple of Knowledge* have been out for some time – the former a chaotic blast from these Canadian greats that did usher in a less crisp guitar sound that continues today, the latter a to-these-ears-not-heard-but-acclaimed-by-the-likes-of-Mike-G-of-*Metal-Maniacs* next step – and there are a ton of people who rightfully worship Kataklysm worldwide. Iacono assumed the microphone, some random dude took on the bass, they all cut their hair, and the influence of hardcore took hold in the guitars that once were a beacon known as Northern Hyperblast. And that old Kataklysm sound still exists with thicker, beefier, simpler riffs.

Will the fans of *Mystical Gate* and *Sorcery* be able stomach the band's change from all things relentless to catchier, more formulated tunes? I was quite turned off by *Victims of this Fallen World* during initial encounters, but I have recently been playing it at above-normal volumes and am really coming around. "As My World Burns" is the opener and it delivers, while "Caged In" and "Courage Through Hope" come through unexpectedly after unappealing starts. And when later songs would have you believe the band were tanking, past elements like the guitar/drum races of *Sorcery* or the sick gurgling rasps straight from *Mystical Gate* pump in some new life.

We know that the brutal death metal Kataklysm is dead – and great as **Cryptopsy** is I wouldn't call it a complete replacement – but I've found enough intensity left in the old bugger to keep my neck snapping. Yeah, there's some unappealing stuff here too, but *Victims of this Fallen World* isn't half as bad as Houde's exit and the layout's hardcore imagery would have you believe. 👍👍👍 ¾

KRAAL
Mutant
1998 Agony Records
3 tracks – 18:27

Those Europeans apart from Scandinavia are doing something weird and with varied results these days. Many of these death metal bands are working with a peppy groove to set themselves apart from the same old stuff. One of the best bands I've heard doing this are France's **Kraal**. The lengthy title track opens this CD EP and grows in aggression until the singer repeats "Destroys me / Slaves of me" vigorously at the end.

The next two tracks are more eclectic with their light uses of keys and female vocals, but Kraal shy from the norm by keeping the guitars chugging and strong with eager palm-muted riffs and melodic lines. The production is top-notch as well, so the only disappointment about this disc is its short running time. 👍👍👍 1/3

LACRIMOSA
Alleine Zu Zweit
1999 Hall of Sermon
4 tracks – 16:25

You may not be expecting to see **Lacrimosa** in these pages but the quality on this single impressed a very skeptical me. I'm not big on the German darkwave scene and male singer Tilo Wolff has a distinct voice that takes getting used to. That said, the emotion and brilliant composition that went into writing the title track and its instrumental rendition can't be measured. Wolff and other main member, Anne Nurmi, employed the services of the London Symphony Orchestra to create this passionate and natural sounding classical piece with rock guitars (the distortion levels are not high enough to call them metal). Wolff and Nurmi sing a wonderful duet in German that builds in fervor without relying on speed to increase the intensity, unlike countless other bands. This track is by far the best and I anxiously await the full-length *Elodia* in June. I also like hearing words sung in another language, as it is not often Americans hear what wonderful melodies can be created by non-English vocals. The last two songs are another symphonic original and an older song ("Copycat") remixed by **Samael**. Check Lacrimosa out, you might be wowed! 👍👍👍👍 ¼

LAS CRUCES
Ringmaster
Brainticket Records 1998
10 tracks – 43:13

Doom is a very different style of music. My first experience with "doom" I guess would be **Entombed**. Wolverine Blues has those riffs that make you wanna drive '69 camaro at full throttle down a dirt road. Well, **White Zombie** is up there too. I didn't realize this stuff was doom until now. Anyway, **Las Cruces** is right up that alley. This shit makes you yearn for a cold beer, a smoke, and fast cars. The only thing I don't like about **Las Cruces** is their tendency to get lost in jams at times. At one moment it's a song, and then the last ten minutes is a "Freebird" jam (this is an exaggerated description of how it feels to hear). I think this style can work only in arranged pieces. Some of the riffs are pretty clever though. Very groovy too. This whole style is very groove oriented. Almost sounds like something more redneck oriented. The basslines sound like a muffler, and the guitars are the engine. Cool stuff though. "Ringmaster" is a cool track. I just thought of it. Cathedral!!! It reminds me of Cathedral's very sort of grind-a-billy sound. That's what I'll call this, grind-a-billy. It's worth a listen. The whole doom thing is starting to grow on me! 👍👍👍 5/8 (Jaun Suarez)

LUNGBRUSH
Old School, New School
1999 Pavement Music
14 tracks – 38:49

Let me clear my throat! Before anything happens here, let me make this exquisitely clear; there is only one Phil Amselmo!!! Man, I love the guy, but you don't see me trying to be him! You know, if these wannabes would listen to his lyrics, they would have heard him say "You can't be something you're not" You're not Phil Anselmo! Amen! Ok, now that we got that squared away, the band is actually ok. The opening track *Urban Tribes* is brutal! Ouch. The album goes on to present a series of songs that are mostly very heavy. There are some good riffs scattered throughout. A couple problems I could see being ironed out in the future are songwriting and consistency. The group inherits good traits from **Pantera,** (musically) **Suicidal Tendencies** and some new school **Snot** type of sounds. The songs just have strange progressions to them. They don't flow well. As far as consistency, the songs sound very different in some cases. One song is very thrashy, and the next is grinding, and the next one is funky. The problem with this is that the mood changes too much. You never get a sense for what the band is all about. It's a very tasteful release, but a little on the generic side. I do look forward to their next release though. They have great potential. As important as the frontman/singer "Roach" (original) seems to be, I think the band should find someone new who isn't so full of themselves and can actually sing. When I hear words like "alibi" "lies" and where is your God, he's dead and gone" I hear a problem. Pretty stale. If you like really heavy, hardcore metal it's worth a listen. I bet they have a rough live set! 👍👍👍 ½ (Jaun Suarez)

MACTÄTUS
Provenance of Cruelty
1999 Napalm Records
8 tracks – 45:30

You guessed it: emo-hardcore! Actually **Mactätus** play black metal in the vein of **Lord Belial** with uppity riffs backed by the incessant tapping usually known as uninventive refrigerator drumming (see **Dark Funeral** review). But I shouldn't be too harsh since these guys aren't so bad and dish out an at least well-played album of Norwegian black metal. I just feel that there are so many bands that can either play well or go into a studio and come out sounding like they do, that musicianship is not enough anymore. The fresh ideas are hard to find today, especially in this genre.

There is creative female vocal use on *Provenance of Cruelty* that goes beyond the average ethereal, angelic passage. "Sleepless Souls" is a very nice song because of this indeed. You might get sleepy as the album progresses, though. Not a whole lot of passages of emotion or power are to be found. Still, Mactätus beat the latest crop of American black metal to hit my mailbox. *That* is a truly cursed fate: being forced to endure hours of raw American black metal. Where's my bible? I'm ready to be saved! 👍👍 ¾

MALEVOLENT CREATION
The Fine Art of Murder
1998 Pavement Music
13 tracks – 56:42

Brett Hoffman, back! Rob Barrett, back! Do you realize what this means? Judging by *The Fine Art of Murder* it means that we can officially hammer the last nail into **Malevolent Creation**'s reluctant coffin. Oh, we thought all was lost when *Stillborn* came out and helped usher in the demise of Florida death metal – other Roadrunner acts Obituary and Deicide can also claim some of the blame, thank you – but then Hoffman was booted for drugs and the band stormed back on Pavement Music with bassist Jason Blachowicz on vocals with *Eternal*. What a comeback! Catchy as hell riffs, brutal vocals, and just that old Malevolent feeling! This album probably showcases guitarist/leader Phil Fasciana and crew at the top of their game in musicality, consistency, and tightness.

After the EP-like *Joe Black* Malevolent Creation took a nosedive and put out the utterly unbearable *In Cold Blood*. I must have listened to it three times before promptly getting it the hell away!

Now we've got the core lineup that brought us that glorious death metal triumph of 1992, *Retribution*. Nowhere else could you find the power of "Eve of the Apocalypse," "Slaughter of Innocence," and "No Flesh Shall be Spared." Where to begin with *The Fine Art of Murder*? It plain sucks! The production is terrible, the riffs straight off the Fasciana/Barrett **Hateplow** project, and Hoffman's trademark fear-instilling bellow is weak and low in the mix. "Day of Lamentation" has acoustic guitars, revealing the band's deterioration as musicians. Any of the other twelve tracks are as faceless as any other and I'm sad to say that these Malevolent dogs who once ruled with *The Ten Commandments* – every song, from "Remnants of Withered Decay" to "Thou Shall Kill," is a classic – are expendable ancients in the evolving world of underground metal. For stubborn ears only. 👍 ¾

MADDER MORTEM
Mercury
1999 Misanthropy Records
9 tracks – 51:59

This has been the hardest review to write for a CD I really love. **Madder Mortem** are not comparable to any other band I've heard and the fact that they're from Norway only makes them more intriguing. They are led by the soulful singing of Agnete

M. Kirkevaag, her voice soft and sensitive one minute, strong and impassioned the next. The only person I can compare her to is the singer from **Jefferson Airplane** (or whatever they're called today) – I just want you to know she doesn't sing like some weak angel. The music backing her is slower but active, the guitarists taking it upon themselves to create something original rather than relying solely on their singer.

It's hard to gauge the "heaviness" of *Mercury* because as is the way with many Misanthropy artists, Madder Mortem aren't your conventional metal band. The album turns into an intimate listening experience far beyond normal as you delve deeper within, "These Mortal Sins" and "The Grinding Silence" standing out as strong atmospheric and emotional songs. A lightly dark mood runs through each song, somehow reminding me of **Tool** of all bands, and **Metallica**'s *Black* album. Keep in mind these are very abstract connections. If this review has interested you, check out the interview in this issue for the scoop on Madder Mortem. 2/3

MENTAL HOME
Black Art
1998 The End Records
9 tracks – 53:13

This album's almost a year old but I wanted to mention it because it's not often you encounter a Russian metal band. Well, I guess someone stood in the bread line for them so they could learn their instruments because these boys can play! I didn't really care for their debut, *Vale*, but *Black Art* shows them playing with a lot more passion, melody, and symphonic touches. The raspy vocals are more distracting than helpful as I wouldn't mind an instrumental album from **Mental Home**. Nonetheless there is a lot of quality to be had from the young band, keep them in mind. 1/3

MESSE NOIR
Mandal – Gate of the Calling
CD – 8 tracks – 17:58

This three-piece Connecticut act uses the following pitches to sell themselves: that **Messe Noir**'s music is "non-repetitive" and they're starting a new genre called "War Metal." The ambiguity I find is that while the music is in fact non-repetitive – because there are no hooks worth repeating – all the songs sound the same! The tempo is always apocalyptic as the guitarist fiddles from riff to riff, all the while the singer growls and rasps like a demented scientist who has just discovered all the crazy sounds his throat can make. And as for War Metal, the insane Aussie bands already coined the term and Messe Noir sure rip them off in terms of playing unintelligibly nonsensical and unmemorable garbage. After two songs I am already bored out of my skull! If you want to hear *real* War Metal check out England's **Bal-Sagoth** – they create huge and mighty martial landscapes without being repetitive. ¼

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MITHOTYN
King of the Distant Forest
1998 Metal Blade/Invasion
11 tracks – 58:27

People have come to know **Mithotyn** by their reputation as black metal ruled by folk influences. The few songs I heard from *In the Sign of the Ravens* definitely had this overt feature but *King of the Distant Forest* is evidence that Mithotyn are a metal band. The guitar harmonies are ever present, like on my favorite "We March," but the folk elements are channeled into the band's more epic approach toward their seeming goal as the **Manowar** of black metal. But don't think they've reached that level just yet, and it's way too cold in Norway to even think about wearing pants that expose your butt cheeks.

I find myself listening to this album frequently despite its two glaring flaws. First is the shoddy production job. The mix is clear but everything sounds tinny, rendering the guitars thin and not epic. You'd think a band would take the time to fashion a strong sound for its second album with great worldwide distribution. The second problem is the vocals. Bassist Richard Martinsson's wails are extreme to the point of being overdone and contrast with the would-be-really-melodic-if-the-sound-were-better music. Still I enjoy the album and even the vocals, for some reason I cannot understand because I normally hate "true Norwegian" vocals. So you be the judge, because *King of the Distant Forest* is quite flawed but I still like it anyway. ¾

MORGION
Solinari
1999 Relapse Records
8 tracks – 52:49

Both **Mindrot** and **Morgion** are signed to Relapse Records, are from California, and play doom. Mindrot's *Soul* is a sometimes difficult listen and I don't think the band have reached their potential. Morgion are known for thick, crushing guitars and deep growls. Their light keyboard use was also a plus on *Among Majestic Ruin*, a fairly traditional doom album that did manage to convey the band's unique sound. *Solinari* shows them expanding their music into longer songs, much like Mindrot's classic *Dawning* album. All appears well and there are nice buildups within the songs, but when it comes time for a definitive, climactic moment there isn't one. Morgion have a perfect foundation to be the new kings of doomy death but for now they haven't pulled it all together as much as I was expecting. Maybe next time. ¼

MORTEM
The Devil Speaks in Tongues
1998 Merciless Records
12 tracks – 52:51

The cover is cool, and so is the album title. The intro to the disc is kind of evil, it set the mood, and then the music started. This record is an attempt at death metal. Claiming they've been together since 1986 (yeah right, I think **Chuck Schuldiner** was still inventing the genre) they show very little musicianship and skill. The songs are poorly arranged, and the drummer is a sloppy mess! Not to mention, the murky sound and production probably masked most of the real crap. Take your evil wannabe demonic image and blow it out your arse! I'm sorry, but image is nothing. If anything it compliments music, it doesn't make it. Being from South America doesn't earn this band any **Sepultura** sympathy! They sound like they haven't rehearsed for three years! A few harsh demonic screams earn a bomb. (Jaun Suarez)

NAGLFAR
Diabolical
1998 WAR Music

The band are from Sweden and play fast as hell. Some call the music death metal, others call it black metal. And I was initially hesitant to give praise to **Naglfar** but then I realized that the intensity, great production, and musicianship found on *Diabolical* mostly make up for the shortcomings on the originality front. Most bands can't handle all that Naglfar embody: high-speed but varied tempos, a sound somewhere between death and black, and a wicked vocalist *not* just like Tomas Lindberg (**At the Gates**). Other relationships can be drawn to **Marduk** and the odd guitar sounds first heard on **Hades**'s *Again Shall Be*.

With **Dissection**'s Jon Nodveidt locked up for a foolish crime, fans of *The Somberlain* and *Storm of the Light's Bane* are starved for something similar. **Sacramentum**'s *Far Away from the Sun* is a good start and you'll also find songs like "12th Rising" here very suitable. A lot of extreme black metal riffing is prevalent throughout the album, the feeling of this style more prevalent than of death metal.

It would have been nicer for the guitars to be higher in the mix, which would definitely have enhanced the similarity to **Satyricon**'s *Nemesis Divina*. The less polished sound on that album makes it seem more real than *Diabilical*. Most listeners won't be as picky as me about Naglfar and admittedly this is an intense listen, but I just find it misses the mark and leaves unfulfilled potential a la *Enter the Moonlight Gate* by **Lord Belial**. All the ingredients are here but the result seems undercooked. The best tracks here are "The Brimstone Gate," "Blades," and "Uncrowned Majesty." 2/3

NEMBRIONIC
Incomplete
1998 Displeased Records
16 tracks – 48:26

I'll be damned, those Europeans are even surpassing us on the brutality front. It's no surprise from these Dutch boys however, since they've been playing together since 1991. And while most bands spawned during the death metal explosion of that time have folded, **Nembrionic** forge ahead as an ever tighter, more punishing unit. I think all the grindcore bands in America need to pick up a copy of *Incomplete* in order to see how outclassed they are, for each song here is a crisp gem of how to brutalize. One of the reasons Nembrionic are so stable is that all the members are great buddies, and the last 12 minutes of the disc feature them hanging out and singing along to random songs (and a cover of "My Sharona." You'll laugh, you'll cry, this album you should buy.

NEVERMORE
Dreaming Neon Black
1999 Century Media
13 tracks – 65:59

As I held this CD for the first time, I thought, "Could **Nevermore** possibly ever top *The Politics of Ecstasy*?" The answer is no. Keeping this in mind, the band amazingly enough created what I would call a perfect sequel. *Dreaming Neon Black* picks up where *Politics* left off, reminding me what Nevermore is all about right from the first cut, "Beyond Within." They maintain their huge sound and apply it to a series of relentlessly crafty music. The musicianship is obvious in the clever and subtle use of timing and riffing. Vocalist Warrel Dane puts his soul into the intense melodies and powerful harmonies that complete each piece. Nevermore explores all sounds from beautiful to brutal. At a broader listen, these guys are good ol' fashioned heavy right down to the low guitar tuning. The guitar riffs are original and the drums erect a furious wall of rhythm sure to get your adrenaline going. Unite all this under the canopy of a depressing story (it's a concept album) and you've got a masterpiece. They put all other Seattle bands (except maybe **Queensryche**) to pure shame, he he. (Juan Suarez)

NEW EDEN
Obscure Master Plan
1999 Nuclear Blast
10 tracks – 50:04

Okay, I'll acknowledge that there is some impressive guitar playing here. Some of the melodies and power metal riffs are pretty catchy. But that really doesn't matter because of the damn singer. There's no polite way to tell the band he sucks and if they have any aspirations of selling albums they should either boot him or send him away for serious lessons. Imagine a **King Diamond** clone going through puberty as a professional wrestler kicks his scrotum forcefully and repeatedly. There's even some **Forbidden** in there for added aggression. I think Nuclear Blast felt obligated to sign guitarist and founder Horacio Colmenares's **New Eden** because he had previously played with label mates **Steel Prophet**. Too bad because while reviewers sometimes point out that the album in question seems average now but might have been huge a few years ago, *Obscure Master Plan* is a bad album in 1999 as it would have been in 1989 and before.

NIGHT IN GALES
Thunderbeast
1998 Nuclear Blast
13 tracks – 54:20

I picked up this band's debut, *Towards the Twilight*, at a used CD shop and it's one of the best finds I've made. Despite its occasional awkward vocal or musical moment, it is one of my favorite super-melodic death metal albums. And the fact that **Night in Gales** are from Germany was refreshing because they had some obvious non-Swedish influences added to their overall musicianship.

I had high hopes for *Thunderbeast*. In some ways it delivers but in others it leaves me scrambling back to their debut. While there a number of strong rhythms and the musicianship is still good, Night in Gales don't seem as ambitious as before. They didn't take any risks into creating an album dripping with emotion, melody, and power. Instead *Thunderbeast* is them being safe, stressing their **At the Gates** influences and cutting down on leads and classical roots.

Because I've been a fan of the band I can get into the album, but I think someone who's not as big a fan of the style as me will smartly take his money elsewhere. ½

NONPOINT
Struggle
1998 Conquest Music
12 tracks – 48:59

You might want to grab a roll of toilet paper because I am about to shit all over **Nonpoint**. There three reasons for this: a) I will make them my whipping boy for the whole '90s metal scene, b) I interviewed them in issue #3 and must explain both myself and my disappointment, and c) the live show I saw them perform in February.

Okay, what's with metal these days? I refer to American bands specifically because the Europeans still know how to play their instruments while what I see over here is the urbanization of American metal. You've got all these hardcore and Latino influences stripping true metal of its technicality, speed, and feel. And like most of these bands, Nonpoint have a few good songs to start off but soon enough you've got *the* same damn riffs that have no variation and with one intent – to get the audi-

ence to jump vertically like pencils on hot coals. The vocalist yells a lot and then he raps a little, maybe gives some spoken words, but then the audience is bored so the guitarist cranks out a stagnant riff that keys the drummer to hit his crashes a lot, which sends a remote signal to the crowd to get hopping.

I interviewed Nonpoint's Mike Hillyard in *Sloth* #3. He's no longer in the band and at that time they still played hardcore metal with their thrash roots. Those days are long gone. Now they are trendy enough to get signed by Roadrunner (though they might not have enough piercings.) Incidentally, what the fuck happened to Roadrunner? How could a company responsible for discovering **Obituary**, **Deicide**, **Gorguts**, and **Fear Factory** now foster bands like **Coal Chamber**?

Now about this live show I saw. Things started well enough with a couple of energetic songs – even the drummer was leaping around his kit. But soon I'd heard enough pit-inducers and chilled on the couch behind a pool table, out of eyeshot but the earplugs unfortunately did not block all sound. Why was I so thankful about not having to physically see these guys? Besides that they dressed anything like a hard band, singer Elias was responsible for my disgust. He has dreaded pigtails on either side of his head, which actually looked neat, but on his face was glitter. Fucking glitter! What a pussy! And earlier he had had one of those paperboy bags slung over his shoulder, too. You know those bags – especially prominent on college campuses – that people wear as they walk around urgently, this bag an *obvious* sign of their importance, so out of the way! *I work for the college radio station as promotions director, watch out for me! I decide which crappy bands get on rotation. My friend has a bag like this too and he buys coffee from Starbucks. Aren't we the mature young alternative adults, responsible without forgetting how to be hip.* 💣💣

NOTHINGFACE
Another Everyday Atrocity
1998 Mayhem Records
9 tracks – 37:56

Yahoo! Good new school hardcore. I thought **Hatebreed** and **Earth Crisis** were the only ones. The best part is, these guys aren't straight edge! That gets them a star already. Besides being cool (the guitarist wears a cool cowboy hat) these dudes really know how to "fuck it up" for lack of a better phrase. Very meaty guitar riffs backed by an amazingly tight drummer and a furious singer (how do these small guys yell like that?) There's nothing more refreshing than new riffs and progressions. If the brutal opener *Goldtooth* doesn't break a bone, then the angst driven *Grinning* might piss you off. If you're real hard (like me) you get past these, but the rest of the record is like a round of jabs that make you want to swing back in fury. What a fine job by these rookies! I can sleep comfortably tonight. 💣💣💣💣 ½ (Juan Suarez)

OBTRUNCATION
The Callous Concept
1999 Damnation Records
12 tracks – 48:03

Obtruncation are unashamed purveyors of intensely fast grind. Oddly enough the songs toward the end of *The Callous Concept* are better than the others, a reversal of so many bands that start well but putter out halfway through the album. Not to say this is any great band, though they play together and the production is very crisp. What separates the best bands in this demanding style is the drummer, whose beat has a strong influence on where a song goes, its tempo, and its coherence. And Martin does a decent job so it's the guitarists who don't give him enough to work with, or...To cut through the crap, Obtruncation are average insane grind and aren't anything you haven't heard before. 💣💣💣

ODES OF ECSTASY
Embossed Dream in Four Acts
1998 The End Records
6 tracks – 32:29

Metal is evolving, folks. For Greece's **Odes of Ecstasy** metal is just a mere part of the dynamic whole presented on their debut album. Strong classical and operatic influences are prevalent throughout, and they are not superficial add-ons used by an incapable band being passed-by. The music here is cutting edge, complete with melodic guitar licks, soprano female vocal lines, and dramatic keyboards. And though many bands look alike on paper because they too utilize diverse elements, Odes of Ecstasy are not just a metal band taking from other styles – their whole musical self is rooted in all these styles. The album is heavy, beautiful, emotional, and oh so memorable. So order this from a catalogue if you have to, it's worth the wait over picking up the latest nonsense at the store. 💣💣💣💣 1/3

OLD MAN'S CHILD
Ill-Natured Spiritual Invasion
1998 Century Media

Surely you've heard of this unique Norwegian band by now. Main man Galder has taken his project from unknown black metal band to addictive black metal alternative on *Born of the Flickering* through hit-and-miss *Pagan Prosperity* to *Ill-Natured Spiritual Invasion*. The album sees him speeding things up and orchestrating them out, with **Slayer**-type riffs mixing with refreshing, puffy keyboards. Comparing the darkness of that classic *Born of the Flickering* to Galder's present creation, you'd think he got a great job at the circus. The tunes are peppy and fun, his trademark rasp and growl trading off like a pair of happy children playing in a sandbox. Add drum legend Gene Hoglan to the fray and this album looks to be one of the safer purchases in a while. 💣💣💣💣 ¼

OPETH
My Arms, Your Hearse
1998 Century Media
9 tracks – 52:38

I know this album is a year old but **Opeth** rule, I've never sounded off on them before, and a new album is sure to come out soon. You must have read about these Swedish geniuses somewhere and all the press they get is deserved. Every time I hear their recorded-in-1994-but-released-a-year-later debut *Orchid* I am struck by its brilliance anew. Follow-up *Morningrise* is quite cool but since I don't own it and don't want to talk out of my ass I won't say more, just that *My Arms, Your Hearse* was eagerly anticipated worldwide and rightfully so. Opeth are a band that wholeheartedly earn all their respect. I just hope someday others will look back upon them the way **Dark Tranquillity** is now revered, though *Skydancer* was much more influential to me than *The Mind's I*.

My Arms, Your Hearse features a more traditional folk metal guitar sound than Opeth are known for, but if you think this album is anything short of a masterpiece we need to rumble. And not *Mortal Kombat* rumble, I'm talking old school *Double Dragon* action where Charlie Sheen look-alikes duke it out against huge G. Gordon Liddy look-alikes. What the hell am I talking about?

I'm trying to say that Opeth rule. Be it their commitment to heaviness and inventiveness or their long and memorable songs, they rule. I shouldn't have to keep talking, especially because I jump off on the stupidest tangents, so I won't. Just pick up the Opeth catalog. My birthday's in May so you know what I'm asking for – *Morningrise* and a pet midget. 💣💣💣💣💣

OPPOSITE EARTH
Headspace
1998 Conquest Music Group
10 tracks – 48:09

Featuring clean vocals and seventies keyboards, two of my favorite musical aspects these days, **Opposite Earth** is just the doctor ordered for a great progressive band. The album forges a fine balance between melody and chunkiness so that *Headspace* isn't your typical over-your-head-unless-you're-in-music-school progressive metal album. Steven Vincent sings smooth lines that bring **Rush** and **Tool**'s vocalists to mind, with more relation to the former. These days I can't get enough of the airy, twiddling keyboards some bands are using – death metal fans into this and moogs *must* get **Paraxism's** MCD *Xism Excursion* – and Rick Risberg does a great job as both backup man and song leader when his number is called.

Opposite Earth is an easy listen for the metalhead. Their music is beautiful but with enough punch so that we don't think it's too light. I'm relieved to know bands like this are still out there that can still play when the trend today is stray further and further from musical ability into one-tone crap that panders to the lowest common denominator of adolescent rebels. 💣💣💣💣 ¼

OPPRESSOR
Elements of Corrosion
1998 Olympic Recordings
9 tracks – 32:09

This review needs to be here because I've ragged on **Oppressor** pretty hard in the past. While they've always been good musicians it is only *Elements of Corrosion* that all the pieces are falling into place for the band. Now the riffs are more brutal, the transitions are smoother, and the lead work remains splendid. I might call Oppressor the poor man's **Morbid Angel**, though I have not been impressed with Trey and crew for a few years now. Fans of complex brutality take note! MMM 2/3

PANZERCHRIST
Outpost – Fort Europa
1999 Serious Entertainment
8 tracks – 28:56

After some mental battles I have decided I like **Panzerchrist**, but not without a few reservations. *Outpost – Fort Europa* is this Danish quintet's second album and it is said to be less extreme than the *Six Seconds Kill* debut. Main men Lasse Hoile (vocals) and Michael Enevoldsen (drums) are the only remaining members from that album, but I think that Enevoldsen is probably in charge of the whole operation. Why? Because he used to play with Denmark's gods **Illdisposed** and Panzerchrist sure sound a lot like them!

Anyone familiar with Illdisposed will immediately recognize their trademark brutal vocals and heavy, catchy riffs; therefore popping in this CD will make them think they're hearing outtakes from *Submit* or *There's Something Rotten*. This mention of unoriginality is not too harsh because Panzerchrist do have their own personality at times, though you can't look past the connection on "Skin" and "Uranium Angel."

I bet if I didn't like Illdisposed I would like this less, but because I do, I give Panzerchrist a pass. This is some heavy shit, just not as good. I will say on their behalf that they are trying by incorporating some melody with keyboards on "Fort Europa" and closer "Surrender is not an Option," but I'm not sure how appropriate they are on an album of this nature – not a clean note sung anywhere – and especially when the running time is less than half and hour yet a quarter of it is spent on instrumentals. "Fort Europa" is actually quite enjoyable with its guitar leads but the other, following the lackluster "Flesh in the Scent," makes the album end on a downer. 💣💣💣 ½

PISSING RAZORS
Cast Down the Plague
1999 Noise Records
13 tracks – 42:29

Here's a dose of modern American metal from **Pissing Razors**, a band that tour constantly to establish their name. It's not hard to compare them to other bands at all. Mix **Stuck Mojo** and **Meshuggah** riffs with **Pantera** and **Sepultura** vocals, being sure to spread a thick layer of **Machine Head** over it all. *Cast Down the Plague* is an aggressive album mainly because the riffs are so intense; therefore the guitars are my favorite element of the music. I think the vocals hurt the band because they sound muffled and a delivery more like Bonz from Stuck Mojo would be more appropriate. Still, you cut your losses and realize that for a nineties metal band Pissing Razors are somewhat exciting. MMM ½

POST MORTEM
Repulsion
Pavement Music/Morbid Records
16 tracks – 65:40

I don't care about the hype the record companies are manifesting about this band. **Post Mortem** sound like **Ugly Kid Joe** and **Testament** trying to play death metal. That is stupid. The production is shoddy and you can't get Whitfield out of your head between some other person's half-assed growls. There are however some catchy old-school riffs and sometimes the band are not completely annoying. I even see a cross between **Anthrax**'s riffs and the crazy vocals of **Mass Psychosis** on "Beyond the Bounds." But if ESPN were to put out a CD for beer parties I bet Post Mortem could get on there. There are too many **Dead Youth**-ified Whitfield wails and moans for me to take, so forgive me if I cut this review and my final listen short. 💣💣 ½

PROJECT 86
Self-titled
1998 BEC Recordings
10 tracks – 48:56

There's always room for slow mosh grooves. These guys managed to put together a set of songs that are sure to toy with your



emotions. What makes this group kick ass is that right when you feel a stomp riff coming on, they deliver it on cue and with brutal force. A very heavy **Rage Against the Machine** influence can be heard, only these guys have bigger kahunas. The excellently composed songs are chock full with tasty, ripe grooving. The album is a musical Blitzkrieg. Like a good meal, I feel fulfilled after listening. The songs are consistently good to the end. The rap-ish vocals are used intelligently and don't get old, and there are even some catchy choruses like in *Run* and the closer *When Darkness Reigns*. These guys build their riffs so well that you're practically begging for the drop. A top notch effort. Thank God there are good *new* bands, the next **Pantera** disc won't be out for a while...

4 ½

PROPHANITY
Stronger than Steel
1999 Metal Blade/Death/Blackened
9 tracks – 41:37

If you haven't already, read the **Mithotyn** review because **Prophanity** are a more polished and technical version of that Norwegian quartet; they're Swedish too. The vocals are just as raspy though not as wildly unsettling, so they become boring. I'm not sure who will like *Stronger than Steel* for it possesses technical old-school metal skills, some modern melodic riffing, but is delivered more aggressively than you'd expect. So I don't know if this will satisfy anybody – there's not enough of one style that sticks out to guide the album ahead. Add an average production and too much *okay* material to the mix and you're left indifferent, not even concerned about Prophanity's unfulfilled potential. Well, there are too many bands to worry about in this review section alone to care. The last song, "Swedish Steel," is more what I'd like to hear from them. It's got that heavy production but power metal vocals. Not enough bands do that and I wish more would blend the two styles. 3 ¼

PRO-PAIN
Act of God
1999 Nuclear Blast
12 tracks – 36:00

Pro-Pain are back for the millionth time with a hardcore metal album and once again the only improvement is the production. I swear all of their songs follow the same formula and that they have not gotten better as musicians in a decade. I can't tell the difference between the songs here from any others of the past few years, but the kids for some reason like Pro-Pain. Yeah, it's catchy and professional, but anybody can play these songs!

Pro-Pain are going through the motions to make money from music rather than to work, which is understandable on one hand, but they don't have to passion like on "Pound for Pound" or "Mercy Killings." I know this will sell, but you have to ask yourself if well-produced guitars will convince you to let average songs pass. 2 ¾

PROPHECY
Foretold...Foreseen
1999 Corpse Gristle Records
8 tracks – 48:36

Grr...Cookie Monster! Must recite alphabet slowly! Must enunciate but no one will know what I say! Must have guitarist interrupt each fast riff with slow pit beat so I can go: Ee-ee-ooh-ooh-*yoreeee*! I like when the song goes dunh-dunh-dunh-duh all the time – it is refreshing and new! I am like another instrument because the guitar goes dung-dung-dung-dung-*urrie*, and I go ee-ee-ooh-ooh-*oorie*. Not only am I hooked on phonics, I love numbers too. I can count with each riff: one, two, three, four, five, six, seveneightnine! We are brutal. Mmmm...COOKIES! 3 ¼

RADAKKA
Requiem for the Innocent
1998 Century Media
11 tracks – 58:10

I don't really understand what **Radakka** are about. Oh, the music in understandable enough – hard-rockin' power metal with haughty lead vocals and '80s leads. The lyrics are the confusing part because every song is laced with sexual imagery and moaning. That's nothing too risqué, but then the singer shouts about what a whore this woman is, then how much he needs her, then he moans about sweat. I was just eating a sandwich and hearing this guy groan in the heat of the moment really didn't do it for me. I think that Bret Michaels was his main lyric inspiration, which is cool...I guess? As for the album, it's fun and there are some catchy parts, but it all seems a bit silly. 3 ¼

RED SKY
Knife Behind the Smile
1998 Endless Fight Records
10 tracks – 28:36

Oh, you just think this is going to be a hardcore band – hell, it was initially formed by two guys from hardcore bands – but two songs in and you know you've stumbled into the kind of ass beating you can't get at a stomp-riff show. **Red Sky** are heavy, metal, urban, crushing. You'd want to see the band play on a ground stage so you could feel the guitarists heave and see the drummer's sweat fly, all while the two vocalists are screaming indecipherably.

The sextet are diversely rooted in hardcore and death metal, and strong hints of LA metal and **Slayer** mix in, especially in the tinny guitar sound. Going beyond the limitations of both hardcore and death, Red Sky are creating energetic atmospheres that make you want to turn the volume up and scream. What lacks in instrumental prowess is superceded by songwriting maturity. And by maturity, think about it this way: Red Sky take all the strong elements from the various heavy styles and inject them into their veins. These guys rip! They are one of the few bands which hardcore, metal, and death metal kids could see live together and not end up beating each other up over ideology during the show. 4 ¼

RESURRECTURIS
Nocturnal
1998 Diamond Records International
10 tracks – 43:18

I knew that I liked this but it took a final few listens to understand what irked me. **Resurrecturis**, a longstanding underground act, have a variety of styles working in their music, from thrash to death to melodic metal. When they play with the melody and emotion everything is great, but when the thrash is prominent the problems set in. I don't think people are up for an album of simple, catchy riffs and dry vocals. Thankfully *Nocturnal* is more than this, but if Resurrecturis want to reach the next level they may have to shelve the old stuff. It's like every other song is a sign of progression because half are really great and the rest are so-so. They even throw some clean and female vocals with great success on songs like "Il Male Contro Il Male" and "Dark Moods." There is just too much talent in the guitar department and in the singer's gruff vocals to be wasted by failing to progress. Keep an eye on them! 3 ¾

SACRAMENTUM
Thy Black Destiny
1999 Century Media
10 tracks – 39:16

If you ever want to hear an album comparable to the great **Dissection**, check out **Sacramentum**'s *Far Away from the Sun*. It rules! If you ever want to waste your money on poor sounding and indecipherable black/thrash billed as "violent and hateful black metal," check out *Thy Black Destiny*. It will evoke the mightiest of emotions from you: frustration and I-can't-believe-I-bought-this-shit anger. All the promise Sacramentum had and could have greatly capitalized on with Dissection's indefinite postponement, has given way to dry riffs and raspy vocals of the forgettable kind. Don't believe the hype, Sacramentum will bore you to death. 2 ½

SAD LEGEND
Self-titled
1998 Hammerheart Productions
7 tracks – 40:03

This is just what the Norwegian black metal scene needed: a South Korean band to show them how it's done! **Sad Legend** come from Seoul, Korea, playing a catchy style of atmospheric black metal which (according to the bio) is rooted in Korea's ancestral sorrow and traditional music. What I hear are unimposing guitar riffs melded with light keyboard use, enough speed sections to please the purists, and tons of fresh ideas.

One of the best elements on *Sad Legend* is an atmospheric high male soprano voice that frequently appears in tandem with traditional snarls. The emotion I find lacking in most black metal bands shines through here; "Han" is a prime example. Combine this with methodical guitar moods and fully structured songs, with a great production to boot, and you've got the surprise black metal hit of the year. I instinctively grab *Sad Legend* when I'm not sure what to listen to – a true testimonial to an album's greatness. 5

SARCASM
A Touch of the Burning Red Sunset
1998 Breath of Night Records
9 tracks – 41:27

I don't know what the deal is, but people think they can sell horrible music by calling it "pure" and "old school". **Sarcasm** are Swedish but play their songs are totally out of control and without an ounce of melody. If you are sick of the trendy stuff coming out of Sweden you still won't like this album because the riffs are stale and buried beneath an cheap production. I hate Sarcasm. 2 ¼

SATARIEL
Lady Lust Lilith
1998 Pulverised Records
10 tracks – 50:47

Pulverised Records hails from Singapore, but before you doubt that such a remote place could find good metal bands, please know that we have to credit this label with discovering **Amon Amrath**. That said, **Satariel** is the next Swedish death machine hoping to make it big under Pulverised's wing. Bringing an offering reminiscent of **Ebony Tears**, **Sacrilege**, **Molested** and of course some **At the Gates**, the quintet on paper doesn't seem worth your time. But there is hope and with Ebony Tears recently abandoning its eventual rise to the top, we may need to nurture Satariel.

The strongest songs aren't the ones with the forceful vocals, but those featuring clean, almost soulful singing. The driving, aggressive Swedish melodic death metal guitars are not bad, but when coupled with typical rasps and growls it becomes an average, sometimes unappealing affair. Interestingly, what happens when vocalist Pär Johansson actually sings is that guitarists Mikael Granqvist and Magnus Alakangas play very catchy melodies to accompany him. The opener, "Devil's Dozen (XIII)" is a perfect example of this breakthrough that is beautiful to hear. Songs like "The Well of the Artist," "4 Moons Till Rising," and "The Great Necropolis" plod through the tried-and-true territory that may be decent, but why settle for that? In the name of originality and forging the Swedish scene ahead, these guys should focus in on the successes of the lengthy title track, "Behind What's I," and "They're Sheep to be Slain," the latter's chorus a haunting sing-along affair. Further, Satariel doesn't have to sacrifice its roots and influences. By focusing in on the clean vocals, which are sung quite capably, the band will probably shed the excess wasteful riffs that only fill time.

I want Satariel to be a great band. The potential Ebony Tears had is evident on *Lady Lust Lilith*, minus the female vocals and violin of course, and if a sudden desire to play like **Meshuggah** doesn't surface, we could behold a bold step in the world of Swedish metal. 3 ¾

SCATTERED REMNANTS
Destined to Fail
1998 Repulse Records
8 tracks – 31:40

Scattered Remnants became an underground success by working their asses off through incredible self-promotion. I got so many flyers for their stuff it's no wonder their two demos, *Procreation of Mass Carnage* and the CD *Inherent Perversion*, earned sales in the thousands. The CD is a glorious example of American brutal death metal but it is also laced with touches of European melody. We interviewed guitarist Rob Settergren in issue #3 based on the strength of that release. It took three years to finally get an album out and now it appears the band will call it a day, frustrated by their inability to find a permanent drummer. So if *Destined to Fail* is to complete their legacy, the underground surely owes a lot to Massachusetts's Scattered Remnants.

The new album isn't as awesome as *Inherent Perversion* but it packs more punch and catchiness than most brutal bands. What I couldn't get was the keyboard track in the middle and the use of female vocals on "At the Right Hand of Nothingness." They are not fitting to the band's style the way the melodic guitar riff in "Amidst the Afterbirth" started *Inherent Perversion*. "Virtuous Abandonment" and "Lamentation of Tortured Souls" are what we've come to expect from the band – fiddling, swirling guitars and Jason Hendershaw's thunderous polar-bear growls. That is the Scattered Remnants legacy, brutal fucking death! Of all the bands that have to break up, why this one? 3 ¾

SCULPTURE
Self-titled
1999 Nuclear Blast
11 tracks – 49:14

It is hard to construct a review for this band because I like them even though I know I normally would not. **Sculpture** feature ex-**Crematory** guitarist Lotte and (I sure hope) current-**Darkseed** vocalist Stefan. Readers familiar with either will want to know the music on this album isn't much like Crematory and Stefan's voice is less emotional than on *Spellcraft*, but only gruff to the point that he sounds as if he has a tiny motor purring

in his throat.

The amount of gothic rock I hear on the album is not as much as the bio sheet had me prepared for, and I was struck more by the amount of light metal riffs that run the formulated songs. Why I had trouble believing I liked Sculpture is that they don't sound all that European and had a lot of American grooves and convention to their music. I am very upset with this country's mainstream hard rock/metal so it was a surprise to find myself grooving to this un-German sounding band.

Each song has a saving grace from whatever cheesy or lame riff I would usually agonize over: "Deniers" is a perfect example because the awesome, haunting chorus outweighs the simple body riff. Most of the songs have a strong chorus or other repeated lines that are soothing and memorable, and you will have no problem with this CD if you're doing something while it's playing. There are a lot of subtleties presented here, closer "Down the Ages" the most notable for its keys and vocals.

I heard aspects of **Machine Head**, older **Metallica**, and (I hope this isn't too esoteric of a reference) Portugal's popular **Ramp** throughout, especially the latter's *Intersection* album. Maybe I need Sculpture to fill my lighter music needs that stuff on the radio just can't do because that doesn't have the power, however subtle, that I need. I mean there's even a ballad called "Why," and "I'm Free" is not aggressive but very beautiful, showing strong gothic elements. A couple of songs towards the album's end are irksome, but by then I was won nonetheless by Sculpture's easy listening vibe. 4/4

SCULPTURED
The Spear of the Lily is Aureoled
1998 The End Records
7 tracks – 41:17

The End Records is intent on fostering metal bands for the 21st century and **Sculptured** are one of them. The price paid is that some of them are inexperienced – judging by the band photo these guys are probably 20 at most – so while the musicianship and ambition are strong, the songwriting and production skills aren't there yet. But it's a tradeoff because you know they can play and it's only a matter of time everything falls into place. (You'll want to know these songs were recorded two years ago, so the future may already be here on the band's upcoming album.)

On *The Spear of the Lily is Aureoled* the Washington State trio cover a lot of ground, tackling European melodic metal guitars, piano and saxophone interludes, some clean American vocals, some straight-up death metal. Think of **Fatal Embrace** and a lesser **Opeth**. As noted this is an admirable attempt from the young band and we are almost guaranteed a fine sophomore release soon. 2/3

SEA OF TRANQULLITY
The Omegan Ruins
1999 Cursed Productions
10 tracks – 66:25

These boys had a split CD with **Pax Mortis** that was a brutal affair that showcased both groups' originality. *The Omegan Ruins* is the band's first full-length yet all the songs were written between 1995-97 and one from 1992. These songs are not very brutal at all! Instead **Sea of Tranquility** play mid-paced death metal that is technical to the point of monotony. Surely you've seen a struggling metal band from your area playing out live, each member just standing there doing his technical thing but not being *heavy*. The band's thrash influences really hurt their formerly intense music, bringing **Morticite** to mind. Plus look how long the album is! The good stuff in here gets buried in all the plodding riffs and blah raspy vocals, so I am one very disappointed in Sea of Tranquility's abandonment of their very promising brutal style to overdone musicality. 2/3

SEPSISM
Purulent Decomposition
1999 Repulse Records
12 tracks – 39:03

How do you separate **Sepsism**'s form of brutal death metal from the many other American bands? I would say it's their raw, almost old school guitar sound. Repulse compares them to **Terrorizer**, but I've never heard that band so I don't know. Sepsism definitely have the LA feel, especially in sound and their catchy delivery. The first couple songs are really good but then I got bored until "Uterocasket" and "Brutally Butchered" kicked in. Talk about heavy! And don't get upset about the cheesy song titles because they've been doing it since 1990. It's safe to say that the second half of *Purulent Decomposition* is more lethal than the first, an odd but pleasant fact since forty minutes of boring brutal death metal ain't cool. Could it be, is American death metal making a comeback? Judging by the likes of Sepsism, **Divine Empire**, and some others it just might be. 3¼

SEPULTURA
Against
1998 Roadrunner Records
15 tracks – 47:26

As far as I'm concerned, this group needed a comeback after they let Ross Robinson ruin *Roots*. I got scared when I heard the tribal drums in the opening. Did they succeed? Sure. This record is hard. Thankfully, they didn't get absorbed in the pointlessly low and noisy, unclear, one-string guitar riffs their ex-frontman turned to...To regain some stature they focused on clever and thick guitar riffs with beefed-up drums, assuring mosh pits in the future. The less-is-more notion works when topped by new singer Derek Green's tasteful growling. From the thrasher "Choke" to "Floaters in the Mud," listeners can enjoy the catchy choruses. Oh yeah, it also seems drummer Igor Cavalera's second foot is back in action as he pounds out some brutal double-bass. The finished product is the classic **Sepultura** riffage with an extra dash of heaviness...okay, an extra handful of heaviness. One problem, it's one of those CDs where you know the first few songs but not the second half. It gets dull. At least **Soundgarden** quit while they were ahead. These guys got **Metallica** syndrome... 2½ (Juan Suarez)

Sepultural Feast – A tribute to Sepultura
1998 Black Sun Records
15 tracks – 63:00

There's no need for any chitchat here since you know what the album's about! **Sacramentum** perform an excellent and true-to-form version of "The Curse/AntiChrist." The same cannot be said for **Deathwitch**'s boring "Necromancer," which just ain't that heavy. Both **Mystifier** and **Swordmaster** play "Warriors of Death" and Swordmaster just blow Mystifier away! Not only is their production way better but they play the song in an extreme frenzy not captured by the Mystifier quartet. Swordmaster are one of the album's best. **Dimension Zero** deliver the goods on an intense, modern-sounding "Troops of Doom." The album continues to rage! **Lord Belial** go apeshit and primal on "Crucifixion" but stick in just enough control to make it another fine track on this tribute. The singer even squeezes in a couple Landfermann (**Bethlehem**'s gloriously tragic *Dictius te Necare*), for which I am eternally grateful. **Defleshed** are notorious for tearing it up and they make easy work of "Beneath the Remains." The production is true to the original though the vocals are a bit different, but I guarantee you'll bang your head to this one. I'm not a big fan of **Impious** but they do a decent job of "Inner Self," though it does drag toward the end. **Children of Bodom** are also average in their rendition of "Mass Hypnosis," but **The Crown** thankfully lift us back to glory on "Arise." The drummer totally rips his kit to shreds, as does the vocalist to his throat. Intense! **Exhumation** follow up with a solid take on "Territory," but at this time I was completely in shock that only one song from *Arise* was covered. Hello! What about "Dead Embryonic Cells" and "Desperate Cry?" Groove-metalers **Gooseflesh** are best playing songs other than their originals, as proved by their cover of "Slave New World." I despise this band but they at least do Sepultura some justice. *Roots* was Sepultura's worst album, but **Slavestate** and **Gardenian** manage to do some good with "Roots Bloody Roots" and "Cut Throat," respectively. I don't have much of an opinion of "Ratamahatta" from **Denial**. The album peaked a few songs ago and the last thing I need to be reminded of is *Roots* after celebrating the glory of *Beneath the Remains* and *Arise*. Overall, a pleasing compilation that is mandatory for the Sepulfreaks and not a bad investment for average fans. 3¼

SHEAVY
The Electric Sleep
1998 The Music Cartel
11 tracks – 59:09

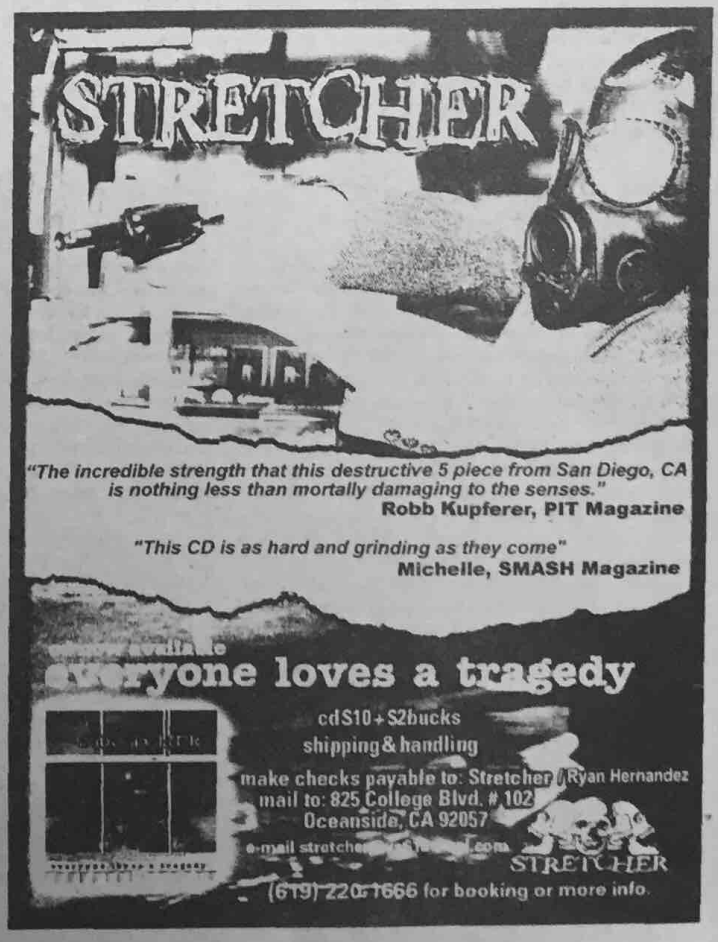
You know I don't go for the doom. Then why the hell am I cranking the **Sheavy**? There is something subtle about their approach that sucked me in, its force something I was unable to resist. Singer Steve Hennessey sounds like **Ozzy** and Eric from **Trouble** but I actually like him! The songs are groovy and I like them too! That is the sign of a good record, when you can get someone who cringes at the genre to play a band's CD and roll with it.

Here are my favorites. "Velvet" is a fine n' smooth ballad with acoustic and light plugged-in guitar and soothing vocals. The title track is led by a subtle, bluesy lick and relaxed "Iron Man"-ish singing. Hennessey is amusing on "Automaton," his voice sounding processed robotically. I think "Savannah" is Sheavy's "Don't Close your Eyes," though it's in memory of the late porn star. Finally, "Oracle" ends on an up note with a faster rocking rhythm that is still in my head. So get Sheavy, doom freaks, it's great! 2/3

SKINLAB
Disembody: The New Flesh
1999 Century Media
10 tracks – 42:03

'90s metal has forsaken me. **Machine Head** and **Sepultura** are not the same. The **Fear Factory** that created *Soul of a New Machine* are exploring new elements. **Life of Agony** was fine for two albums but are now lame. The tag 'Roadrunner' has been a curse. When I think of American metal I cringe and think of underprivileged youths posing and flashing symbols rather than banging their heads. Someone save me.

Skinlab are definitely the first step on my road to recovery. Just before I was to renounce my American citizenship and stowaway to Europe I received *Disembody: The New Flesh*. Here we have a fiery blend of Sepultura riffs and growls, the slight electronic antics of **Fueled**, Machine Head's forgotten aggression, and clean vocals resembling Life of Agony and Fear Factory. Not two successive songs are much alike and you don't tire of the album halfway through like with most '90s metal. Skinlab could be the first step in putting American metal back



on the map for real metal-heads. 🎸🎸🎸🎸

SKYFORGER
Kauja Pie Saules
1998 Mascot Records
9 tracks – 40:21

As I prepared to give this a final listen before writing the review I pulled out a little note I'd scribbled and stuck in the booklet. It read: track 3 – gay ass flute. During the subsequent listen the note proved a fair warning as the flute came in and I had a good laugh. It reappears on "Why the Horns of War are Blown," this time nervously as though the person playing it were being tickled at the time.

But I did not expect such foolish things from this self-proclaimed Latvian raging pagan black metal band who reveled in the spirit of their ancestors circa 1200 for resisting the Christian invasion and paying for it by dying in battle. (And now burning in hell if you believe in His word. Incidentally, what do you think will make you blinder, masturbating or being Christian?) But **Skyforger** try too hard to incorporate the culture of their folk songs and the appealing male choruses with their average and unoriginal black metal skills. Fans of very old school black metal (**Celtic Frost** and **Mayhem**) may enjoy the discordant riffs, generic production, and troll-with-tracheotomy vocals a la **Master's Hammer** – you know, I bought *The Filemnice Occultist* at the Milwaukee Metalfast from some guy outside for like two bucks at it totally blows, but I did score **Pyogensis**'s self-titled debut and it rules – but I think they're trying to sound eclectic.

Skyforger are not an experienced band and only once in a while come up with a decent riff and tempo change, like on "Kurshi." If you take away the sparse flute and clean vocal sections, and the random bagpipes at the start of "Forger Forged Up in the Sky," you find you have listened to an album that has *taken* something from you and you feel empty. 🎸🎸

SLEEP
Jerusalem
1999 The Music Cartel
1 song (6 tracks) – 52:12

Doom! Slow as time, molasses sludgy doom! This is when you know if you're a fan or not. All the kids who hop from one trendy band to the next don't truly love their music. If you like **Sleep** in their unashamed crushing glory, you know you love your music and nothing else is for you. I normally hate this kind of music but *Jerusalem* is so slow, so heavy and overwhelmingly enveloping. It just smothers you like a giant pillow. I think the first track has maybe five different chords but it doesn't drone too much to put you out. I think **Black Sabbath** would be pleased with the guitar sound on here because, like I must repeat, it's so heavy. Too bad Sleep have broken up, but so it goes. Poo-tee-weet. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¼

SOILENT GREEN
Sewn Mouth Secrets
1998 Relapse Records
13 tracks – 45:48

I saw **Soilent Green** last year at the Milwaukee Metalfest and they were amazing. The bar stage was stuffed full and the band went off from start to finish, the guitarists doing their fiddling and the singer torturing his throat with growls and rasps galore. They had obviously improved tenfold over the *Pussysoul* debut and I eagerly awaited *Sewn Mouth Secrets*. So when I got it and wasn't very impressed I confused – it was only when I sat down and gave the album a few quality listens did Soilent Green hit me like they did up at the fest. Beyond the overwhelming wall of blasting insanity that drives each song are pulsing grooves, sick breakdowns, and endless tortured vocals. Only a couple of the middle songs seem pointless, but for the most part *Sewn Mouth Secrets* rages from top to bottom. When *Rolling Stone* published that joke of an article about the best metal bands around – seems like by "best" they meant "most sales by 14-year-olds" – they at least were smart enough to include these guys, and though they're not in my top ten, I'm glad the ignorant masses got a little exposure to what they're missing.



🎸🎸🎸🎸

SOLITUDE AETURNUS
Adagio
1998 Olympic Recordings
13 tracks 62:54

Well, the record company calls these guys "Doom/Power Metal." All I know is that when a band from Dallas goes to record in England, it's gonna be something dark. When I learned that this was their fifth release, and I had never heard them before, that feeling kicked in. (See **Flotsam and Jetsam** review) The older bands just aren't keeping up, except for **Testament** of course. Anyway, the album rocks. It's a very gloomy sound. The singer lays some grand melodies over medieval wartime guitar riffs. The finished product is an intense series of very thick, slow progressions. If I had a castle, this would be a good soundtrack. Overall, the singer is awesome, and the record provides an hour of groove paced melodic metal. It's very pleasing. 🎸🎸🎸🎸

SOLSTICE
New Dark Age
1999 Misanthropy Records
9 tracks – 66:07

I met this guy who worked at a Tower Records in Virginia with a metal section. His name was Tom Phillips and he asked me back around the time of issue #2, "How can you put out a zine called *Sloth* and not like doom?" He then left the country for England to play guitar for **Solstice**. Fast forward to late summer 1998 at (I think) a Morbid Angel show – why does the new vocalist play with a *fan* blowing his hair? – and some guy asks me the same question. I told him and he said he was the same guy. Evidently Tom was no longer in the band so my story is done so let's talk about *New Dark Age*.

Shall we call the band's style melodic doom? Perhaps, because instead of being crushing and full of despair like traditional British doom, elements of stoner rock and heavy metal drive the guitars. The vocalist sings clearly and growls are laced sparsely to say the least. Sometimes he and the band are completely on and create unique while appealing atmospheres. The title track and "Alchemiculte" are examples of how when Solstice are on you will be wowed. These songs have the best of the melodic guitars, too.

Problems arise first because the album is too long. A number of songs are around ten minutes long and there just isn't enough about them to merit the length. The vocalist embraces a folk style sometimes, best demonstrated on the acoustic "The Anguine Rose," but this delivery comes off sore during a number of the regular heavy moments.

Overall I was quite impressed with the band's nearly optimistic style of doom, something very new to me. *New Dark Age* does lose its charm on the final two tracks that total 25 minutes, but hey, I liked plenty more than I expected to. 🎸🎸🎸 ½

SPINESHANK
Strictly Diesel
1998 Roadrunner Records
14 tracks – 47:45

Longtime readers of *Sloth* know that I got burned big time when I gave **Coal Chamber**'s demo a good review in #3 and then got their full-length for review in #4. Trust me, it was not a pretty sight and I unleashed an upset review. Last issue I reviewed **Spineshank**'s demo unaware that they too were on the verge of releasing a Roadrunner Records debut. Luckily I am not as angry this time, but there's a lot of typical '90s metal here that's annoying. The **Korn** influence isn't huge though there's a ton of screaming and yelling in the modern California style. I liked the first few songs but as is the case with mass-marketed metal, the last half of *Strictly Diesel* is as memorable as taking a leak. 🎸🎸 ¾

STEEL PROPHET
Dark Hallucinations
1999 Nuclear Blast America
9 tracks – 46:51

This is the reason this issue is dedicated to "out with the old, in with the new." Old guys trying to rock still. I do feel bad that Power Metal is making a comeback, and these guys are trying to regain some recognition maybe. The only problem, releasing dookie isn't going to just turn heads because of a good record ten years ago. This is the kind of record where some old metal buddies whipped up a little project, only it sounds outdated and it's not clever. The hundreds of lineup changes come as no surprise. Who would want to stay in this band. This case is really a matter of songwriting. There are tons of good musicians out there that just weren't meant to make music. They were meant to play it. These guys can play, they just can't create a great song (or guitar solo). Musicianship earns them they're points. It's not a very good CD to listen to though. They lose big points for letting the guitar player steal a lick from **Randy Rhoads**' solo in "Mister Crowley" on the track "New Life" Tisk tisk!! Think nobody would notice? 🎸🎸 ¼ (Juan Suarez)

STRATOVARIOS
Destiny
1999 Noise Records
10 tracks – 59:01

The Finnish power metal quintet known as **Stratovarius** are absolutely huge around the world and Noise Records has taken up the insane challenge of trying to infiltrate America's ears. *Destiny* is another showcase of the band's brilliant musical and compositional talents, with a perfect production bringing out the leads – ripping and melodic – and Timo Kitipelto's Tate-like delivery. I especially like the driving drums and rhythm guitars that run the songs, not to mention that stagnation is never applicable to a Stratovarius tune. The only drawback is that some songs tend to be on the cheesy romantic side; if you can think of **Hammerfall** as cheesy in the metal realm, and that **Blind Guardian** doesn't fall into such traps, maybe you can see what I mean. This is not necessarily bad, but there's more beauty than aggression, we'll say. See "4000 Rainy Nights" and "Anthem of the World" for proof. All said, you can't go wrong with a band this band, and they *do* deliver. 🎸🎸🎸🎸

STRETCHER
Everyone Loves a Tragedy – 1998
10 tracks – 38:39

Stretcher. Ever heard of them? That doesn't matter because they do it all! I'm talking speed metal riffs, hardcore riffs, death metal riffs, the works! A strong European influence is evident in the guitar sound, its buzz-saw production clear enough that individual notes don't sound like bad chords. As an esoteric reference, think **Lemming Project**'s *Hate and Despise*.

Mario Israel delivers his raw vocals in both metal and hardcore styles, his rasp not too far from Martin Van Drunen. Stretcher is an amazing unsigned band – probably one of America's best – so expect to see that name a lot in the coming months. It's about time a group lived up to the hype on its bio sheet: I give you Stretcher. 🎸🎸🎸🎸 ¾

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TAETRE
Out of Emotional Disorder
1999 Diehard Music
10 tracks – 37:09

I hear that the members of this band have kids who are also in a band together which is called **Taetre Tots**. The guys must've realized what a wimpy name they chose because the logo has two inverted pentagrams, an inverted cross, and many sharp points jutting out all over the place. At least vocalist/guitarist Linblood looks like The Undertaker. His teeth are pretty nasty, too. The album cover has this guy in a straightjacket with flaming eyes and there are stars behind him. Diehard is putting a lot of money behind this band; it's too bad they play generic Swedish death metal. I didn't think many bands were still doing that. In guitarist Danyael's picture he's got an open book placed between two candles on a tablecloth with an embroidered inverted pentagram. Do you think he's reading *The Book of Virtues*? What I really want to know is if that tablecloth comes in forest green. I'm just dying to throw a picnic at Fort Ward Park but all my tablecloths clash with the scenery. "An Epitaph Carven" is so unoriginal that Taetre couldn't have gotten it wrong, so it's catchy. **The Rolling Stones** have a song called "Paint it Black." Taetre now have their own version which is pretty brutal, proving that if they did covers and not half-assed rip-off originals people might buy their albums.

These thoughts I had while distracting myself from *Out of Emotional Disorder*. 🎸 ½

T.A.R.
Tar and Feathers for the Millenium
1998 Heathendoom Music
4 tracks

I figured it out! Heathendoom Music signs all the shitty wannabe bands! What a lame ass release. The singer has one annoying voice on the first track, and then switches to a stupider **Beavis** voice for the other three. These guys wish they could play. I feel bad for the drummer because he shows talent. The rest of this album is a high school attempt at hardcore. Stay away from Heathendoom Music! Goddamn, it makes we want to give up music and start collecting baseball cards again. I get more amusement watching a toaster cook pop-tarts. 🎸 (Jaun

Suarez)

TERRA FIRMA
Self-titled
1999 The Music Cartel
10 tracks 40:12

Well, there was **Black Sabbath**, and now there are Black Sabbath wannabes. Maybe these guys think that if they sound enough like Sabbath, **Ozzy** might pick them up for this summer's Ozzfest tour, but he won't. Basically, all I hear from this CD is one riff al jammed out for 5 minutes. The songs are very rough. There's no unity besides the fact that the whole song is one or two riffs. This causes riff burnout. Shit, these guys even look like Sabbath! I didn't get anything out of this. It sounds to me like a bunch of guys that jam together for fun, and their friend owns a recording studio, so they made this kind of "fun" release so they could tell biker chicks that they have a CD. ½ (Juan Suarez)

THYRFING
Valor Galga
1999 Hammerheart Records
10 tracks – 49:24

This is probably the surprise of the issue! Hammerheart sent me an absolutely awful batch of trendy black metal including the not-worth-reviewing **Manes** and **Ishtar**, and the name **Thyrfing** isn't necessarily encouraging. But from the opening riffs and big keyboards I was hooked. Picture a combination of **Bal-Sagoth, Enslaved**, and **Dimmu Borgir** with maybe a slice of **Emperor** where the songs are mid-paced with uppity beats. The vocalist does not scream, for which I am eternally grateful. He instead yells with an edge, half a growl and half a rasp. He, like everything on *Valor Galga*, just seems to work into an addictive combination. I love the catchy riffs, the active and lively keys, and the production job that is not necessarily thin, but every element has breathing room. What surprised me most was contrary to my expectations, Thyrfing keep my interest for all ten songs. Just when I think they surely can't come with anything more, I am proven wrong. This rules – go get it! (http://fly.to/thyrfing)

TRAIL OF TEARS
Disclosure in Red
1999 DSFA Records
10 tracks – 47:25

I love this album! People complain that female lead singers in a metal band is trendy or wimpy but a) this style is one of the best things we've got going, and b) the power of Helena Iren Michaelsen's voice will make a believer out of you. There is no room within the **Trail of Tears** sound for a softie with a gothic chorus voice, and Michaelsen delivers! She is a trained opera singer and brings her lines forth from the depths. And how beautiful, tragic, and powerful her voice is pitted against Ronny Thorsen's aggressive growl and *the* thickest rhythm guitar sound to come out of Norway. It's not tinny like so many bands: it's thick and meaty and really yanks at you like a receding wave that has knocked you over.

Instant comparisons can be made to **Theatre of Tragedy** and any fan of their pre-*Aegis* days will not be disappointed. *Disclosure in Red* also relies on guttural male and enchanting female vocals, but where Theatre of Tragedy created soothing, melodious atmospheres Trail of Tears utilize a variety of techniques to evoke these same feelings as well as extreme aggression and light peace. These ends are reached by smooth guitar harmonies, strains of the various Scandinavian riff styles that help set the tone, not to mention advanced songwriting that transcends the use of standard acoustics and keyboard effects.

What you get is a gloriously dramatic metal masterpiece that is not afraid to be melodic, brutal, atmospheric, and epic all within three-quarters of an hour. You cannot ignore such a complete band as Trail of Tears!

TRAUMA
Daimonion
1999 Pagan Records
12 tracks – 43:27

I noticed a strong change in **Trauma**'s music while giving it a final listen that led me to believe they used their best songs first and threw on the average ones to fill the album. The bio informed me that these last six tracks are from the band's *Invisible Reality* tape, which is actually a relief because *Daimonion* was kicking my arse all over the place.

This Polish quintet have been plugging away for over a decade and it is obvious they play for the love of death metal. Let's hope people can look beyond that they aren't familiar with Trauma or all of Pagan Records' awful releases this decade. There's some **Morbid Angel**, old **Malevolent Creation**, *Fale-*era **Gorefest**, and **Vader** in here, so you know this is going to be total quality. The Vader aspects are all but nonexistent except for the skilled drumming so there's no need to worry about getting the same thing as *Black to the Blind* or *The Ultimate Incantation*. (Anybody got a wrist brace? I think I just pulled a muscle working my whammy bar.)

Trauma play polished and professional death metal with a European air. I only wish there were more new songs since two of the six are just –tros (in and out, haha), though the older tracks are decent. They are actually closer to grindcore and set back by sloppy drums. But judging the quality of Trauma in 1999, I'd say Poland is ready for another lethal metal export. ¾

TURMOIL
The Process Of
1999 Century Media
12 tracks – 35:37

When the first sound on a disc is some crazy white boy spitting an unforgiving "What the fuck?!!!" one anticipates brutality or a false sense of testicles. Thankfully, Turmoil followed up this vulgar display with some brutal hardcore. There isn't much to say about the disc though. It's very heavy, it definitely makes me want to mosh, but it sounds like a great many other hardcore bands. This is good and bad. With contenders like **Hatebreed, Earth Crisis** and **Vision of Disorder**, these guys put up a good fight. I was a little disappointed when I went to their show and watched a group of children clapping for them and the end of each song. Basically, the group just doesn't stand out from the hardcore scene. Honestly, I think that's a problem with the genre in general. Otherwise, the album puts a scuff on my boots. The guys can play well and their songs flow properly. Once something has been done, bands should be inspired to expand from that point, not mimic it. ¼ (Jaun Suarez)

TWIN OBSCENITY
For Food, Honor and Soil
1998 Century Media
9 tracks – 45:57

Maybe Century Media has licensed one black metal band too many because **Twin Obscenity** don't make a lasting impression though they are musically proficient and don't rip anyone off. The biggest problem is their maxi-thin guitar sound which sounds straight out of Greece. But beyond this shortcoming, the Norwegian trio play some catchy black metal reminiscent of **Old Man's Child** and **Dimmu Borgir**. The Dimmu I hear is in the occasional keyboard passage that is surprisingly fresh (see "Up the Morning Field," while Old Man's Child connections can be drawn to the vocals, riffs, and tempos. Unfortunately the charm of *Born of the Flickering*, which this album resembles more than *Ill-Natured Spiritual Invasion* due to its rough sound, isn't as strong here.

Not too say *For Blood, Honor and Soil* is a bad album; just maybe too late. No, I find myself not wanting to like the album but am impressed when hearing it. Am I just disbelieving that there is yet another Norwegian black metal band doing an original thing? Probably. And Twin Obscenity are more raw than the big Norwegian bands of today, elements of old **Mayhem** and **Immortal** playing a part for sure. So you have read a wavering and ambiguous review and my conclusion judges Twin Obscenity favorably (see "The Thrive-dammed Legions"), hoping for an amazing next album. ½

UNJUST
Thin Line Emotions
1999 Mascot Records
12 tracks – 46:35

I have a bad track record with the unsigned bands I like. Most of them break up and only a few get signed. The last two "accessible" unsigned bands I recommended – **Coal Chamber** (how this band earns any repsect I cannot fathom and truly makes me believe people *are* that stupid and why the hell am I wasting my time with this magazine?) and **SpineShank** – were disappointing. **Unjust** are from California and play more like **Machine Head** than any of bands from the state. And while most of these bands (getting radio play or not) rely on making nifty sounds with their guitars and their vocalists saying stupid things, Unjust just play. And they're heavy! Their riffs are energetic and original, the vocalist uses a variety of howls and shouts, and maybe once do I think about **Korn**. Unjust are great "mainstream" metal...probably why you they're not on the radio. ¼

VARATHRON
The Lament of Gods
1999 Pagan Records
5 tracks – 26:03

For those of you unaware, **Varathron** are *one of the oldest* Greek metal bands and have released material through Cyber Music (label responsible for the glorious and unfortunately defunct **Phlebotomized**), Unisound, and Cursed Productions. They have evolved from their primitive and (to me at least) boring roots to a mature breed of Grecian black/death with skillful classical elements. Therefore the guitar sound is a bit dry, but where this left Varathron's music hollow *in the past the* keys and other orchestral elements fill in nicely. The group have been making steady progress for the last few years so I can only expect more solid music from them for years to come. 1/3

WITCHBANE
Soldiers of Hell
1998 Mascot/ Two Moons Records
10 tracks – 38:14

I am fed up with this raw black metal craze. The stuff sucks! **Witchbane** are the latest blood-soaked, corpse-paint wearing, weapon-wielding batch of trendies to invade the scene. Every damn song here is same: fast as hell, indistinguishable from another, and plagued by hissing-cat vocals. *Soldiers of Hell* is probably one of the worst albums I've ever heard, and while I'm warding you away from them let me mention some other worthless CDs not even worth reviewing. The following must be avoided for they are all reprehensible black metal: **Pentacle**'s *...Ride the Moonstorm* (Damnation), **Seth**'s (a name that's too evil to be reviewed) *Les Blessures de l'Ame* (Season of Mist), **Penetralia**'s *Carpe Noctem*, and **Isegrim**'s self-titled release (both on Last Episode).

One more thing about Witchbane is that their band photo looks ridiculous. Never mind that they've gone overboard with the fake blood and spikes (the bassist has some rusty ones; if the singer bumped into those during a show he'd need a tetanus shot: *evil*!), but each is carrying some small, sharp weapon except Nightstalker, who holds up his truly deadly, *unholy drum sticks!!!* Please, don't kill me!

WOLFRAM
Misanthrope – 1998
10 tracks – 47:06

From the photocopied cover to the CD-R held within, this packaged looked grim. Even the shittiest bands have a somewhat professional CD. Noting these guys are from the Czech Republic, I decided to listen and see what the scene is about over there. I'd be lying if I told you to ignore **Helloween** and check out the new breed of power metal, but these guys really caught my attention. **Wolfram** provides the listener up front with guaranteed quality from the machine like drums to the virtuoso guitars. These guys are tight! One thing I really like is that the singer is gutsy enough to stray from the typical "Dickinson" voice as he introduces a scruffier yet tonally pleasing accent. A guitar lover's delight, these guys shred from the galloping *Mercator* to *Presto*, an instrumental track, a collage of guitars quoting passages from Vivaldi within the blanket of string work. Overall, the disc is collection of good guitar driven metal with a pretty clean sound. Keep it in mind... ½ (Juan Suarez)

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ZEBRAHEAD
Self-titled
1998 Dr. Dream Records
10 tracks – 27:10

Okay, here's the deal. I like **Korn**'s first two albums. What I don't like are all these clones and pretty much every pit-core band. **Coal Chamber** is a terrible, terrible band. And I know you're cringing that this review is even in here, but yes, I like **zebrahead**, a band from Orange County, CA. Can I be a fan of **Diabolical Masquerade** and zebrahead at the same time? Yes, because these boys are just a lot of fun to hear! No angst or any of that political crap here, though there are some rapped vocals and various Korn touches.

Ali Tabatabace isn't so bad rapping because it's not like he's bustin' ghetto-ass rhymes, but personally I like guitarist Justin Mauriello's soothing clean singing better. Most of you reading this magazine are advised to stay away from zebrahead, but to those of you who realize your CD collection is not permanently tarnished if you own a happy, upbeat album might find some soul soothing within. ¾

ODD METAL

with Alf Svensson

OXIPLEGATZ

First give us a little history of Oxiplegatz. How long were you in At the Gates? How much songwriting did you do? Why did you leave? Had you played metal guitar for a long time?

I played for a couple of years with At the Gates, which was formed by myself and some other guys from Gothenburg, Sweden, after our first band Grotesque was split up. For the first release, *Souls of the Evil Departed*, I did most of the songwriting. Later on, Anders Bjoerler, the other guitarist, would write more and more of the material. After recording the third release, *With Fear I Kiss the Burning Darkness*, I felt I could no longer go on playing with the band. We had been on a few shorter tours through Europe and I felt it was not really my thing, and since the band gained popularity it was likely there would be a lot of gigs coming up. Furthermore we were starting to have different points of view on the future of the band. Anders was taking over the role of songwriter more and more, not that I thought his material was bad, I just felt like experimenting a whole lot more then the rest of the guys seemed to. So, I decided to let them develop in their own direction and do what I wanted to do for myself.

What was the reason behind doing Oxiplegatz as a solo project as opposed to starting another normal band? What are the names of your albums, and what labels released them? How would you describe them? Please give your opinion of each.

I had a lot of old material that was never used with At the Gates and I put together some songs of rather uneven quality. This was released as the first Oxiplegatz album: *Fairytales*. Unfortunately I was not used to doing everything on my own and the result was, looking back now, not what I would have liked it to be. I let myself be influenced by others' opinions and ideas, which I have learned since to ignore completely. This album I released myself – I had an idea of doing everything on my own, which was not very successful in the end.

The second album, *Worlds and Worlds*, is in a sense the first real Oxiplegatz album, with the style more developed and the direction for the band set, even though some songs on this album are also old material. "Graveyard Dream" is an old song I wrote for Grotesque, which was never recorded. "The End is Nigh" and "Journey" were originally meant to be on the first album, but the recording really sucked so I did a remix and added a new song – this is the last part on the CD, recorded in Studio Fredman. Both these two first albums I have sort of pushed from my mind – there are so many parts that I don't like.

Sidereal journey is a much better piece I think; I have matured musically and found the style I want. There are still a lot of things that could be better, I think, but on the whole I'm satisfied with the way it turned out.

What does "Oxiplegatz" mean? Is it a concept band? Are you a big reader of sci-fi? What exactly is the story going on in *Sidereal Journey*? Do you think it's similar to Edge of Sanity's Crimson, in which a race is facing extinction? (That album is also one 40-minute track.)

"Oxiplegatz" – according to an old Donald Duck magazine, means "How?" A gold-devouring creature utters the word when deceived by the clever Donald and his nephews. I figured: Most bands have names that are totally incomprehensible, I'll use an even worse one.

I have always been a sci-fi fan. Periodically I read a lot, the problem is only that there are so few good writers. Most concepts have already been used before, also in this field. My personal favorite is Jack Vance, who never seems to run out of ideas for new and strange societies on remote worlds. Besides reading sci-fi, I have ever since being a child been an amateur astronomer. It's a thrilling feeling to gaze through a telescope at some distant star and ponder, "What lies out there? Maybe I'm right now staring at a future home of mankind, or the blazing scene of an interstellar war going on beyond the knowledge of us feeble, Earth-based primitives. If only I was born a few hundred years into the future!"



The lyrics of *Sidereal Journey* are somewhat like a short novel or tale, telling the story of a race of beings driven off their home world by the presence of a black hole on a path threatening the stability of their sun. Building a huge spacecraft they bring samples of every species of their doomed planet and set off into space to find a new home, where they can recreate their environment. On the journey they encounter many strange phenomena, things new to them and not always benign.

Edge of Sanity: *Crimson*? Sorry, never heard of it, I don't follow the scene much or listen to this kind of music actually, but maybe this one would be interesting – I'll check it out! (Can you say out of touch? –ed.)

Are you familiar with an American television show called "Alf"? It was produced in the 1980s and featured a short hairy brown alien with a wavy nose who lived with a silly American family. Does this at all tie in to your interest in space or aliens? Do you have a wavy nose?

Sure, I've seen it. I'm not sure there's any semblance between us, and it was a long time since I saw it. I try to watch as little TV as possible as I consider it a total waste of time. I watch "Seinfeld" once a week and occasionally turn on Eurosport for the sumo wrestling which I'm a big fan of. Otherwise, I sometimes view the Ricki Lake show to laugh at the stupid Americans, hehe.

You're an artist by profession, correct? Please tell us about that. Do you have your own studio? What different media do you use? What's your favorite style? Have you designed any sci-fi book covers?

Yes, I'm a graphic artist and I work with computer games. I've been doing it for a year now and our first release, Clans, will be out any day. It's a fantasy hack n'slash game in the vein of "Diablo," about 50% of the graphics are my hand. I work with almost any kind of media, 2D-3D PC-programs, oil or acrylics on canvas, inks. I have spent much time drawing comics, airbrushing, and I have had my own tattoo studio for more than five years. So, I think I'm not lying when I say I'm comfortable with anything. Check out my website for samples of my work. Book covers I have not been into, there is a lot of competition there as there are many great artists around doing that kind of stuff.

What do the other Swedish bands think of your band? Do you have much contact with them? Do you listen to much current metal? Why or why not?

Today, I'm not in contact with any people in the metal scene. I'm a secluded person and prefer to rather spend my time working than wasting it hanging around with friends. I think most of my old friends got tired of me never calling and we drifted apart. I don't listen much to new metal, I think most good stuff was produced during the first wave of death metal – Massacre, Napalm Death, Benediction, and the likes. Most stuff I hear today I get the feeling of having heard before. I listen mostly to classical music, preferably opera, but also music from the '30s and the '40s – Bing Crosby is my favorite, beside some Swedish artists. Strange? Hey, I'm not a teenager anymore – 32 today, actually.

Your girlfriend Anna modeled for the cover of *Worlds and Worlds*. Are you married? With kids? What does she think of Oxiplegatz? Is she the guest vocalist on *Sidereal Journey*? If not, who is and will she appear on future releases?

Not married, but we're still together – I don't believe in marriage. No kids. I don't think she cares much for my music, hehe – I'm not sure she's even heard the albums as I never play them. She's not a vocalist, she's pretty good with the piano though, but I don't think she will ever play for me. The female vocalist on my albums is Sara Svenssön, a good friend of mine. She's not in any other band, but she actually did some vocals for Dark Tranquility once.

Tell us your plans for Oxiplegatz and your art career and how you hope to improve on new albums. Should we expect the same quirky, adventuresome music?

Art career – I expect to do some world-class games in the future. We're a group of guys working on a role-playing game right now that will whip "Baldurs Gate" and the likes. But that release is still a year or so in the future. After that, who knows where the road is leading? Oxiplegatz – I hope to complete the fourth album within '99. I have little time for music actually, it is just a minor interest to me, my main field is as a graphic artist. The next album will be pretty much in the same style as *Sidereal...* I think it will move a step further towards classical music, away from the growls and screams (sorry, metallers). Still, those who liked *Sidereal Journey* will get their share on this one too.

Thanks for finding the time to answer these questions! Please feel free to mention anything the questions may not have covered.

Thank you. Well, I can't think of anything in particular, except that I will try to update my website soon, perhaps with a taste of the new album, some mp3's of music that I like, and also some new artwork.

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Temple of Doom

All must kneel before Solitude Aeturnus as they preach the new metal scriptures

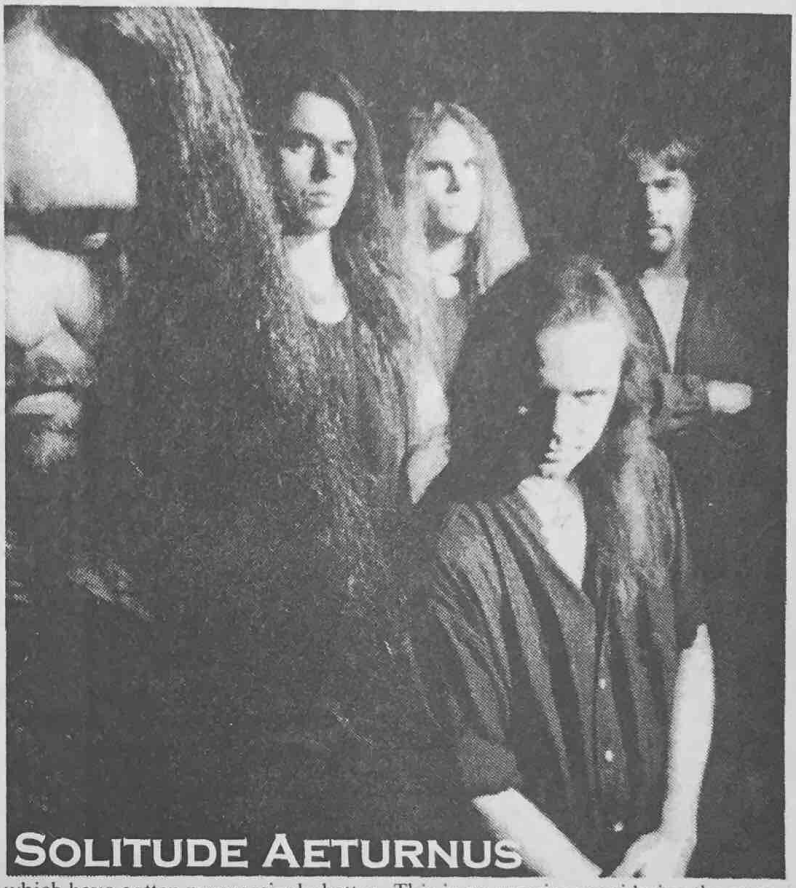
by Juan Suarez

Just because band members are in their thirties doesn't mean they can't rock. Unfortunately, in today's scene, we are witnessing the demise of many great bands that simply lose their edge. It seems these musicians have less time for music as they begin more frequent trips to the doctor and start ordering free brochures on Viagra and Rogaine. Under this pretense, I was blown away by Solitude Aeturnus' fifth recording *Adagio*.

These guys are in fact in that age during which we expect them to either change their style or try something experimental. Perhaps what keeps these guys fresh is the fact that they don't necessarily slave for a record label. Olympic is actually the third record label they've signed with. I get the impression that this is a good thing; no long term contracts that have ruined such great bands as Metallica, Tool, and Sepultura. According to guitarist John Perez, these guys are in it for the music. Well, why would I believe him? There are a few simple reasons. To begin with, the group has never actually made money by making records. They all have day jobs to earn a living. Secondly, the music is good. Their style has a unique vibe to it. It has a very nice "unproduced" feel. In other words, I don't hear Bob Rock's ideas all over the place. No cheap harmonies and crappy drum fills. Instead, I hear clever melodies and good, clean guitar work,
i.e. no label interference with the music.

With this in mind, the band's latest release, *Adagio* was made to be "heard". The music is a series of very well thought out melodies and progressions. The album is ideally consistent without getting redundant. Choruses blend invisibly with verses and pre-chouses. Songs like "Believe," in which very dark harmonies recount pessimistic lyrics about modern humanity. This is followed by "Never," a ballad with enough beautiful harmonies and depressing thoughts to make Layne Staley cringe. The best trait of this record is that whatever isn't dark, is powerful. Very groove oriented meaty riffs like "Idis" line the harder songs. The finished product is a very dark, Doom piece from a group of experts. The title is quite appropriate. Adagio is a traditional musical term for "slow". So who's the band behind this music?

Well, the only reason Solitude Aeturnus isn't more popular than they are is because they don't tour much. The last big tour they did was supporting Mercyful Fate in 1995. John explained that touring is more of a hindrance than it's worth [because they're too old to be lugging equipment]. A true musician, John isn't preoccupied with record sales and recognition. As long as he's able to cut albums when he wants, he's happy. According to him, though, Europe is a much better place to tour. The band is supplied with bussing and lodging. I guess that tells us something about the support for metal in the states. Anyway, the band is based out of Arlington, Texas, noted mostly for bearing the metal super-group of the '90s, Pantera. They formed in 1987 under the moniker Solitude. In its 11-year existence, the band has been through various labels including King Classic, Roadrunner and Pavement/BMG. In this time they released 4 other recordings,



which have gotten progressively better. This is no surprise considering the experienced feel on *Adagio*. While the music has improved, the ambiance of their style hasn't changed.

Solitude Aeturnus' music is very gloomy. This is complimented by the less than jovial album covers and band name. I asked John how this whole sense of darkness was inspired. He grew up listening to Black Sabbath (of course) and also was inspired by the darker sides of Judas Priest, Fates Warning, Metal Church, Savatage, and even Slayer. This makes sense considering Solitude's very melodic style. John's goal in making music is to keep it new. He seems to get gratification from being unique. This is also more refreshing for the listener. In the end, John approaches his music from the listener's angle.



John Perez

John's profound interest in keeping things new has inspired him to form his own record label called Brain Ticket. The label supports mostly Doom bands including Las Cruces and Archie Bunker. This comes directly from John's interest in groove oriented metal. Some of his favorite new discs include Nevermore's *Dreaming Neon Black* and Orange Goblin's *Time Travelling Blues*.

John is obviously a very dedicated musician and supporter of heavy music. His intense involvement with music gives him "stripes" in the field, and his opinions and music should be duly respected. *Adagio* is only the latest product of his imagination, and it should inspire musicians and listeners alike to be original; a long forgotten metal fundamental.

KATATONIA

To say Anders Nyström's music has had a profound effect on me is only the beginning. He is the mastermind behind two very different bands, each of which is pushing the boundaries of its genre. Katatonia, the older and better-known group, sent me into an as-of-yet-unrecovered shock with *Brave Murder Day*, a brilliant album based on hypnotizing mid-paced chords and inspirational lead lines, not to mention guttural growls courtesy of Opeth's singer. *Discouraged Ones* followed and shocked Katatonia fans – the death metal core had given way to darker, even gothic influences. But the emotion remained the same, of tragedy and sadness, so this album too was accepted by critics and listeners worldwide.

As Katatonia have evolved into a more accessible band, Nyström has still been driven to create the extreme stuff and does so transformed in Blakkheim, sole perpetrator of Diabolical Masquerade. Over the course of three albums Blakkheim has raised the banner of black, old school, death, and heavy metal while injecting his own twisted visions to establish his own mind-blowing niche. He can do no wrong (or is that do no good?). So read on to find out all there is to know about these highly creative bands led by one prolific individual...

There was a huge style change from Brave Murder Day to Discouraged Ones. I know this occurred a while ago, but briefly explain what brought it about.
The main thing was that we'd been using harsh vocals for over seven years and we felt that they couldn't keep up with the pace as our music evolved. Nothing new had really been happening on the vocal front while we'd gone through some real musical changes from release to release. We could no longer accept this repeating itself and the new songs definitely needed something beyond growls so, we started experimenting with clean, harmonic vocals and discovered it would bring a new edge to our sound. We decided to go full circle and it turned out to be a perfect move which helped us from stagnating and ending up as failures. We also changed studio, engineers, and co-producers.

What elements do you think remained intact while which others are gone?
We intentionally worked within the "frames" regarding the arrangements this time and adjusted a more basic and conventional structure to the songs in order to make "real" songs for the first time ever. The music, the riffs, and the vibes to be precise, are still very much in the same field as on *Brave Murder Day*. There's still those pounding rhythm guitars, the monotone dual leads playing a hypnotic pattern. The balance between clean and distorted parts. The disharmonies. In the vocal department, immense progressions were accomplished. Clean vocal harmonies follow throughout the whole album and undoubtedly gave the album a new edge. The general sound/production is digginly (?) heavy and almost raw as it was done at Sunlight Studios which is famous for its sound. As the music tends to cover both a mellow and fierce spectrum it sets new contrasts.

***Brave Murder Day* is one of my favorite albums because of the huge guitars. Thankfully *Discouraged Ones* didn't scrap them altogether, though their fierceness has diminished. Is there a term you have for the riffing style that opens up both albums?**
We just call it 4/4 straight. That's a big part of what we sound like today.

Did any mags accuse Katatonia of selling out since you changed vocals, logo, sound, and style? Did you feel that the depressing nature or other aspects kept it underground, or just heavy?
Some people have disliked the vocals as an obvious result of their narrow-mindedness and I didn't think there would be any need to worry about that. I'm really disappointed to hear people having trouble getting into the new album because of the vocals. Damn, we still have the special Katatonia feeling in the music, we still put down our very souls into what we do. The clean vocals just help us to bring our music more justice, they help it to shine! So, I can't see why this should be a problem. It's time people wake up! And to all the people wondering why we do not use a combination of growls and clean vocals the answer to that is simple: We *did that on Brave Murder Day*!

One thing that can be said is that your music is dark. As accessible as *Discouraged Ones* may be, it does not paint a pretty picture like radio bands. Do you think Katatonia will ever get happy? *Brave Murder Day* is a very uplifting album, if on different level.
Katatonia is based on sorrow and was formed because gloom and doom was the ultimate music we could create. Back since '91 we have always wanted to play immensely dark and sad music because there was no other band doing it for us. It will always be this way...

I hear you just entered Sunlight Studios to record *Tonight's Decision*. Tell us all about the new album! What are the similarities to past albums? All clean vocals again?
Yeah, of course. We haven't regressed and started forcing Jonas to growl his throat to pieces again. All that is now a part of the good old times. We know what we wanna do with our music, we know our sound. The material is equal to *Discouraged Ones*, but more varied and improved. The album is better worked through and feels more complete.

Any of the epic leads and melodies?
Yeah, there'll be a lot more leads and melodic hooks on this one, both those hypnotic monotone twin dubs as well as lonely solo leads with a slight disharmonic flavor just as on *Brave Murder Day*.

Any faster tempos?
No, it's all crushingly heavy and downheartedly slow. Faster tempos? Katatonia? You know the difference between day and night I hope?

Is there a concept behind the titles?
No story or links between the songs. Pretty much the same themes as people should be used to by now. But it could be that they're even more obscurely expressed. Dark feelings of the earth.

When will it be out?
Before the summer.

I hear you are once again without a full-time drummer. Who is recording on the album?
We hired Dan Swanö for the job. (See his *Moontower* review in this issue to know why Swanö is god.)

Why can't you keep a drummer?
I think you misunderstood the point here. We've never kicked out a drummer nor have we recruited any. Jonas used to be the drummer before adapting to vocals which happened only last year, so...

You're as cursed as Malevolent Creation!
I suppose we're misery incarnated!

What songs are the most fun to play live? I'd think *Brave Murder Day* is great because those songs are so emotional and fiery, but *Discouraged Ones* songs because the audience can sing along.
I'm most eager to play the *Discouraged Ones* songs and even more eager to play the songs from *Tonight's Decision*. They're all great live numbers.

There are all these awesome bands from Sweden but apparently not that much of a live scene. Why don't you get 20 bands or more and throw a big metal fest? Perhaps you guys don't understand how jealous we Americans are of Sweden's metal output. America sucks, you rule! You should hijack a plane and come to America and tour!!!
We're coming...someday.

Because of you and Kataklysm, whenever I write catatonia or cataclysm I always misspell them. How does it feel to be contributing the ignorance of others?
Well, now I'm gonna get myself something to drink. Some gin and tonic would suit for tonight. Ignorance of who? What was that?

What is the current lineup of the band?
For the recording it was: Anders Nyström on guitars, bass, keyboards, backing vocals; Fred Norrman on guitars, bass, and backing vocals; Jonas Renske on vocals. For the future and live performances the lineup will be expanded with a bass player and a new drummer.



Stop...Blakkheim!

Any final Katatonia comments?
Discouraged? We are too...

I will give you a line or two to get into the role of Blakkheim now. Drink whatever potion is necessary.
Drinking...Transforming...Done!

I have all three Diabolical Masquerade albums (two bought with hard-earned cash; Adipocere was kind enough to send *The Phantom Lodge*). My strongest feelings are for *The Phantom Lodge* and *Nightwork*, and I find *The Phantom Lodge* an easier listen. You seemed to have tied up all the loose ends from *Ravendusk in my Heart*. I found *NightWork* a tough listen sometimes because you branched off into less-than-smooth transitions. Often the songs ended very well after a few shaky minutes, though the last few songs are near perfect. I love "The Eerie Obzidian Circuz" and "Haunted by Horror." What comments do you have after reading this long paragraph?
My comments are that *Nightwork* is your roller coaster ride. You have obviously taken a seat on it, but unless you really want to do it and follow *every* curve on its course it won't be a very amuzing ride, will be awkward and you just wanna get off. Sometimes things grow and you change your opinion. Sometimes you know from the first minute something is just not your cup of tea. That's all I have to say.

I hear that the cover photo on *Nightwork* is from a real church. Where is it? Why does it have a chandelier of bones and skulls? Isn't that somewhat sacrilegious? You are obviously not using it for Christian purposes!
Of course I am...I wanna help spread the Christian message just as you should too!?!? Ehhmm, the photo is said to be a notorious church somewhere in Slovakian territories. It's got like hundreds of bones and skulls decorating the walls and ceilings. I find that extremely obscure, especially once you get to know all of this is to be found inside of a *church*! That's not very common these days now is it? With its eerie atmosphere I think it excellently represents the album and gives you a hint of what Diabolical Masquerade's *Nightwork* is all about. I'm utterly concerned that the visual graphics represent the album concept. On this one it all walks hand in hand...



I am pissed off you don't want to play live shows for Diabolical Masquerade. Do you realize how exciting that would be? You would have audiences captivated! Tell me "Hater" would not be the most damn fun thing in the world in front a crowd.
It would not be the most damn fun thing in the world! Hehehe...Well, seriously. It's a thrilling idea to perform a few concerts with Diabolical Masquerade since I'm sure this wicked and eerie music would be a blast on stage! I'm positive the material would come across excellent if I got a full line-up backing me up on all the featured instruments, so in any case I absolutely have to get hold of some session people for that. Imagine, with a good financial backup I could set up a show as an intense visual representation of the current concept. Wouldn't that rule? But I guess that will remain a daydream. Perhaps someday I will play live. If this project is the only one left alive I might just wanna make it my main band with a stable lineup, but for now I treat it as an exclusive studio project, active about one time per year. Time has often proved things are contradictionally changing sooner than you know...

Explain "Upon the Salty Wall of the Broody Gargoyle." What are you talking about!? It's one of my favorites and I love when your voice cracks because you're screaming so hard! Admit it, *The Phantom Lodge* is your favorite and the most fun album.
The Phantom Lodge is not my favorite and most fun album! *Nightwork* is though! Although "Upon the Salty Wall of the Broody Gargoyle" is a cool tune. It's a bizarre story about a gargoyle hiding in the walls and it reacts to and is awoken by the smell of human fear. Beware salty walls around you. What lurks inside is not friendly...

Would you say the first two albums revel in the glory of the '80s speed metal while not losing any modernity? So many bands fail at this.
I suppose that's not a statement out of the blue...At that time I made *Ravendusk* I just wanted to make an extreme, but atmospheric album in the vein of Emperor, old Bathory, and early Katatonia. It's significantly the most black metallish album of the three. I still like it, but it tends to get a little bit stiff and lifeless after a while probably due to the drum-machine. The song "Under the Banner of the Sentinel" was a pure heavy metal song and was a bit odd to appear on such an album at its time, so there you got the '80s glory speed/heavy metal cut in a modern way at its peak. As for *The Phantom Lodge* I'm extremely satisfied with this piece. It's pretty much a continuity of the debut, yet with a further step taken in every aspect of a record. It has an improved production, even more varied material with both thrash/heavy metal and folk music elements alongside the black stuff. Everything is just a bit better on this one. Many people describe it as a mixture between heavy metal and black metal.

***Nightwork* shows you exploring and expanding from before with creative keyboards and acoustics, not to mention odd sounds. Some of the heavy parts actually seem awkward. Could your new developments in this project make *Nightwork* more of a feeling-out album like *Ravendusk*, and therefore we can expect your next Diabolical Masquerade album to be the opus equivalent to *The Phantom Lodge*?**
Hmm, in other words what you're saying is that *Ravendusk* is shit, *Nightwork* is okay and *The Phantom Lodge* is great? Well, I respect your views, but I feel I have to give you *my* views on *Nightwork*. Finally, I felt it was my task to create a "metal soundtrack" to the concept of horror. In difference to my to past material, I felt my ideas didn't come across good enough in faster paces. It didn't do the music any justice and I decided to drop the blast beats through the whole album. Instead, I set focus on more mid-paced oriented material and discovered how the riffs instantly flew out like bullets! On top of that, I think that the keyboard work finally became a strong ingredient in the music as it boosts the eerie concept to the maximum. Also, I've juxtaposed a lot more diverse mood changes on this one. I figured out it would create variety, attract the listeners and capture their attention. I like to surprise people with unexpected things, sort of like a roller coaster ride as I said before, people should not expect what's behind the next corner! It may seem awkward to some, but on the other hand, I also value stuff being catchy, stuff with a lot of groove and swing. Stuff that makes you hooked! If an album lack these things it will soon turn into a very mediocre listening experience and isn't that one of the worst things that could ever happen to a record? I think this album has a balance of both the catchy stuff and the unpredictable moments and thus makes it a very delicate piece of music. With the *Nightwork* concept I feel I've escaped the risk of repeating myself and right now I'm excited to venture deeper into it.

How much does a room cost for a night at the Phantom Lodge?
I think the rates just increased, so a room at the Phantom Lodge would cost your life! Will it be a room for tonight?

Does Ravendusk cause irregular heartbeats?
Well, how do you think a body reacts to discover it's dying? Be it by desperation or excitement, the heart will not beat with a steady pattern. Rush!!!

A lot of the scene's most original and productive members don't follow current metal too much. What have you been listening to these days, metal and non-metal?
I've been listening to a big fucking bunch of stuff man! I can make it really easy and just tell you two dramatically different bands I've been listening to in my Walkman recently. As for metal, it would be Raphsody's *Symphonies of the Enchanted Lands* which is a totally cool power metal/symphonic soundtrack combined attack from Italy. As for non-metal, it would be Sunny Day Real Estate's *How it Feels To Be Something On* which is a very droony (?) good alternative record from your big land.

Tell me your plans for the next year for yourself, Diabolical Masquerade, Katatonia, and whatever else you're doing. Fill the readers in on your ever active and interesting self!
Plans are not planned, but it's time I plan the plans so be sure to hear from me sooner than you think!

Any final Diabolical Masquerade comments?
Hellelujaha, Brotha!
Official Katatonia and Diabolical Masquerade websites:
http://forlorn.simplenet.com

Forty Days Longing

Can you say "American rebirth?" Well that's what Forty Days Longing are doing to the scene, their latest CD demo *the head of the demon* ample proof of their abilities. I could go on for hours about how great they are – the brilliant combination of tortured female growls with beautiful violin work, the unforgettable riffs – but I'll instead yield to keyboardist Greg Schwan for all the info. Check out the review of the demo for the endless praise...



I see a new breed of metal brooding in the Mid-Atlantic region, with Garden of Shadows, Disinterment, and 40 Days Longing at the forefront. Do you have any insight into this, or am I just crazy?

Not crazy, but optimistic. There are some great bands in the area, like the ones you mentioned, but that is only a small piece of the puzzle. What is missing are some good labels and clubs. That is quite flattering of you to say that we are at the "forefront," but there really is no scene other than about two or three decent clubs. Labels on the other hand are quite a dilemma. Everyone wants their music to get out and reach people, but I have a very pessimistic outlook on the business side of metal. I don't need some guy to make money off our hard work, while we don't see a penny. There are many more important things than getting "signed," like writing original compositions. Of course, good publications like *Sloth*, *Word of Mouth*, and the *Grimoire* are important as well. Maybe you should start a label, Phil!

You've been compared to old My Dying Bride and Anathema. How do you think you differ from these acts? Further, do you think the other young US bands mentioned and yourselves are channeling these European influences into something exciting that will finally make our scene boil over?

It's always flattering to be compared to My Dying Bride and Anathema, though I don't think the influence is as explicit as some zines have made it seem. Not to be pretentious, but we are a bit more eclectic, a bit more unpredictable if you will, plus we play faster at times. It's hard for me to pinpoint how we differ from those bands, as they are both quite different from one album to the next! With regards to the latter half of your question: like I said before, there are some great bands, but we can't do it alone. I hope however, that we are not always labeled as nothing more than a "European influenced" band. Of course, we all love *Elegy* (Amorphis), *The Angel and the Dark River* (My Dying Bride), and *Orchid* (Opeth), but there is a lot of great non-metal music out there that we listen to and are influenced by.

What I like about your band is that you don't try to play riffs that don't fit or complex parts just for the sake of it. It's as if you've already found a niche! How does the writing process work for a band with metal guitarists and an actual violinist?

I'm glad you picked up on that, because simplicity is an essential element to our approach. We're not trying to impress people with our chops, rather we want listeners to hum the melodies to our songs for weeks and weeks on end. I want our music to be moving, it should make you want to cry, like a good score. We put a lot of thought into our songs, and we refuse to limit ourselves. We rarely omit something because it is too simple.

Writing songs that include metal guitar and violin are no problem, as the two work so well together. I've always thought that Suvo's role is pretty much as a second guitarist anyway, minus the chunk! Specifically though, Matt (guitars) and I lay down the structure and framework, then everyone else piles on. Matt and I often suggest things such as "we should all play in unison here" or "guitar, bass, an drums only here." Every guitar riff, keyboard progression, violin run, bass line, drum beat, and lyric is important.



Speaking of Suvo, does having his experience and knowledge make the songs more complete and/or credible?

I don't really know what you mean by "credible," but Suvo is a great musician, and that *always* helps! I would have to say that his greatest strength lies in his note choice. He oftentimes approaches countermelodies in ways that I wouldn't imagine. He's been involved in performing classical music for over ten years, and it shows. As I said before, every guitar riff, keyboard progression, violin run, bass line, drum beat, and lyric is important.

Live you guys are entrancing. There is definitely an atmosphere you've created. Does much preparation go into a performance or does Zdenka just know how to own the stage? Even Suvo was pretty brutal live!

Glad that you enjoy our live show, as that is very important! If you can't replicate the studio magic on stage, what good are you? Preparation? Ha ha, not really. You can't practice stage presence, nor is it something we care about anymore. I'll admit, I used to care, but I've grown up a lot. Zdenka does rule live, however. Let's be honest here, how many other girls are out there singing like that?

Tell us about the CD! How many songs and how long? How would you describe it? How much does it cost?

The CD is 25 minutes in length and contains three songs. It's entitled *The Head of the Demon* and is loosely conceptual. The lyrics basically deal with the secularization of industrial society and the impending overpopulation crisis. These are very real topics that we try to discuss objectively – we don't have some stupid ideology. Musically, I would hope that people find it honest, diverse, epic, and original. It's fast and it's slow, linear and refraining. You can get it for $5.00 US / $6.00 world...

Finally, update us on the latest goings on and your plans for the next six months.

Well, we parted ways with our rhythm section from *The Head of the Demon*. To help us out, David Castillo (drummer for Hatred) and Owen Davis (bassist for Garden of Shadows) are currently doing session, and it's going great. We are also going to be featured on Soulside Records' *Orchestrated Chaos III* compilation, featuring Entombed, Angelkill, and Enforsaken among others. Hopefully it will be out when this issue hits. We are always writing new songs and brainstorming. We're hoping to get some out-of-state shows in support of the new CD, but it's tough. We would like to get into the studio again soon as well, you learn a lot each time. Our immediate as well as long-term goals are primarily centered around improving as musicians, writing better songs, and reaching more people! If you are interested, you have no excuse not to write!

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Amon Amarth

To put it bluntly, Amon Amarth rule. *Once Sent from the Golden Hall* was not only one of last year's highlights but probably a triumph within the Swedish scene. While many bands stray from their brutal roots and others refuse to compromise their sound with melody, Amon Amarth embraced the benefits of both in their brutal, melodic death metal. Vocalist Johan Hegg is a madman of a growler who puts lots of personality into his words. The band have a new album out soon on Metal Blade Records, but we'll let bassist Ted Lundström tell us the good stuff...

What's going on with Amon Amarth right now? Sounds like things are pretty exciting!
Yeah, we recorded the new album after reheasing the new stuff for some time.

What's it called?
It's called *The Avenger.*

Where did record it?
In Abyss studio, same as the last album.

With Peter Tagtgren?
Yes. Everything is the same as the last album.

How is the music going to be on The Avenger compared to previous releases?
I think it will be more heavy this time, but it will sound like old Amon Amarth but more heavy but with some really fast tracks, too.

I gotta ask you about the cover of *Once Sent from the Golden Hall.* That's supposed to be you guys, right?
Well, it is us. It's nothing serious, we've had the idea for a while. So we just took a couple photos and got the help of a guy who worked with computer arts and he put it together from three different photos.

Why are there five guys if there are only four members in the band?
The band photo was taken when there were five guys in the band. Then the guitarist [Anders Hannsson] left the band before the album came out.

Has anybody mentioned that the fire looks like a big penis?
Yeah! (laughs) Some people have. I think we had some problems, I don't remember which country, but they saw it like a big cock and didn't want to sell it at first.

Were you guys surprised to go from one of the world's smallest labels in Pulverised to one of the biggest in Metal Blade?
We knew that we could get a good label, because we thought that our music was good enough. But of course it was great to be on the best labels, you know. We took the Pulverised deal just to get a CD out so that we could get the bigger label. That was our goal when we signed with Pulverised because bigger labels don't sign bands with only demos in their back (under their belt?).

When you're a Swedish death metal band is it a little discouraging to think you can make it when there are already so many bands out there?
It's a pretty tough competition with all the other bands but I think you have to believe in yourself and you music and try to make it as original as possible. Or not original, but as much your own style as you can, because I think people can hear whether it's true or not.

Do you have any formal musical training?
No, not much. If you mean have we gone to any music schools or anything, we are all self-taught.

Have long have you guys been together?
Well, we've played together since 1992, I think, when Amon Amarth was created, but we played in different bands in the same area a couple years before that.

What was the original style of music that you played?
Some mixture between old school death metal and old school black metal.

I think you guys have a created an totally kick-ass style of brutal melodic metal that most of the bands can't handle.
Yes, but if you listen to our first demo you would still find these melodic but heavy parts. That's always been our goal, to be melodic but keep these heavy parts. Otherwise, if you play like In Flames and those kinds of bands that leave all that's metal and become something, I don't know, boring stuff.



One of the things I felt really made the album strong were the drums. They really added an extra level of heaviness.
I think the drums are excellent on that album. We had a new drummer for that album because the first one [Nico] left the band. So the new drummer, Martin Lopez, he was much more talented and had many more ideas. He could also put in more technical elements without losing the power. It's great drum work!

Do you think the Viking aspect of your music requires a really tight technical approach with a lot of discipline?
I don't know. I don't think it matters too much. The only thing is to make sure the lyrics and music fit with their feeling.

Does Johan write the lyrics?
He writes most of them. We also come to him with ideas and he writes them down because he's best at English.

Is that Ozzy you're listening to right now?
Yeah. You could hear that?

Are you big fan of him?
I like him a lot, yeah. I think it's at a pretty low volume, I didn't think you could hear it.

When you were really young were Ozzy and Black Sabbath what influenced you?
No, I don't think so. I was a bit too young to listen to Sabbath when they were big. I started listening to metal like KISS and Iron Maiden in the beginning of the 1980s. I think Black Sabbath had their success just before that. I have always listened to this kind of stuff but they haven't been a big an influence.

I'm looking at the band picture on the back of *Once*...Who's the one who's afraid to look at the camera?
I don't know, I don't remember! (laughs)

The one with the brown hair.
That could be me. Brown straight hair, that's me.

Are you really camera shy?
I don't know! (laughs) I don't know what happened, we took so many photos in the studio. We just had small prints to decide which ones we wanted to use. And you could see who looked just like what.

Maybe that adds to the sad, brutal, scary nature of it.
I don't know! (we laugh)

So does Johan lose his voice a lot?
He never has so far but he's been close when we've been touring; you know, drinking too much and sleeping too little. Then it's hard for the voice.

I can't imagine anyone screaming that hard and loud without losing his voice!
I can't believe it either. I've tried myself and maybe one song and my voice is totally messed up!

So you guys like to party a lot?
Yeah, of course. That's what's life's about!

What do you drink?
Everything with alcohol, I think. Mostly beer and vodka.

Have you had a chance to hear the new album from The Crown?
I think it's a great album. It's very fast and intense and I like that kind of style.



To make ends meet the members of Amon Amarth strip at local bars.

I guess since you don't like the In Flames style you'd like this better...
Yeah, more aggression is better.

Are you anywhere near Gothenburg?
Not really. It's about 500 km from here.

Do you think that's a good thing to be away from those influences or pressures?
Yeah, Stockholm is a much better place to be. If we were coming from Gothenburg we would have an even harder time to get out into the musical world.

Sunlight Studios are in Stockholm, right?
Yeah.

Do you think that Thomas Skogsburg gets bored doing death metal all the time.
He doesn't only record death metal albums, actually. He records many rock n' roll albums too, so I think he gets a variety of music.

So Sunlight isn't just death metal.
No, they have rock n' roll and ordinary heavy metal bands and stuff...

So what are your hobbies besides playing brutal death metal?
I don't know, not much. It takes pretty much time to be in a band, and the weekend is all about partying. That's the two big hobbies I have.

Do you play any sports?
No. I used to when I was younger but not any more.

So you guys are all going to be fat rockers when you get famous?
(laughs) No, I don't think so. We all have physical work when we work, so I don't think that would be any problem.

Let me ask you about the bass, because it really hasn't been respected within death metal in the sense that it's not as prominent as the guitars, vocals, or drums. How key is it to the backbone of the band?
I think just because you don't hear it so clearly people don't think it's that important. But if you play in a band and you use the bass in the right way, you'll notice right away if it's missing. It adds so much power that everybody takes for granted because they don't really know what the bass is compared to everything else in the sound. So I think it's much more important than most people believe.

You took the band name from a J.R.R. Tolkein novel. Did you have any expectations about it because Deicide's old name was Amon?
Not actually, because we've never seen ourselves as anything near Deicide. We didn't even think in those directions; we just thought it was a good name fitting our music so we took it.

For Swedish death metal bands is one of the goals to get recognized in the States?
Yes, of course it's a goal because it's a big country and it would be great to come there and play and sell many records. I don't know if it's the main goal, which might be to be known all over the world.

Are countries like Germany more important because metal is more popular over there?
It's very important because we sell most of our CDs in Germany. The biggest market for our style of music is over there.

Have you guys considered getting eighties rocker haircuts like the Scorpions?
(laughs in light shock) No, I don't think so!

None of you are going follow the nineties trend and shave your head?
(chuckles) Uh, I hope not anyway. I'm not planning on it anyway and I don't think anyone else in the band will.

Final comments?
Just be sure to play it loud! I think that's all.

www.amonamarth.com

In the mood for a dose of brutality that's thought out and well played? Would you care for a hefty portion of melodic leads dripping with emotion? Well, pack your bags and come on down to... Richmond, Virginia! That's right, after touring the Phillip Morris plant you should check out Disinterment. They've been honing their craft for five years now and have a brilliant album called Endless *to prove their talents. I've had it for two years and it still sounds as fresh as ever – a milestone in any genre of music. I interviewed Kris Norris (guitar/vocals) and Ryan Parrish (drums) to get the latest on this ambitious but unappreciated band. I sure hope they put out a new CD soon...*

First off, let's get a little history of Disinterment. You guys are all pretty young but the band has been together for a pretty long time. Ages? Occupations? Locations?

Kris: We formed originally as Gutted and after various lineup changes officially formed Disinterment. Then there was a brief time when Ryan was not in the band and during this time I learned more about scales and theory and shit and we sort of changed our style now that I could play more of what I wanted to. We got Ryan back and added Chris Barron on guitar. After two unsuccessful demos we decided to change guitarists and added Tommy Lythgoe. After a year of writing new songs, we got Chris back as a 3rd guitarist. We then recorded the CD *Endless* on Sevared Records. We played out a lot and found out that Chris Barron was not what he seemed and both he left and we kicked him out. As of now, we have a final (hopefully!) and permanent lineup:

Ryan Parrish: dums
Kris Norris: guitar/vocals
Tommy Lythgoe: Guitar
Jason Mincz: bass/vocals

We may have lost out third guitarist, but the music has been arranged to sound the same if not better with two plus the addition of new songs that we hope to record soon. I am 20, Ryan is 21, Tommy is also 20, and Jason is 22. Jason is the manager of a tire shop here in Richmond, VA, called Minez Tire, so if you ever need a hook-up...I am currently a music composition student, Tommy works odd jobs, and Ryan... gets by.

I guess having been around for a while has brought about tough times as well as some great experiences. Got any stories concerning Disinterment's ups and downs?

Kris: I think the history explains the most of our downs. One other thing was when Tommy decided to shop at a practice space that wasn't ours. He pawned off all the shit he stole, realized how dumb he was (we also kicked him out, got Chris back, and then got Tommy back also after all this), and turned himself in. He was in jail for a short while. All this was a major down, not only because we lost a member but it took some time away from all us being friends. He has changed and is a much better person now though.

Your debut, *Endless*, was recorded in April 1997 and released on Sevared Records by your friend Barrett Amiss. Was it a long time coming? Lots of hard work? Did you ever doubt yourselves or that Disinterment would last? How does/did Barrett fit into the picture? How long have you known him?

We got started with Barrett about two years ago when he became roommates with Ryan through a friend of his. He did a lot for the band by making flyers, doing lots of mail, and we made the decision that he should be our "helping hand" to get started. He was really interested in starting his own label, so we agreed to be his guinea pigs and let him try his first at it with us. Through all the bullshit we only had about 6 months of preparation before we recorded it. This was because of all the lineup changes, plus jobs and school. Yes, of course we doubted ourselves as any band does. We thought all was going to shit after the first 6 months of the CD release. A major doubt was that being American and sounding more European, that people would look at us differently and maybe not give us a chance. That doubt still kind of holds true today. We still don't really think we will find label support that will back us up enough to get our music out to the people. At the moment we are looking at some offers and Barrett will still remain a friend and close partner with the band, but we are trying to branch out more. We still owe a lot to Barrett and any band looking for distribution and someone to help with the things you may not find time for should contact:

Sevared Records / Barrett Amiss / 19 E. Main St. / Leroy, NY 14482 USA / DLLG31A@prodigy.com

In the liner notes Kris thanks "Arcturus for the words of inspiration." When did he speak to the band? What was the conversation about and how did it affect you positively? Did this talk relate to your band's switch from straight-up death metal to the more melodic, though aggressively American style? (Or was this just a natural, independent progression for you guys?)

Kris: I was really thanking Enslaved more for the inspiration. I met them while in Norway and we listened to another band I'm in that is more black metal but still melodic and we also listened to Disinterment's old brutal stuff. They hated the brutal stuff and loved the melodic black metal band. I wanted to concentrate more on melody and stuff and they just gave me a lot of words about how they did what they wanted differently from most black metal bands of that time and it gave me the inspiration to write more of what I wanted and felt, rather than what I thought people wanted to hear. I was very young at the time and very impressionable. Sverd from Arcturus just showed me that there can still be musicality in aggressiveness.

K & R : It wasn't really a change, but a development, and this came about when we learned how to play our instruments better and were able to play the melodic style we had always wanted. Melody was always present, but now we were able to enhance the ability in writing and playing. We feel we have matured musically. The way we implement different styles is that we all play in other bands. Disinterment just happens to be one of these and the one we like best.

Jason sends "As Envy Bleeds" out to whores quite angrily. Could you share with us what that's about? the band's stance on whores and promiscuity? (As we know, metal people are stereotypically very into this lifestyle.)

K & R: This was mainly a lash at an ex-girlfriend of his. It was his choice of words and a statement against all girls who go after guys just because they're in bands. We love girls, but we're not about fucking everything that "lets us." In fact most of us have long-term relationships.

Because you guys are all so young, are you in school? What does the future look like if some members have to relocate for jobs?

Kris: I'm still in school and plan to go for a doctorate, so I'll be in school for a while. I will eventually have to relocate for grad school, but will try to keep the band as close as possible, and if the band takes off, schools will always be around.

Ryan: Members that do have jobs aren't going to leave the area. Jason's business is in Richmond and Tommy's job(s) are always in Richmond as well. I don't plan on going anywhere unless it's on tour.

***Endless*, fresh as it always sounds, is two years old. Have new songs been written or recorded since then? What's the prognosis on a new album? Have any labels shown interest? What's next for Disinterment?**

K & R: We have written new songs and rearranged the old ones. We are taking more time with writing than before, and are planning to record this year, hopefully by the summer. We have one very good offer we are looking at, and maybe we'll be able to get a new one out. The label is also planning a re-release of the CD with new artwork, pictures, layout, etc...Next we just hope to get the music out and play shows and be able to continue doing so for as long as time allows us. [Update: Frowz Productions will re-release *Endless* with major distribution and a new album is probably in the works with them too. www.frowz.com]

How would you classify your style? Each song is filled with a myriad of unconventional riffs and melodies, and great heartfelt solos. How much formal training do you all have, and how has this played into songwriting?

Kris: Thanks for the compliments. I would say it's all the great aspects of metal wrapped into one. Tommy took lessons for a few years, but only for playing, not writing. I have studied classical guitar and composition now for two years here at school and the new music reflects that, along with a lot of emotional input. Most if not all the music came from personal and emotional problems and writing these out into



music. It was more just jamming out my problems, not thinking of theory but knowing the theory just helped me not hit wrong notes.
Ryan: I learned to play by hitting shit and Jason basically learned through practice with the band and his own spare time at home.

How much media attention have you gotten for *Endless*? My friend said he saw you play a packed house in Richmond a while back. Are you still playing out?
K & R: We've been in a few zines but this is only our 3rd interview. We had a while where we played out in Richmond a lot and had quite a good following going; now we resort to house shows, because we prefer it. We would really like to get out of here because there's only so much you can do in your hometown. We have played a few out of town shows, but nothing big. We have sold a lot of CDs here and been featured a few times in the papers. We were voted once the 2nd best band in Richmond. We're trying to play out of town more, so anyone interested or that can help, give us a call.

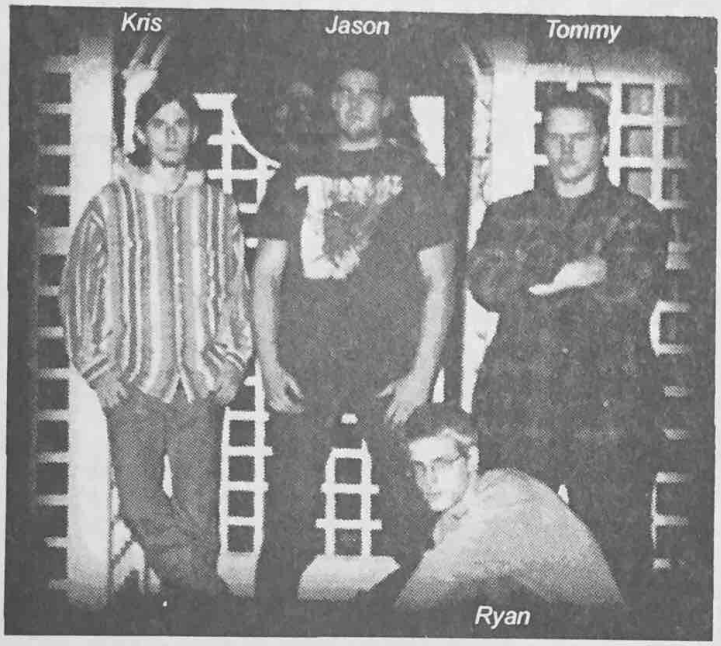
As we head toward the new millenium, everyone is in a frenzy. How do you feel about the world we're inheriting?
Kris: Ryan and I are in a band called New Millennium's End; that should clarify what I think. I just feel that nothing will ever be the same as it was ages ago and am sad to say I think it will never be able to be that way again.
Ryan: I've never thought about it, but the world sucks and when the New Millennium comes and everyone's rioting, I'm gonna get a new TV.

When you look at the cover of Marduk's *Fuck Me Jesus* do you think of the tune "Hot Cross Buns?"
K & R: No, we think we know where Cradle of Filth got all their t-shirt ideas!

I grew up in Virginia and was glad to get away for college in Miami. How do you guys like living in VA? How's the metal scene where you are? Do you sometimes wish you lived in Europe because that would make succeeding musically so much easier?
K & R: Living in Virginia as a metal band is probably the same as anywhere else in America. There is really no scene here. We get mainly hardcore-grind kids at our shows. I (Kris) have always wanted to live overseas and have been trying to get there since I was 6!
Ryan: I'd like to go to Europe but I would never want to live there, yet. I think we'd do a lot better in Europe and maybe someday we'll be able to go there.

Okay, you're going to be reaching a vast audience with this interview. What are the most important things the Sloth readers need to know about Disinterment?
K & R: Nicknames – Tommy is Tomgunn, Jason is Walter, Ryan is Dirtfoot, Kris is Weenie. Jason's really a redneck, Tommy is a ninja, Ryan is a little kid at heart, and Kris is just Kris. We practice about once every month or two, and have the worst luck with shows (all our shows on tour got cancelled). Thanks for the interview and good luck with the zine.

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Eternal Sadness

Why beat around the bush? These German guys know how to play the old Pyogenesis style with heaviness and melody and with a very personal feel. But as keyboardist and vocalist Timo Lechner tells us, Eternal Sadness are always looking to progress, perhaps even beyond their name. Read on...

I find it hard to pinpoint your style of metal. How would you describe Eternal Sadness to a potential listener?
Though our musical style offers various influences, I think the description as "open-minded gothic-rock" would fit best. Our roots lie in typical gothic metal, like Paradise Lost, Tiamat or the older Sentenced. As our musical interests grew, we also brought prog-rock and folk elements together, an always heavy groovin' rhythm, and kept our sight on the vocals. We also like to give some songs a kind of classical character and work with different timbres.

Do you hear any Phlebotomized or *Sweet X-Rated Nothings*-era Pyogenesis in your music? What bands did influence you?
You're definitely right. Pyogenesis was one of the greatest influences on our music in the early days. Together with the bands above, I think there is also need to mention Sisters of Mercy, Dream Theater and all that seventies rock stuff. We like to listen to lots of different music, so that this process of influence isn't over yet. But I think there are lots of trademarks in our music, so you can recognize an Eternal Sadness song at the moment you listen to it. (So true! – ed.)

I like the clean vocals on your CD because often growls won't fit but glass-piercing '80s screams are just as inappropriate. Which of the three credited vocalists does the singing? Does he have any formal training? Do you hear any slight Billy Idol or other '80s pop voices in there?
The singer you're talking about is me, Timo. And in fact I am in training since about two years. Though I like Billy Idol, I wouldn't call him one of my favorite singers. Those are guys like Steve Perry from Journey or James LaBrie of Dream Theater. But it's always interesting how different people hear my voice. And as a singer you should try to find out what sounds good and what does not, no matter what, so you don't sing like your idol.

"Descending Glances" and "Dance of the Dawn" are songs with clean singing, piano, and acoustic guitars. And only the second one has any distorted guitars and drums toward the end. Still I love these songs! Do you think I might enjoy these songs but not a whole CD of mellow music because there is that knowledge that you are metal musicians and that heavy stuff is sure to come? Possibly the same holds true for Scandinavian bands using classical guitar or keyboard intros? Could part of it be that metal fans can truly appreciate good musical elements?
I think it's the mixture. If every song sounds the same, you might get bored. If the whole CD would consist of songs like "Descending Glances" or "Dance of the Dawn" you wouldn't have written us, like only songs like "Autumn" and "Shadows from the Past" might not have interested you the same. The Scandinavian bands might use those elements for the same reason. When you listen to At the Gates or Dark Tranquility, you'll find classical guitars and keyboards even integrated in some songs – that makes them more varied. I think it's a stupid cliché that metal fans only want it louder and harder. If you take a look at the higher selling metal bands like Paradise Lost, Metallica, or Blind Guardian, you see that metal fans often buy records from more versatile bands.

Calling your band Eternal Sadness but your album *Elation* is ambiguous. Are you troubled but optimistic souls? Please explain, because your music is very uplifting!
The name "Eternal Sadness" was chosen many years ago when it really reflected our music and lyrics. They changed with a more optimistic and rockin' direction. I wouldn't say that we are happy guys, but we live a very funny life, with lots of music, parties and beer. And "uplifting" is a very good word for what we want to express. So, it's only a question of time until we'll change the name.

You were featured on Black Mark Production's compilation *Out of the Box* for bands they were considering signing. How was the response? Did a deal not come about?
Unfortunately there was no big response. Black Mark wasn't interested in us, and the only positive reactions were in some magazines that praised us. After this we wrote many letters and sent a lot of CDs to record companies. There were only some very small labels that offered us a deal, but they always had very bad conditions, so we didn't sign anywhere.

Since metal is popular in Germany has that made life any easier for E.S. to survive? Are there lots of shows to play/attend?
Especially in our environment, there are many metal fans coming to our concerts. During the past years we played a lot of shows in Germany. It goes always like this: you invite a band, later they return with another gig. There are about 100-200 guys who visit these underground concerts. If you want more people you have to try to play with greater bands, but mostly this is lucky chance, like our gig with Bolt Thrower and Sentenced back in 1996. At the moment, the metal scene slowly comes out of the underground. You can hear harder stuff on the radio more often and see metal bands in the charts. I think the times are getting better for bands like us!



***Elation* is two years old! What has the band been up to? Have there been any lineup changes? New songs? Can we expect a new album in 1999?**
In the last two years we wrote many new songs, played several live gigs and recorded almost every song as a demo version. In autumn 1998 our drummer Tom (Hemmerlein) left the band and Helmut joined us. We also spent lots of time and money waiting for the record deal. That's why we didn't record new songs in the studio, but in May we'll enter and record a brand new CD! We're going to sell this product by ourselves and keep trying to offer it to record companies again.

Why should someone check you guys out? How does *Elation* differ from other albums?
I think everyone who loves bands like the ones mentioned in this interview, be it Dream Theater or be it Paradise Lost, might find some likable moments in our music. I know from my own experience that a lot of different listeners found that there was something interesting in our tunes.
Most people that have seen us live on stage told us that we have lots more energy in concert than on CD. And we got the habit to do sometimes some strange things on stage! Still not curious yet? Today, two years ago *Elation* is in my opinion a typical gothic metal album like many bands did it at this time. Of course, I can't be as objective as the listener. But in those years, we read so many reviews with comparisons including bands like Tiamat, the Gathering and totally different ones, like Savatage, Pretty Maids, even Blind Guardian! So maybe there is something special about those songs that makes people have such different associations. Even you heard '80s pop influences, see? I think *Elation* is one of those albums that differ because of their variety, so you can't give the music a definite name.

Thanks for the interview. Feel free to leave a final message for the readers!
To Sloth Magazine and readers: We're very happy to get an interview in an American magazine, thanks! I hope that all of you metal-heads take a chance to check us out, and maybe we'll play one day in the States; that would be the fulfillment of a dream for us. So keep Heavy Metal rising again, back from the underground. Rock on!

Eternal Sadness
c/o Alex Hagenauer
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Germany

We've featured a European sounding melodic death metal band from Richmond called Disinterment this issue, so why not continue the insanity? Get ready for epic death/doom from the haunting depths of *Pennsylvania*! In Ruins are here! I hope you've got your rosary beads ready, 'cause it don't get any more evil than rocking out in Ben Franklin's old stomping grounds. (In tribute we are using the "Franklin Gothic Book" typeface right now.) I spoke with guitarist/songwriter/leader J. Michael about his rapidly rising band, so why not check them out before watching television? Reading, even as silly as our interview, definitely is more productive than watching "Dawson's Creek." I swear, all the freshmen who live on my floor in the dorm are gay for this show. You wanna play some ball? *No, me and the guys are going to cuddle and find out if Dawson got Katie pregnant...*

IN RUINS

Well it sounds good talking to an American after interviewing all these European guys.
Oh, yeah? Who were you talking to?

I interviewed Borknagar, Satyricon, Evergrey...
I think we're playing a show with Borknagar in a couple of weeks at that New Jersey thing.

So you guys are out playing shows now?
Yeah, we're getting started, really. This is gonna be one of the first. We're playing this Saturday, locally here.

Cool because I remember reading your first bio with Black Thorns and you guys weren't too interested in playing out.
We weren't at the time but we sort of expanded the lineup; we're up to six people now.

What is the full lineup?
It's the three people who did the CD and then we added a keyboardist and second guitar and there's a guy who does vocals live so I don't have to do it.

So you found some local bands to play with?
This is kind of a warm-up thing, nothing really worth mentioning.

There are no brutal Amish bands around where you're from?
Ah, no. (chuckles) We try to stay out of Amish country, it's pretty scary to go through there.

Your music is very European sounding and I was thinking how suicidal that is for an American band to do this.
Yeah, it is different. I guess I just listen mostly to European metal so it's more of an influence than anything that comes from the States. That's sort of how that comes to be that way. It's not that I don't like American music but it's a lot more natural for me to write this kind of stuff. But a lot of people seem to be surprised we're from Pennsylvania and not from Europe.

That's not really a hotspot for any style of metal recently.
No, not really. Philadelphia's not bad, they have a decent scene, I guess. But I don't get too involved with it.

So what prompted you to start the band on your own when you did?
I was just in other bands at the time and I just got bored with them. Nobody really wanted to do exactly what I wanted to do so I figured I would just do something by myself. And like you were saying earlier, it wasn't really supposed to turn into a full band, we really weren't gonna play live since it was just me at the time. Then we got some label offers and it just sort of gradually evolved into a full lineup.

Yeah, now that you're signed these guys want to be in your band.
(laughs) Yeah, that's really annoying. You go and people you don't even know ask you for a spot in the band and they've never even heard of it. They never even heard the music, they just heard you were signed. That's a little annoying.

This summer I'll be back in Virginia if you need an extra vocalist or something.
(laughs) Yeah! That's the way it is. These guys I got in, I sort of targeted them before the labels really got involved. I thought if that did happen and I got signed, these are the guys I would get.

The CD sounds great to me. Was that the original vision you had?
Mostly. It's not exactly how I wanted it. Things have changed now a bit, the stuff we're writing is a little bit different. It's a little faster, a little more direct and to the point and edited down. It came out pretty close to how I would have wanted it to. It took over four months, which is ridiculous. We were going in the studio like one day a week for like two hours. It just took too long.

I guess that makes it hard to capture the feel on the album when you're just doing it on your off time.
Yeah, it did. We hard a real hard time trying to coordinate the time we could get there with the time the studio guy could do it. Hopefully the next one will be no more than a month at the most.

In Ruins today



When is that gonna be?
I don't know. Like I said, I'm writing now and the main thing now is just to play some live shows. I hope that in two months everything will be written but as far as when we could actually book a time and actually get everything done, that's hard to say.

You were saying how your songs were going to be faster this time. I remember on "The Gathering Storm" that great part at the end has that explosion and the rest of the album doesn't have any of that speed on it.
I just got a little bit bored of mid-tempo and slow stuff. I think we'll always probably do that, there will be some elements on the next one, but I kind of want to up the tempo a little bit, not that the next one's going to be all out speed or anything. We had stuff written back during the demo days that was faster that just didn't make it onto the demo for whatever reason, so it's not like we've never written it.

Who plays the other instruments on the album, like the keyboards? That wasn't listed in the liner notes.
I did most of the keyboards, the engineer (Ekim Akdar) did some. I'm not really a keyboard player, it's not really my thing, I just did it because I wrote the parts and knew them, and it was simpler for me just to play them. Hopefully now with a new guy in there he can do everything in the studio because I don't have any interest in playing keyboards. I have enough other things to worry about.

So he's pretty experienced?
Actually, no. He's actually fairly new at it. He (Corey) was with us as bass player back in the Black Thorns days and he's been playing keyboards for a few years and was really interested in trying that out.

I noticed you guys looked a lot more manly in the Metal Blade picture than in the demo picture.
(chuckles) Yeah, well it's different guys in there as well. He's doing really well. It's not his first choice for an instrument but he's enjoying it, it's something different for him.

Have you done a lot of interviews yet for the CD?
Yeah, a ton actually. Mostly European but it was like five a day. But that was when it just came out, there haven't been too many lately. I don't know, maybe 60 or 70.

That's got to be ego-boosting.
Yeah, but tiring! To do it as soon as you wake up... the weird thing is the European interviews where you're talking to France and then you call and you're talking to Denmark, then Belgium. It's one after another and you're

trying to adjust to different accents and cultures. It's strange.

What would you like the readers to know? Especially because this is an American audience you'll be reaching...
What bothers me is when we get called a doom band all the time. I can sort of understand that but if people hear anything about the band the first thing that gets brought up is that we're some doom band. I don't know, when I hear that I tend to think of My Dying Bride and Anathema and bands like that. I don't think we sound anything like that at all. The first song I think is pretty doom influenced, but in the rest of the album there's just too many tempo changes to label the whole thing doom. Also, we're not from Philadelphia. Everybody tends to think we're from Philly. We're actually about an hour outside of it.

You've got some bitterness against Philly?
No, I love Philly. It's just people ask me where I live in Philly and I don't. I love it there, I go there a lot. I was just there two nights ago...

Have you been to Pat's King of Steaks?
Uh, I'm vegetarian actually, but yeah, I've been past it.

Well how metal is that?
Yeah, I know. I'm just not a big meat guy.

It's weird because a lot of the bands I've been interviewing lately on the phone, the guys are really nice and laid back. The guy from Satyricon was like the friendliest guy in the world yet the music is so harsh. Do you have to put yourself into some sort of mental state before you're about to write music?
No, I tend to get in that mode myself without any help. That's when I do the best writing, usually late at night, the dark candlelit kind of thing. I don't really have to psyche myself up or anything, it just sort of comes about. Like now in broad daylight in the morning it'd be impossible to try to sit down and write. You're just not in the mood for it.

Are you familiar with Morbid Entrée from Pennsylvania?
No.

They were this cheesy grind band and they had this shirt called "Vegan Slaughter."(we laugh) And it had this vegan's head in a hamburger bun.
No, no, I've never heard of them. Like I said, I'm really out of the loop as far as American stuff goes. People ask me what my favorite American bands are and I don't even know. There's a few really cool bands, but I guess a lot of labels don't take too many chances on American bands too. People still think we're European which is really strange. I was just talking to this guy who had heard of the band was just really surprised that we were American.

You should call yourself Jean-Michele.
Yeah. (chuckles)

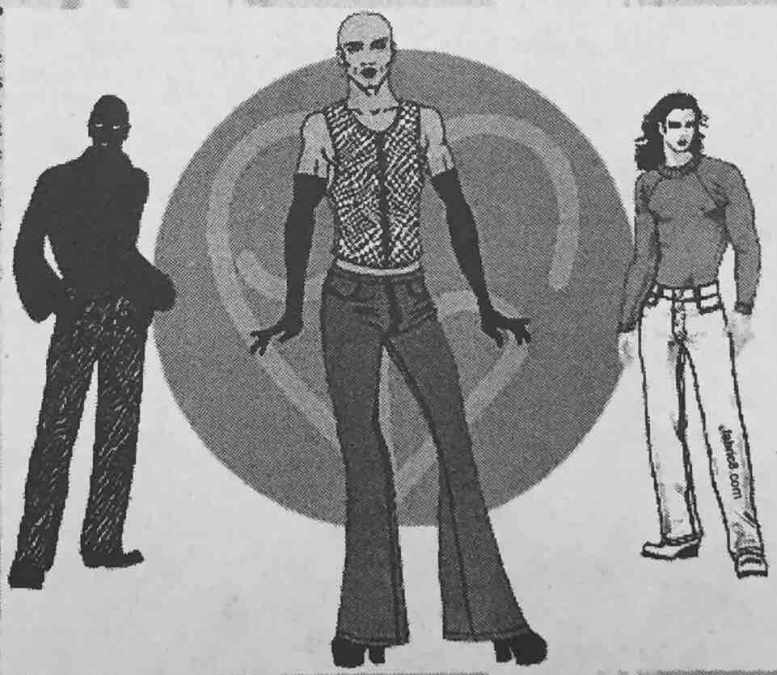
Do you think it was a little risky to put a moon and a castle on your album cover?
No, not really. Look at some other covers. At least you can read our logo. We wanted to create a certain atmosphere, and I think there's enough subtleties on the CD that we didn't really feel the need to be too subtle with the cover. I think we'll probably continue to do stuff like that on the cover – maybe not quite that obvious. But I like the cover, I think it came out pretty well.

How come you changed your name from Black Thorns to In Ruins?
There's like a bunch of other Black Thornses out there. I never liked the name to begin with because I thought it was a very obvious, sort of standard metal name. It was cool, but I was thinking about changing it and it was brought to my attention that there's at least four or five other bands, and one apparently from Philadelphia that was pretty established (with the name). And I felt, "Well, I don't really care for the name too much to begin with. I'd rather change it now than have to change it after the CD comes out." So we were actually in the studio without a name, you know, trying to come up with different names.

What do you care? You got the record contract and they don't!
(chuckles) Yeah, well it's kind of weird about that. I was looking into that with the lawyers that I was talking to and they said we could actually put it out and still be forced to change it if they have it copyright.

That's why your label mates The Crown had to change their name. Some glam Christian band had it.
I didn't know that.

It's funny because Metal Blade, when they sent out the promo pictures, mislabeled both you and The Crown.
The guy on the left is really the guy on the right.
Yeah, the other guys in the band were really thrilled about that. They've been looking forward to the big CD release and they get the promo and their names are fucked up. They wanted me to call Metal Blade and sent out new pictures. (I'm yelling "Repress, repress!" in the background.)



In Ruins circa 1996

You're not that famous yet.
I know, I know.

Do you like Bal-Sagoth?
Um, I never heard them, I don't think.

Afflicted? I heard some Afflicted on track 5 of your CD.
Never heard 'em.

They have this album called *Dawn of Glory* and it's real Manowar-ish type metal.
Oh really! Manowar is a great band. They're just putting out a new live CD.

Really?
Yeah, yeah, they're still going. They're all like 60 or something like that and they're still working out, buff and everything. It's funny.

One of them wears ass-pants, doesn't he?
I think so. I saw'em wearing like loincloths or something like that. All holding swords, it was pretty sweet. (we laugh)

Supposedly they have a Michael Jackson-ish following in South America and Africa.
Yeah, I was on the Internet and I came across a couple pictures of them on some site and they were playing in Germany in front of the sea of people. It was ridiculous, it was like some Madonna concert or something, and all these people were doing this Manowar sign.

Give us some unknown fact that otherwise we would have no reason to believe.
I already told you I was a vegetarian. I can't think of anything else. Sorry, it's still really early in the morning for me.

Yeah, me too. I was like, "Damn, I have to get up!"
We had a late night last night, it was like bar after bar. I'm kind of groggy here.

Do you have to go to work?
Yeah, at some point, like one o'clock.

What's that?
I do computer graphics, so I get to sit in front of a computer and listen to CDs all day. Pretty laid back.

Pays pretty well?
Too much to quit. The band doesn't pay the bills, you know. That's another thing, I think a lot of people wanted to join the band because they think we're gonna be riding around in limos and making tons of money. And it's like, "Yeah right."

All right, J. Michael, my last question for you is will you divulge your last name?
No. (laughs)

Is there a reason why you guys don't give your last names?
It's hard to say. I'm just not really comfortable with it. Nobody really needs know, it's not that interesting. (chuckles) First name's Jeff if that helps you out.

I was just wondering.
Actually the label doesn't even know. A lot of people were sending me stuff with "J. Michael" on it. I was on a guest list and I was like, "Maybe you should put my last name on it because I don't think my driver's license is going to read 'J. Michael.'"

How about this: You guys all put on cheesy European last names, like J. Michael Necromancer?
That was the idea. I was going to use Satanic Hellslaughter at first but it might be a bit too obvious.

And it wouldn't fit on the checks.
Exactly! Necrolord Warlust Bestial...we're working on it, so maybe for the next album we'll go full out corpse-paint as well. (chuckles)

Excellent. And you could pose in an Amish field.
I don't know. Like I say, I stay away from the Amish. Those are pretty frightening people.

Really?
They're scary. Two people were just busted for dealing cocaine out of their fucking buggy or something like that.

Charon

Finland has been having an off time of sorts since Impaled Nazarene are stagnation kings and Sentenced are far from the glory days of **North from Here** *and* **Amok.** *Amorphis remain innovators and now we present Charon, possibly the country's next hope. They are a young group whose death metal core now boasts strong gothic rock influences, with Juha-Pekka Leppäluoto's soulful vocals the music's strongest element. Their debut album* **Sorrowburn** *was released by Diehard Music, which shows the faith this traditionally death metal-oriented label has in the quintet. Juha-Pekka answered some questions about Charon for us...enjoy!*

You've gone through the death metal stage and now play metal accented by gothic, hard rock, and melodies. Many bands are straying from their death metal roots these days, and some people are speaking out against this. What do you have to say to the critics?
At first I have to say that we are very, very thankful for the past and the roots that Charon have and one thing that made us "change" our style was a need to start producing our music towards the style that we play nowadays. I'm not saying that we didn't want to play death or anything like that! There wasn't any decision to start playing a whole new kind of music, it just started to find its own paths and this is where we are right now. It was kind of naturally born without pain – it had to come by natural ways because doing things like music just for the fashion or some other reason would suck a little bit too much and you always can hear it!

Would you say your progression mirrors that of Cemetery? Sentenced?
Of course there is the same kind of progression when you look at bands like those mentioned. This could be called a slight growth of metal, I think. It is also true that nowadays metal bands and any kind of bands have to follow the directions where the music markets are growing because there are so many new bands and artists right now on sale, that you have to be strong to survive. For us, music is more a hobby by now than work, so I know that we don't have problems like that yet. If I could do this as my work one day, I would do it without hesitations!

Are any of your old death metal tapes available? What is your opinion of them looking back?
Yes, there is every tape! I wasn't in the band when guys did record those tapes but they don't shame on those and we can still listen to those of course! Sometimes laughing and sometimes with deep respect! There were actually few really great songs and parts that I just wonder how on earth we didn't sign beside those promos/demos in anywhere!!? (Yeah, ? exactly. –ed.)

It seems farfetched that Charon would be able to land a US tour, so what are the current realistic goals for the band?
Now we are looking forward for the Finnish festivals and possibly a tour somewhere in Europe. We just got a Finnish gig-booking agency behind us in here Finland so now we just sit and wait for what happens. They do have a good reputation and they're hard working men. Tour in Europe depends of our label. I think that most of the gigs are going to be here in Finland at first but we'll see what will come up...I believe it when I see it!

Has anyone said that the riff from "Keimos" sounds like it's from Sentenced's *Amok*? Did this band inspire your evolution? What is your opinion of *Down* and *Frozen*?
Negative!!! No one! Of course Sentenced has influenced Charon somehow but it is just one in a thousand things that does it. On your perspective we live as a neighbor with Sentenced and I know guys from it so it's not surprise if something sounds like it but that is just one. When a band is in this point where we are now, you have to think how to use your influences and always try to make everything like *you* want it to be.

My opinion of *Down* and *Frozen*. I think that Sentenced has always been some kind of a guide for Finnish metal people and their "northern" sound has been always unique like they do it. *Down* was good but *Frozen* seems to kick more ass than I expected! *Frozen* is a very produced album but it seems to fit well in Sentenced's category and I like it very much, even though I don't own it.

Through the years did a number of gothic bands affect the way you approached your metal?
Yeah, there was a huge number of bands which affected it but not only gothic bands. When I joined Charon I didn't actually listen metal at all! After that there was bands like Paradise Lost, Type o Negative, etc. I can't remember everything. But the way we approached to metal was already written and it just went where it went. No one said, "Please, let's do wonderful hit music like everyone else, please." It was more like a combination of everything that we had learned during the time when we all started to play something. I think we'll just see what comes up next, I'm sure it's something that we all want.

The bio says the album's cover, "Marble Leaf," is representative of humanity's growth, our birth and death. Do the songs tie into this theme, and how does the title *Sorrowburn* relate?
Some parts of the songs tie very closely into this theme as in the cover but there are also many things in the lyrics that give the reader only a clue to follow and that's why there is such a thing as cover art. Actually, when I wrote those lyrics, I didn't have any specific idea which to follow and any specific message to tell. But when I saw those lyrics as finished I could then easily fit them together and find something alike in them all, so I think that the state of mind which I used writing those was just perfect for me and there are no reasons to change it to anything else. The *Sorrowburn* title came after the song names and we chose that name because it simply describes the whole scenario of the feelings that I had during the writing process, those feelings and emotions I tried to bring out in my lyrics.

Like pretty much everyone, you can speak English. Do you feel this modern-day necessity infringes on Finnish or worldwide culture? I think that American television shows are a form of indirect colonization by my country.
Actually I'm pretty lousy at speaking English but it'll do for me for now. English is a great common way to keep in touch with different guys all around the world but it depends on people how much they let it come as part of their culture. People do have roots in their own culture and Finnish culture is one that I won't change for anything. But it is true that the English language will be more common in a few years and it'll be necessary to speak it in some occasions, and these are also the reasons why bands do music in English. In some manners it feels like your TV shows mirror your country but there must be also a real life behind that. I don't watch those because I don't believe them.

Further, Amorphis's *Tales from the Thousand Lakes* drew largely from folk music and other aspects of your culture. Are the members of Charon attached to their homeland in a similar way? How do you look upon the flag-waving Norwegian pride mongers who seem to make a show of their nationalism?
We're not maybe attached in our culture like that, it's more our landscapes that we're in "love" with. I've noticed that our dark seasons give us more subjects to make songs than subjects from our culture, but of course our cultural meanings move around these forms. I haven't heard yet about those pride mongers in Norway but making a show of your own nationalism will only damage it and make it a less serious or important thing to respect. Respect is the one thing that should always remain the same.

I hear *Sorrowburn* debuted very well in the Finnish charts. Do you feel like rock stars? If the band became really popular, do you think that would change your outlook on the world, or when the time comes to compose new music, the songs you write?
When you live in a country like Finland, you can't ever feel yourself as a rock star. If your friends don't drag you down, then winter will. Making music would be great as a full job but I enjoy it now when it's my hobby. If it becomes more serious, then I'll put my life into it. Of course popularity can change something of you and it can also affect to the way you compose your music, but I have a straight line to make music only from the subjects that I want and I would never change my songs because of the pressure of publicity.

Diehard is traditionally a promoter of aggressive death or hardcore type bands. Was it weird being picked up by them? How has the press's response been so far?
Not actually weird, because we knew that things would work with them too and the contract was good for us. So this is a good start for us. I've seen a *lot* of the press releases of Charon and I wouldn't shame any of them! I'm happy that it had this good response from all over Europe because now we have had some self-respect during this process and this is a great point to continue!

If you had to convince someone to buy your CD, what would you say?
Don't buy Oasis!!! Buy us!! Money is power and power is greed, Oasis has money...already!

Charon seems a more death metal type name. Were there ever thoughts to change it to something more gothic, like Lily Dusk? Do you think future albums will further stray from the metal and reach more accessible, mainstream sounds?
Lily Dusk!!! Oh my god!! We haven't ever thought to change our name, it'll do by now and always I hope! Our future sounds and songs are going to stay as metal as they can be – actually I think that it's going to be more our own now. We have concentrated on the songs in different directions and also found some interesting paths to do them. Now we can have more out of it and I hope that audience will too. Emotions are always going to be the top things when it comes to making music.

Thanks so much for answering the questions! If there is anything I forgot to ask you about, feel free to say whatever you want the readers to know.
There shouldn't be "anything" by now, take care you guys in the "big-land". We'll just freeze to death and make some good songs for you, bye!!
charon.contact@gnwmail.com



JACOB'S DREAM

They sent in their self-released, self-titled album for review. We were impressed with their brand of heavy metal: unashamedly '80s but not outdated. So we scheduled an interview and the whole crew was there. From them we found out the great things happening for Jacob's Dream right now. Maybe life really does start at thirty...

So are you guys in the middle of a band practice?
John Berry (guitar/synth): No, we're just in the middle of putting down some stuff on our four-track to send to our prospective producer for him to get a grip on what we're doing.

How long have you all been together and how old are you?
John: On and off, it's been about 10 years. I'm 31, I think Gary's 33, Dave's probably 29, James is 26. He's a puppy.

Are all of you married?
John: Yes, we all are, as a matter of fact.

Does that affect the way you approach the band?
John: It's pretty casual. Our wives dig it, they don't mind us being out late at night. Dave's calling me a liar. (laughs)

But you guys got some big goals, right?
John: Yeah! I don't know if I told you about getting signed to Metal Blade. We signed with them back in November, so we got a four-album deal with them. We really need to get started on it pretty soon.

How did that come about?
John: Believe it or not, we hadn't even sent them anything. We had an independent CD out and we were selling it over in Europe and it was selling well over there. And somebody passed one by one of the reps from Metal Blade and the next thing we know we're getting a call and contract from them. So we got ourselves a lawyer and went back and forth with them for a while and finally got a contract we could both agree to. We didn't expect anything like that – it sort of fell into our lap.

Has it been frustrating over the last ten years to get a deal?
John: You know, we just had lot of fun doing it. If we hadn't gotten signed we'd still be going at it and probably put out another independent CD just because we love doing it.

I noticed the CD is copyrighted 1996 and was released a year ago, so I guess you have a lot of songs written since then?
John: We've got the next album just about ready to go. We've got ten we want on there for sure and possibly two more from the old album, and maybe we'll just write some more stuff.

How would you compare the new stuff to what's on the CD?
John: It's heavier and yet more melodic. That's kind of a dichotomy but just a lot better, I think.

I noticed in your picture you guys have the '80s jeans going and the sunglasses going, but your music is more in the '90s. How would you compare yourself to '80s bands and all that stuff?
John: We're not ashamed to say we sound '80s or anything. That's who we are, we're not gonna run away from it.

What were some of the '80s bands that influenced you guys?
John: I was sort of a Maiden and Queensryche head but we kind of run the gambit from Rush to Guns n' Roses.

You are a Christian band, correct?
John: Yes.

How does that play into your agenda for music?
John: We said for a long time that we're not preachers, we're not gonna hide from the fact that we're Christians, either. Who we are is just gonna be reflected in our music.

A lot of bands put scripture in their lyrics or they say their band is a ministry.
John: We're more a rock band but we're Christians and that's gonna be reflected in our music. We're not necessarily a "ministry" and we haven't received a whole lot of support over the years from the church, per se.

Why do you think that is?
John: I don't really know. We've been totally cool with them, but they haven't seemed real interested in getting behind us. A song for the new album called "Crusade" and it kind of reflects the historical hypocrisy in the church. There's also modern-day hypocrisy.

Tell me about your plans for the next six months.
John: We have to get in the studio and it shouldn't take too long to lay down the tracks. Everything's been written and rewritten. The recorded the last album in four days and this one shouldn't take an unreasonably long time.

Has Metal Blade talked to you about tours?
John: We left that out of the contract purposely because we want to negotiate that separately. We've all got families and houses and stuff we don't want to lose.

Back to Metal Blade real quick. They have a lot of Satanic bands on their roster. Does that really bother you that you're dealing with a label like that?
John: Doesn't bother me at all. If we went out with some bands that reflected beliefs that were a lot different than ours it wouldn't bother me. We'll still reach people with our music and that's cool.

Ten years ago when you started out were you a lot wilder and partied?
John: Believe it or not, there was a time but it kind of came later than that. (laughs) We went our separate ways for a while and before we reformed there were some wild and crazy times. Things are pretty settled down now, I guess.

So you all work regular jobs?
John: Yeah, nine-to-fivers. I'm in the printing industry. James drives a towtruck, Gary's in the mailing industry, and Dave, you drive a forklift? (voice in background and laughter) Warehouse technician! (we laugh)

Tell me about the band's name then. I looked around the internet and could only come up with a couple religious sites.
John: It doesn't have a whole lot of meaning for us. We had tossed around some names. When we first started out we called ourselves Iron Angel, but times change and so did our style. Then we came up with Westminster Abby but we couldn't get rights to use it, so after tossing around a couple more names Gary's wife came up with Jacob's Dreams off the top of our head. None of us were too crazy about it but we couldn't find a reason not to like it.

On the CD you cover some really deep topics, like "The Jewel." What goes into the lyrics?
John: Let me refer you to Dave on that.
Dave Taylor (vocals): Hi, I'm poor and in debt. Please get lots of people to buy my CD.

My questions are about the lyrics on the album because you cover pretty deep topics on "The Jewel," "Rape of Innocence," and "Sarah Williams." What inspires you to write this as opposed to generic stuff?
Dave: "The Jewel" – There was a girl I was dating at the time, she was like my first love. I poured my heart and soul into her. It was a song about her and the situation she was in, but it was also about my life in the sense of God in humanity, and my beliefs in over the years of growing up. The song is basically how the Creator views humanity.

"The Rape of Innocence" has a preface saying it's a controversial song. Is that also based on a personal experience?
Dave: Yeah. It was later on in my life, kind of like the wild and crazy days. I was ignorant, innocent, a boy who had no understanding of things. And I met up with a much older woman and it kind of like flourished into something unhealthy.



The song "Sarah Williams" was funny for me because that's the name of my good friend's mom. But she wasn't hit by a drunk driver like in the song.
Dave: That's good! That was written by a guy we had in the band before John in the wild and crazy days. He drove home one night drunk and he didn't know how he got home. He freaked out and called one of the guys in the band and said, "I don't know how I got home. Something might have happened, I'm scared." He watched the news and everything. It just freaked him out so bad he just sat down and thought about all the consequences and put these words together. I kind of wrote the last part with him. Sarah Williams is a kind of name we came up with. Other than playing it live, we probably won't do much with the song.

I was in a crappy band a few years ago and one time we were improvising and my singer just went crazy and penned these lyrics for a song called "Ghost of the Highway" about someone who got killed by a drunk driver. It was the gayest song you'll ever hear! (we laugh) What was the first thing you thought about when you knew the Metal Blade contract had been signed?
Dave: I'd say it was a physical manifestation of something that I've envisioned and hoped for. It was rather exciting but with it I realized the future responsibility. I mean, it's a big deal. I was ecstatic, I was happy. Would you like to talk to James?

Sure.
James Evans (bass): Hey!

I just asked what Dave thought when the contract had been signed. What was your response?
James: Fear was a big response. It was a moment you strive to get to and now all the cards are on the table and it's dealing time. You either go for it or back out – it's the moment of truth and when you actually sign it's relief and a little bit of anxiety. After it settled in I felt like we made the right decision. You know, if you're seventeen-years-old and you go in and a record company waves a contract in your face, it's easier to say no problem. Like John was saying before, we have families and houses to think about and we've got to make sure they're gonna be provided for. Family life is a very important thing for us.

When do you think the album will be out?
James: We're hoping to record in May and then it's up to the record company to see when they release it. They probably won't be dragging their feet on it because that's where their money is too.

I haven't spoken to Gary yet. Would you mind passing the phone on?
James: No problem...
Gary Holtzman (drums): Hey, how's it going?

All right. I'm asking you all what you thought when you knew the deal had been signed with Metal Blade, so let's get your take.
Gary: Well, everything was corresponded through me so I had already talked to a bunch of record labels. I talked to like Nuclear Blast and there's a bunch of them I never even heard of called. So when Metal Blade had called I had already talked to like five or six of them. I think that just the correspondence we got from Europe was pretty shocking. The record label really wasn't a priority to us, at least to me.

How many CD did you press?
Gary: We initially had done a thousand and all those sold within two weeks and it was all through a guy's company in New Jersey called Sentinel Steel. He pretty much got the ball rolling. That was the most shocking thing to me, that in a matter of weeks we had people in Europe wanting CDs from us. *Rock Hard* is a magazine in Germany and they contacted me because they wanted to put one of our songs on this compilation CD they release once a year for unsigned bands. I think that's how the record companies got in touch with us because they pressed 100,000 them. We were one in twelve bands? Fifteen maybe, from all over the world and we were the only American one on there.

Cool. Thanks for talking about the band. Could you throw John on again?
Gary: Sure, no problem.
John: What's up, man?

I've asked all the guys their initial reactions when you knew the deal had been signed, so I wanted to get yours, too.
John: Oh man, it still hasn't sunk in yet. I guess when we record and get the CDs back from the label it might sink in then, but now it doesn't even seem real.

Any final comments for the readers?
John: Just keep an eye out for us, can't wait to get out there.

John Berry
231 East Creek Dr.
Galloway, OH 43119 USA



Most demos suck and most people are only interested in buying albums released by labels. So here's the best of the unsigned – there's something below for all of you!

ASSOCIATION AREA
Stop Motion Has been – 1998
CD – 4 tracks – 20:51
Okay, I'll mention this even though it's not really metal and typical *Sloth* material. **Association Area** have the screamy, unintelligible vocalist that could pass for black metal but of course the music is quirky hardcore. So you know the style, but at least they don't have an agenda; the lyrics are very confusing actually. I hear some **Faith No More** amongst the insanity, and some odd lead guitar lines pop up throughout to make the music much different than the usual. "Steakwater" is the best track – it's long, diverse, and the vocalist becomes increasingly upset and frenzied toward the end.
Write for info to:
P.O. Box 30115
1027 Finch Ave. West
Downsview, Ontario
Canada M3J 3L6

CRUCIFIED DAWN
Self-titled – 1998
Actually this demo really sucks but I wanted to mention it because one of the vocalists sounds like Scooby Doo. I laughed my ass off! The music is jumbled and choppy blackened death, but the more financially suicidal of you might want to hear this guy because he resembles Scooby making an inquiring "Uh?"
$5 everywhere to:
Frank Kermes
P.O. Box 76195
St. Paul, MN 55175-1197 USA
marduk50@ix.netcom.com

CYANOSIS
Bludgeoned 1998 3 tracks
This was a tough one to decide whether or not to review because on the one hand **Cyanosis** play typical chunky brutal American death metal, but on the other their sound is incredibly crushing. And the riffs that really hit home have that sludgy **Mortician** guitar tone that makes a lot of you cream. I can see plenty of the old school fans eating up Cyanosis and there's good news for you: they signed with Pulverizer Records and will release a new album soon. I just hope they either improve the leads or scrap them altogether...
$4 (US) / $5 (world) to:
P.O. Box 27728
Milwaukee, WI 53227 USA

DISCERN
Revive and Rebuke 1998
CD – 8 tracks – 21:08
To the normal fan **Discern** would appear to have two strikes against it before he even pressed play: it's a solo project and a Christian one to boot. But hold your horses, mates! Bill Fraser is primarily a drummer and judging by *Revive and Rebuke* also adept at the guitar, so there are never any awkward moments when someone can't keep up. Fraser says his music is "brutal, heavy, and simply crushing, blending blues with death metal, creating an original sound." And his stuff is damn heavy, played as well as you're going to find in an unsigned brutal death band and without the momentum-stopping intended-to-induce-a-pit-Cookie-Monster-reciting-the-alphabet nonsense. The sludgy guitars are reminiscent of **Mortician**, though overall produced a bit more clearly, and the vocals are straight out of the **Suffocation** textbook, so all you evil dudes don't worry about getting a sermon. Incidentally, death and black metal fans get as upset about Christian lyrics as Christians do about Satanic or other condemning lyrics. Why don't we all just shut up about it; it's beyond our comprehension!
$10 everywhere to:
Bill Fraser
11408 Audelia Rd. #4778
Dallas, TX 75243 USA
discern@flash.net

EMBODIMENT
No God – 1998 – 5 tracks
It took a few listens to appreciate this Tennessee trio's music, but I found a lot of personality within the standard death metal I initially judged it to be. For those readers who have **Gutted**'s *Bleed for Us to Live* album, you'll understand what I mean. The songs are based around your everyday catchy mid-paced riffs but then maybe the drummer will throw in a new look with his cymbals or the guitarist will play a nice lead. **Embodiment** is what I look for in an American death metal band interested in progressing without losing its fury. Give them another couple of demos to really put it together (no bands have been able to write those great choruses like Gutted) for a knockout, but definitely worthy as is.
$6.66 (give'em $7) to:
Michael Grim
400 E. Rickert St.
Dickson, TN 37055 USA

ENCABULOS
Dark Divinity – 1998 – 5 tracks
This is surely only for the sickos out there! For the past few years **Encabulos** have been honing their skills and these do not include keyboard theory, convincing ex-girlfriend to sing, or dueling guitar harmonies. Just pounding grind of all tempos with a beefy production job to boot. It ain't pretty but I guess that's what happens when you come from Geelong City.
$4 (world) / $5 (Aus/New Z.) to:
Steven Hull
P.O. Box 1648
Geelong City 3220 Australia

EXMORTEM
Promo anno 1998 3 tracks
Exmortem have become *Sloth* favorites of sorts over the past issues, with their last album, *Dejected in Obscurity*, earning a perfect 5/5 rating. They play brutal death metal circa the early '90s unashamedly with energy and con-



I betcha didn't know this was Cyanosis!

viction, bringing to mind **Cannibal Corpse**'s debut *Eaten Back to Life*. Actually, this comparison is holding less true the more I hear this demo, which is relieving because I was beginning to think Exmortem were not progressing anymore. But they are, slowly but surely, with not a hint of their power sacrificed in the process. You can't beat brutality as consistent as that!

Write for info to:
Ravnholtvej 145
8310 Tranbjerg J, Denmark

FALL OF THE LEAFE
3-Song Promo 1999

I reviewed **Fall of the Leafe**'s Defiled Records debut *Evanescent Everfading* last issue and found it an impossible listen because the band had no focus, despite how skilled the guitarists may have been. Defiled has folded but FOTL is back with a three new songs that showcase their trademark floating, multi-layered guitar melodies. "Deference, Diminuend" starts things off the same as before and I muttered to myself, "They'll never learn," but by song's end everyone had settled down and I was pleased. In this song and the others there is a great variety of heaviness and melodiousness, the drummer standing out in the aggressive moments. "I Feathe to the Juniper" and "Wonder Clouds Rain" are further proof of the band's progression with touches of black metal, old **Moonspell**, and their Finnish folk roots all mixed into the FOTL sound. If you like layered European metal this might be a demo band for you!

Write for info to:
Marko Hyytiä
Tanhuakuja 8 As. 21
23500 Uusikaupunki, Finland

FORTY DAYS LONGING
the head of the demon – 1998
CD – 3 tracks – 25 minutes

I cannot stop listening to this band! There is only one other demo I cranked this much, *Heart of the Corona* by **Garden of Shadows**, and the fact they and **Forty Days Longing** are both from Maryland is freaky and a bit scary. If the trend continues, people won't be ripping off Swedish bands anymore. Everybody will start moaning about "generic Maryland death metal." It's a stretch but I long for the day when America again can boast at least one thriving scene. Unfortunately nobody cares as much as they proclaim they do by writing "Support the Underground" on flyers for their stapled-in-the-corner-but-selling-for-four-bucks zines with distribution of like a hundred. There was a zine called *Deep Imagination* that advertised on its flyers that they only printed a hundred, as if it were some special thing. Now that I'm ranting I've got some other shit to throw – don't worry, you'll get your review. There are too many labels that don't know what they're doing and too many zines exist just long enough for the editors to get a bunch of free CDs then bail when they realize they've got to review them all – we pause to hail Ray and *Metal Curse* for valiantly reviewing over 500 an issue (he is *the* man). I have said this in previous issues and am not ashamed to admit it: it is great to get free CDs but if that was all I cared about *Sloth* would look nothing like this and people would soon see through my façade as they have with countless rightfully defunct zines. The zines listed at the end of this issue are established and will most likely be around for a while – it is a much smaller list than in past issues but hopefully all you eager readers and aspiring bands will write to them with confidence. I think the most hardworking people in the underground are the bands because they're the ones out there struggling to create music that someone is willing to spend money and therefore time on.

It's funny, but there is a large business side to the underground that I had thought only existed with big companies like Elektra or Geffen. You would not believe how many hours I spent on the phone trying to get in touch with label people, only to end up leaving a hundred unreturned messages or getting vague answers about ads with the underlying theme: call me closer to your print date, preferably two days before so you can be inconvenienced and not spend your time finishing the articles supporting the bands you love. I just don't think people are as into the underground spirit anymore. They get jobs at labels and suddenly it's not about promoting the great bands but making money first and foremost. I think that *Sloth* has been building up enough consistent credibility that if I ever were to start selling out – ads for interviews and good reviews, basically – my readers would see through the bullshit and justifiably tell me to suck their dicks. I am not afraid to say an album sucks! I used to have nothing to lose when *Sloth* was new and small but even if advertisers aren't pleased, the reader will be thankful for the honesty he finds here and rarely elsewhere (*10 fucking skulls!*), and that is why I do this damn magazine: for the love of the bands that make me happy and the opportunity to share them with like minds.

Okay, I will review the CD. *the head of the demon* is perfect, absolutely at the height of perfection. I never imagined when I reviewed their 2-song demo a year ago they would develop into the definitive demo band to end the year. I was considering not reviewing the first one yet one listen to *the head of the demon* will prove their brilliance. The core is melodic doom/death metal but the whole is not easy to categorize at all. Female vocalist Zdenka Prado growls like you wouldn't believe and not once does she try to be a pretty voice. She's brutal as all hell but very unique. Then we have violinist Suvo Sur, an active member of the band with a dozen years of formal training. The beauty, power, and depth he adds to the music are immeasurable and I have never heard such skilled violin work on a metal album. When I saw the band live last year his stage presence was shockingly good, as well as that of Zdenka.

Finally, I just want to say that in no way can metal be all dried up if a young band from Maryland of all places can single-handedly give the world a wakeup call. Garden of Shadows first did it in 1997 and Forty Days Longing are doing it now. If you believe you are any kind metal fan, get off your ass and get this CD. (See interview for complete info.)

FROM THE DEPTHS
Self-titled – 1997
CD – 4 tracks – 15:55

This CD may be old but it shows why **From the Depths** are great hopes for playing European-inspired death metal. For all the melody there is plenty of brutality, and the singer does *not* sound just like Tomas from **At the Gates**. I hear that the band signed with Candlelight Records and rightfully so; write to them and get the latest info.

Write to:
P.O. Box 34414
Cleveland, OH 44134 USA

ICEFALL
Ghostlands – 1999 – 3 tracks

It's all about supporting the underground, right? Well Sean Underwood (not to be mistaken with Jay Underwood, star of movies like *The Boy Who Could Fly* and *Not Quite Human*) is trying something a little different for an American demo band, though many are going the solo route lately. I guess the success of **In Ruins** hasn't been discouraging either! Anyway, he plays slow metal with strong older European influences and I hear **Manowar** creep out in the choruses. But the songs are more mournful than epic, with Sean saying his letter, "I only hope you guys are familiar with **Candlemass** and **Solitude Aeternus**." I've heard Solitude Aeturnus and can't make much of connection with the vocals since Sean sings lower and more passively while Robert Lowe's style involves grabbing his testicles and going after those higher notes.

All in all, **Icefall** is a somber band that manages to be ambitious without falling flat. A lot of bands try the clean vocals and sound like pubescent choirboys. "Haunt of the Autumn" closes the demo with a great faster section where everything clicks. Icefall is a pleasant surprise indeed.

$3 (US) / $4 (world) / free (ex-commie countries) to:
Sean Underwood
P.O. Box 441
Rochdale, MA 01542

LILITU
3-song promo – 1998

We were mighty impressed by the ambitious 70-minute *Servants of the Twilight* that came to us from **Lilitu** late in 1997. Back then the quartet were half-male, half-female and featured much alternating singing in the long songs. There have been some shakeups since and core member Derek Bonner does all the vocals along with his guitar duties. He and I have been in contact for a while and share a strong common bond in our worship of **Phlebotomized**. He tells me Lilitu will be very active this year and judging by this sampler I'm just as excited as he is! The songs are melodic doom aided by piano and fronted by Derek's daring vocals. I say daring because in a time when most underground bands put little effort into their vocal patterns, Derek actually sings more than using his growl (which reminds me of **Darkified**). The clean vocals have both emotional and memorable words – another plus. Lilitu are one of my picks for 1999 so check them out!

Write for info to:
P.O. Box 1795
Hardwick, GA 31024 USA

LISA THE WOLF
Erotic Evil – 2 tracks – 1998

I've seen guys in action at this, so I know what I'm talking about when I say that on the occasion of a female having anything to do with metal and they are in the same room, they get really excited. Maybe she's attending the show or actually in the band – either way some guys go bonkers and immediately get too excited. Within in the industry this penis-minded bias comes in the form of Raul Caballero of Dwell Records releasing a whole CD, the god awful *Awakening*, in tribute to the few bands with chicks in them. This bias appears in zines when editors give good reviews for the same reason. Therefore rest assured you can read this review as if it were written by a eunuch. That's not to say Ms. Lombardo isn't attractive, for she is quite cute, but there is nothing *weak* about her music.

Lisa the Wolf are a sick duo that immediately suck you in with Lisa's witch-like spoken intro as wind howls behind. In comes this chugging riff that is so addictive that you know you're hooked for life as Lisa wails and growls overtop. You don't want it to end and thankfully the bulk of the song revolves around this one glorious passage. That's not to say the demo is repetitive, for each time I listen I am enslaved by the guitar rumblings, Lisa's decipherable howls, and skinsman Jim Sheedy's traditional and effective growls. Hands down, *Erotic Evil* is the most fun demo I've heard in a long time. **Great Kat**, I think you have a rival!

$3 (US) / $5 (world) to:
Lisa Lombardo
P.O. Box 1407
Boston, MA 02104 USA
www.lisathewolf.com



MALIGNANCY

Ignorance is Bliss – 1998 – 4 tracks

There is no pretty way to put it: **Malignancy** are brutal fucking New York death metal. A lot of New Yorkers don't like *Sloth* because they know I rip on this stuff, but I know quality when I hear it and Malignancy have me banging my head and growling along. All the songs rage and crush and kill with a thick, gurgling production. Sorry, no violins on this one, folks!

Write for info to:
P.O. Box 631
Yonkers, NY 10710 USA

MOONSORROW

Tämä Ikuinen Talvi – 1999 – 5 tracks – 43 minutes

For how much **Moonsorrow** sound like **Emperor**, I will say that they do a pretty convincing job. I don't think big fans of *Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk* would have a problem with the demo either; they'd probably enjoy it. What I find most admirable when I listen are the advanced keyboards reminiscent of **Bal-Sagoth**, though of course not on such a high level. It's a double-edged sword to release a demo three-quarters of an hour long because although you may want to show off your material, you run the risk of boring the listener with so much music. For Moonsorrow – comprised of cousins Henri and Ville Sorvali – to keep my interest while playing frantic black metal is a feat indeed. The only aspect I don't like are the vocals. They are raspy and just low enough in the mix to be irksome rather than evil or brutal. To be esoteric, I'll compare them to **Master's Hammer**. Other than that, this demo is far better than most black metal I'm getting today.

20fim (Finland) / $5 (world) to:
Ville Sorvali
Porvoonkatu 37 B 6
00520 Helsinki, Finland
wille@netlife.fi

NDE

Pain EP – 1998

CD – 8 tracks – 32:45

I gave these guys a good review back in issue #3 for their self-released album *Falling*. They play a breed of mid-paced '90s metal intended for the live stage and have had some success back in their hometown with shows and radio airplay. The *Pain EP* shows what **NDE** have been up to for the past couple of years with four new songs, a revamped oldie, and three live tracks. The best way to describe the music is riffage ranging from slower **Pantera** to speedier thrash sections with a touch of groove, but not enough to discourage yours truly. The band have definitely tightened up since *Falling* and the floating, bluesy guitar leads add a touch I don't think was a possibility before. "Burden" and "Pain 9" show that guitarists Chris Longo and Bobby Reinard are focusing on the slow stuff now, leaving me to wonder if "Friends 98" and "Stench" live weren't included just to keep fans of the intense old material from being too alienated. Reinard keeps his painful rasp as before, so at least NDE have kept true to form on this front, and old fans will enjoy the hard-hitting "Lawn," plus "Pain 9" builds to an impressive ending especially from a songwriter's standpoint. Expect a new full-length from NDE this year.

$9 everywhere to:
P.O. Box 2297
Streetsboro, OH 44241 USA
nde4chris@aol.com

NOMAD

The Tail of Substance – 1998 – 10 tracks

As you can see, this is a long demo. And that makes it hard to listen to the whole thing, but I figured **Nomad** were good enough to mention here. They play diverse death/thrash with touches of speed and black metal, their sound the typical European one of today. I noted a number of great moments on the tape's second side, but since there are so many songs with so many lyrics it was hard to remember which was which. "The Quartered Dependence" is one that I do remember as awesome, however. I probably wouldn't recommend Nomad too highly as a signed band, but for a demo this is well above average.

$5 (Europe) / $6 (world) to:
P.O. Box 69
26-300 Opoczno, Poland

OMNIUM GATHERUM

Demo 1998 – 4 tracks

I had reservations about reviewing this band but figured what the hell. The production is decent for a new band and I was struck most the number of memorable transitions within the music. "What exactly is the style?" you ask. Mix chunky American death with speedy thrash and a healthy vocal battle between grunts and excited rasps with a few added touches of separate bass and guitar lines. Plus, there's enough diversity within the stomping goodness to please someone as jaded as me when it comes to demos.

Write for info to:
P.O. Box 79 Kilkenny
South Australia 5009

RAIN FELL WITHIN

Solemn Days – 1998 – 5 tracks

If you're up for five long songs of slow melodic metal led by soft female vocals, **Rain Fell Within** are just what you need. Although this is their first demo it shows a lot of ambition and I look forward to hearing future releases. The moods the band create are very soothing and I hope that with time they will be able to mix up the tempo more, as well as known when a song needs to end. Still, *Solemn Days* is about as un-American sounding as you'll find so all you European music freaks pay attention! Look for new material very soon.



$5 (US) / $6 (world) to:
Charles Gore
P.O. Box 222713
Chantilly, VA 20153 USA
rainfellwithin@juno.com

REBAELLIUN

Promo tape '98 – 2 tracks

This tape was sent to me by Hammerheart Records with a promo pack so I think they're going to release a **Rebaelliun** album soon. That's fine with me because these four Brazilian maniacs play death/thrash more frantic than I thought ever possible again. I immediately think of this song "Death be Not Proud" by **Ritual Sacrifice** that I dubbed from the radio five years ago as the last time I heard this style played so intensely. Picture **Slayer** high on crack mixed with Aussie grind and a little **Morbid Angel** death metal, and then make it faster. What devastate me are the *hyper* leads where the guitarists play their notes speedier and speedier to a crushing climax, and then I remember all the times I wanted a band to do this but they never just let loose. That is what sold Rebaelliun to me and I'll be an unhappy man if I don't hear any more music from them soon.

rebaelliun@yahoo.com

SKILLS OF ANGELYN

Demo 1998

Mix industrial, hard rock, and death metal for a dish called **Skills of Angelyn**. Not sounding anything like a Swedish band, SOA just play straight ahead catchy songs with enough twists and heaviness to stay underground. No blast beats or boring speed sections here, only plenty of chunky riffs backed by a drum machine and deep but decipherable vocals.

Write for price to:
Max Thornell
Virebergsv. 10
169 31 Solna, Sweden

SORROW BEQUEST

Torn from the Last – 1998 – 5 tracks

We're getting the best stuff from the unlikeliest of places these days, and North Carolina's **Sorrow Bequest** give us their take the melodic death metal made famous in Scandinavia. Not to say they've forgotten their American roots, but **In Flames** are a definite influence in these five tracks. Although *Torn from the Last* is not the most advanced of demos, it shows signs of musical dedication and the good things to come if they keep plugging at it. Besides, the Scandinavian metal craze is finally attracting American bands (just look at the citywide Chicago bandwagon) and Sorrow Bequest are ahead of most in their rendition of the style.

$4 (US) / $5 (world) to:
Johnny Wooten IV
342 W. Juniper Ave.
Wake Forest, NC 27587 USA

TWILIGHT SYMPHONY

At Dawn – 1998

CD –3 tracks – 16:15

Swedish metal band encompassing all the styles: heavy, death, melodic, and some black metal. Corresponding vocals, the death growls and singing like **Anathema**. It almost reminds me of what the many American bands tackling this style sound like – their influences are obviously Swedish but the product is different and usually appealing. **Twilight Symphony** is best at restrained harmonies and just rocking out sometimes. None of the vocals are overdone and "My Fallen Tear" is probably the best song here because of this, plus the soothing and progressive music. *At Dawn* definitely grows on you! (See easy ordering info below.)

60skr (Sweden)/62skr (Scand.)/$9US (Euro)/$10US (world) to:
Henrik Leghissa
Jutevägen 19
961 49 Boden, Sweden
twilightsymphony@swipnet.se

UNBORN

Sounds of Agony – 1998 – 4 tracks

Guitarist/vocalist Tom even said in his letter that this tape is nothing fancy (they recorded it on an *old* machine) and that **Unborn** will be entering a real studio soon. Well the sound is a challenge to battle through, though it is not muddled, just limited in clarity and level. Why I find reason to mention this "three-piece balls-out Grind Core Death Metal band" is that the sound they are crafting looks to be very frightening when they play together longer and get a real production job. The bass sound is crisp and soooooo heavy and really helps the guitar riffs pound. Sometimes they get totally in-sync and rip out downright wicked material. I may be going out on a limb here but my hunch says Unborn may show us a new way to be brutal in 1999.

$2 (US) / $3 (world) to:
Tom Sprouse
7029 W. Diversey Ave.
Chicago, IL 60707-1702 USA
meatgrind@aol.com

UNHOLY CADAVER

Demo Number One – 1998

CD-R – 3 tracks – 26:12

The member who sent me this CD says these three songs come from an eight-song full-length they've recorded. Now for as bad as the name **Unholy Cadaver** and how far San Francisco is from a death metal hotspot (excluding sick gods **Old Grandad**), they aren't so bad! And with the fact that all their songs are long, the third almost 15 minutes, I couldn't believe how not bored I was. There are ripping solos, European melodies, brutal riffs, normal death metal sections, and more. I see Unholy Cadaver as a good cross section of the different underground styles out there. They're certainly much better than most unsigned US bands I've heard.

Write for info to:
3278 20th St.
San Francisco, CA 94110 USA
unholycadaver@mindspring.com

Evergrey

THE PROBLEM WAS THAT I DIDN'T LIKE POWER METAL. THE ANSWER WAS EVERGREY'S DEBUT, *THE DARK DISCOVERY*. IT WAS AGGRESSIVE, MELODIC, AND THE VOCALS FORTUNATELY DID NOT HIT GLASS-SHATTERING HIGH NOTES. THE TECHNICAL GUITARS HAD THIS GROOVING, BROODING FEEL THAT MADE EACH SONG ON THE ALBUM A HIT, EVEN THE SENTIMENTAL BALLAD "FOR EVERY TEAR THAT FALLS." I SPOKE WITH BANDLEADER TOM S. ENGLUND IN JANUARY AND SINCE THEN THE SWEDISH QUARTET HAVE COMPLETED RECORDING THE NEW ALBUM, TO BE TITLED *SOLITUDE * DOMINANCE * TRAGEDY*. IT WILL SEE AN AUGUST RELEASE, SO READ NOW AND PREPARE!

What's been going with the band?
Quite a lot, I'm quite stressed out actually! We're recording the new album in February and we don't have enough songs and all that. We have been doing a few gigs and we were supposed to be on a European tour with Kind Diamond in October but it was postponed until March or so.

But you are going to do it?
Probably but it's going to be with Mercyful Fate because they're going in to the studio in February.

You're recording the album next month?
Yup.

And what's it going to be called?
Don't know! Haven't got a clue! (chuckles)

Haven't got a clue? But aren't you the one who writes all the lyrics and song titles?
I am. I have a few to choose from but I don't know yet. I haven't written all the songs yet and that's why I am so stressed out. We're lacking like 3 songs.

Are there a certain number of songs the record label wants you to have?
It's more like what we want to put out. We don't want to put out less than ten anyway. We got like eight now.

Is it going to be musically pretty much the same as the first album?
Actually we have progressed a lot since we recorded the *Dark Discovery* album because we recorded that one for a different label actually. We ha a major problem with getting them to release it and all that, and getting rid of them and contacting lawyers. We actually recorded that album in the summer of '96 so it's quite old for us.

So Black Sun just picked you up immediately after that?
More or less, yeah. I spoke to Rolf and told him about our situation, sent him the tape and he liked it and he formed the GNW label (Gothenburg Noiseworks).

Do you find it odd when he first signed you because he usually signs the death and black metal bands?
Yeah, he got a tape from the other band (on GNW) Destiny around the same time and then he was thinking about starting a new label for just classic metal. So we came at the right time, and we wouldn't have wanted to be on the Black Sun label because that's not the right approach for us.

What kind of style would you consider yourselves? Not just classic metal, but more progressive?
I don't know! We do whatever we want to do, we just play and whatever comes out comes out. I mean, we've played death metal before, so maybe that's where we get the dark moods from. I don't know what we are, but people call us power, prog-metal, so maybe that's an accurate description for it all.

Now do you prefer not to hit the really high notes when you sing?
Yes, because I can't! (laughs) I didn't want to do that but have a lower tone of voice.

Do you think that grounds your band in the '90s instead of the '80s?
I like the '80s metal a lot but I can't sing the high-pitched vocals and it never really appealed to me at all. I like the Helloween music and stuff like that but I never liked the vocals. I like guys like Bruce Dickinson; the only guy I like who does the high vocals is Geoff Tate from Queensryche.

When you played death metal was this as Evergrey?
No, it was me and the other guitar player; we played death metal for four years.

It wasn't your calling then? The more progressive was what you wanted ?
More or less because we love the aggression about death metal and all that, and I think we did 6 shows here one year in Sweden and Scandinavia, but after a while we wanted to bring in all the melody and all that, the keyboards and so forth. I think we felt we were stuck in a way. Dan actually left the band before me and we did a few shows without him, then after that we decided to quit.

So what do you think of the stagnation I see in the brutal death metal and even some of the black metal now?
What do you mean?

Just being stuck, no more progression…
It's the same thing overall now. I don't even like the new Morbid Angel album, I didn't even like the new Death album, actually. That sounds more like black metal to me, the vocals at least. I haven't seen a lot of new bands coming out that I really like. I like In Flames, though. I think they brought something new into it. Other than that I think it's stopped progressing, actually.

So tell me this, what's it like being in Sweden? It sounds like it's really exciting with the size of your population and the number of awesome bands that come out over there.
No, it's not. (laughs) Nowadays with the success of Hammerfall the metal's beginning to come back in quite a big way. The big newspapers and daily magazines are writing about us and Hammerfall and In Flames, like whole page sections. But other than that, it's not like we have gigs every night because we don't have anyplace to play. They have two clubs here in Gothenburg that play metal. There are some Italian guys and Greek guys that think there are just thousands of metal people and headbangers hanging around here in Gothenburg but it's not like that. (laughs)

So maybe the magazines have made it something it isn't?
Most likely. I mean, there's not really anything happening. I work in a music store where I sell instruments, and that's where I see people playing music, other than that I don't see anybody at all. So it's a big, what do you call it, fake.

I guess it's more bands, a lot of bands, just putting out CDs?
There's a lot of bands coming from Gothenburg, and I know most of them, but it's not like I've heard of most of the bands of Sweden. I mean there's thousands of bands coming from Sweden and I've never heard of them or see them or nothing, live or whatever. They don't play any metal on the radio either, not on TV and so forth. So it's just hyped in magazines.

Why do you think it is that so many great bands come from Sweden as compared to the rest of the world? Does it have to do with training as kids?
No, never! Because when you go to school here you have to play the flute. At first I wanted to play guitar when I was seven years old but I couldn't because I had to play the flute for two years. I didn't want to do



it and I didn't start to play guitar until I was fifteen. I guess we have a lot of good parents who buy us instruments, I don't know. (laughs) People are dedicated to what they are doing here.

Do you think everyone having learned the flute at a young age they now include that on their CDs?
Maybe, we have a folk tradition here. Like In Flames, I know that Jesper's dad is playing a lot of folk music. That's where they got their influences, and At the Gates, that's where they got the violins. Maybe!

Do you think music in general is very important to the Swedish culture, no matter what the style?
For a fact, the second largest export we have besides Volvo cars is Swedish music. Big bands like ABBA, Roxette, and Ace of Base, the list goes on and on.

You know what one of my new favorites is?
No?

Europe!
Yeah!

I bought *The Final Countdown* about a month ago.
That's cool because that's I started listening to, Europe and fucking Bon Jovi! That's great.

I'm on this '80s kick lately and I think your CD might have started it for me because I usually listen to more to extreme death metal but I thought your CD was so great.
Great. I read your review (in *Sloth* #5), thanks very much. Now the melody's coming back for sure, and that's what we wanted to do when we started Evergrey in the first place. To bring back the melody without being wimpy about it, too much anyway.

Let's talk about the band specifically. Is this your brainchild?
Yeah, most definitely, I work my ass off every fucking day to make songs or make lyrics or whatever. There wouldn't be any songs without the other guys though, because I write one riff and take it down (to them) and they add all their stuff to it and that's what makes the songs.

Is there a specific concept behind the band or the first album?
Lyric-wise or music-wise?

Both.
Not lyric-wise; the only common theme about it should be the fear of life and the fear of being left alone. When I write lyrics I make small dark stories about things that either happened to me or someone close to me. Music-wise, we just write what we want. What was the question, I forgot what you said!


Kenneth Johansson

The way the digipack of the CD looks, things are really tied together.
Yeah, I don't like stuff that's all spread out and don't have a...yeah, maybe you're right then! It does have a whole concept to the whole thing then. But I don't know what it is, sorrow maybe, frustration mostly.

Have been people been giving you a hard time about "For Every Tear that Falls"? Have they called you guys "Evergay"? (The song is an emotional ballad. –ed.)
Oh, my boss calls me Evergay every day! (laughs) No, we haven't got any bad response for "For Every Tear that Falls" at all. In Greece and Italy they played the video fucking six times on TV the first week. That's quite amazing for a debuting metal band, actually. At a show we played with Hammerfall and The Haunted they recorded a video of it and they're going to show that on TV in Greece. So we haven't gotten any shit for that song and it's a song we wanted to do because we did it on the first and only demo we did and didn't think it came out quite right back then. We wanted to do it with me singing and all that.

What do you want the readers t know about the new album and the band?
Hmmm...that's tough question. Basically, we have progressed a lot since the first album but it still sounds like us, of course, but one of the main things is that when I started to sing it was like two months before the recording of the *Dark Discovery* album. We had a singer before that but he left two months before and I hadn't sung a note before the recording so I had to practice with my girlfriend for two intensive months. And then when we got into the studio I was somewhat ready and it worked out all right, I think, but there's still a lot of things that I know I could have done better today because now I have been singing for two-and-a-half years and that's at least some time. Mainly the vocal progression is quite big. And as for the music I think it is more technical in the main structure, more easy listening to the ear. We play a lot of choruses that are easier to catch onto than the last album.

Would you say the tempos are pretty much the same?
The tempo, yeah. Much quicker actually, overall more up-tempo songs. We have a lot of mellow, slow things too but the overall tempo of the album should be quite quick.

Are you going to use more female vocals?
No, I think we have a song called "Nosferatu" which my girlfriend's going to sing on, but it's not "For Every Tear that Falls." It's more like a brutal choir thing.

I was reading your bio and it gives a description of each member of the band. It seems like all of you guys are pretty involved with literature and artistic things. Could you give us a little summary of who's involved with what?
Dan, the guitarist, he like to draw a lot and he's quite good, but he only uses pencil. He doesn't paint with anything, just uses black and white. He has always been into the role playing so I think he's actually writing (something to do with) role playing now. Daniel, the bass player, he writes his own lyrics, but he writes them in Swedish unfortunately. They are very deep and he's been through a lot of shit in his life and he's got a lot he needs to get out. He's helped me to write some of the lyrics this time too. And Patrick hasn't got the time to read and write too much because he's got a family and all that, so most of his time goes to being with his son. And for myself, I read a lot, not nowadays anymore actually because I haven't got the time with me working and doing all the music for the next album and all that. Before this I really read a lot about mostly hypnosis in the last year and psychology in the background of hypnosis, so I really got into that. I think I got 15 books about hypnosis. Shit, that's a heavy thing! Hypnosis, that's a major force that every person has within themselves that most people don't know that they have, and can find out things within hypnosis they can't find out any other way. So if you can get to know yourself within yourself, that's quite heavy actually.

So do you hypnotize yourself or other people?
That's the one problem! I would love to be hypnotized myself but it's not like you can look into the yellow pages and look up "hypnotizers" or whatever. People haven't accepted it in the Western world, but nowadays they're talking in the newspapers about using it at the dentist. Yeah! For sure, here in Sweden! So it's not a bogus thing, it's a fact that it works.

Will Chandra's no longer in the band?
No, and he's quite a weird guy actually. (laughs) I don't want to talk a lot of shit about him, but he worked in the same place where I was working and I asked him if he wanted to help us out with the keyboards. It was more of him helping us; he didn't actually write any keyboard parts or piano parts. I did it or Dan did it, and he just played it on the album. And after it was done, he said, "Well, I have to concentrate on my studies," because he was studying in a very popular school here, like Harvard.

So you're playing keyboards now?
Keyboard parts anyway.

15 years from now, what do you want to be doing?
Hmm...either I want to be dead and have been drinking beers and doing whatever with the band, of dying in bad health of being successful. (chuckles) Or I still want to have a house with a studio where I still can make music or can produce albums. Hopefully we'll still be together, even though I think it's tragic with old men playing metal! (laughs)

What do you get out of the band? What does it mean to you?
It means everything to me. First comes the band and my music, then comes my girlfriend, in that order, actually. Of course I want to maintain my girlfriend and live together, but if I can't write my music I can't breathe. Evergrey is the most important thing for me.

Are the other members just as committed as you?
It's hard to have four persons being as committed to the band as I am, but they do care a lot but I'm overenergetic in a way. I want to have everything now and usually take care of it being so, too. They do everything I ask them for, like interviews – we divide it up quite fairly.

I want to introduce you to the American audience, what do you want them to know about you guys?
Oh, another tough question. For the most part I think our music could appeal to almost anyone, as it did to you maybe, because we got people all around the world who listen to death metal and also list us as one of their favorites, so I think we could appeal to almost anyone, actually. Maybe that's one thing, to take a fair listen to the album if they can get their hands on it.

Official Evergrey website:
home6.swipnet.se/~w-92709

Trail of Tears

There's a new wave in the scene spawning many great bands that are attracting fans worldwide: female lead vocalists! While many groups bring in women guests and use their angelic voices for atmospheric background purposes, a brave and inventive few are now saying to hell with that and are using women with strong voices to lead their music. Sloth has featured Theatre of Tragedy and Within Temptation in the past and we proudly present one of our latest discoveries, Trail of Tears.

Seven members strong, Trail of Tears are Norway's leading purveyors of melodic, atmospheric, and brutal metal. Singer Helena Iren Michaelsen's wonderful operatic voice is complemented and contrasted by Ronny Thorsen's throaty growl very powerfully. The music is similar to older Theatre of Tragedy but overall more varied and aggressive, each song on debut album Disclosure in Red a dramatic composition. Ronny was kind enough to answer some questions just after a European tour, so read on...

To be honest, I am totally amazed by the album but don't know what to ask you about! How did this glorious band of yours come about and did you always play such epic music?
Thanks, I'm glad you like the album. The band was formed in 1994 under the name of Natt. The members had been playing their instruments for a couple of years, but we were still very young so this is to be considered our first real band. In the beginning the music was extremely different, it wasn't until we got some new members in '96 that the music took its first step into becoming what it is today. Earlier the music was more thrash/death metal orientated, something which we got bored with. The new members were basically much more influenced by more melodic/atmospheric things which led to us following that direction too.

The band is new to me but I'm sure DSFA is giving full support to spread the word. Are you out playing shows in Europe? How has the response been to the CD? Do you find many fellow Norwegian bands to play with? Are your live performances theatrical?
DSFA are doing a great job for us! They have promoted the album very well and we also have a European tour coming up. In addition to us, the tour will also feature Tristania, The Sins of Thy Beloved, Siebenburgen, and Antichrisis. The ultimate highlight will be the Dynamo Open Air in Holland on May 21-23, where we'll play with among others Manowar, Metallica, Fear Factory, Cradle of Filth, Anathema, Morbid Angel and Mayhem. It's a totally unbelievable situation for us!!
The response to the CD has so far been very good. It's been voted "album of the month" in several magazines, the reviews have mostly been good and I don't think the sales so far have been bad either. As for live shows, we did a few shows in Holland and Belgium last week, and it was a great experience. We've also done some shows up here in the cold (Norway)! There's no problem finding bands here who are willing to play, but it's hard to get shows arranged at all. Two shows that I remember in particular was the show with us and In The Woods... in our hometown and also the release party we had last year at the same place. When we play live, our main goal is to give the audience a first class metal show. If the sound is good and the performance is the same then that should be enough to please people. When that is said, I have to mention that we're not against the use of "visual effects." In fact, we often use effects to shock people at our shows. I guess what I'm trying to say is that it's okay to use it as long as the musical performance comes first. Not all bands practice that, and it can easily become a problem if a band focuses too much on theatrics and effects instead of the music itself.

I read that Helena is a trained opera singer, and it shows! How long did she study, or is she still training? How did you get her beautiful and powerful voice to come sing for a melodic, brutal, atmospheric metal band? Some people say it's trendy to have a female singer in a metal band these days but I think this is one of the best styles going and you can't refuse great music when you hear it!
She's been singing since she was seven, and has been involved in several choirs and musicals. Eventually she started taking opera lessons at the South Norwegian music conservatory where she learned different techniques, and she has continued to develop her repertoire. She is from the same place as the rest of the band, so we were familiar with her before she joined the band. We basically just asked her if she would be interested in trying something else and we explained our music to her in a few words. I guess what she found interesting was that we really put our hearts and souls into the music instead of only cranking up the volume and playing as distorted as possible. The music is very emotional and I think she understood that we really meant something with what we were doing. We had a different female singer earlier, but she couldn't keep up with the rest of the band so we had to let her go. A short while after, Helena came by the rehearsal room and blew us all away! Three weeks later we recorded our second demo tape, *When Silence Cries...*, which got tremendous response and resulted in the deal with DSFA Records. People who have a problem with female singers in metal bands should stop whining and listen to Deicide instead!



Surely you get compared to Theatre of Tragedy. Do you mind? Do you think this doesn't matter because they have lightened their style very much? Personally, I find all aspects of your music much more dramatic than their songs. Have you been compared to Dismal Euphony? Again I find you're more musically complex. Do you feel you've got a super-group?
Yeah, there have been some comparisons to that specific band, and in a way I do mind because personally I don't think we're that similar. That goes especially now that they have changed their style so drastically. Except for the line-up, they're now totally different from us. In other words it's not fair for either of the bands to be compared to each other, they're doing their thing and we're doing ours. It's nice to meet people who notice a difference, he, he! People without hearing problems will hopefully realize that both bands have gone in different directions. They're getting softer and we're getting even more heavy. So then it's up to listener to decide which band they like the most. As for Dismal Euphony, I believe there's been a couple of comparisons to that band as well. I haven't heard their new album yet, so I'm not sure how their sound is like now.
If other people consider us a super-group, then I thank and bow! Personally I don't see it like that, but of course we're confident with what we're doing. There wouldn't be any reason to continue if we weren't. I'm really sick and tired of reading interviews with bands who say that they aren't satisfied with their recent CD or whatever. What's the point in releasing it then!? Fucking stupid if you ask me...

Does the name "Trail of Tears" relate to the Cherokee Indians being driven from their home by the American settlers? We Americans don't particularly like it when other countries try to criticize us. We've got the bombs and Baywatch, haha! Also, has anyone pointed out that you and Theatre of Tragedy have the same initials?
The name is in fact related to the Indians, but please hold your anger! It has no deeper meaning to us, we simply thought that the name would reflect our music in a good way. We're not trying to cause damage, ha, ha! Actually, the vocalist in Theatre of Tragedy went out in Norway's biggest metal magazine a while ago and claimed that we had ripped off their initials!! The whole thing was just ridiculous and I know for a fact that a lot of people in the scene had a good laugh when they read it.

That opening riff on "Temptress" was so awesome I had to figure it out on my guitar! Plus, your rhythm guitar sound is *so* heavy. Most Norwegian bands are incapable of getting that sound, or just refuse to. What kind of musical backgrounds do the various members have?
Are you kidding me!? Did you really figure it out on your guitar? Ha, ha, ha...Cool! That I take as a huge compliment!
As for the sound, well... we're a metal band first and foremost, so it should be heavy. We're totally satisfied with the sound. If other bands choose to do something different, then that's fine as long as that's what they want themselves. Luckily people have different taste so there's something for every listener. Except for Helena, the band members have mostly metal backgrounds, although we've broadened our horizons and we listen to a lot more than just metal. Non-metal artists that I enjoy personally are f.ex., Portishead, Dead Can Dance, Enya, Radiohead, Aphex Twin, David Bowie, and Massive Attack.

Many Norwegian black metal bands say they are influenced by folk music and the forest. Are you? Do you like much of that music?
We're not influenced by folk music, nor the forests but I can certainly understand why others are. Sometimes I realize how beautiful the nature is in Norway and I don't see the forests as a strange influence, but we would never go into that topic with Trail of Tears. When it comes to folk music, it's really not my cup of tea (or glass of beer for that matter)! Not the other members' ones either. Black metal however is something that I appreciate a lot. There is a lot of music in that genre which appeals to me. The new Dimmu Borgir is simply amazing and I can't wait to hear the coming Satyricon album. Also I'm really looking forward to see Mayhem live at the Dynamo festival, that will be killer!!

"The Burden" is a bonus track on the CD. Why? Did you not write it?
Of course we wrote it!! It was Anthony from DSFA who came with the suggestion, and we thought what the hell, it's not a big deal for us. It didn't matter to us as long as it was included one way or another.

I really don't have a lot to ask you since you're a new band and I am just in awe of the album. What would you like to say? I reach an American audience that is dying for some great music and I think they will like Trail of Tears. Write whatever you like!
I would just like to say thank you for this interview and invite metal fans in America to check out our album. You might be surprised and actually like it! Cheers!!!

amorphis

Amorphis have been a huge force this decade. What they hinted at on debut *The Karelian Isthmus*, melodic doomy death, became full-fledged genius on *Tales from the Thousand Lakes*. The album remains an untouchable triumph that will continue to wow people for years to come. Amorphis got accessible with *Elegy* by bringing in a clean vocalist and lightening their guitar sound, but songs like "On Rich and Poor," "Song of the Troubled One," "Weeper on the Shore," and "Relief" ensured its success. Just released is *Tuonela* and it shows the band further straying from their death metal roots. While there aren't as many definite classics this time around, I'm constantly listening to it and humming along. "Rusty Moon" is my favorite, its fluttering flute and Skyclad vocals addictive.

I spoke with guitarist/founding member Tomi Koivusaari and then singer Pasi Koskinen about the latest with the band just after the New Jersey Metalfest in March, so read on...

Looks like you guys must be feeling like rock stars these days.
(Tomi) Rock stars? No, I don't feel like that.

Not even after the New Jersey Metalfest?
No, we don't think about things like that.

Well how was the Metalfest?
It was okay, but problems because there wasn't sound check. It was okay, but not like best.

You only got to play like six songs?
Yeah, we only had like 45 minutes. But the sound sucked on stage and it was the first time we played the new songs live, so it was like practicing more.

So you're going on tour?
Yeah, we are going on European tour in late April. Before that we have a small tour in Finland.

So no American tour?
I hope so. They have been talking about autumn, some tour in there, but it's not sure yet. If it's up to us, of course we want to do it.

I heard you guys played in Mexico City this weekend. How was that?
It was great and the audience was great. There was just problems with electricity. Like six times it went out. Like one song and totally dark and silent.

It's because you guys rock so hard!
(laughs) Yeah! We were laughing like we had six encores because we'd have a five-minute break, a beer break. But otherwise it was very good.

Tell me what your opinion of the new album is and what it presents for metal in the '90s.
We are not listening to what's happening in the metal scene these days, so I don't know. It's hard to compare it. I think it sounds quite original because all the influences came from totally different music styles. We are very happy about this album, nothing to complain about yet.

I heard you took a break between writing and playing any music for a while. Why was that?



We didn't take a break like playing. We rehearsed usually like three, four times a week for a year but we didn't do any shows because we kind of get bored playing old songs because we got bored since it's three years since *Elegy* came out. We just wanted to take a little break from touring and do some new songs and it was very good that we had that break.

So are you sick of the old songs, all of them?
Not quite sick but of course it's a little bit boring to play for two years the same songs. We still are going to play some older songs but when playing the same songs to the same audience it doesn't sound too good.

Metallica's been doing that for about 20 years now.
I think we can do better shows if we're excited about songs.

So you're very excited about the new songs then?
Yeah, it was very nice to play them live.

I noticed on "Rusty Moon" the vocals sound a lot like Skyclad.



I know the band but I haven't heard it ever. But there's a folky style but I don't know if Skyclad play like that.

Do you all have normal lives back in Finland or is it just the music?
The music's the only thing we are interested in and that's what we do. I can't imagine anything else. It's not like we can live by it but we are trying.

Are you going to be doing some videos for the album?
We did one video for "Divinity" like three weeks ago in Finland. We had a guy from Germany direct it and I saw it just before we came here, and it was like, okay.

Are you going to do any more?
I think we are going to do another video but I don't know when.

What are the big plans for the next year?
I think this year is quite booked. We have so many tours, a couple European ones and hopefully here in the States also. And also trying to do the next album a little bit faster. We are not trying because if it's not going to happen it doesn't. I think we have a new mood, so I think it's going to happen sooner. We did half these songs from *Tuonela* in like three months and half like in two years, so now it's starting to feel to good to make new songs.

You've already gotten some new songs written?
Not yet but I just have a feeling that definitely we are not going to do anything if we are not totally satisfied.

Who's playing keyboards for you right now?
His name is Santeri Kaltio, he's an old friend of ours. He's a very nice guy and very talented. I think he will be a permanent member. He's doing shows also.

You're really happy with the new release?
(Pasi) It's awesome! The thing is it's just as we are being grown with our music. This is the thing we like to play at the moment, so we are extremely happy with this one.

Tomi says you might put out a new album sooner than you did this one.
Yeah, we're going to try, but it's because of all this touring we didn't have time to make it (*Tuonela*) earlier. We'll try now, yeah. We're thinking about another album after one year.

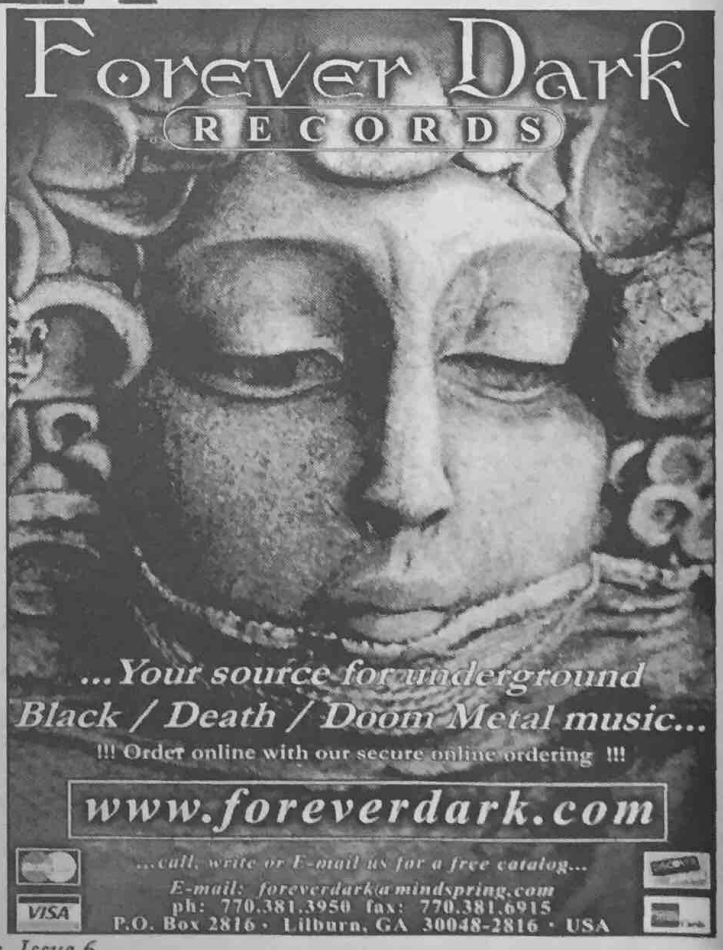
On this album what were the lyrics based on?
They were based on my own mind. (laughs) Just my own philosophy. There's some interesting parts with half he songs I did in Finnish poems, then my friend translated them into English so there's the same sort of mood.

How do you think the show went this weekend at the Metalfest?
It was okay but because of time, distance, and everything we were extremely tired and we didn't have any sound check or anything. We were a bit confused about sounds, but I think that people were all right. It was a good opportunity for us.

There were a lot people watching?
Yeah, full house. And we did one show in Mexico City.

And that was good?
Yeah, it was a brilliant show but the electricity broke down six times so we started seven times but it was fun. People were crazy in there and they really did appreciate our show.

Do you have any final comments for the American readers?
Um, keep on rocking! (laughs)



SLOTH EXCLUSIVE:
THE LAME INTERVIEW!

Immortal Dominion

Greetings! Welcome to a Sloth first! That's right, for the first time in the sixty interviews we've conducted we said more than the band. This was disappointing because Immortal Dominion are without a doubt an American leader in the underground, their brutal music highlighted by addictive riffs and a passionate, screaming madman for a vocalist. Their album *Endure* is a hit, they play shows constantly in their native Colorado hometown, and from the promo material alone I could tell how professional they were. But alas, what could have been shall not be, the glorious and would-have-been-thought-provoking questions are gone to waste. You, the readers, are welcome to complete the interview yourselves and mail the answers in. If we get some good responses we'll print them in the next issue.

Bassist Steve Sherwood gave the short answers found below, but do not feel bad. The band had over a month to get the interview back to me and doing so wasn't a priority. Playing their great music probably was, so I'll look the other way...

First of all, does your singer comprehend the fear he instills every time he opens his mouth?
No.



And does he have that gritted-teeth, Terminator look all the time?
Oh yeah...it's fucking terrible.

Ray also plays guitar, too! I saw the live picture of him and must say he has a scary delivery pose. What do the rest of you do since he has to stand in one place a lot?
Act like crazed fucking lunatics that love Ozzy!

Have you considered a banquet in honor of those responsible for the brilliant sound captured on your CD?
A banquet of plenty of liquid bread...The Blasting Room is a great studio with cool people.



Have you taken a lot of shit for "Brighter Days?" Is there any specific story behind how this song came to be and put on the album? I sort of see it as something for people who don't mind certain aspects of the popular rock, or how it really should be done.
No – it's one of our most requested songs. No special story – but it's nice to have a change of pace.

I love the riffs on your CD *Endure*. When I tried to describe and categorize them for a friend, all I could think were how damn heavy, catchy, and crushing they are and that they'd be great at a live show. How would you describe the music?
Heavy, catchy and crashing and adrenaline pumping.

Since I mentioned a show, you'd better tell us about Immortal Dominion live. The singer looks like a sick individual and the rest of you ain't too pretty, either. Ha ha! Give us the whole story!
High energy-moshing-stage diving.

Ray looks like a pretty fun intense guy, though. Do the other three of you have to fight him for the girls? Or does he scare them off?
Ray's groupies all follow him to the bus...even all smelly after a show. Fight him? There's never been a shortage...

The album cover depicts the aftermath of a Medieval European battle. How does this relate to four guys from Skiville, USA?
It looks cool and life is a battle.

Juha Vuorma's distinctive art is all throughout your CD case and booklet. I've seen his work on the Darkified CD and Headfucker magazine. Where did you see his work? How did you get in touch with him? Is he a busy guy?
Internet contact...He's very busy.

Was he enthused about working with you?
Yes.

Was he expensive?
No.

What other bands has he worked for?
Tons of European metal bands.



For possessing such a unique style, he doesn't get the recognition of a Wes Benscoter or a Dan Seagrave. Why?
He is still a dark horse. We see him rising to the top.

So many awful bands have had names similar to yours, often the two three-syllable word kind. Now you assholes have, with your awesome CD, given a hundred more nothing bands reason to call themselves Primitive Destruction or Embodied Engorgement! What's your problem? Why not call yourselves something artsy, like Epic Steel Rose?
The name is hard hitting...we like it.

Your very professional promo package lacked just one thing: lyrics. Therefore we ask you to explain the following songs. a) "Piece of Meat" – is it like Korn's "Daddy?"
Yes, it's about the same subject.



b) "I Won't Kill You" – that's not very much in the metal spirit, now is it?
Ray says it's about the Earth.

c) "1000 lbs Of Glory" – is this some sort of wrestling tag team?
Similar except for the background.

So what's up with the band now? You appear intent on touring, which is one of the reasons I'm so excited about promoting Immortal Dominion. Seems like the only bands that up and tour are the shitty ones, like Nevada's Requiem. They suck! What does 1999 look like as for tours?
Opening for Nine Inch Nails, Napalm Death, Neurosis, Skinlab. 1999 looks good...Labels are interested...



What has the reaction been to *Endure*? Tell us what sort of distribution deals you're working on.
Reaction has been very positive! Working on many deals.

How many copies of the CD were pressed? Have you had to make more?
5000 copies originally and we're about to reorder.

Do you think one of the reasons behind your freshness and success lies in that you're from Colorado and not California, Florida, or New York, where they have established and world-known scenes and style is affected (at least) subconsciously?
Possible, but one thing is for sure: our music kicks people's asses and people must like to have their asses kicked because the CDs are selling and people keep moshing.

Any final comments for the many readers and soon-to-be fans of Sloth?
Party until all brain cells cease to function then order our CD and prepare for your reprogramming...and please support your local scene.

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INTESTINE BAALISM

Intestine Baalism were a great find by Repulse Records and *Anatomy of the Beast* proved to be one of the most breathtaking combinations of brutal riffs and soaring leads ever. The album is still fresh every time I listen to it because it is both catchy and emotional. I sent off interview questions twice, once to be forwarded by Repulse and then directly to the band, and did not get a reply until after *Sloth* #5 was out saying that they had lost the questions but would like to do the interview. I finally got some answers back this time, though they were pretty boring. I also found out that Repulse has dropped Intestine Baalism for reasons relating to their inability to reply to interviews and other matters. So what was supposed to be a special feature on a hot new band will instead be a blurb on a hot new band. Let's hope Intestine Baalism can get their shit together on the business end because their music is breathtaking. Interview with bassist Katsumasa Yoshida.

Do you play many live shows? Are there other bands that play your style nearby in Japan?
No, we don't. We have lost two members of our band since we released the 1st album. So, we can't do it right now. But we really want to play live shows after we get the members. There are a bunch of bands that play death metal or thrash in Japan.

What immediately makes *An Anatomy of the Beast* stand out is the mix between brutal, catchy riffs and beautiful, melodic, and memorable solos. What bands got you into playing metal and which ones do you think IB sounds like?
In the set-up period of our band, Testament affected us to some extent. We started playing metal because we liked Slayer, Metallica, and so forth. And increasingly, our band has become more brutal. Now, we don't have specific bands affecting us in terms of our music style. We are just writing songs as we want. We believe we are original and no other bands are similar to us.



What do you think is the most important aspect of your music that makes people want to listen?
We think it is the combination of dynamic phrases and melodic parts which are harmonized with our brutal music.

My favorites from the album are "Cannibal Sodom" and the combo of "Blasphemy Resurrected" and "A Place their Gods left Behind." What are your favorites?
I like "Corporal Celebration" and "Cannibal Sodom," personally.

How was the reaction to the album from magazines and fans?
We've got a lot of fan letters and asked a bunch of interviews. We were surprised at the enthusiastic reactions. (Never mind that you didn't answer any of them. –ed.)

***Anatomy* has been out for over a year. Please update us on IB. What have you all been doing? Played many live shows? Written new songs? Are they the same kind of music? Can we expect a new album on Repulse? When?**
We are recording the 2nd album!! It will be released as early as next summer from Repulse. We are looking for a new drummer. If we find the one, hopefully we will start playing new songs in live shows in Japan and foreign countries such as the US and European countries.

I hear that Japan is far ahead of the world technologically. This affects the way people live, and I hear the cities are very crowded and stressful. But there is also a countryside that the cities do not encroach upon like in America. I also was told that it is very important for children to get into a good school at a young age. Could you please tell us about life in Japan?
Japan has long history unlike the U.S. So, we have a lot of traditional things such as tea ceremony, shrines, flower arrangement, and so on. In addition, martial arts are big things in Japan. As you may know, judo and karate are Japanese originally. But this is only a small aspect of Japan. Our life is surrounded by high-tech goods. Even junior school kids have cellulars. And as you pointed, we have some social problems such as too intensive education for kids and aging population. Finally, economic situation is really terrible now. But we are enjoying our lives in Japan and I hope you guys like our country.

Follow-up question: I heard that Repulse Records dropped Intestine Baalsim. What are you going to do? Are other labels interested?
We are looking for a label that might be interested in us.

katsumasay@hotmail.com



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You obviously take influence from Swedish melodic death metal. Which of these bands affected your style? Before that, who first got you into playing metal?
Well, Swedish melodic metal isn't just what influenced us. But we like bands like Dark Tranquillity. We don't like to be compared with the typical Swedish kind of metal. Bands like Death, Paradise Lost and Amorphis have meant a lot to us. Anyway we all have roots in different music styles. Other bands to mention could be: Pink Floyd, Depeche Mode, Mike Oldfield, The Doors, and Guns n'Roses.

Yours is definitely not the typical Danish sound. While most of your countrymen do the brutal groovy thing, your sound and style are very far from that. How come?
There are a few good bands in Denmark playing that style – and a lot trying to copy that... It's like they're stuck in the same track. It's not of our interest to play that kind of metal.

From what I hear the new EP shows you further straying from your original form and defining your style with more rock elements. What differs on *Sadiam* from *Eos*?
The tracks on *Sadiam* are a bit slower and more melodic than on *Eos*, and we have developed the melodic parts a lot. Secondly most of the songs for *Sadiam* were written by Carsten, our bass player. Of course the compositions are made by the whole band – but the basic riffs were his. The songs on *Eos* are a mix of songs from Allan (ex-guitarist), Thomas (lead guitar), and Carsten. Anyway, we think that we are going the right way with our music.

You definitely have the instrumental skills of Dark Tranquility but I found the dramatic lone lines on "To Hell" so emotional and effective, too. I haven't heard *Eos* so you'll have to tell me what came first for the band.
Thanks a lot... Well we are not quite sure what you mean, but as *Eos* was released first and more a metal album than *Sadiam*, you can say that we started with a melodic death metal style and developed that to a melodic rock-metal style. But the emotional parts in the music are basically what itis about in Aurora. Many songs are written on an emotional basis and mean a lot to us.



Claus sounds like a lot of the Swedish guys who took their influence from Tomas of At the Gates. Surely you all know this. What does he do to separate himself from the pack? Can we expect any actual singing from him?
In fact, there are a few parts on *Eos* with "actual" singing from Claus – and also a female guest vocalist. Claus seeks his inspiration from many genres. As with the rest of the music, we will always work and experiment with the vocals. On our new material for the upcoming full-length there are more experimental vocals than on the previous albums.

More energy, melody, and passion than the average Swedish bear, it's Aurora from... Denmark!

Carsten designed the cover artwork for "Sadiam." Is that a photo? of what? What does it symbolize?

AURORA

Lead guitarist Thomas Broberg speaks!

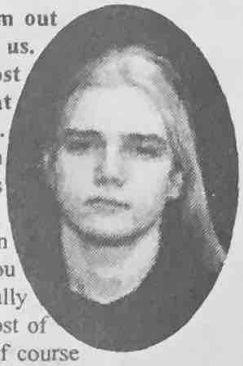
It's a painting (2 x 2 meters) with a hole in the middle, where there are flowers and some tree-stuff coming out. Carsten calls it an "eternity-picture" – he's been painting on it since 1994 and still is. When he needs to express his feelings, he picks up the brush! So the background is an abstract, psychedelic image of his thoughts. The cover front is a perspective photo of that painting, the booklet contains several other shots of the painting from different angles. The photo retouch and layout were done by myself.

Has anybody made fun of the title? Have they called it childish or silly?
No – why should they? Isn't the music "sad" enough or something like that?

Your music is so upbeat and inspirational that I was surprised you named your CD *Sadiam*. Judging by the music and vocals, only Claus seems pissed! Are you sad that Denmark has so many beers and you only have but one life to spend drinking for your country?
You got a good point there – well we don't intend to drink our lives away – but we sure like a good Danish beer!!! About the music, we know that there's a few "happy" parts on our CDs, but the inspiration to the music is mostly based on emotions and feelings... But just because you're sad, you don't have to compose sad music!! Sometimes we're quite happy but write sad music anyway.



Europeans have a way of dressing so that when we Americans see them on our streets, we can point them out though they look just like us. For example, most Germans wear pants that aren't quite long enough. Does the phenomenon exist when Americans visit Europe?
Most of the times you can recognize an American if you see one on our streets. Usually because of the fact that most of them are remarkably fat; of course we don't think you all are fat. Our first impression of a typical American is their notable weight. :-)



Americans apparently have a much different philosophy towards life than Europeans. We work ourselves to death racing from one place to another, eating a lot, buying many useless things, living for a sports team, and then dropping dead of a heart attack. Fun, right? How does the average European see us? What is his outlook on life?
Many Europeans have the same life philosophy as the ones you describe. But as not all Americans work themselves to death, not all Europeans are like that. We have inherited a lot of the modern American ways of life – of course with a 5-10 year delay – the life in the fast lane, computers and gang wars, it's all here...

I'm assuming very few of my American readers have heard of Aurora. But I think you're cool – that's why we're doing this interview – so tell'em why they should check you out!
Well, we would of course encourage everybody to check out our music – hopefully you'll be positively surprised!

What are your plans for the coming months? You have another album out soon, correct? Do you play many live shows? Denmark's Dominus and Infernal Torment have wild live shows; do you?
Our music isn't quite the traditional death metal kind of thing, so our live shows couldn't be compared with that kind of bands. But yes, we have a wild show. Right now we're working on the material for the upcoming full-length. We're also rehearsing a lot on the old stuff with our new guitarist Anders. Besides that, we're planning the upcoming gigs of this summer – hopefully we'll be able to visit the States in the near future. At the moment our label, Serious Entertainment, are working on a deal with a US company regarding licenses and tours.



Any final comments?
Cheers! Check our CDs and get more info at the official Aurora homepage: http://www.aurora.person.dk One of the latest updates are MP3 sound samples from both *Eos* and *Sadiam*.

The Sins of Thy Beloved
"Lake of Sorrow



NPR 053 CD

Norse Gothic Metal with female vocals. Majestic and Epic

Tristania
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NPR 041 CD

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Melancholic,Epic, & Atmospheric Metal

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"Provenance of Cruelty"



NPRA 057 CD

Monumental Norwegian Black Metal
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"Channeling the Quintessence of Satan"



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"A Legacy of Love"



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Dead romantic songs of pain and beauty

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"Grimjaur"



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NPR 054 CD

War Black/Death from Sweden

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P.O. Box 37062
28080 Madrid, Spain

Hall of Sermon
P.O. Box 749
CH-4319 Rheinfelden
Switzerlandwww.hall-of-sermon.de

Hammerheart Productions
Seoul C.P.O. Box 8383
South Korea
hammerht@hitel.net

Hammerheart Records
P.O. Box 277
6300 AG Valkenburg, Holland

Heathendoom Music
P.O. Box 36
S-114 79 Stockholm, Sweden

House of Kicks / No Fashion
P.O. Box 2140
103 14 Stockholm, Sweden
http://www.algonet.se/~dark-f/

Hypnotic Hard Stuff
86 Main St., Suite 401
Town Centre Plaza
Dundas, ONT L9H 2R1
Canada

Immortal Souls Productions
Brezova 9, 03401 Ruzomberok
Slovakia

Last Episode Productions
In der Vorstadt 114
73529 Schäbisch Gmünd
Germany

Listenable Records USA
554 Warburton Ave.
Yonkers, NY 10701
www.listenable.com

Listenable Records
B.P. 559
62311 Boulogne Sur Mer, France

Lost Disciple Records
P.O. Box 340
Winthrop, MA 02152
www.lostdisciple.com

Lucretia Records
Via Emilia 4
20097 San Donato Milanese
(MI) Italy
www.lucretiarecords.com

Mascot Records
P.O. Box 231
2650 AE Berkel (Z-H)
The Netherlands
www.mascotrecords.com

Mayhem/Fierce
303 Winding Road
Old Bethpage, New York 11804
www.mayhemfierce.com

Merciless Records
P.O. Box 72
97448 Arnstein, Germany

Metal Blade Records
2828 W. Cochran, Ste. #302
Simi Valley, CA 93065
www.metalblade.com

MIA
P.O. Box 1236
Canal St. Station
NY, NY 10013

Misanthropy Records
P.O. Box 9, Hadleigh
Suffolk IP7 5AU, England
http://listen.to/misanthropy
(will close its doors summer 1999)

Moonfog Productions
Arbeidersamfunnets plass 1
0181 Oslo, Norway
www.union.no/moonfog

Morbid Records
Postfach 3
03114 Drebkau, Germany

Moribund Records Cult
P.O. Box 77314
Seattle, WA 98177-0314

The Music Cartel
106 W. 32nd St., 3rd Floor
NY, NY 10001
www.music-cartel.com

Music For Nations
137-139 W. 25th St.
New York, NY 10001

Napalm Records
Krumpentaler Str. 3
8790 Eisenerz, Austria

Napalm Records America
P.O. Box 382
Bremerton, WA 98337

Necropolis Records
P.O. Box 14815
Fremont, CA 94539-4815
www.necropolisrec.com

Noise Records
12358 Ventura Blvd., Suite 286
Studio City, CA 91604
www.noiserecords.com

Nuclear Blast
Hauptstrasse 109
73072 Donzdorf, Germany
www.nuclearblast.de

Nuclear Blast USA
www.nuclearblast-usa.com

Olympic Recordings
P.O. Box 7217
Elgin, IL 60121

Osmose Productions, B.P. 57
62990 Beaurainville, France

Osmose Productions USA
4470 Sunset Blvd., Suite 6
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Oz Records
Apdo Postal 109
Boulevares, CP 53140
Edo. de Mexico, Mexico
www.ozproductions.com

Pagan Records
P.O. Box 12
85-105 Swiecie 5, Poland

Pavement Music
P.O. Box 50550
Phoenix, AZ 85076

Pulverised Records
P.O. Box 109
Yishun Central
Singapore 917604

Red Stream
P.O. Box 342
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0342
www.rstream.com

Relapse Records (and WAR USA)
P.O. Box 251
Millersville, PA 17551
www.relapse.com

Repulse Records
P.O. Box 50562
28080 Madrid, Spain
www.repulserecords.com

Repulse Records America
P.O. Box 14356
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406-4356
www.repulse-usa.com

Roadrunner Records
536 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
www.roadrunnerrecords.com

Root Of All Evil Records
636 N. Snelling Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104
www.rootofallevil.com

Season of Mist
24, rue Brandis
13005 Marseille, France
season@worldnet.fr

Serious Entertainment
Kongensgade 84
6700 Esbjerg, Denmark
www.madhouse.dk/se

Shiver Records
Hans de Wyngaert
Bossepleinstraat 6
3128 Baal, Belgium

SMI Records
PI 799, 82198 Rengsjo, Sweden

Southern Lord Records
P.O. Box 291967
Los Angeles, CA 90029
www.angelfire.com/ak/southernlord

Still Dead Productions
03-933 Warsaw
UL. Obroncow 2A, Poland

Tooth and Nail/Solid State
P.O. Box 12698
Seattle, WA 98111
www.toothandnail.com
www.solidstaterecords.com

Unisound Records
84 Acadamias Ave
106 78 Athens, Greece

The Twelfth Planet Records
P.O. Box 22
65012 Cepagatti (PE), Italy
planet12th@hotmail.com

Twilight Records
P.O. Box 416
Devault, PA 19432

WAR Music
P.O. Box 22141
250 23 Helsingborg, Sweden

Warhead Records
1B Smith St.
Parramatta, NSW 2150, Australia

Wild Rags
2207 W. Whittier Blvd.
P.O. Box 3302
Montebello, CA 90640

X-Rated Records
Apdo. Postal 1-2023
Cuernacava, Mor., CP
62001 Mexico

ZINES

Hopefully these will last a while because I hate listing fly-by-night zines. My favorites have an asterisk by the name.

Antithesis Megazine
1317-A Tompkins Dr.
Madison, WI 53716
reddawn@inxpress.net

Are You Ready to be Digitized?
2441 Temple Ct.
Alexandria, VA 22307

Ball Buster
P.O. Box 58368
Louisville, KY 40268-0368

Battle Helm
P.O. Box 175
Chaska, MN 55318
lordalgol@aol.com

Berzerker
P.O. Box 23455
Phoenix, AZ 85063-3455

Brutalized
P.O. Box 886
Lebanon, PA 17042
brutaliz@lmf.net

Canadian Assault
c/o Dale Roy
Unit #1, 6318 Bingham St.
Philadelphia, PA 19111
metaldale@hotmail.com

Close-Up (in Swedish)
P.O. Box 2284
600 02 Norrköping, Sweden

Death-Core
c/o Alex Queller
11 Coltsbrook Rd.
Marlboro, NJ 07746
deathcore6@aol.com

Devil's Triangle
P.O. Box 870232
Morrow, GA 30287-0232

Earsplit
P.O. Box 142
Congers, NY 10920-0142
earsplit@aol.com

Goetia
Linnégatan 24
380 62 Mörbylånga, Sweden

The Grimoire
248 Lakeview Ave., Suite 237
Clifton, NJ 07011
billzbub@wfmu.org

Headfucker
C.P. 151, 25038 Rovato
Brescia, Italy
headfucker@intelligenza.it

Hectic Metal
P.O. Box 401122
San Francisco, CA 94140-1122
hectic@hectic.com

Hellfire (in English/Spanish)
Apdo. Post. 1199
CD. Juarez 32000 Mexico

Hell Frost*
9933 W. Argonne Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53222
headcrsh@execpc.com

Ill Literature*
P.O. Box 480275
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Intellektual Spew*
P.O. Box 785
Cookeville, TN 38503
bart@tnaccess.com

Isten
Peltolamminkatu 6 A 17
33840 Tampere, Finland

Koito
Casellina A.
65025 Manoppello Scalo
(PE) Italy

Lamentation
7187 Majos
VII. u. 22, Hungary

Lamentations of the Flame Princess
c/o Jim Raggi
710 Peachtree St. #418
Atlanta, GA 30308
jer@elavidge.com

Last Judgment
P.O. Box 692
Arkansas City, KS 67005

Leather Knights
715 11th Ave. SE
Rochester, MN 55904

Mama's Fool Promotion
816 Putnam St.
Fort Wayne, IN 46808

Meathooked*
c/o Ville Sorvali
Porvoonkatu 37 B 6
00520 Helsinki, Finland
wille@netlife.fi

Metal-Core
13 Carraige Ln.
Marlton, NJ 08053-1109
metalczine@aol.com

Metal Curse*
P.O. Box 302
Elkhart, IN 46515-0302
cursed@sbinet.com

Metal Mafia
P.O. Box 5101
Fostoria, OH 44830-5101

Metal Maniacs*
233 Park Ave. S. 5th Floor
New York, NY 10003

Metal Nightmare
P.O. Box 420195
San Diego, CA 92142
deadmetal@aol.com

Metal Rules*
2116 Sandra Rd.
Voorhees, NJ 08043
metaljef@cyberEnet.net

Midwest Metal
120 Broadview Village Sq.
Suite 406
Broadview, IL 60153
tvader666@aol.com
(temporarily on hold — write for info)

Neptune
P.O. Box 770
Townsend, MA 01469
fmrneptune@net1plus.com

New Breed
P.O. Box 736
Piqua, OH 45356

Pit Magazine
P.O. Box 9545
Colorado Springs, CO 80932

Rapid Pulse
503 Robert Ave.
Winter Haven, FL 33880
neudawn9@aol.com

Simbiotic
c/o David Carrascosa
P.O. Box 21.116
08080 Barcelona, Spain

Sociopathic Despair
P.O. Box 10025
Bowling Green, KY 42102-4825
sociod@hotmail.com

Sounds of Death
P.O. Box 220729
St. Louis, MO 63122

Static
115 E. River Rd.
Kawkawlin, MI 48631
staticzine@aol.com

Underground Zine Scene
316 E. Main St.
Sebewaing, MI 48759

Unrestrained!*
3150 Spring Creek Crescent
Mississauga, Ontario
Canada L5N 4S2
http://come.to/unrestrained

Word of Mouth
P.O. Box 416
Devault, PA 19432
wom_tw@ccil.org

Worm Gear
P.O. Box 426
Mayfield, MI 49666

"Damnit! Scottie, I need more power..."

Iron Savior *Unification*



The side project of Kai Hansen (Gamma Ray) & Piet Sielck (producer, Blind Guardian) who've combined vintage metal riffs & epic sing-along choruses with shredding guitar work to create one of the finest power metal albums of 1999.

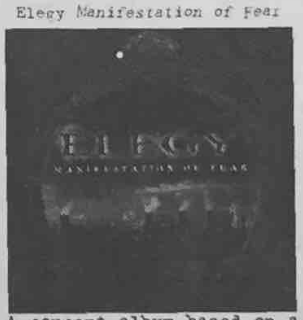
Stratovarius *Destiny*



"Slickly played, meticulously structured & dynamically driven, containing choruses to die for, overblown, epic passages & more than a touch of standing on a mountain top, hair blowing in the wind..."

-Terrorizer

Elegy *Manifestation of Fear*



A concept album based on a tale of discovery, power, corruption & redemption, *Manifestation of Fear* is "for fans who enjoy lots of melody with their metal...Elegy have the potential to go far."

-Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles

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CD $10 - RR 6924

MORGION
SOLINARI

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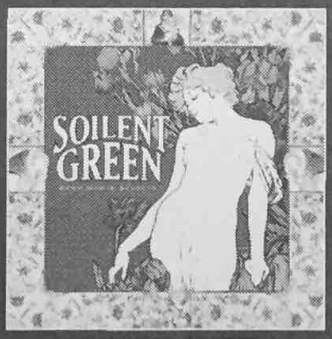


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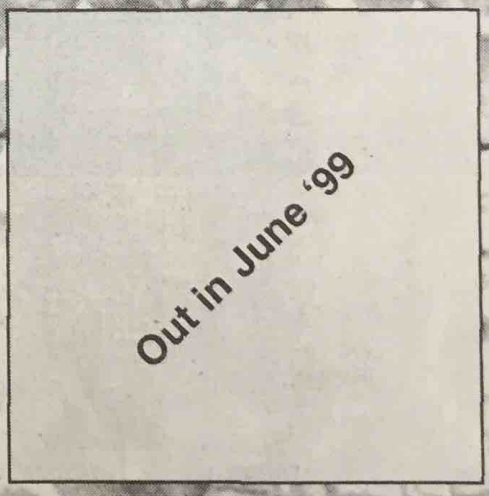
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