

Amputation

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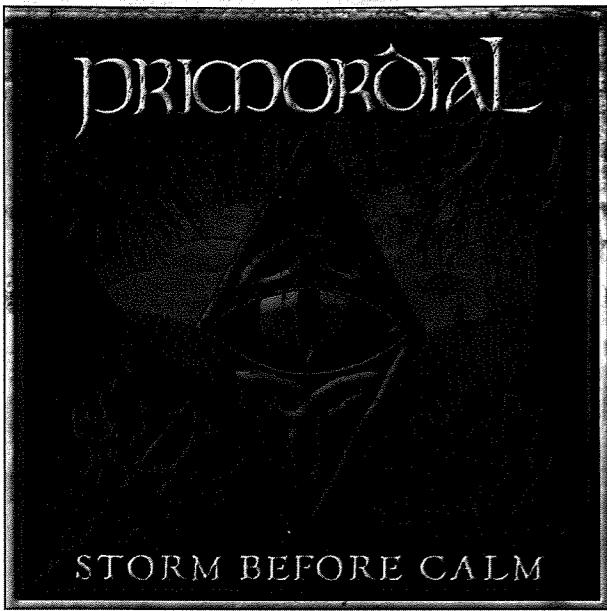
vomitory

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MUSIC FOR GENERATION ARMAGEDDON



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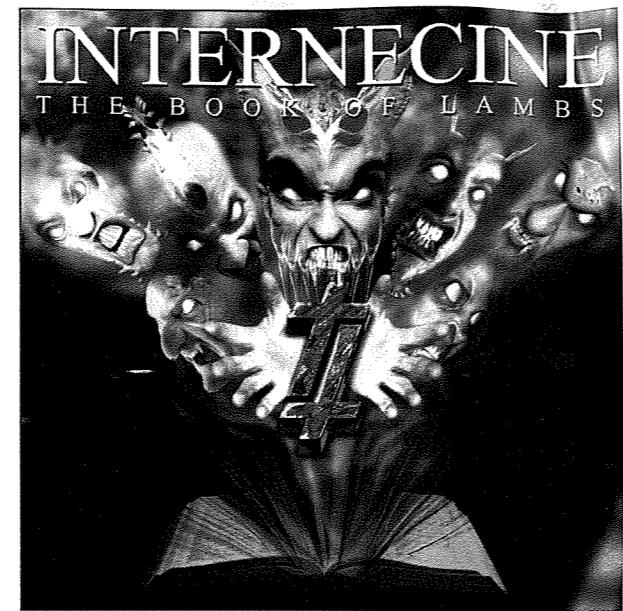
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Amputation

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One of the oldest death metal bands in our neighboring country of Denmark is doubtlessly Iniquity. They've been through many setbacks over the years, but it's like they say: what doesn't break you strengthens you. And they are a strong unit nowadays - stronger than ever.

Much of the problems this band has been struggling with has to do with all the line-up changes that they've been through. It looks like it's hard to find good musicians in Denmark, and Iniquity seem to have used every one of them during their career. Guitarist/vocalist Mads Haarlov sees one way to solve the problem.

- You're probably right. Maybe it's time to use that motto of ours (and yours), and start invading your country for scabs to new musicians!

Not even Mads is an original member. He joined the band back in 1993, but only three years later he decided to leave. That must have been after the recording of the debut full length album *Serenadum*, wasn't it?

- I actually left just before the recording of *Serenadum* in 1996. When I joined back then, we wrote the material for *Serenadum*, but after a while Brian Petrowsky and I decided not to work together any more. He was the front-man of Iniquity back then, and therefore he believed that he should not pay his share of the rent for our rehearsal room. I said "fuck you", and he kicked me out. Later on, we found out that he smoked brown heroin. Now he has disappeared into nothingness where he belongs. I was out of the band, and started Swollen, with bassist Thomas Fagerlund and the drummer from *Serenadum*, Jacob Olsen. We did a couple of demos, and then Thomas and I re-joined Iniquity. The band also recorded the MCD *The Hidden Lore* before Mads and Thomas re-joined them.

- Well, by then the band consisted of a totally different line-up than the one that recorded *Serenadum*.

Beside Mads and Thomas, nowadays the band consists of guitarist Kraen Meier and drummer Jesper Frost. And as a matter of fact, none of these four is an original member of Iniquity.

- No, but despite of all the shit we've been through over the years, we decided to keep the machine running.

You certainly did the right thing.

The latest line-up change was on the guitar position. After the recording of the second album *Five Across The Eyes*, Brian said thank you and goodbye, and new guitarist Kraen Meier entered Iniquity.

- That's right. Brian was losing interest in the band. We were taking it too serious, I guess. Brian is a totally nice guy, but more of a social hangout, than a guitarist, who wants to go beyond the four walls of the rehearsal room.

Was Kraen your #1 choice, or did you have any other guitarist in mind?

- We never thought about asking Kraen. I just bumped into him one night at the local bar. We were both very drunk, and that's when I asked if he wanted to join the band. But yes, it's a bit of a

problem every time someone leaves. Denmark is not crowded when it comes to tight guitar players.

Kraen came to Iniquity from Sacrificial, a band that he's been part of even after joining Iniquity and Mads surprised me with some unpleasant news.

- A couple of days ago Kraen decided to quit Iniquity. His heart is with Sacrificial. He's a trash guy, and I understand him perfectly. It's just a common name though, because he's a fucking tight guitarist. While searching for his replacement, we want someone who is a tight guitarist, as well as rhythm. Some of the other members of Iniquity are also members of the Swedish Death metal band Thorium, and I hope that they all of a sudden don't decide they want to concentrate on that band exclusively. According to Mads that's nothing to worry about, as Iniquity is the #1 priority for all its members. I really hope it stays that way.

Despite of the closeness of our countries, my knowledge of the Danish death metal underground is very limited, and apart from the old bands I don't get the impression there are many new bands coming up. In magazines for example, Denmark is almost always represented by the known acts, such as Illdisposed and Withering Surface.

We have a few killer up-coming, such as Human Erupt and Corpus Mortale. These guys shred ass! You might have heard of Exmortem to.

Hell yeah! I interviewed them in Amputation #7 when they released the brilliant album *Berzerker Legions* on Hammethorn Records.

- It's a sad story about Illdisposed, if they represent Denmark. Bad news! I know that Konkhra is in the process of recording a new album, with the Spit Or Swallow line-up. Other than that, I'm not the man to ask.

Now lets get to the new album *Grime*, which Mighty Music released some time ago. In my review of it, I wrote that there is some classic Swedish death metal in it. I mean that in the slower passages, the typical sound of our country have colored their music.

- I probably can't deny that. I've been listening to just about every Swedish death metal band there is, from back when everybody traded rehearsal tapes. I've got it in the blood. We do not sound like a Swedish band though. If you were to dissect Iniquity, you would find US and U.K as well as Scandinavian influences. No birthday-riffing though!

I take it Mads is referring to the famous so-called Gothenburg-style which, however, have nothing in common with these

Danes.

- What happened to Morbid Fear, by the way? I'm afraid I'm not the guy to ask about that one. Sorry. Where do you see the biggest difference between the new album, and the previous two?

- *Grime* is way tighter, twisted and complex, although catchier than *Five Across The Eyes*. The production on *Grime* is harder and darker. *Five Across The Eyes* was done in a hurry and we hadn't been playing together for a very long time back then. I think we've grown a bit this time. Both are good albums though.

I guess that we've all been running around, buying demos, albums, zines, 7"EP's etc in our youth, but it seems that those becoming close to their 30's have gotten bored with that. Nowadays, most of them are only listening to the old stuff, or don't listen to metal at all. Mads said earlier that he's got it in the blood, so I was curious of whether he's keeping himself up-to-date with what's being released nowadays.

- I would say that I am. More or less. I don't buy anything within reach anymore, because there's so much shit out there. I listen to death metal ALL the time though Black Sabbath is my favorite band. Deep Purple, old Rainbow and DIO have a big place in my heart as well. A new death band can boil my piss, the exact same way as it used to back then!

So what's mostly spinning on your turn-table these days?

- Realm Of Chaos! I also have this compilation CD where *Spawn Of Possession* has one of their songs on. That fucking song *Inner Conflict* is absolutely killer! Right up my alley! Can't wait to hear the whole demo.

The CD Mads is talking about might be the compilation *Death To All, volume 1* which comes free with the 15:th issue of Mighty Magazine. Indeed there are some good tunes on it, so check it out.

There are indeed some very good bands coming up all over the world, and many of the old classics still manages to make excellent death metal. I believe that Iniquity stand strong against the competition within the scene.

- Against Morbid Angel, Hate Eternal and Nile? No. Not sales wise. The rest? Yes. The way I see it, it's not a competition. It's a contribution to all of those who like brutal death metal. What do you have, that other bands don't then?

- Balls!

Most bands stick to one kind of topic when it comes to the lyrics, be it gore, war, politics, Satanism or whatever. In Iniquity's case however, they are dealing with various stuff and that makes it more difficult to run out of ideas.

- Yeah. We like different topics. It makes the whole album more interesting. I mean, who wants to read a manual about "how to turn a baby inside out" for 45 minutes? I know that some do, but we get bored with it after a couple of songs.

Are the lyrics of equal importance to you as the music?

- Not really. Music to me is what comes out of my speakers. Not how the band looks, or what they say, although we do make a great deal out of the lyrics. I won't just sing anything!

What Mads actually is singing about on *Grime*, is for you to read in the booklet. With one exception that is, and that's the ending song, the second part of *Poets Of The Trench*, which is the only song whose lyrics are not printed.

- It's a story Thomas wrote in the studio. It's about a soldier dying during the WW1, in the battle of Somme in France, which is between England and Germany. He's lying in a trench covered in almost frozen clay, holding on to his guts, which are hanging out from his stomach. He's thinking back to when he was sitting in the train with all the other soldiers, on their way to the front, smoking cigarettes and exchanging war stories. It's a continuation of the song *Poets Of The Trench*, and we thought that it would be more interesting if people could figure it out by themselves. We might put it on our home page though.

It's not impossible to figure the lyrics out as they are spoken. It could be more difficult to keep up with the lyrics in the other songs, in which Mads is growling his way through. Actually it is really impressive that he manages the vocals while playing his guitar at the same time, as his parts are not all that simple.

- I sit at home and speak them out, while playing guitar. It takes a little practice.

One thing that really goes well with the music is the cover of the album. The sick collage is quite Carcass-like I would say.

- It was done by an American guy named Daniel Long. He did the Deranged cover as well. Very talented and twisted guy.

Ever since the beginning, one could say that Iniquity has been faithful to Mighty Music. Apart from the debut album *Serenadum*, which was released through Emanzipation, but that is actually the predecessor to Mighty Music. Maybe it's time for a change, in order to try out some new people to work with?

- I think about it all the time, but I'm quite happy with Mighty Music. There's no doubt that we are their no 1 priority, and the promotion for *Grime* has been good. As for now, we are off the hook, so we can take any offer we want. We'll see what happens. Bjarke and Michael, the label managers of Mighty Music, are as metal as it is possible to be, I imagine, operating under the motto "We'll still be metal when you have short hair, an ugly wife, and work 9 to 5!". They seem to be die-hard fans of the music they are releasing, and that's really important and unfortunately not very usual.

- Yeah. That's the cool thing about these guys, but still they are youngsters compared to us. Whether others labels like their bands, I don't know.

On the Mighty Music releases I have in my possession, the duo also have the title "executive producers". How involved were they for example in the making of *Grime*?

- Executive producers are the ones that put money into it. That's what they do, along with a whole bunch of promotion, of course. We more or less get to decide everything about the album by ourselves, and that's the way we want it!

It has come to my knowledge that beside Germany, Iniquity has never played outside of Denmark. Earlier this year, they were supposed to go on tour with Incantation but that never happened. There have also been some plans for tours with other big bands, but none of them ever became reality.

- We've actually played in Czech Republic at the Nuclear Storm festival. That was a total blast! Incantation cancelled the tour, because their drummer had a back injury. We were supposed to go on tour with Nile twice, but Century Media, which is a big label, threw a big bag of money on the table, so that Forsaken (hey Anders!) and Carnal Forge could go instead of us. That greedy little tour manager couldn't resist that, and I know it pissed Karl from Nile off pretty bad. It's all about money, but we'll tour!

I'm sure you will. And when you do, keep in mind that it's not all that far to Sweden.

- Well, no. Do you guys like Danish death metal? If you do, you should come the Gothenburg Death Fest on June 1st, where we will be headlining.

So where in the world do you think you have the most of your fans?

- I would say Czech Republic and the US. Judging from what Mads told me about the scene in his native Denmark, I guess they are not playing all that often there either.

- We get to play in Denmark about once a month, in average. The scene here is fucking lame. We would like to play some more in Sweden. Again; the bridge.

Yeah, it's really easy for you guys to cross the water, and I'm sure many people here would appreciate a dose of your metal. You're welcome, any time!



A whole lot of stuff changes as time goes by, but some things remain the same. When you see a new album with the Vomitory-logo on the shelves of your local record-dealer, you can be sure it will give you a great dose of qualitative death metal. You can simply count on Vomitory. Blood Rapture is the fourth album from Karlstads finest, and it was about the time I shed some light on the band with an article in Amputation. Here's bassist and singer Erik Rundqvist, at your service.

They have stayed true to the style of music they once started with, completely ignoring the trends that we've seen come and go. It's only strengthened their cred, and now that the interest for death metal is increasing again, a whole lot of people must have been awaiting the 25:th of March, the release-date for Vomitory's second album for Metal Blade, *Blood Rapture*. The first two albums, the 1996-debut *Raped In Their Own Blood* and *Redemption* from 1999, were released through Fadeless Records, but since the quartet relocated to the German label, one can see more and more of them in the press.

- Yes, since Metal Blade is a much bigger label and have worked with this for so many years. They know what to do and they promote and advertise a lot, and that is really good for us. People that haven't heard about Vomitory before are now able to check us out much easier.

And still, you don't seem to have toured more on *Redemption Nausea* than on any of the previous albums?

- No we haven't. We did a European tour with Cannibal Corpse and played on the No mercy festivals but that was before we released *Redemption Nausea*. After the release of that album, we did some gigs in Holland and we played the X-mass tour this December. We didn't do a special tour for the album.

That X-mass tour was not a totally pleasant ride, so I've heard. Some of these hard boys seem to have suffered from various health-problems.

- Well, our drummer Tobias went to the hospital in Berlin because of pain in his stomach, so we missed that gig. Then I had

to visit the hospital in Vienna so I missed that one, but the other guys still managed to play three songs on that gig. We managed to play the rest of the tour, except for the last gig that was cancelled for Cannibal Corpse and us, because of our flight departures. The thing is that we missed our flights anyway. We arrived to Sweden on the 24th of December and then I went straight to the hospital. On the doctors' order, I stayed home for two weeks because of the infection I had in the stomach.

I certainly hope that the tour-situation will change with this new album. The first gigs to promote *Blood Rapture* will be on the tour with Amon Amarth, Diabolic, Callenish Circle & Sins Of Omission in April and May, and even though this will be yet another tour that won't bother visiting Sweden, it sure will cover a big part of the European countries.

- We will play in England, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and France. We look forward to this tour, because we haven't played with any of these bands before and we will play in many new places.

Are there any other tours planned for *Blood Rapture*?

- No, the only gigs confirmed besides this tour are three gigs in Finland, the Wacken festival and maybe some festivals in Sweden.

Yeah, I've heard that you will play Wacken this year as well. That must be very exciting, as it is the biggest metal festival here in Europe.

- Yes, that will be a great gig and hopefully in front of a lot of

people. The line up this year is a killer with bands like my favourite Swedish band Candlemass and Rob Halford, Bruce Dickinson and many others.

Now that you are on a label that puts their bands on the road all the time, could you not lobby for getting more tours to Sweden? For example, a package like the X-mass festivals we talked about earlier, which these four Karlstad-warriors took part in together with Cannibal Corpse, Marduk, Dark Funeral, Krisiun, Kreator and Nile, would be quite successful here I believe. Unfortunately, according to Erik the promoters of these kinds of tours are more skeptic.

- Shows like this are almost always sold out down in Europe. The promoters that organize X-mass and the No mercy tours thinks that it is too expensive to do these kind of tours in Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia, because of the costs for the ferry and the long travelling between the places. Besides, they claim that the shows would not sell out in Sweden.

It is kind of weird, isn't it? I mean, the metal scene in Sweden is nowadays stronger than in a long time, and the interest for new as well as the old bands seems to be increasing again. Not many countries can compete with such scene as ours, with bands like The Crown, Dismember, Necrophobic, Thronaeon, Hypnosia, Kaamos, (and the list could go on, and on, and ...). One might think that the organizers would try their best to book some good tours, but that seems to be just wishful thinking.

- Sweden has some of the best bands in the world when it comes to death metal, both old ones and new ones. I think other countries have a lot of good old bands as well, but they don't have the same growth with new bands like Sweden has.

The release-date for *Blood Rapture* is stated already in the beginning of this interview, but that goes only for Europe. The American fans will have to wait another two months (May 21:st) before this album will be available in their stores.

- Sorry, but I really don't know why it has to be that way. The more I'm listening to *Blood Rapture*, the more I get the feeling that you have written material which is more straight forward than for instance *Redemption Nausea*. You've always played classic death metal the way it was meant to be, but the new material is rawer than never before.

- We just try to develop our sound for every record and I don't think we changed anything from *Redemption Nausea* to *Blood Rapture*. But I'm pleased to hear that you think so. We had more time to do the songs for *Redemption Nausea* than for *Blood Rapture*, so maybe that's reflected in the sound.

Many have mentioned Napalm Death as one comparison to your music, and I would say that it fits for the new material as well.

- That's good, because we all like Napalm Death and we've all been listening to them for many years. We don't try to copy them or any other band, but if you are going to compare, why not to Napalm Death.

When you compare, do it with the best, right? On *Redemption Nausea*, I also felt a spirit of Bolt Thrower in some of the songs, and I feel that on some places among the new songs as well. For example, the melodies in *Eternity Appears*.

- Well, Bolt Thrower is one of my absolute favourite death metal bands. Maybe subconsciously there are some influences from them in our music but as I told you before, we don't try to copy anyone.

No, absolutely not. Vomitory have over the years created an own style, and even though some of the inspiration might come from the bands mentioned above, the roots are to be found in old Swedish classics, such as Carnage, Nihilist/Entombed and stuff like that.

- Yes, the death metal bands we all mostly listen to are the old school Swedish-ones. And that is what Vomitory is all about, old school Swedish death metal mixed with a lot of grind.

Blood Rapture is the second album that's been recorded as a

quartet (the line-up is beside Erik consisting of the Gustafsson-brothers, Tobias on drums and Urban on guitar, and guitarist Ulf Dalegren) and I guess that they are more than happy to continue as a four piece. Erik has indeed grown as a singer, and it sounds as he isn't doing anything else but screaming into the microphone all day long.

- Thank you. When we recorded *Redemption Nausea*, I had only been singing for about four months, and didn't try to experiment with my voice as I have this time. Of course now I've been singing a lot more so the voice is much better both in the studio and live. And it's so much easier to be only the four of us in the band. We are pleased it all worked out.

Apart from a couple of the songs, in which Ulf and Erik helped out, drummer Tobias is responsible for the composing of the music. That's quite unusual, but the man is capable of more than just beating on the drums.

- Yes, he makes all his songs on an old acoustic guitar at home, and then he plays everything for us in the rehearsal-room. That's how we mostly do our songs. Tobias is the best songwriter of us, which makes it only natural that he does most of the riffs. So was all the material completely written and arranged before you took off to Malmö and Berno Studios?

- No, I think we wrote three songs and about four or five lyrics in the studio. I can tell you that it's really hard to work under the pressure of time in the studio, but we managed and the result is really good. We have done a song or two in the studio during the recording of our last three CD's, but this time it was to much work that we had to do. Next time we're going to record an album, we won't go until everything is completely finished. We've promised that to our selves.

Ever since *Redemption* (1999), the band has always returned to Berno studios, to record their albums with Henrik Larsson. There's nothing wrong with the work this man has done for Vomitory this far, however one might think that a change will be a good move for the next recording.

- We are very pleased with him and I think this album is the best produced so far. We worked a little different with the guitar-sound this time, to get a more distinct sound and I think that worked out really well. For our next album, I think we will change studio and maybe producer too. That way we might develop our sound, and get some new ideas. But that is a long time from now, so we have not really thought about it yet. A change in procedure was actually made with *Blood Rapture*, as the co-operation with Peter Wallgren, who did the cover artwork for *Redemption* and *Redemption Nausea*, ended. Instead, the job was given to Michael Finsberg. The new cover looks good as well, but it differs quite much from the stuff that Peter used to deliver.

- Peter has painted everything this far for Vomitory, so we thought it was about time to try something different. Peter is a really good painter, but he can't paint the really brutal things we wanted to have this time. That's why we asked Michael, who does his work with paintbrush, and I think it turned out the way we wanted it.

I'm sure it did. But the most important thing is what's been recorded on the disk inside the booklet, and that my friends, is some really good music.





*Doing justice to the legendary bands from the 80's, you have to do more than just making new songs based on used Venom-riffs. The Swedish Hellcult of Bewitched recently released their new album *Rise Of The Antichrist*, and once again they've shown us how it's supposed to be done. Here's the man responsible for most of the material, guitarist/vocalist Vargher, to give you his opinion on things.*

Bewitched is a rather well known act within the Swedish metal scene, and there's a good reason for that. Since the start back in 1995, they've released three full-length albums which all were a kick in the ass of all the so called retro bands that tried to ride on the renewed popularity of the old heroes. Their latest strike into the metal-world *Rise Of The Antichrist* will once again show that they know how it's supposed to be done, and they should be very pleased with it.

- We are still very satisfied with the result, most due to the fact that this was the first time we recorded an album completely by ourselves. This made everything much easier and that can be heard when listening to it. It sounds way more professional than ever before.

Rise Of The Antichrist was recorded already in May 2001, but was not released until eight months later. A delay is often caused by the label, in order to wait for the right time for releasing their products, however this time, the blame is on the band.

- Yes, it was our fault that it got so delayed. We had some problem getting the photos done and to be honest with you, we are a bunch of lazy bastards. The thing is that Hellfire lives in Gothenburg and the rest of us in Umeå, so it wasn't the easiest thing to gather the whole band.

Is *Rise Of The Antichrist* a result of the efforts made by the whole band?

- The main influence for the new album was simply listening to our previous album *At the Gates of Hell* from 1999, which we nowadays consider being a mistake from our side. It turned out way too melodic and all the aggression was lost. It should have never been released. I wrote all the music for *Rise of the Antichrist* and me and Wrathy wrote the lyrics together. This was actually the first time we worked like that and it turned out killer.

A change in the line-up since the last album is the new guitarist Hellfire. He replaced Spider, who filled Blackheims shoes after his departure shortly after the release of album #2, *Pentagram Prayer*. Hellfire has found his place within the band, but we'll have to wait for the next album to check out his composing-skills.

- Hellfire did not contribute with any material for the *Rise Of The Antichrist*. He joined the band quite late so most of the songs were already finished. However, for the next album I am sure that he will contribute with some shit.

Bewitched have thrashed a decent amount of stages and performed in front of thousands of people over the years. They've also covered some of the biggest metal-festivals in Europe, but as with many bands from Sweden, they've gained bigger support outside of their home country.

- It's hard to say in which country we have the biggest support,

but the most memorable gigs we've done so far were in Mexico City, Finland, Germany, Portugal and Italy. Also the shows at Wacken and Dynamo were totally great.

Speaking of Mexico. Bewitched is one of quite few bands from Sweden that had the chance to travel across half the globe to do some shows. It was back in the winter of 2000, when you presented the Hellcult to the Mexican audience. One gets to hear all kinds of stories about the South-American maniacs, and Bewitched too got to experience the devotion from the fans over there.

- It was totally insane. The people over there were so dedicated to this kind of music and it was nothing but great to play there.

I guess that playing the kind of music they do, the dream would be to put on a massive show with all kinds of bombs, fire etc, but that is probably out of the question (financially). At the moment anyway.

- I am very satisfied with the performance we are able to do right now because we are a great live band. There is a lot of aggression involved together with the traditional fire-breathing and the use of blood. Of course it would be great to be able to use pyro and so on. We have actually thought about it, so maybe on the upcoming tour. All I can say is that it will be one hell of a show!

Their present show is indeed highly recommended, and if you get the chance to catch them on some gig in the future, you should definitely not miss the opportunity.

- Pure aggression is the best way to describe it. Total fucking mayhem!

And if you have never seen them in action, an option would be to get their CD *Hell Comes To Esen* from 1998. It's a live CD that was recorded during the World Domination tour in December 1997, a tour on which they played together with Enslaved, Swordmaster, Demonic, Dark Tranquillity, and DellaMorte. I believe that it has captured the spirit of their performance.

- Yeah, because it was a very honest recording. At first, it was intended only to be used for the World Domination-video, but Osmose insisted to release it as a picture-LP as well. We thought that it would be a cool idea to release it as our own live as well, since nobody actually listens to a picture disc anyway. Most people just put it on the wall.

And the eternal question that follows every live-recording. Was any of that material polished in the studio?

- No, nothing at all. It was only recorded on two tracks so that was exactly the way we sounded that hellish night in Essen.

The band was started by Vargher (vox/guit) and Blackheim (vox/guit) back in 1995, due to the lack of quality of metal bands that were around at that time. Later on Reaper (drums) joined their forces and they entered the Chamber of Hate to record their first demo-tape *Helkpell*. Shortly afterwards, bass player Wrathy completed the line-up, and the debut album *Diabolical Desecration* was recorded, to show the world how it should sound. Over the years, not much has improved in the scene according to Vargher, and he is still pissed off at all the crap that's being released.

- No. There are still some few great bands but the scene is, and will always be, infected by scum who totally lack any kind of talent and musical intelligence.

Diabolical Desecration came just one year after the formation of the band, and was supported by a European tour with Ancient

Rites, Sacramentum and Enthroned. Personally I think that it still can be considered as a pretty strong album, and it definitely stands strong against the competition even these days.

- Thanks. I am still very proud of that album and satisfied with it, considering the circumstances around the recording of it. We weren't signed to Osmose back then and financed the recording by ourselves. We only spent three days in the studio.

Beside the already mentioned albums, the discography is completed with the MCD *Encyclopedia Of Evil* (1996), containing covers of Venom, Bathory, Mercyful Fate, Celtic Frost, Black Widow plus a couple of their own songs. Osmose made it possible to release the debut *Diabolical Desecration* and today, Bewitched is still releasing albums on that label. And their co-operation seems to work out pretty well.

- Hmm, yeah I guess so. They have made it possible for us to tour and we've had a lot of merchandise available, so I don't complain. Still I feel that they could have done more. But I am never satisfied.

For a band that is so possessed by the 80's thrash/black metal bands, I'm curious of whether Vargher ever check out some new bands/releases?

- Haha, yeah I actually do. Some of the latest things I bought or listened to that I found interesting were the new King Diamond album, Kreator's *Violent Revolution*, the last *Diabolicalum* album and some more.

Some of the old classic bands are still around these days, however only few of them makes music that is close to the masterpieces they once recorded. Take a band like Bathory for instance, whose latest LP *Destroyer Of Worlds* is miles away from what they used to record. A band that you on the other hand still can count on is Mercyful Fate.

- Bathory don't really exist for me these days. I heard some tracks from *Destroyer Of Worlds* and to be honest, it sounded like shit. The last *Destruction* album was a positive surprise because I was a bit disappointed with *All Hell Breaks Loose*. Mercyful Fate is one of the only bands that I simply refuse to say anything bad about, simply because there is no reason to. Ok, *9* isn't as good as *Don't Break the Oath*, which is the best album ever. Still the new releases have kept a very high standard. I've heard Venom's *Cast in Stone* but found it rather uninteresting. There were some good songs like *The Evil One*, but all in all it was crap. I haven't had the chance to listen to the last *Sodom* album though, so I can't really comment that one.

Bewitched is by far not the only band that the four warriors play in. Vargher is also playing in Ancient Wisdom and Havayoth, and Wrathy in Setherial. Both of them are also members of Naglfar and Purgatorium. Also Hellfire and drummer Stormlord have got gigs on the side, so the whole band seems to be able to keep themselves occupied.

- Hellfire also plays in Florida-styled death-metal band Bleeding and Auberon, who has released two albums on Black Mark. Stormlord played drums on the first *Nocturnal Rites* albums, and now also plays in a band called Scissorhands.

Is every one of these bands of equal importance for you?

- I can only speak for myself and for me, all my bands are of equal importance. They are my children. It is no problem since it is only Bewitched and Naglfar that is rehearsing and doing gigs. All right, times out so I let the occupied musician of the hook.

- Thanks for the support. Worship the Fire!
I will.

WORSHIP THE FIRE



Doubtlessly one of the longest-running death metal bands in Europe. Every soul that's into this music has, at least at some occasion, heard Sinister from Holland. I'm quite sure of that. Their latest album is just another addition to their great discography and I had a chat with their bassist Alex, who was very economical with his answers.

Sinister is one of the bands from the Dutch scene, that have stuck to their death metal in wet and dry. Their new album *Creative Killings* will surely please their old fans, as it is just as good as all their previous releases. One thing that struck me when I received this new CD from the Hammerheart-office was however not the music, but the singer. First Johan Liiva was replaced by Angela Gossow in Arch Enemy, and now there is a women behind the microphone in Sinister. What is going on within the death metal scene?

- I think that feminism has stroke the metal scene, haha! The original singer Mike (1988-1997) did the vocals on the first Houwitser album, and is now screaming in Death Squad. Erik took over between 1998 and 1999, and is right now working on a new project. Before Rachel joined, a guy named Joost lasted between 1999 and 2000, and he is today singing with Inhume. Rachel is indeed a very good singer, and her vocals fit the music of Sinister perfectly. I'd say it's about the time more women takes part in the scene.

- Well, I don't know if that's the case. Rachel has been into death metal for 12 years now, so it's not something new to her. The only thing that's new to her is that she is now performing in a well known band within the scene. I think it's OK that more women will take part in the scene. If they have the quality that is.

After all, over the years there's only been Jo Bench (Bolt Thrower) and Sabine Classen (Holy Moses) that were part of successful metal bands. Apart from all the black metal combos of course, that uses female vocals as a counter pole to the male growling/screaming, but that does not really count.

- No, you're right. In that case you will be using a girl for other purposes.

Rehearsing and playing gigs is one thing, but sharing a tour-buss with a chick can be a whole different story. We all know that guys' humor is seldom appreciated by the women.

- She is used to it, haha! It's not something that offends her and that's the cool part of her. We didn't have to adapt to Rachel because of her gender. She was simply a new Sinister member.

Singers are far from the only line-up changes within this Dutch band. Different musicians have come and gone over the years, and just recently I found out that guitarist Bart has left the band. What was the reason for his departure?

- Bart is a good guy but he just couldn't find the time and devotion anymore to put 100% into the band. Just recently, his wife gave birth to their third child so he has other priorities. It didn't take long before Bart's replacement was found, and the band could announce that Pascal Grevinga from Cantara will fill his shoes. Still, it was not all that easy to find a suitable man for the job.

- Well, it's pretty hard to find an excellent guitarist nowadays. A lot of people play in a band, but their technical skills are usually far from perfect. I got a lot of applications, most of them from the US, but we wanted a guitarist that lived in Holland.

Fortunately, Jens of God Dethroned knew someone that was suitable for the job. We rehearsed and it all went pretty good.

I have read that Sinister is planning to release a whole album with covers of old death metal classics, and that their old guitarist Ron will be playing on it. Even though Pascal is a regular member of the band now, Ron is still considered for this album. And with the bands they've decided to cover, I believe that it will be a really interesting album.

- Yes, we will do covers from Pungent Stench, Autopsy, Kreator, Infernal Majesty, Celtic Frost, Death and some others. Ron will be a part of the band on this CD and also on the next Sinister CD. But he will not be a real member and perform live.

The idea is however not very unique. The Danish veterans Ildisposed recorded such album last year with covers of Death,

Carcass, Dark Throne, Venom, Autopsy, Pestilence, Obituary and others.

- I haven't heard it.

Hypnosia has done it, as well as Houwitser and Amon Amarth (that I know of). What am I talking about? Of course the fact that they've all recorded a cover version of the old thrash-classic band Possessed.

- Yep. All those bands recorded it because of a tribute album, which was never released.

Sinister has since the debut *Cross The Styx* (1992) been releasing their albums for Nuclear Blast. It was followed by *Diabolical Summoning* (1993), *HATE* (1995) and the MCD *Bastard Saints* (1996), but *Aggressive Measures* from 1998 put an end to that co-operation. *Creative Killings* is the debut for their native Hammerheart records, and they are all hoping for a better support than they are used to.

- Nuclear Blast offered us a new deal, but we thought it was time for a change after ten years. Hammerheart gave us a good contract and hopefully better support and promotion.

Your latest album *Creative Killings*, the 5:th full-length since the start over a decade ago, is out and it is once again qualitative death metal you offer the fans. Did everything (writing/rehearsing/recording etc) go smoothly?

- Well, there are always some problems. But in a way the recording went on as planned.

I (and I'm sure many with me) can't wait to see this new line-up

- Yeah, we both play in Houwitser and both bands are important for me and Aad. Thanatos is not an issue anymore because Aad isn't playing with them anymore. The most important thing is to schedule everything and then it's not a problem.

In the mid 90's, Sinister toured quite frequently, and they even did a big tour in the US. Even though the scene has grown again after the black metal years in the late 90's, Alex is not very optimistic about the future.

- The scene will never be as big again as in the beginning of the 90's. It's still possible to do big tours, if you have a good package. No mercy festivals, etc.

Holland (as well as the rest of the world) has seen an incensement for death metal lately. Bands like God Dethroned and Thanatos raised from the dead and recorded great albums, and in almost every magazine I've read lately I've stumbled upon names like Centurian, Houwitser, the above mentioned and a bunch others.

- Yes, we have some great bands nowadays. And so do we. Here in Sweden we used to have the "Sunlight-scene" in the early 90's, but only a few of those bands are still around and lesser of them still play death metal.

- My favorite death metal bands in the early 90's were from Sweden, but it's a pity that most of them changed their style. I agree, but you are lucky to have some of them as your label-mates, i.e. Dismember and Necrophobic. We can be happy we still have the bands in Florida, that continues to feed us with great death metal (Morbid Angel, Cannibal Corpse, Malevolent

CREATIVE KILLERS

Creation, Hate Eternal, Divine Empire and many others).

- Indeed!!!

On the other hand, many thrash bands have been popping up here in Sweden, and for instance The Haunted is having a huge success with their music. That kind of stuff seems to be the next trend in our country.

- It's not really my style, but I can appreciate it just because it has aspects of music that I like, which are aggression and musical skills.

Indeed metal, in many forms, is getting stronger again and that is yummy!

live, playing all the great songs from it. But I guess that we will have to wait some more. Recently, the announced European tour was canceled, and even though a new tour is being planned at the moment, Sweden will probably not be included on the list.

- Hammerheart wanted a cool package on tour, but unfortunately the costs were too high and they had to cancel the whole thing. Sinister will probably go on tour after the summer, because Aad and me are both busy with Houwitser right now. It's also too late to schedule a new tour before the summer. It's really the job of promoters to get a tour also to Sweden but I don't think this will happen soon, just because of the costs.

The bad luck is proceeding, as the planned US-tour that was scheduled for this spring is still unconfirmed.

- We should do a tour in May, but the promoter is taking a lot of time to confirm everything. It's still uncertain.

As already mentioned, drummer Aad and Alex are beside Sinister also members of Houwitser, and Aad is also playing with the reformed Thanatos. Both bands are quite active by playing shows and recording albums, but that doesn't seem to be a problem for Sinister.

HEARSE

Once upon a time, there was a band called Furbowl. It was built upon the duo Johan Liiva (bass/vox) and Max Thornell (drums), but after two very good records, changes appeared in the band and eventually they decided to call it a day.

It would take them about 7 years to start making music together again, and the stuff they've recorded this far proves they are doing the right thing.

I hooked up with Max one sunny spring day, just outside of their rehearsal room in central Stockholm, and due to the weather being so good (which is a quite unique happening here in the north), we decided to sit down in a nearby park to have a talk. With a fresh root beer in his hand, Max got right down to business by revealing what he has been doing since the split up of Furbowl, and the move up to Stockholm several years ago.

- I've been playing with a band called Satanarchy. Just recently we released our debut album called *Disgraceful World* on Primitive Art Records. I've also played in all kinds of different constellations with some other people from Växjö who live up here. Like for instance Wonderflow, which was put to rest in 1997. Right after that, some time during 1998, we formed Satanarchy.

Furbowl was a really good band, to say the least, and the music they made did not sound like any other stuff back then. Even today, I think that no one came even close to what they did. It's been mentioned in interviews during Johan's time with Arch Enemy, but still I think that many people are not familiar with this band. My opinion is that they can thank their former label Black Mark Records for that. I believe that they did not support the band the way they deserved.

- Yeah, we were not exactly satisfied with what they did for us. Furbowl has been referred to lately in reviews, but when we were active, a whole lot more could have been done in order to spread the name.

What was the reason for you guys to split up? All of a sudden, members were exchanged. Nicklas came in to handle the guitar, which he did very well indeed. But later on when Johan left, you took in a vocalist named Pelle, and that was a bad move I think. It was not the same thing anymore. The first show I saw with this guy behind the microphone, I was like "What the hell is this?" Nothing felt right, and me and my friends

were just standing there, not understanding what the hell was going on. We missed The autumn years.

- Yeah, I understand that completely. It got kind of schizophrenic there for a while. That's why we also decided to change the name to Wonderflow, as Furbowl was not the same band anymore.

Anyway, that's the past and we should look forward. Particularly on Hearse, which is a band worth keeping your eyes on. Even though the name has not been spread too well, it's not as fresh as you might think.

- It was actually started about two years ago. I had a bunch of songs that I've been working on, and I needed a band to play the songs with.

At the time when Max was making up plans for a new band, Johan was suddenly fired from Arch Enemy. In my opinion, those who should be the most sorry about that decision is Mike Amott and his bunch, as they let go of a very talented singer who fitted their music as a hand in the glove. Max is starting to laugh a bit when I point out Johan's timing.

- Him being fired sure was perfect in time, if I may say so. Recruiting him for the band was a really good move, because his voice is indeed very characteristic. Three words into the microphone and one immediately recognize his dark vocals.

- Absolutely. I mean, he is my favorite singer within this style of music, so he just had to do this with me.

Johan and Max actually started to make music together even before Furbowl. Back then, the band was called Max And The Chainsaws and the music was hard core. How did it feel to have a band with Johan again, after so many years?

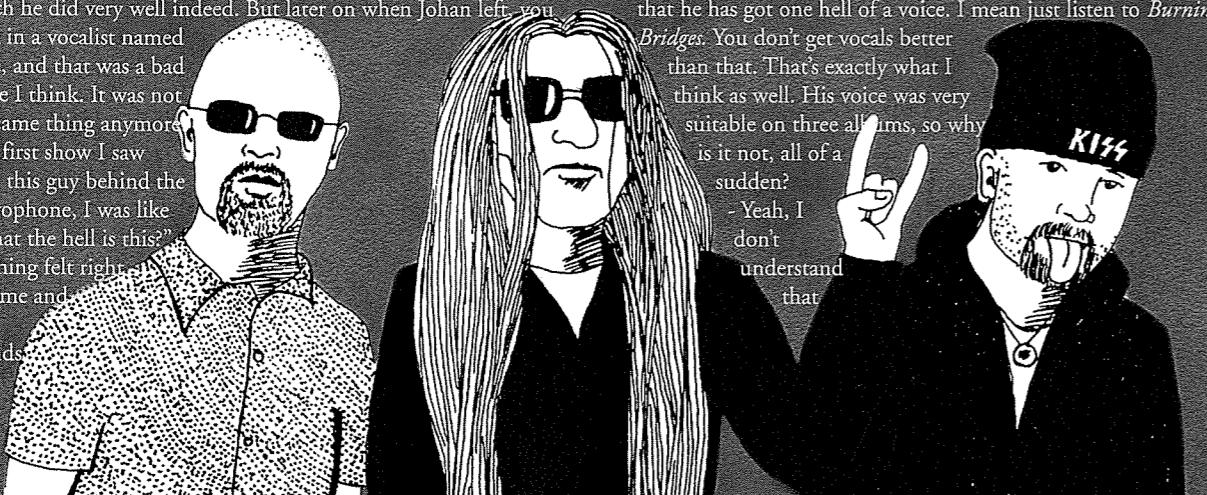
- Cool. Really cool. It was about time, since we've not played together since 1994, or something like that. We played the Hultsfred festival that year with Furbowl, and after that he left the band. Now that I had all the songs and started the hunt for musicians to form Hearse with, I felt that Johan had to be part of that. It was like either he's gonna be part of it, or there will be no band.

I never really understood the reason for him being excused from his duties in Arch Enemy.

- I've read in some interviews that the rest of Arch Enemy did not feel that his voice was suiting the music they played anymore. Which is something I cannot understand, as I think that he has got one hell of a voice. I mean just listen to *Burning Bridges*. You don't get vocals better than that. That's exactly what I

think as well. His voice was very suitable on three albums, so why is it not, all of a sudden?

- Yeah, I don't understand that



either. His dark and sad vocals are just so good. It's a lot of anguish in it, which I like a lot.

I get the feeling that the old Carnage-story is repeating itself in a way. I mean, Johan was a part of this old classic band from the start, but before the split-album with Cadaver was to be recorded, he was replaced by Matti Kärki. Arch Enemy cannot really be compared to Carnage, as they play different kind of music and have gained a whole bigger success, but it still must feel really shitty. Especially since his buddy Mike Amott was the one to fire him both times. And this time, he didn't even care to tell it to him, but wrote a letter.

- As soon as things are working well for the band, he's out. Poor man! I can't understand that.

Well Johan is certainly not sitting at home grieving. Beside Hearse, he's keeping himself occupied by singing in Nonexist, a band that he's got together with drummer Matte Modin (Defleshed, Dark Funeral) and Johan Reinholdz (Andromeda), who is handling the guitars, keyboards and bass.

Now we've only been talking about Max and Johan, but in order to have a band, you also need a guitarist. Hearse too is completed by one, and they call him Mattias, a musician I know nothing about.

- He is an old colleague of mine, working in the same school as I am. He hasn't played metal at all before actually. He's been playing mostly troubadour-stuff but no angry music. He used to play some heavy metal in his youth, but I had no idea he would be fitting a metal band as he did. It was kind of a shot in the dark, but it turned out to be a good one. I'm really satisfied with his playing.

The line-up of Hearse is far from being settled, and in the near future we might be witnessing some changes. Max was the drummer for Furbowl, and he's beating the shit out of his kit in Hearse as well, however he possesses some other skills too. On the recorded songs this far, he's also been handling the bass. That was quite a surprise, as the most natural thing would have been to see Johan with the four-string-axe on his shoulder again.

- As it is now, Johan is only singing. Once we've started to play some gigs, we'll see how we're gonna solve the bass-problem. We've been discussing the possibility to take in a new bass-player, and even me maybe playing the bass on gigs. We have not decided anything yet.

With only one guitar-player in the line-up, I think that the songs would suffer a bit live. I imagine the songs getting weaker and loosing some of their power with only one guitar. Especially since there are so many melodies within the music, and those would feel quite poor with only the drums and bass to back it up.

- Well, we've been talking about getting another guitarist as well, but we have not decided anything on that either. It's not completely out of the question that I will play the guitar too.

It could be quite difficult to play drums, bass and guitar at the same time though.

- Yeah, but we'd take in a new drummer and bass-player then. I'd really like to play the guitar again, as it's been a long time since I was on stage as a guitarist.

With Johan being located in Helsingborg (in the southern part of Sweden) and Max and Mattias in Stockholm, I imagine the rehearsals in the capital city have to be strictly scheduled.

- Johan comes up every now and then to join us. It's not easy but it works quite all right. No problems. We'll see how it will work once we've started to get some gigs and maybe have to rehearse some more.

Which is also what the goal is with Hearse. It's not just a hobby-project.

- Definitely. We'd like to play live, and eventually also record an album. This is a serious band, no doubt about that. We've already stated that the songs were written by Max, but he is not a dictator and every member of the band gets to ventilate his ideas for the final product.

- It's really a co-operation between the three of us. I have done the basic ground to build upon, and Johan and Mattias have added their ideas. Mattias is doing his stuff the way he feels and Johan is writing his lyrics without the interference from the other members. You never know what a song is gonna sound like when they've added their stuff to my ideas. It's a really nice way to make music.

Speaking about the lyrics, I'm really curious of what kind of stuff Johan is screaming into the microphone. I mean, the music is melodious and with a big dose of good old heavy metal, but then the name is as if belonging to a death metal band.

- Well, who knows? I don't understand everything he is singing about to be honest with you. I even wonder whether he's doing it. It's his deep and dark thoughts I believe. Still there's some thought behind the lyrics.

- I guess they are in the same style as the ones he wrote for Furbowl.

I've known that Johan and Max have been doing music together again for a while, but not until I read a review of the second demo did I know that they've actually recorded anything. The songs on this demo are *Dominion Reptilian*, *Avalon* and *So Vague*, and judging from what I read and heard, I thought that this was a pure heavy metal band. Now with the music spinning in my CD-player, I hear that there is a whole lot of Furbowl in Hearse. The heavy metal feeling comes from all the melodies, which I've compared a bit to old Mercyful Fate in my review.

- You can thank Mattias for that. I don't listen to Mercyful Fate, but I know that he is a fan of them.

As the case is with most of the demos being released nowadays, Hearses debut comes on CD-format.

- Well it is much faster to copy them on the CD, and it is also way cheaper.

And still, you stumble upon people at gigs, offering you a three-song demo for 50-60 Sek.

- We sell our CD for 10 Sek (less than 1US\$). Punk-price! I can understand that some bands are forced to sell their stuff for a lot more, as they've been spending a lot of money in the studio, but our recording did not cost us a dime.

But still, the whole idea of a demo is to get your music to the people. You hardly expect them to sound great.

- Yeah, that's true.

How well have you spread the demo?

- Not much actually. I think we've sent out about 30-40 copies, most of them to labels and magazines. We are dealing with some labels that have shown some interest, but we don't seem to be on the same level with any of them at the moment.

We've been screwed by the labels before, so we are pretty aware of all the bullshit that you can get caught in. I get the feeling that the labels today are surviving on fucking bands over, and I don't want to get caught in.

So forcing people to buy your demo at the local gigs is not your thing?

- No, no, no. I mean, I'm 31 years old and I don't feel like doing that no more. I did that when I was 20, but no more. And my general opinion of the fans these days is that they have no interest in finding new and interesting bands.

- Yeah, nobody buys anything anymore. I try to buy some stuff every now and then, when someone approaches me at

The music of these Dutch-men could be described as thrash/death metal, and if I mention At The Gates while describing their sound, you can pretty easily make your own picture.

- Personally I like to describe our music as "modern sounding extreme metal", with the styles death and thrash metal being the main elements in our sound. Although this doesn't mean we limit ourselves to these styles only, because we also use doom, black and even traditional heavy metal-influences in our sound. Besides, all band-members have a pretty wide range of musical taste, which itself guarantees a varied sound. I can understand why you mention At The Gates. They also had this intense and furious drive in their music, especially on their *Slaughter Of The Soul* - album. I can hear a little bit of that in the Callenish Circle-sound nowadays, so this comparison is cool with me. I mean, they created a milestone in modern death/thrash metal so there's no shame in being compared with such a great band. Certainly not! Thrash have really increased in popularity here in Sweden over the last few years, and At The Gates is the band that's influenced a whole lot of the combos that's been popping lately. Of course, The Haunted understandably stands above them all, but bands like for instance Darkane are releasing great albums as well.

- Well personally I like those bands a lot. Don't forget bands like Soilwork, Carnal Forge and Satariel.

And as Patrick already said, there's also a great portion of heavy metal in their music. Being around for such a long time, I guess that they too were introduced to the heavy music with the 70's and 80's heavy metal bands like Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, AC/DC etc, etc.

- Well my first introduction with heavier music was AC/DC and Van Halen. After that, I discovered bands like Iron Maiden and started listening to more and more extreme music. However I must say that Black Sabbath never really were of my personal interest, nor for the other band-members. Perhaps they were a little bit before our time.

A band that, despite their cheesiness, kind of introduced younger kids to heavy metal several years ago was Hammerfall. They certainly are not coming with any fresh ideas, and I feel that they are only re-recording stuff that's already been recorded. Still, there are a bunch of other bands following in their steps, and they seem to sell a whole lot of albums.

- Well I can't give you an honest opinion on this one, because I am not really into that scene. Of course I know bands like Hammerfall, but it's simply not my kind of thing. I prefer to listen to the old bands like Iron Maiden, Helloween or Judas Priest. Anyway, they are doing very well at the moment so at least they are doing something good, hehehe. I mean, if they were totally crap they wouldn't sell all these albums.

I wouldn't be too sure about that. Just have a look at all the crap that's being released in the US, labeled as heavy metal and selling millions off copies.

As we all know, metal is best when it's played live, and I can't wait till the Dutch-men come up here to the north, to play their set for us. They've never played here which is a shame, as Sweden is after all THE metal country in Europe. When it comes to breeding great bands that is.

- Well even if Sweden might have a leading scene regarding bands, you probably know that a tour almost never visits your country.

I've kind of noticed that yeah, thank you very much!

- I've heard that almost everybody is in a band and therefore there are not enough fans to make a tour in Sweden effective. For example, I heard that the Savatage / Blaze / Vicious Rumors-tour only had 378 paying visitors. Such a package over here easily sells out the 013-club (2000-2500 people). Well if it was up to us, we would have played in Sweden already, but unfortunately it's not

only in our hands. We have some contacts with a festival in Sweden now though, so let's hope we'll play there soon. We want to play everywhere!

A whole lot of people will soon get the chance to check Callenish Circle out though, as between April and May, they will hit the road with Sweden's Amon Amarth and Vomitory. I doubt that this three-week tour will take them all the way to Stockholm.

- Unfortunately no Swedish shows are included in the tour-schedule. And that's even though there are two other Swedish bands featured on the bill as well, Sins of Omission and Diabolical. Too bad, I know!

One country outside their native Holland that have witnessed a Callenish Circle show on several occasions, is Czech Republic. And they have not gotten tired of the Czechs yet.

- I have a few long-lasting contacts in the underground-scene over there. That's how we got to play the Brutal Assault-festival twice so far, in 1998 and in 2000. This year we will probably play there again. Czech Republic is a very beautiful country with great nature, and the fans over there are very supportive. They really enjoy your show and go totally crazy while you're playing. For a band, that's of course the ultimate experience.

Just like with almost every band in the world, Callenish Circle too have had their share of troubles with record-labels over the years. First, *Drift Of Empathy* was released by Hammerheart Records in 1996, but they could not fulfill the expectations the band had on the label.

- Back then, Hammerheart Records was a very young and inexperienced label. And Callenish Circle was a young band with little knowledge of the music-industry. The expectations after the great success of the *Lovelorn* - demo had risen to abnormal heights. The press already announced us as the next big thing after Gorefest, Pestilence and The Gathering, and it was quite obvious that neither the band, nor the label could live up to those huge expectations. Therefore, after the release of *Drift Of Empathy*, both sides were disappointed with the final outcome of the album, and decided to stop cooperating. Still I don't blame them for anything. I think both sides were simply not ready to achieve a little breakthrough back then.

Drift Of Empathy is since long sold out, but it will be re-released by Painkiller Records in October 2002. It's gonna get a facelift too, consisting of new art-work and new design. Besides, it will include the *Lovelorn*-demo from 1992 and one extra track as bonus. And all the songs will be digitally remastered.

To fill the gap between the first and second album, the MCD *Escape* was released in 1998 on Polar Bear Records. The response on this MCD was very good, but when the label couldn't finance the recording of the follow-up to the debut, the band decided to pay it by themselves and get a deal when the album is finished. The label that approached the band with the best deal was DSFA Records and in 1999, *Graceful... Yet Forbidding* was released. The problems were not over though, and due to DSFA's financial problems, the album could only be spread in the Benelux countries. Later on, Norwegian label Edgerunner Records released it in the rest of the Europe, with the MCD *Escape* as a bonus.

- Well we thought we had finally found a decent label, which could give us 100% support. DSFA Records back then was known as a very promising label, offering a massive support for their bands. But as soon as the album was supposed to be released, nothing happened. No promotion, no distribution, no tour. Simply nothing. Of course we asked what was going on, but we were silenced with false promises and bullshit-lies. A few months later we were totally fed up with the situation, and claimed back the legal rights for the album. They just fucked us up because we paid the entire costs for the studio, and we were the part that took the financial risk. As you said, we ended up

licenseing the album to Edgerunner Records, and even though it's a small company with limited a budget, they at least promoted the album within all their power and possibilities.

And as I stated already in the beginning, the new album will be released under a new label again. This time it's the mighty Metal Blade Records who's representing Callenish Circle, and the future must look bright again.

- Finally, after all those years of bad luck and misfortune, we found a real professional record label. Metal Blade is known for its excellent promotion and distribution. Besides, they've already put us on a European tour so everything is looking very good now. I am in the middle of the promotion-campaign now, and the response from the press is killer. I'm doing tons of interviews and we receive great reviews. I am glad we decided to continue the band, even though we went through a very negative period after the shit with DSFA Records. It feels like a little reward for all those years of hard labor and iron spirit, that we finally ended up on a great label like Metal Blade Records.

A four-album deal is signed between the two parts, so I guess that they are stuck with each other for a while.

- Well let's hope so, hahaha. I mean, I don't know any other label that could offer even better conditions for a band like Callenish Circle. We are very confident that together with the support of Metal Blade, we can build the band up.

As many of you know, being a singer in a death metal band is not something you get rich of. You can be lucky to even make a living out of it. Patrick too has got to go to a regular job every day to be able to pay the bills, however his employment at the promotion department of Hammerheart Records is quite suiting for a death metal singer. Is there a possibility that your albums will be released on that label again?

- Releasing our albums for Hammerheart Records again was never even a serious option. I don't want to mix my daily job with my hobby. As you probably know, the interest of a label doesn't always match with the interest of the band, and in case of frictions I would always be the one stuck in between two fires. That's a situation I want to avoid at any cost. Besides, the managers at Hammerheart Records Guido and Peter, have the policy that they don't want to release albums of people working there anymore. This led to problems in the past, so it will never be an option as long as I work at Hammerheart Records.

Let's get back to the new album again for a while. You are the singer of the band, yet the guitarist Ronny Tyssen almost exclusively writes the lyrics.

- It's always been like that, ever since our demo-days. Ronny is better on writing down his thoughts and feelings on paper. I guess that's the main reason why he's writing most of the lyrics. It's not a problem though, because his lyrics are pretty much "down to earth", and that's why I can easily put myself into his writings. And of course, I can also ask him for an explanation when I can't figure them out myself.

An exception is the song *Bleeding*, which Patrick have received credit for in the booklet. He's not responsible for the entire composition of that song though.

- No, I only wrote the lyrics for this one. The music was written by the whole band, just like all the music we create.

And why is that the only song whose lyrics are not printed in the booklet?

- The reason for that is that it deals with a very personal topic in my life. It's about something that happened last year, and I simply don't want to share it with the rest of the world. It's too personal.

You've mentioned that the music is composed by all of you. In which way are you contributing, during the creative process?

- Well I am not actually writing any riffs or drum-parts, but I

am very much involved in structuring a new song. Mostly it's Ronny that comes up with a new riff or idea, and together with Gavin and me we start structuring all the ideas and riffs in a logical scheme. After that, Roland and Remy write their additional guitar- and bass-lines and in the end the vocals are added to the music.

The lyrics are quite dark and mostly (so I have interpreted them) dealing with relationships and everyday life. While reading them, I got the feeling that Ronny is one pretty depressed individual.

- No not really, but as you probably know, daily life isn't all about good and happy things.

Tell me about it. Every day is a struggle!

- Often you have to deal with negative emotions. The lyrics mainly deal with human emotions, in the widest range of the word, but I will have Ronny explain them a little bit more.

And all of a sudden, Ronny himself is a part of this interview.

- Yeas, the lyrics in general deals with human emotions. For some of the lyrics, personal experiences were my inspiration. Other lyrics are pure fiction or inspired by things I've seen happening to people I know. I like to manoeuvre myself into situations that cause heavy emotional feelings like anger, fear, helplessness, grief and sorrow. I try to imagine what I would feel if certain things would happen to me, or to a person who is important to me.

Some time ago, the news about Chuck Schuldiner's death reached us and a death metal maestro was no more. At the end of *Flesh Power Dominion*, the fans will get a cover on *Pull The Plug*, which is one of the best death metal songs that's ever been written. Now that Chuck is no more with us, it is a good tribute to one of the formers of death metal.

- Actually it was not meant as a tribute, because we recorded this song already in April/May last year and Chuck was still alive back then. Anyway, it has become like a tribute now, and with this song we honor a person that was one of the main influences for Callenish Circle. We started out back in 1992 by playing covers from our favorite bands like Death. It's because of people like Chuck, that we actually started playing this kind of music. He was an influence and inspiration for many of us. I guess that says enough.

There is another cover on the album, however this one is certainly not very well known amongst the fans of death metal. I had never heard the song *When The Lady Smiles*, nor any other songs from Golden Earrings before, until some of the older guys at work introduced me to them.

- Golden Earring is Holland's most notorious rockband ever. They had many great hits like *Radar Love* and *Twilight Zone* in the past, and nowadays they are still active. Even though they are over 50 years old I think. We wanted to record an untypical song for a metalband, and one day when I was at the office, they played this song on the radio. When it was originally released back in 1985 or something like that, it was a very big hit over here. So when I heard it again, it immediately reminded me of that great video-clip in which a pretty nun gets raped by the vocalist in an elevator. At the end, the guy is lying on a surgery-table and he's getting the "evil" part of his brain removed. Then it's fed to the dog, hahaha. I took the idea to the rehearsal-place and the other guys were also into the idea of doing this cover. So we worked out the song, and recorded it. I must admit that it's not a 100% serious song like the Death-cover, but more like a surprise-song.

It sure was a surprise. More like a shock actually!



Releasing one good album after another, but not getting the recognition they deserve was frustrating for Stockholm's Necrophobic for many years. With a new line-up, new record-deal and a new album, things are finally getting their way and the future looks good for them.

The freshly released *Bloodhymns* was a major step forward for this long-running band, as they finally got rid of Black Mark and relocated to the growing label Hammerheart Records. The Dutchmen are doing far more for Necrophobic than the Swedes ever did, and I take it that this also means more interviews than earlier. Drummer Joakim Sterner found some time in-between his studies to have a talk with Amputation magazine.

- Yes, there have been a lot more interviews this time, but that's nothing but great. We have done a lot of interviews before as well, but not this much. My throat is beginning to ache and my fingers bleed from answering all the e-mail interviews, he he... If I'm not mistaken, the deal with Black Mark was for four albums, out of which only three were actually delivered to them (*Nocturnal Silence* 1993, *Darkside* 1997 and *The Third Antichrist* 1999), together with the MCD *Spawned By Evil* back in 1996.

- Well, they still had one option left. Originally, we should have given Black Mark this new album, but we got free from them before completing the material for *Bloodhymns*. To make it clear, it was not that *Bloodhymns* was recorded and should have been a release for Black Mark.

So what else is different compared to your earlier situation?

- It's hard to tell this early. The new album has just been released, but we have been contracted to them for a year now and we have had good contact since the beginning. Even before we signed with them. We feel their support all the time. We feel that they treat us good and are more than willing to do whatever both Necrophobic and Hammerheart think is necessary for the band. I've already talked about their promotion work, which is a lot

better. They also try to get us on tours, but the bad luck has just struck us again. The european tour that was arranged recently got cancelled because the other bands on that bill either jumped on a different tour or told the agency that they wanted more money. There are more things to tell that has improved with the change of labels, but I will not bore you with those details.

Hammerheart Records seems to becoming a real Swedish label. Beside Morifade and Demons Of Dirt, Satariel, Hypnosia and Thronaeon have all released good for that label. Also the Swedish veterans Dismember have found their way there and will eventually release a new album for them, their first since their departure from Nuclear Blast.

- Actually, I don't care if they have a lot of swedish bands. The thing I care about is how the label works and what kind of people they are. I think it's the best label for Necrophobic at the moment. We got offers from much bigger labels than

Hammerheart, but I guess we would only be "one of the bands" on those labels. We really need to get the support we deserve now. We've been struggling with bad stuff for years now and have to get some great stuff back, so to speak. Recording killer albums all the time and not get anything else than great reviews...you know...we want more! And we deserve more.

Necrophobic, beside Joakim consisting of bassist/singer Tobias Sidegård and the guitarists Sebastian Ramstedt and Johan Bergebäck, have not been spoiled with gigs over the years, and there are many fans all around the world that are really looking forward to see them in action. The gig-situation must be getting

a whole lot better now, as Hammerheart are more eager to get their bands on the road, compared to their Swedish colleagues.

- I know that Hammerheart did their best to fix everything with the agency to set up a new tour when the original tour was cancelled, just to do everything for us. However, the time was too short to put all the necessary promotion and stuff like that for it, so we will settle with the summer festivals this summer. A new tour will be set up for us in the end of this year, or at the very beginning of 2003.

The cancelled tour that's been mentioned here, is the one they should have done with their label-mates Ancient Rites and Primordial. What happened was that Ancient Rites wanted more money, and when they didn't get it, they just cancelled their participation. When Primordial found out about this they hooked up with another tour, and according to Joakim, they didn't like to tour with Ancient Rites either.

Anyway, I'm sure their bad luck will change and that they will hit the road as planned next time. The Polish fans can be looking forward to see Necrophobic at the end of this year though, as it seems 3-4 gigs down there are already scheduled.

- We're gonna go there in November or December this year. It's something we really are looking forward to. I've heard a lot about the metal fans in Poland, so it will be a killer! We have a lot of fans there and we will get a good deal. And comfortable travelling.

The visual presentation is really important to these guys as well, and they are not gonna go up there and play in just jeans and T-shirt.

- We are all really into a special concept regarding performances. We like to do that special thing, separating ourselves from most other bands and deliver more than just our music on stage. I think we take it one step higher, dressing like we do. We want to do more things for the show, but we don't have the money for it. For example, we want to use our symbol the necrogram more than just for a backdrop. A cooler light show and stuff like that. I guess that Sebastian was the one who distinguished himself the most earlier, but on the new promo-shots Tobias is wearing a long blood-red coat, and I was wondering whether we're gonna see more of that stuff from now on.

- Well, we have always had some kind of extras, so I don't think that Sebastian had more stuff than the rest of us. But yes, we will continue to develop our stage clothes.

So how important is the image?

- As important as anything else regarding Necrophobic.

All of the previous albums were recorded in the legendary Stockholm studio Sunlight, and this time they once again choose it for their new album. Many bands have been complaining about that particular studio over the last few years, and the common opinion seems to be that it is quite passé. Necrophobic, on the other hand, are still satisfied with the studio and the sound that it's master Tomas Skogsberg created for them.

- Those bands that have complained on their sound cannot be musicians. I mean, we have an idea of how we want the sound and Tomas guides us to find what we're looking for. A lot of bands just go there and asks for the Entombed-sound and it's very easy for Tomas to work with them, but the sad thing is that the fans and press just hate it. We have never had those

problems, because we make our sound a lot different than how Entombed, Dismember, Grave etc used to make their sound.

They all had a kind of dry sound. We use a lot more atmosphere (yeah, I hate that word, but it's the best word to describe our sound) and other stuff to get our own sound. In my opinion, Sunlight is not dead. We actually thought about recording somewhere else this time, and the main reason was that David Parland, who was in the band for a short while, really hates working in Sunlight. When we once again parted ways with him, and also had a situation in the band that forced us to record in

our home territory, there were no other place to go. Now that we have the result, I'm glad that we didn't record *Bloodhymns* somewhere else.

"This is our best album ever" is what every band says when they have released a new record, and I take it the same goes for Necrophobic.

- Of course, but we speak the truth. In our case it's not a cliché. I'm sure it is, but in this case the fans seems to be of the same opinion. On the official homepage, the fans can vote for the best Necrophobic album ever and *Bloodhymns* is leading.

- Yeah, I really like the feedback on our new album. Both from the fans and from the press. I don't want to sound cocky, but we seem to get high score after high score in the reviews of the new album. I'm more than happy for that.

In my opinion, *Bloodhymns* is a natural follower to *The Third Antichrist*, although it differs a lot from *Darkside*.

- Yeah, you're right about that. I have talked so much about this in the interviews now, so I can't come up with anything to say. It sounds strange, but I really can't say anything meaningful regarding the development from release to release. However, *Darkside* was a little to thin in the production. It got better again on *The Third Antichrist*, but on the new one, we came up with the heaviest production we've ever had. Everything sounds killer! The songs are strong, the production rips your flesh to pieces. We're back, letting your ears bleed in pleasure, he he. The music sure is great, but what's also important in Necrophobic's case are the lyrics. It's definitely not something they just quickly write down in the studio, minutes before recording the vocals.

- Well, for starters I can tell you that all our lyrics are about the darkside of life. We still make these kinds of lyrics because it's still important to us and there is always stuff to write about. We are all against Christianity and feel that the church sucks, to say it with simple words. Sometimes our lyrics can be easy, straightforward lyrics, sometimes more deep and mystic, but as I said, they are all about darkness and evil in one-way or another. On this new album our lyrics are about dreams, sorrows, swedish mythology, war and more. All from an evil or satanic point of view.

The music is of course the major thing, but Necrophobic managed to dress their material into a really good-looking booklet, which looks better than any of their previous ones. What's impressive is that for the first time, they did it all by themselves.

- Yes, this time we really did everything by ourselves. And I mean everything – except printing it. We wanted total control and this time we could use how many pages we wanted and make them all in colour. Total control, total freedom. I know it isn't really necessary to have a booklet like this, because the music is what counts, but we wanted to create the perfect illustration for the entire album. We had a good time doing it and we are very satisfied with the result. We've done most of the stuff on our previous releases, but this time we didn't even use an artist making the cover for the album. I'm happy to hear that you think it's a killer!

Is that something you will continue to do in the future?

- As long as it turns out as we want it, when we do it on our own, we will definitely continue doing it ourselves.

An interesting thing with the booklet are the signs that every member is connected with.

- It was Tobias who came up with the symbols. I guess it was my idea from the beginning to have some kind of symbol for each member, and Tobias developed that idea when he made them. He came up with the concept and he designed all the symbols by himself. They have a meaning and you can read about them on our website under each member. The symbols are mixed by

ideas and old runes and they stand for stuff that is based on each member's personality. By reading our lyrics, you get clues about it as well.

We've already mentioned David Parland, but I'd like to get back to him a bit, and investigate his latest involvement in the band. Martin Halfdan decided to leave the band after the recording of *The Third Antichrist*, and for a short period of time, David (who recorded the debut album and the MCD) was back in the band again.

- Yes, David was back in the band for a while after Martin decided to leave. At first, it felt really good to play with David again, but after a while we felt that he was more or less a hindrance. The writing process was hard, because we were too far from each other. He slowed us down, so to speak. Ok, we are all very picky when it comes to writing music for this band, but David is the pickiest writer I have ever worked with. Nothing wrong with that in particular, but he turned out to be too black metal for Necrophobic. Everyone that knows Necrophobic also know that we always have had some black metal in our music, but we will not change in order to become more black metal. And that was the case here. He seemed to dislike most of the stuff we came up with, that the other of us felt very strong towards, so we came to the conclusion that David had to leave. No hard feelings what so ever, but it was the right decision for the band.

Martin has not totally stopped playing music, and together with Ubbe from Regurgitate, they have a band they call The Chthulhic Church.

Anyway, once Parland was out, the hunt for a new guitarist was on and eventually the choice fell on Johan Bergebäck. He became a member of Necrophobic in the spring of 2001, at a time when they were busy writing the material for *Bloodhymns* and around the same time as they signed with Hammerheart.

- We didn't have anyone else in mind before we asked Johan to join. We got an e-mail from Jensen (The Haunted, Witchery) if I remember it correctly, where he told us that he was interested to play in the band. He doesn't live in Stockholm though and we wanted a guy that we could hang out with as well. So when we asked Johan and he told us that he wanted to become a member, the situation was solved.

As a fresh member, Johan still managed to write some material for the album. For example, he co-wrote some music for *Shadowseeds*, in my opinion the best song on the album. I take it he's adjusted just fine.

- It's cool that you like *Shadowseeds* so much. It's more or less my song. I wrote almost all the music for that one, but both Sebastian and Johan added a few things to it. Well, Johan wrote most of the music to *Mourning soul* and he almost completed yet another song as well, but we dropped that one just before we entered the studio. It didn't have the right structure, so we will modify those parts into a better sounding song for the next album. However, Johan is a great musician and have a great musical ear and is very good with harmonies, so he is a very good part in Necrophobic. He was a brand new member in the band when we entered the studio, and still he delivered so much material. It will be great to hear his contributions now when we start writing the next album.

All of the Necrophobic albums were recorded with different line-ups. Johan has been in the band for a year now and everything seems to work out great. The question is whether he will break the tradition, and the next album will be recorded by Joakim, Sebastian, Tobias and Johan once more?

- He will break the tradition and let it become a better tradition. But we will follow our tradition to keep on writing a better album than the previous. How great can a band be?

Greater than hell!



OBSCEITY INDECENT & OBSCENE!

You know the feeling when you check out a band you've only heard about, and they turn out to be totally in your taste? And then you investigate their past and find out that they have several albums on their account? That happened to me when Morbid Records sent me Obscenity's Cold Blooded Murder, and I've been addicted to their death metal ever since. Now it's time for you to get hooked.

I've read about this German combo in various magazines before, but never have I checked out their music closely. I really don't know why, but I sure as hell regret it now that *Cold Blooded Murder* turned out to be such great album. An interview had to be done immediately, and I caught up with the newest member of the band, drummer Marc-Andree Dieken, who just recently returned from a tour with Immortal, Vader, Hypocrisy, Disbelief, Catastrophic, Malevolent Creation and Destroyer 666. A really impressive line-up, I must say.

- The tour was great. I mean, it was a dream come true. It was absolutely cool to share the stage with musicians like Trevor Perez or Phil Fasciana, whose music I love since more than ten years. The relationship between all the bands was very good. We shared a bus with Disbelief and Destroyer 666 and we had a lot of fun together.

Obscenity got to present their new material in front of a lot of people, and most of them seem to have enjoyed their set.

- We played in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, Belgium and The Netherlands. The tour lasted for twelve gigs and the response from the audience was better than I ever expected. We played half of the tour as the first band, and the other half as the second band of the bill. Before the gigs, I thought that we'd have to start playing during the entry and

there wouldn't be many people in the club. But everytime there were more than 200 people in front of the stage, and a lot of them headbanged during our set. I think our best concert was in Strasbourg, France. We had to play as the second band that night and the club was full at that time. The people totally freaked out to our music. That was really insane. I think the tour was a big success for us, because we had the opportunity to reach fans of ours in countries where we normally don't play on weekend-gigs. Maybe we won some new fans who wouldn't come to a single concert of ours, or check us out in a record-store.

I tried to squeeze out some dirty story about the craziness that went on on the tour, but Marc gave me another one.

- I can't tell you a particular story, but I can say that we had a lot of fun on the tour. Especially Phil Fasciana of Malevolent Creation is one of the funniest persons I've ever met. He is a born storyteller. He told us a lot of cool stories from US-tours with bands like Demolition Hammer and others from the beginning of the 90's. He said that the Demolition Hammer-guys are the biggest porn-fans he ever met. They bought a lot of magazines in Canada and they treated them like a treasure. They didn't even let the other guys in the bus touch them. On the border to the USA, they had to give all the magazines to the Police. He said that the guys looked like they would start crying. Phil said that he had never seen such broken people before. Those who missed this tour will have to wait some more before they can see Obscenity in a live-situation, as no more tours are planned at the moment. That is if you don't get your ass down to Germany, where they will continue doing weekend-gigs for the next few months.

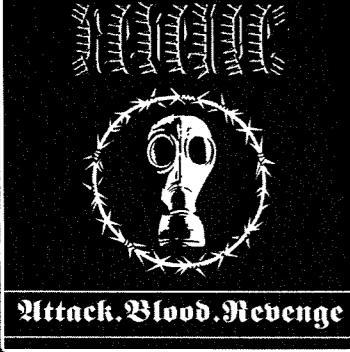
- We will also play at the Partisan Open Air festival in Germany and the Smash Fest in Poland this summer. We try to get on the Christmas Festival Tour with Cannibal Corpse, but right now I don't know if it will work.

Now lets talk about the new album, *Cold Blooded Murder*. Let me tell you all once again, that's one hell of a record and in the reviews-section, you can read that I've announced it the biggest surprise in this issue of Amputation mag. As I already stated above, apart from a few songs here and there I've never really got aquainted with their music before. When the first shock from *Cold Blooded Murder* settled, I searched their web-page for older material to compare with and it sure sounded different.

- Yes, I think that the older material is a little bit slower than the songs on the new one. Maybe it is more or less a result of some line-up changes. Our bass-player Alex has been in the band since the *Intense*-album, and I played for the first time on *Cold Blooded Murder*. The guitar-riffs are written as always by our guitar-players Hendrik and Jens, but I think that I play a little bit different to them than the old drummer Sascha would have done.

I think that the old stuff was rawer in a way. Now don't get me wrong, *Cold Blooded Murder* is indeed a very brutal album. I just

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get the feeling that the old stuff was not that technical.

- Maybe we put some more technical breaks into the songs than on the albums before, but that was not our plan. I mean, we didn't hook up in our rehearsal room and said, "let's do some technical stuff this time". I think it was a natural evolution during the writing process. The last three Obscenity-albums were also quite technical, but this time it went a little bit further. Where do you see the biggest differences between the old stuff and the new album?

- First of all, the production is better than on any of the previous albums. On *Cold Blooded Murder* are the fastest songs we have ever written, like *The Arrival* or *Sleepwalker*. On the other hand, there's also the slowest song Obscenity ever did, *Alien Hand Syndrome*. And as you pointed out, the songs are a little bit more technical than on the old albums.

On *The 3:rd Chapter*, Obscenity even used some female vocals, but I guess (and hope) that it's nothing they will get back to.

- No, I don't think that we'll do that again. It was an experiment. It was interesting at that time, but it would be boring to do it again.

Now that I've listened through their entire back-catalogue, I also feel that the new album contains more melodies than ever before.

- That's funny. A lot of people say that we used more guitar melodies on the new one than on the old albums, but I think there are much more melodic parts on *Human Barbecue* or *Intense* than on *Cold Blooded Murder*.

I am a sucker for melodies, and that particular stuff was what caught my attention with the new album. The combination of brutal death metal with great melodic solos. You don't hear that too much in the stuff that's being released nowadays. Not done in a good and interesting way, that is.

- Yes, that's right. A lot of death metal bands nowadays only play fast. The only band which comes to my mind, who combines brutal riffs with melodic parts, is Monstrosity. They are really one of our biggest influences.

Yeah, but if someone described an album as "death metal with melodic solos" to me, I would immediately think of Arch Enemy, a band that Marc, and the rest of the band, is familiar with.

- Personally, I like their first album *Black Earth* the most, but from album to album they got weaker. The favorite Arch Enemy album of our two guitar-players is *Burning Bridges*. Besides Arch Enemy, none of us really is into the Gothenburg death metal style. I like some melodic death metal bands like At The Gates, The Everdawn or the first two Soilwork CD's, but I'm more into the old swedish death metal style, played by bands like Entombed, Grave, Dismember or Vomitory.

That these Germans are into brutal stuff is *Cold Blooded Murder* an evidence of. Their music is filled with influences from the Florida-scene in general, and Cannibal Corpse in particular.

- You're right. We're all fans of American death metal, especially the Florida scene. We like Deicide, Malevolent Creation, Suffocation (Gods!), Cannibal Corpse, Monstrosity and Morbid Angel to name a few.

Being a fan of that scene, it must be like a little dream to have your album labeled "Mastered at Morrisound Studios".

Obscenity themselves were not involved in the mastering-process though.

There was no chance to be involved in the mastering, because it would have been a little bit to expensive to take a flight to Florida. So we sent them our tape, they mastered it, sent it back, we checked it out and that was it.

The recording of the album took place at the Soundlodge Studios with Joerg Uken. He was also responsible for the recording of *Intense*, and since they were satisfied with his work on that album, they once again used his services. For financial reasons, using the Morrisound also for the recording was never considered.

Are you happy with how the sound turned out this time?

- Yes, we are very satisfied with the sound. I think it's the best sound we've ever had on a CD. Joerg Uken and the guys at the Morrisound Studio did a great job.

Formed already in 1989, these guys sure have been active within the scene for a decent amount of years. Their early steps were taken during the golden years of death metal, and the music from back then have formed their musical direction. Marc agrees with me that many of the albums that were released back then are today classics, that can be listened to over and over again.

- You're right. In the end of the 80's / beginning of the 90's, the best death metal albums ever were released. Suffocation's *Effigy Of The Forgotten*, Monstrosity's *Imperial Doom*, Obituary's *Slowly We Rot*, Pestilence's *Consuming Impulse* or Grave's *Into The Grave* for example. There is no end to my list of classics from that time. I can't imagine a metal party without listening to any bands of that era.

The first years of their existence were followed by a search for a decent label that could release their stuff. Before the deal with Morbid Records was signed, they had two albums out on two different labels, namely *Suffocated Truth* on West Virginia Records and *Perversion Mankind* on D&S Records. Marc might be new in the band, but he is well familiar with their history.

- After the recording of the *Age Of Brutality* demo, Obscenity was signed by West Virginia and released that album for them. They promised a lot, but they didn't do very much for the band. The label went bankrupt, so the band recorded another demo called *Amputated Soul*. D&S Records became very interested in the band and a new deal was signed in July 1994. Album #2 was released, but because of their unprofessional work and lack of support, Obscenity left the label in January 1996.

Soon after that, they signed a deal with Morbid Records and managed to give them their third album, suitably baptized to *The 3:rd Chapter*, the same year.

- After the split with D&S-Records, Olli sent a lot of CD's to different labels. Morbid Records really liked our stuff and offered us a record deal in February 1996. After *The 3:rd Chapter*, Morbid-Records also released a homevideo with us, including two songs (*Disgrace Over You* and *Schattenspiele*) and an interview with the band.

Obscenity was one pretty producive band and almost two years later, *Human Barbecue* (with the cover of Slayer's *Raining Blood*) was in the shops.

Over the years, the fans had been asking the band for their old demos, but naturally they were since long sold out. Therefore *Demo-Niac* was released in 1999, containing music from both of the above mentioned tapes.

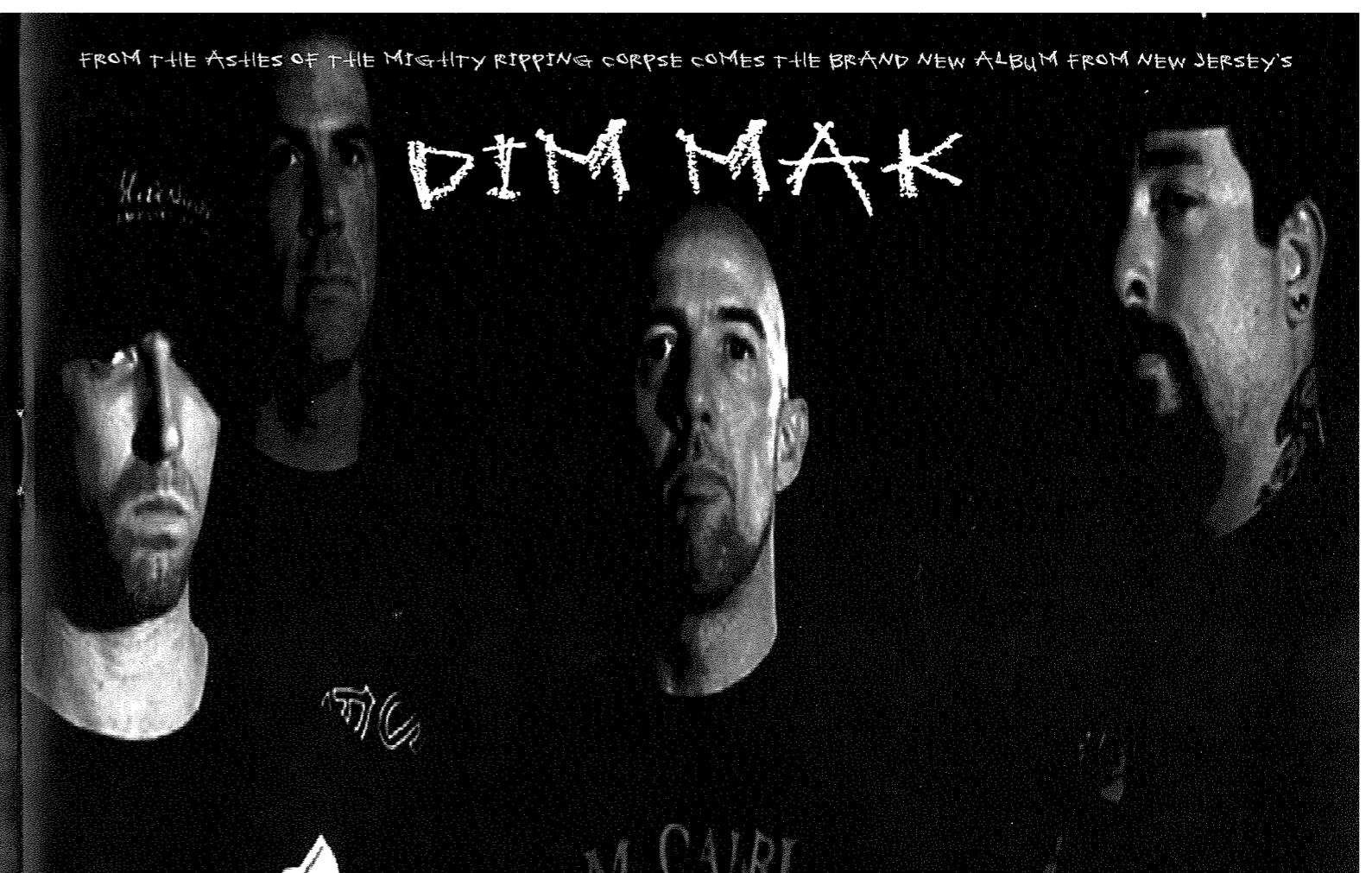
And finally, two years ago the predecessor to *Cold Blooded Murder*, *Intense* was released.

- It is the last CD with the founding member Sascha Knust playing drums. He left the band just a few months after the recording sessions.

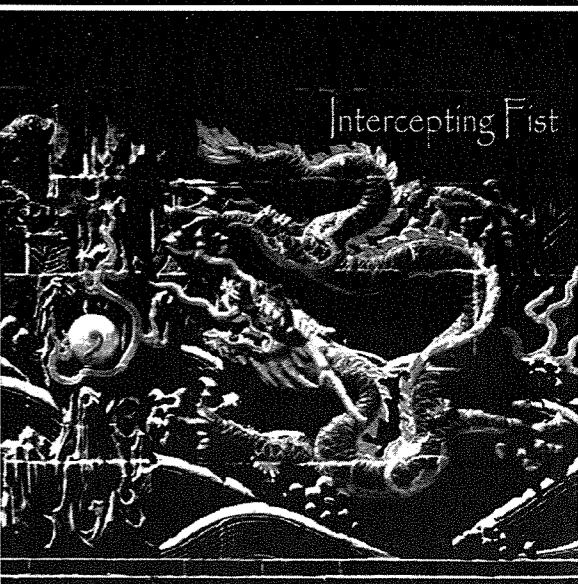
I know that it is a bit early for this one, but the last question for Marc is whether any new songs have been written for next album?

- We have no new songs written at the moment. After the recording sessions in December 2001, we took some weeks off. After the little break we practised our set for the tour a lot, so we've not had the time for writing new songs during the last few months. I think the new songs will be in the vein of *Cold Blooded Murder*, which means a lot of blast beats, slow parts and a combination of brutal riffs and melodic parts. Just 100% death metal. I don't know if we'll take the technical parts further. As I said before, we don't plan anything during the writing-process. I'm sure the next album will once again kick some serious ass, and before it's out, I have many pleasant moments with *Cold Blooded Murder* ahead of me. Before time's out, Marc wraps it up with some wise words.

- Fuck fascism and racism! Stay obscene and support the underground!



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CD-REVIEWS

2 TON PREDATOR
Boogie
 Diehard



2 Ton Predator's debut album *In The Shallow Waters*, which was released a couple of years ago, was a very good record, and the reason to why it appealed to me was because their combination of Corrosion Of Conformity and Pantera (to name a few) sounded very fresh. Now that album #2 is here, it only takes a few seconds to recognize their groovy metal and I'm glad that they've continued creating songs with the successful formula. They've simply continued on the same path that they started to walk on with the debut. The music is a perfect combination of great riffing and powerful vocals, accompanied by a heavy rhythm-section. The difference compared to the debut is that Mogge have dropped his Alice In Chains-like vocals and concentrated on his deep singing/screaming that he does so well. The songs are overall more powerful, heavier and a bit faster, which might be the result of the routine that they've gotten. Whether they play fast (*September Flue* or *Boogie*) or slow down a bit (*Freak 2000*), they don't loose one inch of heaviness and that's what I like. The Predators have fulfilled my expectations and I'm already looking forward to next album.

ABOMINATOR
Subversives For Lucifer
 Osmose

The sound of a battle opens this album and prepares us for war. Already in the opening track *Renegades At Hells Command*, these three Aussie-soldiers steps on it and keep the speed throughout the albums eight songs. Andrew Undertaker, Chris Volcano and Damon Bloodstorm (ex Bestial Warlust) are the names this trio uses in order to match with the black/death metal assault, and if you are familiar with the Australian scene you probably know that they already have one album (*Damnations Prophecy*) under their belt. If you don't, and are not familiar with the phenomenon "Australian style black metal", Angel Corpse will work as a comparison to how it sounds. Chaotic, raw and dirty! Even though the songs have got good flow and it's a real feast for all speed-freaks, it's occasionally a bit too chaotic and it takes more than a few spins in the record-player to get into the songs. The third song *Carnivorous Strike Of The Knife* is my favorite!

AEON
Dark Order

Deathvomit / Necropolis
 At first released as the bands 2000-demo, the people at Deathvomit / Necropolis Records thought it was so good, they

decided to spread it as an official release. And that was a good move indeed, as *Dark Order* is a really qualitative MCD containing six songs as a total. Once upon the time there was a band called Defaced Creation here in Sweden, and that they could play death metal was proved by their album *Serenity In Chaos* (VOD Records 1999). When they split up, 4/5 of this band got together and created Aeon. The first result of their work is a more brutal stuff, but it is still in the Florida-style and it can still be referred to as Morbid Angel meets Deicide metal. How come these guys keep such a low profile? The label should push them the hardest they can, because Aeon sure as hell deserves it.

AETERNUS
Ascension Of Terror
 Hammerheart

Earlier this year, Aeternus released *Burning The Shroud*. That album contained mostly old material (some of it in live-versions), but there was also a taste of these Norwegians new material in the shape of the title track. Now that their new, regular full-length *Ascension Of Terror* is released, I'm glad to find out that *Burning The Shroud* was not just a one timer, but a demonstration of which way they were gonna take their music. Their earlier style, which was more into black metal has developed, yet not gotten totally abandoned. Traces of their old stuff are present also on this new recording, although now it sounds more death metal. *Ascension Of Terror* is opened by *Posessed By The Serpents Vengeance*, a furious Krisiun/Immolation kind of track, which was a pleasant surprise. Eventually this particular song turns into a more melodic piece, then gets faster again to be ended in a slower tempo again. And that is also how the whole album is built up. Fast songs like *The Lair Of Anubis* and *Slaying The Lambs* are mixed with slower stuff like for instance *Denial Of Salvation*, although the fast stuff is dominating. Aeternus has developed in the direction that I wished for.

ALABAMA THUNDERPUSSY
Staring At The Divine

Relapse
 I was surprised to find the Metal Blade logo on the cover of the new Red Aim-CD. A lot more surprising is however, that the worlds leading grind-label Relapse releases an album like *Staring At The Divine*. What one usually expect a Relapse release to sound like, is miles away from the music of Alabama Thunderpussy. This is not even close to the insanity their bands usually create, but American hard rock with groove. Picture a fat and sweaty guy in a big truck, driving on a highway in the desert somewhere in the US. *Staring At The Divine* would be the perfect album to keep him company. Imagine a piece of Monster Magnet, Corrosion Of Conformity, our Swedish heroes Spiritual Beggars and a big dose of their mutual gods Black Sabbath, and you'll get the idea of what this is all about. Alabama Thunderpussy sticks out among the other bands on Relapse, but they also stand well against the competition of the whole hard rock/stoner scene. *Staring At The Divine* works great whether you light up a joint or open up a bottle of whiskey.

ALAS
Absolute Purity

Hammerheart

As soon as I heard of this project, belonging to Erik Rutan from Morbid Angel/Hate Eternal, I was expecting a qualitative product. The music on *Absolute Purity* has very little in common with the stuff that Erik plays in his other bands, instead this is his softer side getting presented. He's written very melodic songs that of course are built upon his guitar, accompanied by a quite powerful rhythm-section (although the bass is very low mixed), but the whole package seems to be just one long show-up. Like a bunch of excellent skills, performed without any feeling, if you know what I mean. Martina Astner, known for her appearance with Therion handles the vocals, and that is in my opinion the weakest link of this album. They just don't sound right. I'm sure that many fans off doom/goth with female vocals will find *Absolute Purity* interesting, but I'll just let it pass without getting back to it.

AL SIRAT
Signa Tempori
 Metal Storm

Al Sirat is not a capital in some Middle Eastern country, nor is it some kind of a terrorist organization (not that I know of, anyway). It is the name of a thrash/death metal band from Poland, and a really good one as well. Their music is technical and faultlessly performed, and it further witnesses about the quality of the bands in this country. Al Sirat are no newcomers to the scene and *Signa Tempori* was recorded already in 1999. It will take you even further back in their career, as it also includes two songs from their EP that was released in 1996. Check it out and you'll discover that they did good songs already back then. You will find many melodies, which compliment the heavy riffing, and the guitarist makes the best performance on this album. Make sure to buy yourself a Polish dictionary if you want to understand every single word that is screamed out, as two of the songs are completely written in their native language.

ANANDA
Profane
 Overcome

Yet another angry hard core band from France gets to release their debut album, and I'm sure that hard core kids who like bands that try some different stuff will be delighted over this one. Ananda mixes their hard core with some noise, metal and strange riffing which works pretty fine. They are experimenting with their arrangements a bit and they seem to be ready to try out all kinds of different stuff. As long as it's fast and aggressive that is, because these are the only norms they would never abandon. If you like most of the stuff that is released on the American label Revelation records, I think that you should check out this French label and it's acts as well. The singer of Ananda would be more suitable for a black metal band, and I would like to hear someone who can get really pissed off behind the microphone. Maybe it's also thanx to him that I don't manage to keep my interest during the whole album, but loses it halfway through.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA
New Obscurantis Order
 Osmose

Frances most nervous anorectics are back with their third album for Osmose Productions, and the label is promoting it as their priority release with statements like "the leaders of the actual symphonic black metal scene". Leaders or not, *New Obscurantis Order* is way better than it's predecessor *Drudenhaus*. This new material feels faster and darker, even though the style they've presented before is recognized immediately. If you liked *Drudenhaus*, *New Obscurantis Order* will make you wet your pants, and even though this actually is not my favorite kind of music, I like this one. Compared to other symphonic black metal bands that let the keyboards take over the music completely,

Anorexia Nervosa uses them as a supplement to their fast metal. Try to get the digipack or vinyl version, as they include covers of Judas Priest, Candlemass and Death. I only found Candlemass *Solitude* on my promo, but judging from how good they succeeded with transforming the song into their own style, I would very much like to hear the other two covers as well.

ARKHON INFESTUS
Hell Injection
 Osmose

This is my first encounter with the Frenchmen, who since the beginning of their career have released a rehearsal tape (later re-released as a CD named *In Sperma Infernum* by Mordgrimm records), and the EP *Dead Cunt Magic* on Spikekult records. Already when the first song on *Hell Injection*, *Brethren Of Flesh*, starts to spin in the CD-player, I get the feeling that this is something good. And as the record finishes, I'm pleased to find out that my intuition was right. Osmose have done a wise move by signing Arkhon Infestus. They deliver nine songs of a not too complicated but very raw death metal, mixed with some black metal and the blend is quite easy to get into. It is fast, energetic and filled with hate and I especially like all the tremolos in the background. They are supposed to have live shows "with a lot of sexual action", and if they have the girl that is groaning in the background on *Domination Xtasy* on stage, I wouldn't wanna miss it for the world.

AURORA BOREALIS
Northern Lights
 Diehard

In Amputation #5, I reviewed the second album that Aurora Borealis was forced to release by themselves. *Praise The Archaic Lights Embrace* was a very well composed album and to try to make more people aware of Aurora Borealis, I did an interview with the main-man of this band Ron Vento in the same issue. Finally, a label has realized the potential of this band and the first co-operation between Aurora Borealis and Diehard was baptized *Northern Lights*. Really this album was released already last year, but this re-release is made for the European market. The line-up on this recording consisted of only Ron, who did all the vocals, bass and guitars, and drummer Derik Rody (whose excellent performances can be heard on albums with Hate Eternal, Malevolent Creation, Divine Empire) and once again they offer brutal death/black metal in furious speed. Mr Vento delivers the riffs in a fast tempo and fills out the music with some screaming black metal-style vocals, while Mr Roddy plays exactly as precise and incredibly as we've gotten used to. They both do their outmost in every one of the songs and not one single second feels like waste of space. This new material seems a bit faster and if you are not familiar with their older material, just check out the five bonus-tracks on this CD which are all taken from *Praise The Archaic Lights Embrace*.

AVERSE SEFIRA
Battles Clarion
 Lost Disciple

Averse Sefira was formed by a trio in, what they call, the hell on earth, Texas USA because of the incredible heat that is always present there. Personally, I don't find their material being too hellish. I would call it average black metal, and it doesn't bring anything new to the already so overpopulated scene. The only thing that sticks out a bit is the performance of the drummer, but he alone can't keep the songs above the average level, when there are two other members that are dragging it down all the time. The best song (which actually is not all that bad) is to be found at the very end of *Battles Clarion*, but it alone is not an enough reason to buy the whole album.

BETHLEHEM
Schatten Aus Der Alexander Welt

Prophecy

I am willing to admit that I have difficulties to deal with the German language in musical lyrics. I simply think that this language sound too hard and rigid. I can possibly take it if the singer is growling death metal in German, but the singer of Bethlehem is singing/talking with clear pronunciation. Right after I discovered this, the grades for *Schatten Aus Der Alexander Welt* were immediately reduced. And they just kept falling further down the more I got familiar with their boring music. I guess that they intended to create a moody and dark album, but all I can hear is slow music that moves along at a snail's pace, and it bores me to death. The label that Prophecy Productions use to describe Bethlehem's music, suicide rock, turns out to be quite suiting, so make sure you stay away from this one if you intend to keep your health. Apparently, they did the sound-track for the movie *Gummo*, and I guess that some of their stuff would be more suitable for movies. Of course some instrumental piece.

BEWITCHED

Rise Of The Antichrist

Osmose

The latest album from the Swedish Hellcult (the fourth in their career) is a really fine piece of music. A few years ago, there were new bands popping up everywhere, playing music which was inspired by their old heroes from the 80's (Sodom, Celtic Frost etc, but above all Venom), and the label retro-metal was born. Very few of these bands succeeded in doing it the right way, and even fewer managed to add some new ideas into their music. I would say that Bewitched belong to the later group. There are some modern influences to be found within their Satanic metal, but mostly it is a blend of thrash and heavy metal as it sounded when I grew up during the 80's. Their songs gets stuck on my brain after just a few rounds in the CD-player and my favorites are the first two songs on the album *Worship The Fire* and *Under Satan's Spell*, as well as *Bewitched By Evil*. These guys can't be accused of striving to create a completely new style/sound of metal or anything, and I'm sure that a whole lot of people will curse this release and dismiss it together all the other releases of the retro-bands. Which is a shame really, as Bewitched is way better than most of them. I myself am very pleased with *Rise Of The Antichrist*.

BEYOND THE EMBRACE

Against The Elements

Metal Blade

Beyond The Embrace was formed to give these boys from Massachusetts the complete musical satisfaction, that no other band could give them. No doubt they are aiming high, and *Against The Elements* truly is a varying album. It sure is a good record, however I don't think it is as groundbreaking as the bio might want to point out. Much of their inspiration comes from our west-coast scene (for example *Rapture* is very close to stealing from Dark Tranquillity, while *The Riddle Of Steel* is close to early In Flames), as well as all the old classic bands that inspired them all, and we all know how many bands that have hooked on that train. Beyond The Embrace does on the other hand play their music more in the direction of heavy metal, and their songs are lean and kind so to speak, with a soft production. With three guitars in the line-up, you can imagine how many solos and melodies there are. The singer occasionally changes his voice from growling to clean vocals, (like the Hetfield-imitation in *Bastard Screams*) and that I believe he should do more than the growling. That would be quite interesting. *Against The Elements* is well worth checking out, and the boys really are good with their instruments.

BLOODAXE

Bloodthrone

White Legends

Here comes a package from Canada, with a bio in Norwegian. In

a split of a second I smelled black metal and my intuition turned out to be right. Bloodaxe was formed in the middle of 2000 by Nordavinden (the man with roots in my neighboring country) and Rati, and already after three weeks of jamming, they released their first demo. Bloodthrone is the debut album on which the duo present some of the style of music that Norway has become famous for. Nordavinden is responsible for the bass, all the guitars, piano and vocals and Rati is providing the high tempo behind the drums, but the speed is pretty much gathered on the first half of the album. On the second one you'll find *1030* (a boring instrumental song in a lower tempo), *Treskjaereren* and *Morgendis* (in which the acoustic guitar is entering to give you chance to catch your breath) and the ending *Trondskogen* (Nordavinden is playing some bass-lines I don't understand). The Canadians don't really surprise, but some of their stuff is pretty decent. Preferably *Drowning In Mimir's Well*, which is the best song on *Bloodthrone*.

BLODDDUSTER

Cunt

Relapse

Australias biggest porno-ambassadors shows that they are still keeping up the good work, and starts of their new album with the words "You're a fucking slut, you're a fucking cock". Many of the albums 19 songs (which mostly clock in on close to one minute) are presented with the same kind of intros, and it's cunt here and cunt there. Also lyrically these songs deals with for-adults-only-material, and when they've run out of ideas they dealt with it like in the song *Spefeven* (This song is to a count of seven, That's the way the lyrics fit what rhymes / Oh it's heaven / Writing lyrics is boring me I'm gonna say eleven / I'm running out of shit to rhyme make up a word spefeven). Musically they are somewhere between grind and death metal with an occasional boogie riff thrown into it, to salute their idols from the a couple of decade's old heavy metal scene. *Cunt* is enough varied and well played with relatively entertaining lyrics (of course depending on what kind of humor you have) to be worth buying. But I think that they could have skipped the almost 7 minutes of pointless guitar-sounds before and after the last track of the album, the cover *Dis-Organ-Ized* from Impetigo, and shortened the total playtime to half an hour.

BLOOD RED THRONE

Monument Of Death

Hammerheart

Death metal should be about death, and that is exactly what this album is filled with. It's one big portion of horror, murder and general disgust. After having played the famous Norwegian black metal in Emperor and Satyricon during the last decade, Tchort and Död felt a hunger for the style of music they once started with. The two guitarists recruited a drummer, bass-player and a singer and with a full line-up, they recorded the demo *Deathmix 2000* which made a great impression in the press. The bosses on Hammerheart records saw the potential of this band (as with many others during the last few years), signed them to their expanding family and they can now brag with yet another great album. Blood Red Throne's death metal sounds like a mixture of Deicide and Death, with a touch of Cannibal Corpse but it also contain a great dose of good old thrash metal. The blood-dripping lyrics are suiting very well to the brutal music, making the whole recording one big death-party. I love it! The whole package is wrapped up in a quite simple, yet provocative, booklet (check out the pictures of the slayed members) and when you see it in the store, don't even think about leaving it there.

BLUDGEON

Crucify The Priest

Magic Circle / Metal Blade

I really didn't know what to expect, when the news of a death metal band being produced by the leather macho Joey De Maio

reached me. It's also the debut release on Manowar's own label Magic Circle Music. The album starts with a couple of mid-tempo tracks that reminds me of *Six Feet Under*, and though they're OK they don't really affect me that much. But as I get further into *Tortured Through Lies*, the speed is turned up and it's suddenly much better. After that they deliver death metal that is connected with the Florida scene (Bludgeon hails from Chicago), but it's quite clear that some thrash (Slayer and Sepultura) has been spinning in the Bludgeonville-house while composing the material. The best songs on *Crucify The Priest* are the faster songs, i.e. *Inner Hell*, *Abandoned* and the title track, and the album gets better and better the further into it you get. *Crucify The Priest* is easy to get into and not too technical, and they don't twist the music unnecessarily much. Instead they have successfully written songs that gets stuck on ones mind immediately. Still, they could have skipped the jumping-up-and-down riffs that appears here and there.

BRODEQUIN

Festival Of Death

Unmatched Brutality

Knoxville-based masters of torture have been quite active this year. In March, their debut album *Instruments Of Torture* was released and now it's time for album #2. They seem to have a pretty good reputation within the American underground, and their previous releases have sold more than expected. Still, I can not understand what all these people see in this band. They play the US-style of death metal and their huge country is literally crowded with bands that play this style way better. The whole album is very monotonous and there's not much on this album that catches my interest. The vocals are very deep, the drums sounds like sauce-pans and the general sound of *Festival Of Death* is very muddled. I think that they didn't have to go all the way to Florida to get such lousy production. Maybe the lyrics describing some of the cruel actions that took place in our history are fun to read, but the music isn't.

BURIALMOUND

Black Death

Sound Riot Records

As Utgard, these Finns have released two demos, but since they reformed after some times of absence from the scene and changed the band-name, they've only put out the 7"EP *Horror*. I've never heard of them before (neither of the bands), but I've been told that they started out as a primitive black metal band. Well, they are pretty far from that these days. They have taken their music towards death metal, but still some of their roots are shining trough here and there. The music every now and then gets raspy and fast, and the corpse-painted singer gets into a screaming mood, but mostly he's delivering deep growling to keep the heavy riffing company. The death metal stuff is what's good on this album, and I think they should cut loose of the navel-string that keeps them connected with their past. This is not a revolutionary recording, but it's also far from the crap that I've been receiving lately. The question is whether that's enough nowadays, when such excellent albums are being released.

BURNT BY THE SUN

Soundtrack To The Personal Revolution

Relapse

I've been looking forward to this debut album from the American quintet, which last year surprised me with a really good self-titled MCD. Finally, with a new guitarist the full-length album is here, and once again they're aiming straight for the throat. Their hybrid of hard core, metal and grind core is presented with a confident feeling, and just as with the MCD it takes a while to really get into the songs and understand what they are all about. And once again it works very good. The music is complex and for every listening you realize more and more how the riffs and beats perfectly match. *Soundtrack To The*

Personal Revolution only gets better and better.

CALES

The Pass In Time

Redblack

Everyone who's familiar with the Czech metal scene must be familiar with the name Peter Hosek as well. Or at least Blackie, which is this guitarist's alias. He's probably most known for his participation in Root, which is one of the biggest black metal legends in Czech republic, but he has also released albums with other projects like for instance Crux and Entrails. Cales is the band that Blackie formed in order to release the more softer stuff that he's been composing and the debut album called *Bonds Of Togetherness* was released in 1997. This truly is not like any of his previous work I've heard before and the big difference between the songs makes this a very varying album. It's like a mixture of Type O' Negative (*Bloody Kisses*), Dan Swanö's *Nightingale*, Root (*The Book*) and Bathory (*Hammerheart*) and just like the music, the vocals too are of wide variety as four different vocalists performs on *The Pass In Time*. My hat goes off for Zuzka from SSGE, who has once again showed what an excellent singer she is. There is a quite frequent use of acoustic guitars and they fit in well in the whole massive arrangements. My personal favorites on this melodious album are *The Last Winter Dance* and *Sacrifice To Fire*, because that's where everything falls in place perfectly, but the rest of the album is also very good. A very professional and qualitative recording!

CALLENISH CIRCLE

Flesh, Power, Dominion

Metal Blade

I've seen descriptions of their music as black metal, and even as doom. However, what's hidden behind the title *Flesh, Power, Dominion*, Callenish Circle's third full-length album, is something quite different. To sum it up, I would call their music death metal with strong influences from thrash and, of course, good old heavy metal as well. This album will satisfy the fans of the Swedish west-coast sound, but be aware that this is NOT yet another In Flames-clone. Even though they mix in some melodies into the sharp metal attack, the Dutchmen sound more At The Gates than the more-than-once-copied Gothenburgers, and their songs have an own identity. There are some slower and softer parts here and there on *Flesh, Power, Dominion*, but where many other bands would just throw in some female vocals to them, to my satisfaction the circle let's them stand on their own. As a conclusion of this great album we are served two covers. The first one is Death's old classic *Pull The Plug*, and considering Evil Chuck's recent death, it works as a very good tribute to the maestro. The other cover is *When The Lady Smiles* from a band called Golden Earings. Even though this band is most likely totally unknown to the majority of the Amputation-readers, Callenish Circle has transformed the song into their own style (I'm sure that the original sounds far from this version) and it fits very well to their own material. Therefore, make sure to get this album in LP or digi-pack versions, as that is probably the only way you'll get to check them out.

CANNIBAL CORPSE

Gore Obsessed

Metal Blade

Times change but certain things remain. One can be sure, that when Florida's famous cannibals release an album, it's gonna be filled with excellent death metal. It's been like that for the past 11 years, and I really hope it stays that way for years to come. On this their eighth album, they once again deliver the gory death metal that they've become known for. Even though the band has developed since the debut *Eaten Back To Life*, they've stayed true to the music they once started their career with, and if you've once taken them into your heart, you won't be disappointed by *Gore Obsessed* either. And who wouldn't appreciate a big dose of

ultra tight death metal, played in a fast tempo and with a fat sound to back it up? I enjoy every second of it. Try to get the limited first edition of *Gore Obsessed*, as it contains a cover of Metallica's *No Remorse*.

CARPE TENEBRUM

Dreaded Chaotic Reign

Hammerheart

Mostly known for his participation within Norwegian black metal bands Dimmu Borgir and The Covenant, Astennu's solo-project Carpe Tenebrum has already two albums released. I've never heard any of those albums, but from what I've been told, neither of them sounded like this third one. Here we are served dark and pretty classic death metal, which has got a feeling of the golden years of this style of music. Bands like Morbid Angel and other Florida classics is mostly the stuff that this guy has been listening to lately (or so it seems), and generally I would say that he's done a good job. It's not that complicated and Astennu is rather concentrating on making powerful riffs than showing off his skills on the fret-board. However, I believe that he shouldn't have tried to make this album completely alone. Apart from writing and playing all the music and singing, he has also produced, mixed and engineered the whole album and sound-wise I think that it could be a lot better. Get some people to help you with the recording next time, and concentrate on the music instead Astennu.

THE COMPANY

Awaking Under Dogs

System Shock

From the German-written info-paper that followed this album, I did not understand much. My limited knowledge in the German language however helped me to figure out that The Company was formed 1995, the members comes from Angel Witch, Heathen, EnForce, Vamp and Weird Kong, and *Awaking Under Dogs* is their third album. "So what?", you might say. "I wanna know what they sound like!". Well, these guys really are into thrash metal. And I mean the American kind, which was named after the area around San Francisco and Oakland. They are also into all kinds of electronic sounds, and I guess that they experimented quite a bit in the studio. The result is a harmless but very modern-sounding electro-thrash metal album, with loops and stuff thrown in here and there. Maybe Fear Factory would have sounded like this if they decided to play thrash? Lyrically, they are dealing with subjects from the every day life and the whole recording is very professional, with a sound that suits the music very well. All the songs are easy to get into and I find their concept quite original.

CONVENT

The Truth Revealed

Awaken

The Polacs in Convent has got some work to do before they reach the qualities that their country-men (read Vader and Decapitated to name just a few) does, but they are on their way. Of course we are talking about death metal here, but compared to those excellent bands who's added a personal touch to their music, in Convent's case it sounds too standard. There's nothing that immediately sticks on ones mind, but it does work pretty fine. Still I think that they have a solid ground to build upon and *The Truth Revealed* should not be totally ignored. I get the feeling that old Morbid Angel and maybe even Immolation has influenced them a bit, but there are also traces of the Stockholm-sound in their music (especially in the last few of the old songs). The first four songs on this album are new (still they were recorded already in 1999) and the rest are re-recorded songs from the 1992-demo *Displeasure* with the bonus-track *The Burning Cross* added to it. Unfortunately, all of the material suffers from a pretty weak production, especially the drums doesn't sound good, and the vocals are pretty boring.

CRIMINAL

Cancer

Metal Blade

From nowhere (well, Chile actually) comes Criminal and surprises me with a really good metal album. Those of you who have been into the underground-scene for a long time, might recognize the name of their front-man, Anton Reisenegger, who used to play in the legendary Pentagram in the 80's. But don't run away now and buy *Cancer* just because of that, because it has very little in common with what that old classic band used to play. What *Cancer* is about, is mostly thrash metal in the similar style as some of the acts that's been popping up here in Sweden during the last few years. There is also a good portion of death metal in their songs and also Sepultura (*Chaos AD*) and Arch Enemy could work as a reference. I like this album a lot, but not everything about it. The calm and instrumental song *Green* I can easily live without, as it is an irritating interruption in the otherwise so heavy material. The same goes for the boring cover of Napalm Death's *Greed Killing*.

THE CROWN

Crowned In Terror

Metal Blade



Now this is one good fuckin' record! The Crown have four qualitative full-length albums on their account, I especially recommend the last two *Hell Is Here* and *Deathrace King*, and with *Crowned In Terror* they are back to once again destroy everything in their way. *Crowned In Terror* could actually be compared to *Deathrace King*, only this time it's rawer, but those who are not yet familiar with what these Swedes are capable of, here is a presentation. They deliver cruelly fast and incredibly tight death metal with a big portion of thrash. The music is heavy as hell and filled with great melodies which goes very well with the razor-sharp riffing. Combined with solos that are amongst the best I've heard lately, only a fool would let this one pass by. After *Deathrace King*, singer Johan Lindstrand decided to leave the band, and there's no way they could have gotten themselves a better replacement than the man who has spiced up excellent albums with Grotesque, At The Gates, Skitsystem etc, Mr Tompa Lindberg. He fits the band as a hand in the glove, and that he has found his place in The Crown witnesses all the lyrics he's written for *Crowned In Terror*. This is one of the absolutely best bands Sweden has to offer, and very few bands (if any?) will release such high-class album this year. People with good taste in music listen to The Crown!

CRUACHAN

Folk-Lore

Hammerheart

These Irish-men (plus one woman) first appeared in this mag, when they had their MCD *Ride On* reviewed in the sixth issue. Since the title-track on this MCD was the only song I found quite enjoyable (and it was a cover too), I've not been sleepless awaiting a new full-length. The fact is that I don't really like Irish folk music, and don't share many Swedish peoples fascination fore Guiness-beer and Irish pubs. Cruachan's music is full of traditional Irish folk music, which is mixed with some rock into songs that they seem to be quite unique with. Still I don't consider this album to be just crap. The first song *Bloody Sunday* is together with *Ossian's Return* (the song that is closest to metal), *Susie Moran* and of course *Ride On* (which is included on *Folk-Lore* as well) all pretty good tracks which I appreciate. I especially like the vocals of Karen Gilligan. Just like on the MCD, this time too has Shane Mc Gowan from the Pogues done some vocals on a couple of songs and some other people has helped out with various instruments. No matter what I think of Irish folk music,

I must admit that these six musicians have recorded a professional album, and I can hear the qualities in both arrangements and performances.

CURL UP AND DIE

Unfortunately We're Not Robots

Revelation

I was not very surprised to find out that this American-trio plays metal core. After all, they are on a label that's known for releasing such music, and generally good one as well. *Unfortunately We're Not Robots* starts pretty fast and heavy, however it does not take long till they start to twist and turn the music in different moods. And they keep doing that through the whole album. When a song is going in a nice and high tempo, all of a sudden they slow down, like in *Make Like A Computer And Get With The Program*, and get into some weird and experimental mood. This debut is full of non-traditional arrangements which are far from the simple three-chord rock style, and the goal is always set for aggression, which they succeeds with. The highlights of this album is the song with the sweet title *You'd Bee Cuter If I Shot You In The Face*, in which the influence from Neurosis comes forth, and *I Lost My Job To A Machine*. This band definitely sticks out, and I don't know any other band that sounds as they do, but I get enough of this album pretty fast. Unfortunately this ain't in the same class as the other bands from the label that I'm familiar with.

DAMNABLE

Completely Devoted

Cudgel

This Polish combo presented themselves to the wider audience by their appearance on *Polish Assault*, a Relapse-compilation they shared with Yattering, Lost Soul and Decapitated. In my opinion, Damnable were really overtaken by Decapitated and overall, their contribution (which was the *Inperdition* recording from 1996) was the least exciting on this compilation. And now that I have tasted their full-length album, I still can't call myself a Damnable-fan. Their fast and US-inspired death metal is occasionally quite OK, and some parts are more than that, but none of the 12 songs (actually 10 if you don't count the intro and the ending acoustic piece) manages to keep my interest throughout the whole track. And it has been spinning in my stereo for more than a dozen of times. The biggest minus goes for the bad-sounding drum-machine (it really sounds like a robot), a medium one for the song-performance and a small one for the incredible boring intro. *Completely Devoted* works quite alright as background music, but if I want some qualitative entertainment, I rather put on something completely different. The album also contains video-recordings from their appearance on the fourth edition of the Fuck The Commerce festival and some other stuff for those who are curious on this band. The fact that they are completely devoted is quite understandable, since they've been doing brutal music since 1992.

DECEASED

Behind The Mourners Veil

Relapse

The last full-length album (*Supernatural Addiction*) from the Relapse-pioneers Deceased arrived to me broken in two pieces, therefore I was not able to really listen to what they had recorded. Still, I am not totally devastated about that, because other people who became familiar with this album used to berry their heads in their hands, wondering how an old band with such routine could release such a piece of garbage. Well, *Behind The Mourners Veil* is not a new full-length album and we have to satisfy with only three new songs. The rest of the total of seven songs are covers of D.R.I., Anthrax, Warfare and Tankard and you will also find a CD-ROM video of the song *Elly's Dementia* from the above mentioned *Supernatural Addiction*. This particular song is the only one I've heard from that album, and

even though it doesn't totally suck, it is nothing to get all that excited about. Quite boring death/thrash metal, that goes into one ear and out the other, without leaving any serious damage. Luckily, the new stuff is way better, especially the first two songs, and if this is the way their new material will sound, then I will gladly check out their next album.

DEEP RED

Prophetic Luster

Forensick

The American fans have had this album for a while now (thanx to Blunt Force Records), and now Slovakia's growing label Forensick Music is making it available in Europe. I kind a had a feel about what this album would sound like, as this label don't get involved with anything that isn't brutal death metal. Finnish Deep Red are exactly that, and their stuff is not all that bad. The music is a style of death metal that has its roots in the US, and I get the feeling that these guys did grow up with Suffocation and the likes. It is an average album, occasionally even more than that, but it has nothing that many have not done before them. It works really fine every now and then, as it will still your hunger for intense and fast death metal but repetitive listening to *Prophetic Luster* might take the fun out of it. Still, it's doubtlessly the best death metal album I've received from Finland lately.

DEMIMONDE

Mutant Star

Epidemie

This band consists of nine!!! very skilled musicians, sure. Their material is complicated and they are not afraid of trying all kinds of different stuff, sure. The music is varying and when you least expect it, it takes a whole different turn, sure. The problem is that it does not give me anything. Absolutely nada! Complex music does not always equals good music. We've seen examples of that before. Death metal is mixed with avant-garde, rock, doom, computerized loops, influences from the Middle Eastern music and eventually even dance music into a stew I almost don't understand at all. And the same goes for the vocals. There's growling, talking, female singing, you name it. There is some stuff that is good and some of it even really good, but bits and pieces out of 43 minutes does not justify a purchase. Demimonde is ranked high in their home country Czech Republic, but they don't get too much of my attention. I can easily continue my life without *Mutant Star*, an album I'm sure have taken a long time to write.

DEMONS OF DIRT

Killer Engine

Hammerheart

At the moment, I cannot think of a better music to listen to than some of the thrash-bands that have popped up here in Sweden over the last few years. Bands that took a lot of their inspiration from the style that At The Gates helped forming many years ago. A new act to join this growing family is Demons Of Dirt, which was formed just two years ago. They've however not just recorded an album, copying the music of the masters. Oh no, these guys have taken a different step. The aggressive riffing a la At The Gates and The Haunted is blended with a cool groove as if the guys from 2 Ton Predator co-wrote the songs and I think that the outcome is very good. Completed with a singer who's torturing his lounges as he's screaming out the text-lines like a pit-bull on speed, it's definitely an album you should not miss.

DEPRESSION / HAEMORRHAGE

Split CD

Cudgel

Depression's debut album *Chronische Depression* was reviewed in Amputation #6. That album is perfect for those interested in the history of this band, as all of their previous releases were represented on that CD. The Deutche duo have since then

recruited a new member, who is complementing the deep growls and high screaming with guttural grunts, but the material is still nothing to get all that excited about. Simple death metal with influences from the early 90's Swedish scene, yet without the feeling that bands here used to play with. One or two riffs are repeated over and over again in each song and it does not take long before I'm bored. One of those songs on a compilation would work quite OK, but not 10 in a row.

Spain's underground veterans Haemorrhage got a bad start, as their recording is lower mixed than Depressions but once I turned the volume up a bit it got much better. On their side of this split, you can enjoy them in their right forum, namely live on their 10:th anniversary gig. Their music touches me more than Depressions and there is more work behind their songs. The grind / death metal they play is well worth a listen or two, however it's hardly something that stick out these days. Apart from their own nine songs, they also perform covers of Impetigo, Carcass and Regurgitate and those melt well with their own material.

DESECRATED DREAMS

Feelings Of Guilt

Metal Age

After the first sight of the really ugly cover, I thought that this was yet another album of symphonic black metal. Desecrated Dreams have chosen to present their debut album with a picture of a lady, who is standing under a full moon and raising her hand (which has been dipped into a bucket with red paint) in the air. Luckily, I realize pretty quickly after that the album has started spinning that my fear was unnecessary, as we're talking death metal here. These Slovaks are going for heaviness and melodies instead of trying to break any speed-records, and occasionally their music reminds me of Krabathor around *Cool Mortification*. Not bad at all, preferably the songs *Pavor Nocturnus*, *Screaming Eyes* and *Mirror Of Damnation*. There are moments when they step on it a bit, and that's when it sounds the best. A pretty annoying part of this album is the vocals. The growling parts does not sound powerful enough and when the singer tries to sing with clear vocals and whisper (*Angel's Whisper*), or scream (*The Lost Faith*) it's just lame. If you are interested in their past, then this album is a real treat. You will find their early recordings, *Waiting For The Last Sunset* from 1997 and *Raven Forest* from 1998 (both consisting of good material) at the same CD, together with pictures, tabs etc. Good value for your money.

DIABOLIC

Subterraneal Magnitude

Conquest / Hammerheart

It seems like an eternity ago, when I received the debut demo *City Of The Dead* from this Florida-based orchestra, which was later re-released on a MCD with two additional trax by Fadeless Records. Just a few months old, this band succeeded to record a demo which in many peoples eyes already is a classic, and the band was praised within the world-wide underground. The debut full-length *Supreme Evil* continued in the footsteps of the demo, and now that the follow-up is here, it's clear that Diabolic have strengthen their position on the top of the Florida scene. *Subterraneal Magnitude* is opened by the mid-tempo instrumental piece *Vassago*, where you'll get to enjoy a guitar duel between Mr. Malone and Mr. Hipp, before we get forewarned about what's yet to come and *Extinction Level Event* starts the blasting Florida death metal, which these boys have become known for. It still smells Morbid Angel from far away, yet without being a rip-off band of the masters, and I enjoy every tone. The heavy stuff is perfectly matched with the fast and every fan of old-school death metal (wanting more than just a re-release of the old classics) should buy *Subterraneal Magnitude* right away!

DIM MAK

Intercepting Fist

Dies Irae

The Singaporean label has licensed this album to Mighty Music for Europe and Olympic Records for the US market. Now that that's straightened out, I'd better tell you what the music sound like on the album you soon will be hunting for. Those of you who heard the debut *Enter The Dragon* (released on Dies Irae a few years ago) should prepare for a change, as Dim Mak have moved away from the hard core, towards the metal they once played with Ripping Corpse. This New Jersey quartet have brought back their death metal roots, and written music that is heavy and brutal, but at the same time quite melodic and technical. With their skills and routine, the boys have recorded a metal album that is interesting all the way through, and it stands strong against the competition from the new bands. Some of the jumping-up-and-down-parts from the past are still there, like in *Mindgate*, but *Intercepting Fist* sounds harder and is way more brutal than *Enter The Dragon*. Partly also thanx to their old buddy Erik Rutan, who handled the production. Stay on this track Dim Mak!

DISINTER

Demonic Portraiture

Morbid

Disinter, Disinter, Disinter... the name sounds so familiar, yet I can not remember where I've heard this Chicago-based band before. I can not find anything with them in my record-collection anyway. These Americans seems to be addicted to the metal acts from our blue/yellow-country, which shows already in the opening track *Strength & Honour* where melodic riffing are the dominant ingredients. But, this is not yet another Gothenburg-clone, Disinter is heavier and more death metal than that and there are traces from the Florida death metal in their music as well. Actually, I was listening to Thorium's debut album the other day and Disinter's music is not far away from that. I have heard this kind of stuff before, sure, and that's why I'm not all that impressed by *Demonic Portraiture*, but it is quite alright after all. The highlight is to be found half way through and is called *What Once Was, Again Shall Be*. This song is a bit slower, yet quite heavy and really death metal and I'm not far from raising my fist in the air during the chorus. Doubtlessly the best song on this album. When they've run out of their own material, they offer us a cover of At The Gates classic *Blinded By Fear* which is pretty OK. That is if you try to avoid the solo, which could have been worked on a bit more to say the least. After that there is a four-minute silence, then another song, then a 25-minute silence before the album is concluded with a short outro. What's the point with all this waste of space? It's really irritating.

EKTOMORF

I Scream Up To The Sky

Silverdust

I really liked the first album that Max Cavalera's Soulfly released 1998, after he broke up from his old-time friends. But do we really need a European band that copies Soulfly today? I don't think so. With their instruments so tuned down that the strings are probably touching the ground and a singer who sounds like an angry dog, these four Hungarian gypsies have adapted the American style of the so called new metal. In an attempt to be original they've added some traditional Roman music into their songs, but I doubt it will gain them more listeners. One song is actually completely a Roman folk-song (I guess), but it does not fit on the album at all and is as crappy as the horrible cover of Beatles's *A Hard Day's Night*. And where are the thrash-influences that the record label is talking about?

THE EMBRACED

The Birth

Aftermath

There is a band in the Southern Sweden that goes under the name The Embraced, however those responsible for *The Birth* are from Norway. Now, you'd probably dismiss this band as "one of a thousand" if I told you that they play melodic black metal, but they certainly are not. There might be many bands around, especially here in Scandinavia, playing their music that would fit into that description, but the Norwegians does it so much more interesting. They have a good sense for melodies and manage to make them work well with the metal. Already in the opening-track *A Path That Never Ends*, they prove to be a band worth checking out and that's only strengthened the longer into it you'll get. There are some nice acoustic-guitars here, like in *Plague Divine* where they match well with the fast riffing, and in beautiful *Apart*. At times they even get close to death metal, like in *Thymus*, which is the best track on the album. The only thing that I would change on *The Birth* is the order of the songs, as the best two tracks should have opened *The Birth*, instead of ending it. Definitely something for those who like the genre that's become quite boring.

ENDLESS

Vital #1

Redblack

Already on the debut demo *Among The Trees* from 1996, I liked what this band created and thought that they had close to Paradise Lost (their later work, not the death metal era). I still think that now that I've gotten familiar with their second full-length album. But, I'm not saying that they sound today exactly like they did five years ago. Not at all. They have reduced the use of female vocals, an element that is used very tastefully and is not over-used, and have thrown in some samples into their rock-metal. They seem to have found their kind of style, and it seems like they are more secure of the way they want to go. Some times, it has nothing to do with metal at all (just listen to the instrumental track *Our Friends* or parts of for example *History* or *Fragnents*), and the whole recording is very emotional and melodic. Instruments such as flutes, mandolin, piano, keyboards and even didjeridoo are used within their creations, in which the acoustic guitars gets quite some space as well. There are also vocals by Zuzka from SSGE, and as always they are of a very high class. I thought that they were very professional already on the above mentioned demo, and since they have taken their music further and become better musicians, I of course recommend them. This is a band that sticks out a bit within the style that seems to have stagnated.

ENSLAVED

Monumension

Osmose

Also this time, the second the album starts spinning in my CD-player, the characteristic style of Enslaved is recognized. *Monumension* is supposed to be a concept album built upon "Vision - Disillusion - Isolation - Deconstruction - Reconstruction - Laughter - Discipline - Initiation", but it is very hard to getting the whole picture with only a promo without the lyrics available. I'm sure you'll appreciate having the lyrics and booklet-layout in front of you as you dive into *Monumension* on your own. And you definitely should buy this album, because it's yummy. Enslaved shows already in the opening track *Convoy To Nothingness* the different sides of their music, going from a fast metal part to slow stuff that could be used during a relaxation-session or something. It's pretty hard to describe Enslaved's material in an easy way, since they are so "wide", yet without getting too pretentious. This is a very original band. I like the heavy metal (like the opening of *Vision: Sphere Of The Elements - A Monument Part II*) and other heavier stuff the best, but the wholeness is simply magnificent. I "discovered" these

Norwegians with the previous album *Mardraum - Beyond The Within*, and it's nice to hear that *Monumension* is a development of that album. I can't decide whether *Monumension* is better than its predecessor, which I liked a lot, but it's at least just as good.

EPOCH OF UNLIGHT

Caught In The Unlight

The End

Epoch Of Unlight is a three-piece from the US, and on their new full-length you will find 10 songs of fast death metal with a touch of thrash that has resemblance to Swedish Dark Tranquillity's early work. Heavy riffing is combined with melodies in their songs, which they mostly play as fast as they can. It seems like the sound and style that the particular band from Gothenburg abandoned when they softened a bit, ended up on the other side of the Atlantic ocean and got picked up by Epoch Of Unlight. If I would complain about something, it would be the guitarists' vocal abilities, which I think he fails to maintain powerful throughout the whole album. I also miss some good guitar-solos, but I guess that it is what they themselves are looking for as well, as they seems to have been looking for a second guitarist for quite some time now. This album is overall a good record and is recommended to all the fans of the so-called "Gothenburg sound", the way it sounded almost a decade ago.

ERYTROSY

Delight

Metal Age

It is strange that a band this good have not yet reached out to a wider audience. Considering the qualitative music that they play, I assume they are a well-known act in their native Slovakia, and I certainly hope that more people around the world will get the chance to enjoy their music soon. We're talking technical style of death metal here and parallels can be drawn to the Florida scene. Doesn't sound too bad, does it? The only thing I know about this band is that they've released an album entitled *Incomplete Minds* before *Delight*. The competent handling of their instruments, and the incredible inventiveness in their material proves that they did not start playing recently. The tempo is high from the beginning until the end (which equals eight songs) and it should satisfy all the speed-freaks out there. I had some difficulties with the vocals on *Delight* in the beginning, and even though I have gotten used to them a bit now, I still think that they should work more on them for the next recording. The vocals are just not as strong as the music. Apart from that, I like what Erytrosy have served!

EXCOMMUNION

Superion

Empire / Plastic Head

After only two songs, I feel pretty full of the Americanos. I don't get all that impressed by their material, but above all the total running time of these couple of songs is more than _ hour, and that strongly contributes to me getting bored. Still, I refuse to give up, which turns out to be a good move as the songs only gets better and better from there. Excommunication's Morbid Angel and Immolation inspired death metal all of a sudden feels all right, and the highlight is the ending title-track which really kills. And after additional listenings to the album, I start to dig the first tracks as well. As a total, there are six dark and unholy songs on *Superion*, and they all are a big kick in the ass of all the evil black metal bands out there. Apparently, Excommunication started out as a black metal band, and we can be lucky they came to their senses with the music they eventually started to compose. The song *Superion* is the last recorded song, and if it's also the last one written, I'll be looking forward for their second album.

FALL SILENT
Drunken Violence
Revelation



Since last time these desert-boys came to visit, which was with their debut album *Six Years In The Desert* last year, some changes have occurred in the line-up on the bass and guitar positions. Still, the music has pretty much remained, but gotten even better. It's still heavy and aggressive thrash core that comes from this quintet, but the difference since last time is that the metal has gotten a bigger roll. And that is very good. I would not go as far as the label, when they name Malevolent Creation as one comparison to Fall Silent's sound, but sure *Drunken Violence* feels heavier and more metal than it's predecessor. In the song *Baracuda*, they are living out their thrash-dreams fully, but to be honest it does not sound too good. So please Fall Silent, stick to using the thrash as a major influence in your hard core, which you are so good at, and we will all be very happy.

FLESHTIZED
Here Among Thorns
Mighty



I am a very happy and satisfied man every time *Here Among Thorns* starts spinning in my CD-player. Fleshtized is a quite well-known name within the American underground (the demo *Tower Of Pain* and the self-financed MCD *Divine And Conquer* was pretty well spread) and I really hope that this full-length debut will get the attention of those who never heard them before. You see, this is what good death metal is all about. This American trio's music is like Morbid Angel meets Immolation (I actually thought of these bands before I read the bio...), which means it's fast and technical, yet without being too complicated to get into. I like the intention in their songs and their ability of grabbing the listener by his/her throat, and not letting go until the whole album is finished.

FORGOTTEN SILENCE

KaBaAch
Redblack

Imagine musicians from different musical backgrounds such as death metal, jazz, doom, rock etc locking themselves up in a studio, with a mission to record a concept-album based on the Egyptian culture. Do you think that the result might sound a bit divided? Well, that's how *KaBaAch* turned out. The music is shifting between different moods all the time and I have difficulties to get the whole picture of this album. Occasionally it sound really good and the music flows on quite well, but all of a sudden there comes some jam-session that would work as background-music in a talk-show and I don't understand a thing. Compared to the last album, the almost 100 min long DCD *Senyaan*, *KaBaAch* is softer and the band has further distanced themselves from the heavy music they once played. Still, their roots are shining through every now and then. All of the members have become better musicians, above all the bass-player Krusty has done the biggest progress, but the couple Hanka (keyboards) and drummer Radim are gone and so is also my interest in this band. I simply think that *Senyaan* was a better album than *KaBaAch* and if you've never heard this Czech band, that is the album you should check out. First of all it was more metal back then, but also the softer parts sounded better.

GODLESS TRUTH
Selfrealization
Shindy

I liked Godless Truths previous album *Burning Existence* a lot,

and that's why I was really looking forward to this follow-up. And I must say that I was quite surprised when I first put it on. The line-up has been increased with a very good drummer and they have taken their music towards new territories. That is US style of death metal. The more melodic death metal they played before has become more technical and the vocals has become darker. I'm not saying that the music has completely changed. They've not totally gone for a new sound, but mixed in some other influences into their own style. I just hope that they'll stick with that, and won't turn into a Dying Fetus clone on the next album. The material on *Selfrealization* is more brutal and faster than anything I've heard with them before, and even though I'd chose *Burning Existence* above *Selfrealization*, I'd recommend this new album to you all. Godless Truth is one of the best death metal bands Czech Republic has to offer.

GORELORD

Force Fed On Human Flesh

Baphomet / Housecore / Relapse

When it was time to record the material that Frediablo (also Wurdulak) composed for his Gorelord during it's 1 year of existence, good friend Killjoy was called in to handle the production of the album. A few demos were recorded before Killjoy offered this Norwegian a deal to record an album for his Baphomet records, later renamed to Baphomet/Housecore records because of the fusion with Phil Anselmos label. When Killjoy is involved in something, it usually smells old flesh and necrophilia and that is also the case with *Force Fed On Human Flesh*. Italian horror movies seems to be the greatest source of inspiration for Frediablo when he's composing his death metal tunes, and I guess that that's where he collected the samples that are to be found in between the songs. Although I can not tell you which movies, as my knowledge in this matter is strictly limited. Fred's death metal (with some touch of black because of the vocals) is not trying to set any speed-records, nor is he trying to play as technical as possible. Instead he's into making his songs quite "catchy". By that I mean that every song has riffs that easily gets stuck on your brain immediately, and I found myself humming the songs on my way to work after listening to the album just one time. A plus for the mega-cool booklet!

GOREROTTED

Mutilated In Minutes

Dead Again

These London-boys are not trying to hide the fact that they are a bunch of sick fucks, and if the band-name does not reveal it, the cover will. This is 100% gore. Musically they float between death metal and grind, and Cannibal Corpse as well as for instance Brutal Truth are responsible for the formation of their sound. Still it's more death metal (the American gruff-gruff style) and of course you will find the compulsory samples from various movies, even though these gentlemen are more economical with the use of them than most of their colleagues. They have a good flow in their songs and it is not just blast beats from the start till the end. The line-up includes two singers (one for deep growls and one for the screaming) and they work well together, but the screaming-guy sound a bit weak here and there. Don't let the bad band-name scare you away from this recording, just check out what these six pissed off Englishmen are capable of in your nearest record-store. You'll get some complimentary laugh by the pictures inside the booklet, presenting the members playing live and covered in what's probably is supposed to be blood, but it looks like someone was shooting paintball at them.

GREEN CARNATION

Light Of Day, Day Of Darkness

Prophecy

Green Carnation has done an Edge Of Sanity. That means they've released a full-length album containing only one song, in this case with a running time just over one hour. Behind this

project is Tchort, who is known for his achievements with Norwegian black metal elite Emperor and Satyricon, these days also involved in Blood Red Throne where he plays classic death metal. Green Carnation is about softer kind of music though. From the line-up that recorded the debut album *Journey To The End Of The Knight*, Tchort is the only remaining member left and four additional musicians did help him to complete this album. Now let's get to the music, which I was quite surprised by. It's about some kind of doom metal and in the beginning I thought that it sounded like Therion meets Amorphis, but eventually the music got more and more varied and the five-piece takes "the song" into a whole lot of different moods. *Light Of Day, Day Of Darkness* turns into all kinds of different shapes and every small detail is thought through. From slow and heavy doom, over some slide-guitars, organs and simple riffs and choirs that gets stuck on ones mind to pure metal-parts, they have succeeded to compose material that is strong throughout the whole album. Besides bass, guitar and drums, all kinds of other instruments are squeezed into the wholeness, creating great atmosphere and every one of them fits perfectly.

GURKKHAS
A Life Of Suffering
Morbid



The previous album *Engraved In Blood, Flesh And Souls*, I only had the opportunity to listen to on a bad cassette-copy, which after just a short time totally collapsed in my record-player. Therefore it was pretty hard to make up an opinion on that recording, but I remember that I didn't like the parts of their songs where they were mixing in hard core riffs, and I requested more of the faster stuff for next album. The best stuff on the above-mentioned album was the fast bits and pieces. The second *A Life Of Suffering* enters my CD player (this time I had a proper promo sent to me from Morbid Records) I can not believe what I'm hearing, as I don't recognize this band. This is not how I remember their music. The Frenchmen attacks with relatively fast death metal from the beginning of the first song *Born On A Day Of War* and sticks to the same style through out the whole album. I sense some influences from modern American bands, but most of the time it is traditional European death metal that they present. Even though some of the riffs feel pretty worn-out and it is a quite standard album within the genre, I think it's worth some of your time because it works pretty good. The trio has taken some steps in the right direction. I also miss some good guitar-solos, which I hope to find on next album.

HAEMORRHAGE
Morgue Sweet Morgue
Morbid



Spain's most famous pathologists proves once again, that they won't abandon the style of music they've been delivering over the years. Like anyone was expecting it, huh? I'm personally not an expert on their back-catalogue, and in my collection are only the 7"EP split with Ingrowing and the split-CD with Depression (reviewed in this issue), but I liked them both and I like *Morgue Sweet Morgue* as well. This new album offers us 14 bloody cuts, and all of them have a given place on the album. None feels like fill-out material. There are also chainsaws, ambulance sirens, vomiting etc that goes very well with the gore-theme in their songs. Their death metal with a whole lot of grind appeals to me a lot, but there's one thing that pisses me off. There are no lyrics included in my promo, and those are half of the fun on recordings such as this one. Regardless of whether they grind their asses of, or slow down a bit, they manage to keep the brutality in the slaughter, and the interest of the listener.

HALO

Guattari (From The West Flows Grey Ash And Pestilence)

Relapse

Guattari (From The West Flows Grey Ash And Pestilence) is one big endless experiment, composed by two Melbourne-maniacs. The guys play drums and bass respectively, on top of which they add various different sounds in order to achieve the most weird and different anti-music you've ever heard. Slow sludge-rhythms, which are delivered by the drummer create together with the distorted bass and all kinds of noises and anxiety-ridden vocals a mixed cocktail of industrial doom/noise core (or something). This is a soundtrack to insanity and a real treat for those who are continuously seeking for "new" music.

HARVIST

A Gleam In The Night

Dark Horizon

What's dominating this album is above all the incredibly muffled sound. It's recorded very low with the bass on max. It's a shame, because the music on *A Gleam In The Night* is not all that bad. It's black metal that moves between mid-tempo and fast speed, all of it composed and performed by the lone wolf that calls himself Dusk. Except of two of the songs that is, in which a few friends helped him out with small parts. There are two major reasons to why I think that this album doesn't reach to the level it could. Firstly, of course the sound. The second is that Dusk's skills with the guitar, bass, drums and keyboards are very limited. He seems to be most comfortable behind the drums, and I suggest that he stay there and recruit some other guys to handle the rest. Now it sounds pretty cheap and very simple. Plus, if you're gonna record long songs (only one song is five minutes long, while most of the rest of them are around seven minutes), you just got to have stronger material. Try to shorten the songs before you record again. A few weeks after I wrote this review I got an email from Dark Horizon, where they pointed out that the bad sound is the pressing-company's fault. That's been taken care of now, and your copy should sound way better than mine.

HIGH ON FIRE

Surrounded By Thieves

Relapse

With a cover that could belong to a black metal band and a label that is known for grinding music. I really didn't know what to expect from this album, but it sure wasn't stoner rock. High On Fires front-man and leader is Matt Pike, who has a past in the band Sleep. I have not heard any of the fantastic music they seems to have done, nor the name of this "legend", but the material he's written for *Surrounded By Thieves* is not making me too excited. As the album is spinning in my CD-player, I keep on waiting for something to happen, but it seldom does, and it feels quite hard to get through the eight songs all at once. A couple of them would work much better, but a full-length gets boring after a while. The drummer does a good job though, never relaxing and constantly trying to keep the listener awake. I must admit that I for some reason like *Thrash Of Caanan*, which is pretty strange as all the songs sound very similar to each other. The best thing on *Surrounded By Thieves* is the voice of Mr Pike, who sound like a stoned Lemmy, a real legend. PS: The debut *The Art Of Self Defence* was released thru Mans Ruin in 2000.

HIMSA

Death Is Infinite

Revelation

Last time this six-man-strong band from Seattle visited me, they offered the self-titled debut EP containing three songs of neo hard core. A style of music which Revelation is famous for. This time it's again an EP (available as both CDEP and 7"EP) that I've received, the songs are four (+ 1 secret song at the end of the CD) and I was quite surprised to hear them the first time. Already at the beginning, it's clear that the new stuff is way faster

and heavier than anything I've heard with Himsa before (I missed the full-length debut *Ground Breaking Ceremony*, so maybe this new direction was taken already on that one). It seems that the first EP was a searching for their own identity, which now has been found as the songs are more on the same level and not so different from each other. This time it sounds more metal and the third track *Hellbent & Hammered* is a real thrash-treat, closer to The Haunted than regular hard core. Very good! I still like Himsa, now more than before. The second full-length album *The Blind Strategy Of Transition* should be out in spring 2002.

HORRID

Blasphemic Creatures

Behind The Mask

Last time I heard any new material from Horrid was on their 1997-promo, which contained some attempts to play the old Swedish style of death metal. I remember their singer sucked though, and that made the whole recording sound pretty weak. What these Italians seem to have done since then, is to further studying our native bands (read Carnage, Dismember, Entombed etc), because nowadays they are very close to the style these bands once introduced. Their material is better than the one that was sent to me earlier, and I can find myself listening to these four songs every now and then. The singer has improved as well, or maybe he's been exchanged? The thing is though, that this is a pale version of the magnificent stuff the above-mentioned bands once released. Also available when you read this should be their new album *Reborn In Sin*, which was recorded in what must be their wet dream, Sunlight Studio here in Stockholm.

HOUWITSER

Rage Inside The Womb

Osmose

Just like before they went into the studio to record *Embrace Damnation*, this time to the singer was replaced before album #3 from this Dutch death-machine was put on tape. This band has since day one been a project of old/present Sinister members, so when a second guitarist was to be recruited, I don't think that anyone was surprised to find out that the spot was filled with Sinister-bassist Alex. The new vocalist Stan is at least as good as his predecessor Arjan and Alex too is a good compliment to the other guitarist Michel. Now lets get to the music. It does not take long to realize that *Rage Inside The Womb* is better than *Embrace Damnation*. They still play pure death metal with blood-dripping lyrics, and there are still samples from various movies to strengthen the brutality even more. Melodies and modern experimentation is nothing this quintet would bother with. No, no, no, just sheer brutality is allowed. *A Bite Of A Diseased Rat, Unleash The Fury* and the title track are some of the best material I've heard from Houwitsers ever, and the increasing of the line-up with a second guitarist has resulted in a heavier sound. I hope they will keep going on in the same style. When you go out to buy this album, make sure to get a copy of their green-colored vinyl 7"EP at the same time. On that one, the band performs *Shredded To Pieces* and the Possessed-cover *March To Die*.

HYPNOS

The Revenge Ride

Morbid

Hypnos has really succeeded with establishing themselves within the death metal scene during the few years of their existence. They've played countless of gigs and including the new album *The Revenge Ride*, they now have three releases under their belt. The problems with the line-up seem to have been solved, and nowadays this Czech tornado consists of a trio, which besides the founding members Bruno and Pegas includes the new guitarist David. Their strongest line-up ever I would say, as what is to be heard on this album is really the best stuff they've recorded this

far. The riffs, vocals, solos, arrangements, sound... everything about *The Revenge Ride* has improved since the debut album (which by the way was a very good record). This truly is a great death metal album! They've approached the Florida-sound a bit and the new songs feel generally a bit faster. I can't wait until I'll be able to see them live in action.

ILLDISPOSED

Kokainum

Diehard

Illdisposed belongs to the metal-elite of Denmark, and is one of the few bands that have kept doing their thing since the glory days in the beginning of the 90's. Last year they released a cover-album called *Retro*, on which they played songs of the bands that inspired them in their early days and it sounded as if they still were excited about playing metal. And that is exactly what they've once again proven with *Kokainum*. The latest material I heard from Illdisposed before *Retro* was sometime in the middle of the 90's, and even though it was quite far from the stuff that is to be found on *Kokainum*, they are still faithful to heavy music. They have just developed their style by adding some groove and melodies into their death metal, which also consists of a great dose of thrash. This album definitely stands out among the other releases this year and should be checked out.

IMMERSED IN BLOOD

Relentless Retaliation

Downfall

This Gothenburg quintet have taken another few steps forward since the last released (the three-way split with Outcast and Confessions Of Obscurity, released by Lowlife Records), and deliver on their debut MCD five new brutal cuts. The style is still the same as presented already on the first demo, which is death metal strongly influenced by the American scene, and the years of united efforts have resulted in better material. The new stuff sounds more Cannibal Corpse than Deeds Of Flesh, but it's still technical and tight as hell. Immersed In Blood have strengthened their position on the Swedish west-coast scene by showing that they know exactly how it's supposed to be done. I'd say it's about the time for a full-length album! I wait for that one, *Relentless Retaliation* will have to do.

IMPALED NAZARENE

Absence Of War Does Not Mean Peace

Osmose



This Finnish tornado strikes once again with a new album, their seventh, and just as we've gotten used to over the years, this too is a great release. They've described this album themselves as "the 2001-year version of *Suomi Finland Perkele*". The new material is not as chaotic as before, there are more melodies and generally it sounds more heavy metal. The unique style of speed and brutality is still there, don't worry about that. During the 13 songs, not many moments are offered to catch your breath (except maybe for the slower *Never Forgive*, which goes in a kind of Scandinavian melodic black metal style), and every one of them is very much worth checking out. If you're not familiar with Impaled Nazarene's earlier (wilder) material, I suggest you get your hands on a copy of the celebration compilation *Decade Of Decadence* which was released earlier this year.

IMPENDING DOOM

Apocalypse III, The Manifested Purgatorium

Cudgel



The first thing that comes to my mind as Impending Doom's

new album starts spinning, is how similar their sound is to the stuff that came from South America in the 80's. Especially the guitars. The more I listen to it though, I come to the conclusion that our heroes Dissection as well has made a great impression on these German warriors. This, their third, album includes nine death/black metal songs with a touch of thrash in it, and it definitely doesn't suck. I like the mixture of the mentioned styles with the melodic stuff that appears every now and then. No, no, no, it's not another so-called Gothenburg-style record. These gentlemen have the sense of keeping the melodic parts on a tasteful level and don't let it take over the songs. Even though they've released a few albums of their own before, as well as a couple of split's (with Atanatos and Exmortem), Impending Doom has not been too exposed by their former label, and it would be a shame if also this album didn't get the back-up that it deserves.

IN EXTREMO

Sünder Ohne Zügel

Metal Blade

A few years ago (it must have been after the release of the *Verehrt Und Angespient*-album), it seemed like every music magazine had an interview with In Extremo. Everybody was talking about their extraordinary music, which I hadn't heard, but when various reviewers wrote about folk-music, bagpipes and German lyrics, I was not really eager to discover it either. And I never did. Until now, when Metal Blade sent me this new album from the German septet for review. With little hope for an enjoyable moment, I put *Sünder Ohne Zügel* in the CD-player, and surprisingly I start to dig it almost immediately. Who would have thought that?! Their mixture of modern sound and technology with the medieval way of playing music appeals to me, and it sounds very fresh and interesting. The rock/metal music is filled with melodies that are easy to get into, and I must say that bagpipes work really good with electric guitars. These people are not only using old instruments such as the flute, harp, nyckel harp, the above-mentioned bagpipes etc, but they are also making their own instruments and that tells a whole lot about their creativity. Apart from the music, I don't even mind the German language – and who would ever have thought that! – which is used together with what sounds like French, Icelandic and Latin.

INIQUITY

Grime

Mighty

Iniuity is an old band from our neighboring Denmark, however it's hardly the same band as when they were formed back in 1989. One thing that's remained is that they've stayed faithful to the people who released their stuff from the beginning (Emanipation Productions and now Mighty Music). The latest milestone in the Iniuity back-catalogue is a really good death metal album, and it does not take long to hear that these guys have been within the scene for a long time. The good old early 90's death metal vibes are still present within their music and in the slower parts, I can hear influences from our Swedish groundbreaking bands. This Danish four-piece is pretty technical and plays with great finesse and I just can't get enough of their music. It's nice to hear new records with that old-school touch, which doesn't just repeat what's already been done. Iniuity sound fresh and they sure have their own style. There's always something going on in the songs, and the riffs sure doesn't get worn out. Except maybe for the closing track *Poets Of The Trench Part II*, which reminds me of the intro to *The Ten Commandments*. Get it now!

INSIDE CONFLICT

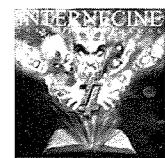
Unearthed From Wonderland

Overcome

French Inside Conflict has got some smaller releases under their

belt, and now it's their chance to present themselves on the big format. And it's really not bad. They pour in some metal into their brutal hard core songs (14 to be precise) that fills *Unearthed From Wonderland*. Not only musical-wise have these boys taken bits and pieces from death and thrash metal, but also behind the microphone the singer presents his lyrics by screaming and growling. The angry music is followed by some dark lyrics. This album is filled with aggressiveness and I think that they have recorded a good album. They also squeezed in a cover of Brutal Truth (*Birth Of Ignorance*), and I'm sure that these NY smokers have inspired these Frenchmen in more than one way. There's also a "tribute" to one of the biggest rock n' roll band of the 90's called *Eat So Izzy*...

INTERNECINE
The Book Of Lambs
Hammerheart



We all know Jared Anderson from Hate Eternal and Morbid Angel, but this guy has more to offer. Internecline is his own baby, and after having composed material for more than five years, he decided that now is the time to record it and release it to the public. And he was bloody right in doing that, because this kind of Florida death metal is what I could listen to 24-7. It's technical and precise at the same time as it is very heavy and aggressive, and it keeps the listener constantly concentrated, as there is so much going on all the time. Apart from the drummers Tony Laureano (ex Angelcorpse, Nile) and Derek Roddy (ex Divine Empire, Hate Eternal), Jared has gotten some help with a few solos from the maestro Erik Rutan. All the guitars, bass and vocals on *The Book Of Lambs* were played by Jared himself, with a great success. Get this one to satisfy your need for death metal, while you're awaiting the follow-up to *Conquering The Throne*.

KING DIAMOND
Abigail II, The Revenge
Metal Blade



Ever since the news that the King is writing a sequel to the masterpiece from 1987, I have with excitement been awaiting the result. And the wait has been very long. The previous album *House Of God* was the best material in a long time, and I'm glad to hear that *Abigail II, The Revenge* is on the same level. This sequel to the classic album, which set the standards and inspired countless of bands since then, is continuing in the style of *Abigail* but the sound is close to the previous album. A perfect combination of old and new, and I don't think that we could have been served anything better than this. As far as the story goes, the King succeeded to come up with a good continuation and as always, the lyrics are perfectly matched to the music. How the story proceeds? Well, I think that you'd rather check it out by yourselves with the lyric-sheet in your hands, and the album on full blast. The changes within the line-up this time are drummer John Hebert out and Matt Thompson in and guitarist Glen Dover out and Mike Wead in (also in Mercyful Fate). But the biggest surprise was to find Hal Patino (who played on *The Eye*, *Them* and *Conspiracy*) as the bass-player of the band again.

KORP
Thorns Of Centuries Unfold
VOD

It's been a long time since I heard anything from Sweden's Korp. Their previous album was *Demon - Reborn* (VOD 1999), but from that one I've only heard a few songs on a promo-tape that was sent to me. They keep on doing their music pretty much in the same style as before, which is mixing thrash and black metal.

On *Thorns Of Centuries Unfold* the thrash-parts seems to have been given more space than before, and I think that their material works really fine most of the time. Preferably the first three songs. The Swedish language has been totally abandoned this time for English, but they have not given up on the heavy music. As a counter-pole to the screams of the main-guy, an additional singer appears here and there with deep vocals. I don't get the point with that though, since the lead-singer manages the vocals perfectly on his own. There are quite a few bands in this country that compose their music after the formula black and thrash metal with a few melodies, but Korp belongs to the better ones of them.

LIKE PETER AT HOME

:Volumen:

Overcome

What makes this quintet from Madrid different from all the other HC bands that I've stumbled upon the last few months, is above all the tempo. Even though they of course have songs that are fast and noisy, they are not afraid of taking it slowly from time to time and add some dragging sludge into their music. On other places on :Volumen:, you will find some melodic stuff, making the material sound almost like regular rock. The lyrics are sung in their native language (another thing that makes them stick out a bit) and the singer is following the different moods the music is in by adjusting his vocals to it. Maybe they keep on repeating some of the riffs too many times on various places, but apart from that it is a decent album.

MALEDICTIVE PIGS

Bloodshed

Cudgel

Bloodshed is the 3:rd album that these German pigs released during their decade of existence. Their past is filled with constant changing of members (the bio is like a soap opera) and nowadays, only bassist Ronny Andrich remains from the original line-up. I have never before taken any notice about this band, which is a shame as *Bloodshed* turned out to be a pretty decent death metal album. The vocals are of the darker and deeper kind (close to the style that US death metal bands are using), sometimes a bit too monotonous and dealing with one scary subject after another. They perform their music quite fast most of the time, but even when they slow down it works just fine. All their songs follow the same style, moving straight ahead without taking any unnecessary turns. My favorites are *Morbid Dreams* and *Horrible Creation*, but the rest of the material is also worth some of your time and nothing the pigs need to be shamed about. They do get some minus-rating as well, and that is for the sound. I feel that it is a bit weak, especially the drums sound too poor.

MASTER

Let's Start A War

System Shock

Mr Speckmann just won't give up. He's been keeping his Master alive for so long, that I've lost the count of all their releases (not to mention all his side-projects). The last I heard from his workshop was *Faith Is In Season*, which due to its poor quality landed in the back of my record-collection. I have no idea whether he's released anything since then, but the new album *Let's Start A War* is slightly better than the above mentioned record. His version of metal is a quite easy listened piece of music, but one simply expect more from a guy who's been in the business for 20 years. *Let's Start A War* seems to be composed in one afternoon, and even though the lyrics deals with serious topics like the problems in his native America, it feels quite soulless. I dig the rock/metal tune *Miss Misery* though.

MASTECTOMIA / MIXOMATOSIS
Split CD

Downfall Records

What we've got here is an international match between Poland and Spain, a fight that goes on for over 50 minutes and one I could enjoy more than once. The Polacs (Mastectomia) is first out with a decent kind of grind core, and their *Thirteen Day Project* works surprisingly good. While the Polacs goes straight ahead with their music, the Spanish dudes are fooling around more and experiment frequently on their *Sang Corrupte*. Above all with the vocal parts. They are playing their gore-metal with a good dose of punk, and their material is filled with a bunch of various samples from horror-movies. The Polacs are better with their instruments and writes better material than their Spanish colleagues. Therefore, this fight ends 1-0 to the Polacs.

MASTODON

Lifesblood

Relapse

After the brilliant album *In The Eyes Of God*, drummer Brann Dailor and guitarist Bill Kelliher left Steve Austin and his Today Is The Day in 1999. The duo decided to form a new band together and went out to search for additional members. They ended up in Atlanta, recorded a demo and almost immediately afterwards started to perform live with Mastodon in the US and Canada. They ended up signing a deal with Relapse (really the only suitable label for them) and now they are releasing their debut for them in the shape of this MCD. It would be quite unfair to compare *Lifesblood* with Branns and Bills former band, as Mastodon is standing on its own feet, and doesn't follow some old footsteps, but they have not gotten tired of all the experimentation and their style of music is similar. It too is aggressive, intensive and heavy (sometimes on the border of getting chaotic), and can be quite difficult in the beginning. If you're patient and spare some time to get into it, a delightful musical experience is awaiting you. Therefore, if you like Today Is The Day, you will surely love Mastodon.

MASTODON

Remission

Relapse



And shortly before the dead-line for this issue, the debut full-length is here. Finally! One immediately recognizes the style that was introduced by the *Lifesblood* MCD, only *Remission* is more "colorful". By that I mean that being a full-length album, there's more space for the band to create all the different moods, which maybe was limited on the MCD. During 50 minutes, we are served so much anger and anguish we can take, leaving us wishing for more. Still, this quartet can slow down a bit and bring forth the softer side of theirs, which is shown in for example *Ol'e Nessie*, *Trilobite* and the ending song *Elephant Man*. Mastodon's music is full of surprises and there's not one dull moment on this album, much thanx to Bränn Dailor's constant abuse of his kit. This is a very innovative and creative band, and they have the musical skills to pull of all the ideas they come up with. This album should not be missed!

MERCENARY

Everblack

Hammerheart

The boys from Denmark presents on their second album music that is not very common. Or what do you say about a blend of heavy and power metal, a dose of thrash and eventually even a portion of good old death metal? Yes indeed, it works just fine if you'd ask me. Even though this album is almost one hour long, it does not feel boring, however the exclusion of one or two of the songs would make *Everblack* even better. Their style is built upon good melodies and the solos come exactly where you'd like them, but the best thing are the vocals. Screaming, growling and

qualitative clean singing in a perfect mixture. I like *Everblack*, especially the songs *Seize The Night*, and the title track but as I said, they could have skipped for example the cheesy *Rescue Me*.

MERZBOW / SHORA

Switching Rhetorics, Split CD

Bisect Bleep / Overcome

Check out the review of the Dunkelheit-demo in this issue. My opinion on that stuff goes for the three "songs" that Merzbow contributes with as well. I mean, seriously, who actually finds these sounds entertaining? The noise from Masami Akita is "interesting" to listen to one time, in order to check out what people are capable of creating, but repetitive listening to this stuff would drive me insane. And this guy has got over 200 releases under his belt! No wonder people still commit suicide. I'm sure many of them got exposed to the noise produced by Masami and his followers around the world.

It's not really hard to beat a competitor such as Merzbow, and when Shora from Switzerland appears, it's like "whoaa, what a band!". They are playing actual songs, which initially sound really great. When I return to reality, I however discover that they are no exceptionally good band. Their music is a modern style of noisy hard core, which is what one expects from an Overcome release. They are experimenting quite a bit and there's no lack of aggression, but there are bands on their label that do this stuff much better.

MISERY

Curses

Venomous

Misery has been spreading death and horror on the Australian scene for over a decade now, and I believe that they've released one EP and three albums (this one included). *Curses* contains of 12 death metal songs of the old school and early work of Morbid Angel can be named as a reference to how it sound. Just to give you an idea. This is exactly my cup of tea, because that's the stuff that I grew up with and I like it a lot. Misery is far from a groundbreaking band, but the energy and aggression that these guys deliver could turn over a truck. This is the best death metal album that I've heard from Australia this year and you are all advised to get yourselves a copy of your own. There should be a new album available very soon, and judging from the three new songs that I've heard so far, we can again expect a dose of uncompromising death metal and I'm looking forward to it very much. Count on Misery!

MORIFADE

Imaginarium

Hammerheart

The first song *Lost Within A Shade* is not bad at all, and one pretty soon notice that the boys know their power metal. Other good songs on *Imaginarium* are *The Enemy Within*, *Dark Images* and *The Secrecy*, even though it is a pretty cheesy album. The bonds to their colleagues Hammerfall are not too distant, however it's not the whole truth. Morifade's material is filled with melodies and orchestral arrangements, but it also contains some progressive elements. They show that they have a sense for powerful chorus and with their decade in the business (resulting in the MCD's *Across The Starlit Sky* and *Cast A Spell* and full-length *Possession Of Power*), they are no new-beginners. They definitely stand well against the competition. I'm aware of the fact that a whole bunch of power metal bands have popped up everywhere during the last few years, and even though I have heard my share of them, it's only been on a one-song-here-and-there basis. Maybe that's why I've not become bored of the music, and can really enjoy this album. Still I don't like

everything about it. The keyboards occasionally feels pretty lame and so to speak in the way. And I'd also like the singer to put some more feeling into his singing for the next album. I think that his voice needs more balls and less concentration on not

hitting false notes.

MYRDDRAAL

Blood On The Mountain

Decius

Of course the label is all excited about their first signing act and the debut release of both the label and the band. I on the other hand am far from all that enthusiastic myself, but there are bits and pieces on *Blood On The Mountain* that I find quite decent. Myrddraal's fast, raw and primitive black metal I can deal with in small doses (like the songs *Under The Banner* and *Dunai's Wells*), but this is an album that has that heard-it-before-more-than-once-feeling, and all it's songs at one time is way too much. Their performance is so simple and amateurish, it sounds as if they decided to start playing in a band, and two weeks later recorded an album. Every now and then, acoustic guitars appears as a counterbalance to all the evilness and that might be a good idea (Dissection did it really good), but in Myrddraal's case it sounds too lame (just listen to the 10-minute long title-track).

NECROPHOBIC

Bloodhymns

Hammerheart

This new Necrophobic album (their fourth full-length) is one hell of a fine piece of art. Black Mark should pity themselves for letting them of the hook, and I really hope that this Stockholm quartet will finally get the acknowledgement and support from their new label, as they've deserved for so long. *Bloodhymns* is pretty much spinning further on the previous album *The Third Antichrist*, which was a step back to death metal from the more black metal album *Darkside*. The blood is literally running through each one of the 10 songs, and even though the absolutely best tracks are to be found in the beginning of the album (*Taste Of Black*, *Dreams Shall Flesh*, *Act Of Rebellion* and the absolute highlight *Shadowseeds*), there isn't one song that is not worth it's place on *Bloodhymns*. Buy it, steal it...I don't care how you get your copy, just make sure you do.

NEPHASTH

Immortal Unholy Triumph

Mighty

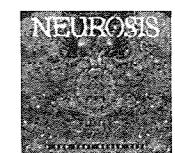


The new death metal export from Brazil is called Nephasth, and with their debut album *Immortal Unholy Triumph*, they have placed themselves among the top of the death metal elite in their native country. And I certainly hope that they will gain success in the rest of the world as well, because this is a really qualitative band. They play in the same division (and style of Morbid Angel-influenced fast death metal) as for instance Rebaellun and Krisiun, and if these bands count to your great heroes, then your record-collection shouldn't be missing *Immortal Unholy Triumph*. A tip for you if you want to check out other heavy combos that Brazil has to offer, is to get your hands on the compilation *Brazilian Assault*, which Relapse released earlier this year. You will find other great acts beside Nephasth on it.

NEUROSIS

A Sun That Never Sets

Relapse



Oakland's most depressive orchestra strikes with the follow-up to *Times Of Grace*, an album that opened my eyes and made me aware of Neurosis grandness a few years ago. Their emotional music that is filled with anguish, darkness and depression as well as mystery and beautiful melodies is one big experiment, and there is not one single band on this planet that can do what these

gentlemen are capable of. The whole time, they build their songs upon the contrasts between the calm and chaos, the beautiful and melodic and the heavy etc. Producer Steve Albini has succeeded with dressing *A Sun That Never Sets* into a heavy as hell suit that brings the best out of the songs. *From The Hill* and the title track are my favorites on this masterpiece as I write these lines, but all the songs are equally strong and every time I listen to it I pick a new favorite. Very few bands can write a song that is longer than 13 min (*Falling Unknown*), and even fewer can do it without loosing the listeners attention half way through. Buy this album and you'll get almost 70 minutes of magnificent music.

NOKTURNAL MORTUM

Lunar Poetry

The End

Ukraina's leading black metal combo released their debut album already five years ago (only available on MC), but due to the huge requests from the fans, The End records are now making it available again. And not only have they re-released the original material, but also enriched it with the never before released 11-minutes song *The Return Of The Vampire Lord*, as well as a cover of Celtic Frost's *Sorrows Of The Moon*. Their own songs are mostly built upon keyboard-melodies and are shifting between high speed and mid-tempo. I particularly like their sense for melodies and the work of the guitar-player, who is responsible for the best performance on this disc. There's more behind their compositions than just furious and hateful screaming, which seems to be the recipe for many other bands playing this style. Nothing reveals that this recording is dated to 1996. In fact, many bands out there are nowadays trying to do what these Ukrainians did so long ago. I'm sure that if this band gets signed to a bigger label that can give them some bigger promotion, their music will get more followers. Nokturnal Mortum is the best black metal band I've heard from this former Soviet-republic (and also the only one, but still...) and all you corpse-painted vampires out there should check them out. Their new material should be out as you read these lines, and it is supposed to be faster.

NOMAD

The Devilish Whirl

Novum Vox Mortis

I discovered that Nomad is a good death metal band (and one of many great acts that Poland has breed) already after their demo *The Tail Of Substance*, which was reviewed in the 5:th issue of this mag. On *The Devilish Whirl* they have modernized their sound a bit, but they've done that without distancing themselves from death metal. One gets easily impressed by their skills (especially the guitars, which paradoxically was what I "complained" a bit about on the demo), and at the same time surprised that not any bigger label has yet picked them up and given them the support that they deserve. There's a good flow in the songs and it's way more than just yet another death metal album. The musicians have enough of good ideas, which they've succeeded to implement into their style of death metal, to make it sound fresh. There's one little thing that I don't like on *The Devilish Whirl*, and that is the singers small parts of clean vocals and other experimentation which seems quite pointless, but since that actually happens very seldom and the material is otherwise so strong, it's easy to look beyond that.

NOSTROMO

Eysore

Mosh Bart / Overcome

The four angry gentlemen who form the Swiss Nostromo have got a full-length album on their account already. An album for which the critics have been mainly positive, so I've heard. Overcome Records have become known for their hard core releases, but compared to most of their label mates, Nostromo is a bit heavier. There is some good dose of metal in their music,

which I think was a good move from them. They even take the step to cover one of their big heroes Napalm Death with *Twist The Knife*, a song that fits very well in the Nostromo suit. If you believe that many off today's hard core bands does not come up with any new stuff, then Nostromo should get you happy. There's one extra track on the 10"EP version of *Eysore*, so get that one if five songs aren't enough for you. The only thing that I would complain about is the closure of this CD. They should have stopped after the last song, as the "outro" sounds just silly. Could it have been the booze that they abused in the studio?

NOTRE DAME

The 2:nd Coming Soon To A Theatre Near You

Osmose

Snowy Shaw and his company, consisting of Vampirella and the De Sade twins, continue to spread the fear all around. This time it's their debut album from 1998 that's been re-released, remastered and re-released with six additional bonus tracks. Apparently it was originally released by an incompetent label, and the band did want to give their best (???) album a second chance. As with their earlier (later) releases, the quartet offers a theatrical metal with a big diversity. Whether you like Notre Dame or not, the fact is still that they are an original act, trying to do something different with music. Personally, I will play this album every now and then, but if you've never heard any of their material, I think you should try the *Nightmare Before Christmas* album to start with.

NUNSLAUGHTER

Hells Unholy Fire

Revenge / Repulse

These Ohio-sons are legendary with their 15 years of existence, and even though I don't believe that everybody have heard their music, I'm pretty sure that everybody have at least heard the name before. Through the years, they've released countless of demos and 7"EP's, but not until now has a full-length album been decorated with their logo. Unfortunately, *Hells Unholy Fire* is not a "new" album as it consists of re-recordings of some of their old songs, which today might be quite hard to find in original versions. This album is packed with 18 unholy tracks, most of them between one and two minutes long, of old-style death metal as it was played in late 80's. The oldest one is the opening track *I Am Death*, which was written in 1986, and the newest material are three songs from 1997. *Hells Unholy Fire* is a perfect introduction for those who never listened to Nunslaughter before, but it will surely appeal to their old fans as well. It's raw, primitive and bloody dirty and I enjoy everything that they serve. These guys seems to have decided how they wanted to play their music from day one, and nothing has (and probably never will) change that. You know what you'll get when you buy a new recording from the slaughter.

OBSCENITY

Cold Blooded Murder

Morbid



They can impossibly have been this good before, Germany's Obscenity. Or have they? I can't believe that I have missed their music for so long, but hey, stranger things have happened. One after another, the German platoon fires their deadly shots (eight of them as a total) and every time they hit right on the target. Which is straight in the heart of an old death metal soul.

Whether they play their metal fast as in *Caught In Life* or slower as in *Alien Hand Syndrome*, it sounds excellent no matter how they are presenting it. And the appearance of a melodic solo here and there along the battle of technical brutality is just so fucking good. These guys have learned a whole lot from the boys down in Florida, and decided to leave the mastering of *Cold Blooded*

Murder to the legendary Morrisound studios, which resulted in the material ending up with a really fat sound. This is, ladies and gentlemen, the surprise record of this issue and you should not let it pass.

OBSIDIAN GATE

Colosal Christhunt

Skaldic Art

When I stumble upon a new band which claims to play symphonic black metal, I usually don't get very excited. Too many recordings with this style have passed my ears, and very few of them have made any big impression. Most of them have been pathetic efforts to make something unique and ambitious. Germany's Obsidian Gate's second full-length is also very ambitious, but it is also among the best albums within this style that I've heard, and I find the first couple of the songs quite good. After that, my interest is lost and the rest of the material does not give me anything. It's like a bunch of melodies and riffs put together, but the result doesn't have any meaning. It's a shame, as they have sense for the music and the skills of the musicians are not that bad either. It's definitely not a totally bad album, and if you like your black metal with symphonic arrangements you should give *Colosal Christhunt* a chance. I just lost the interest long time ago.

ORDO DRACONIS

The Wing & The Burden

Skaldic Art

The last time I heard of this Dutch black metal combo was a few years ago, when they sent me their debut demo *When The Cycle Ends* which was reviewed in Amputation #4. The four-tracks on this tape was their first efforts to write symphonic black metal, and since then they've also released a MCD on their own. Their style and skills have improved quite a bit, and it doesn't take long to realize how much they've worked on their new material. They still build up their songs around melodies, which mostly the synthesizer is responsible for, and add some heavier riffing and screaming vocals.. well, I'm sure you've all heard this formula before. The whole recording is sound-wise very polished and really the only thing it's got in common with traditional black metal is the corpse-paint and the vocals. If you like your "metal" melodious and sounding a bit like pop, I guess that Ordo Draconis is yet another band to spend your money on. Personally, I think it gets a bit too much and almost one hour with *The Wing & The Burden* is more than enough for me.

PARAGON OF BEAUTY

Comfort Me, Infinity

Prophecy

Not much has to do with metal when dealing with Paragon Of Beauty. Except for the screams that occurs quite seldom (they don't sound too god, by the way), this is some kind of alternative rock. Melancholic and mellow parts are mixed together with mid-tempo riffing into pretty harmless songs (eight of them as a total) that does not affect me very much. When the leader of this German quintet, Monesol, sings it shows that he has got a good voice, but sometimes he seems wanting to do too much with it, getting too pretentious. Occasionally he whines like a little boy that just got beaten up by the older boys. I think that I would have appreciated a 7"EP with two songs (preferably the opening track *This Impossible Moment, How Futile It Seems To Sow* and *About Glum Naiades And Idle Gods*, which are the best songs on *Comfort Me, Infinity*) more than this full-length.

PIG DESTROYER

Prawler In The Yard

Relapse

Last year, Pig Destroyer became a new member of the mighty Relapse-family, and with a few various releases under their belt, *Prawler In The Yard* is their second full-length. If I tell you that they've squeezed in 21 songs + an intro into 36 minutes (out of which the last few minutes are just waste of space), you might guess that we're dealing with grind core here. But that is not the whole truth. Within the music of Pig Destroyer, you will find traces of death metal and HC, as well as parallels to bands like Dillinger Escape Plan and Converge (which is not all that strange, as the main-man off the pigs, guitarist Scott Hull, also is a member of Agoraphobic Nosebleed). The songs on *Prawler In The Yard* are very interesting and intelligently composed, and I like this album more and more for every time I play it.

PRIMORDIAL

Storm Before Calm

Hammerheart

As *Storm Before Calm* starts spinning and the first tunes comes out from the speakers, I get myself prepared for a real black metal ride. It sounds pretty OK, however it's not all that exciting. Lucky for me that things get a whole lot more interesting. Already in the chorus in the first track *The Heretics Age*, the singer uses some different vocals and eventually also the music transforms into different shapes. Their music is very dramatic and emotional and if you, like me, have the opinion that it's a bit too pretentious after the first round, listen to it a few more times. You'll get to realize what they want to say with their material and how everything is connected. Primordial have toured with among others Thyrfing, and I believe that if you like that Swedish band you'll enjoy *Storm Before Calm* as well. Not that the music is identical, but both bands are proud of their culture, and use it when composing their own material. Where the Swedes use a whole lot of folk-music in their songs, the Irishmen brings their Celtic culture, both lyrically and musically. Check out this folk-metal album!

RAVAGER

Storm Of Sin

Osmose

The Mexicans first made some noise with various releases under the moniker Domain, however it's now with a new name and a fresh record deal with the Frenchmen that they seriously attacks. And what a strike then! *Storm Of Sin* is one of the absolute best death metal albums that's been released on Osmose, and it's yet another proof of the quality of the scene on the South American continent. Of course the speed is on top once this quartet steps on it, and more known acts like Krisiun and Rebaellun should feel a threat, because Ravager is heading for the death metal throne of South America. In fact, Krisiun could be mentioned as a reference to Ravager's style, so if you like your death metal fast, aggressive and absolutely fucking brutal, you should get yourself a copy of *Storm Of Sin*. Now!

REBAELLUN

Annihilation

Hammerheart

Finally have Brazils big death metal export released a new album! Their previous release, the MCD *Bringer Of War*, was recorded by a reduced line-up because of the departure of guitarist Ronaldo Lima, right after the tour for *Burn The Promised Land*. After the MCD, also the bassist Marcello Marzari left the band. The remaining duo refused to give up all the success that they've gained, and a new bass-player called Lohy Fabiano was recruited at the same time as good old Ronaldo decided to join the band again. Today, Rebaellun is stronger than ever and those who liked their fast death metal on some of their previous releases will surely not get disappointed with *Annihilation* either. This new album is just as good as it's predecessors and it should appeal all fans of speed and brutality. Buy!

RED AIM

Flesh For Fantasy

Metal Blade

This is one odd record to be released on Metal Blade Records. The music that these four German shepherds play is not very close to the metal that this label usually releases but more to rock n' roll. Red Aim is a band that's affected by a wide range of influences, and bands like Kyuss and Fu Manchu have left a mark on their songs. As well as their mutual masters Black Sabbath. The singer is the one that's sticking out the most with his various sounds, and he sure likes to experiment with his voice. It makes me think that they have a lot of fun within the band and don't take things too seriously. Some people might find his performance rather irritating (as my wife declared after hearing *Flesh For Fantasy* the first time, "what the hell is wrong with this guy"), but I cannot write anything negative about them. You see, every time I put this record on, I end up smiling and getting in generally good mood.

REVENGE

Attack, Blood, Revenge

Dark Horizon

Speed, hate, aggression, chaos and pure evilness is what this MCD is filled with. Revenge is a new project of Mr. Read, former member of Conqueror, and *Attack, Blood, Revenge* is (from what I understand) their first release. The four songs on this MCD will sweep you all the way to hell with its unholy attack. The dirty sound and production suits the music quite well, however I think that slightly clearer sound would do the songs more justice. I bet that it was exactly what they were after, but it sounds like a cassette-demo. The three-piece deliver their black metal inferno with full-blast from the beginning till the end, and their choice of cover (*Bathory's War*) witnesses from which scene much of their inspiration comes from.

RISING MOON

European Aliens

Metal Fortress

The opening track *Brutal Katatonic(a)* is, together with the ending *Division Abductions*, fast death metal with thrash elements and I was positively surprised by discovering that the duo of Rising Moon hails from Italy. That country has not exactly polluted the world with good metal albums lately. During the rest of the songs on this MCD (their third release, as they have two full-length albums under their belt), they deliver some melodic stuff as well as fast riffing. Actually, if I didn't know where they were from, I'd guess for some Swedish band from the north. It works quite well, especially in the form of a MCD, and even though they are not exactly groundbreaking, you should not dismiss them.

RITUAL CARNAGE

The Birth Of Tragedy

Osmose

For some reason, I've always thought that the US/Japanese constellation Ritual Carnage played death metal. Maybe they sounded differently before, I don't know but nowadays they are delivering a full blast thrash attack. The songs on their new album smells Bay Area thrash from far away, yet with a personal touch and feeling. Dany has brought some of his Florida-heritage into their music, and they should really be proud off the style they've developed. The music is intelligently composed, with the guitar-work as a highlight of the listening. Occasionally I think that Danny Carnage's vocals sounds like he badly needs to take a shit, but only occasionally and I have no problem living with it. This is a good album, actually one of the best in the genre I've heard in a while. As the ending of this album you'll find *Infernal Death*, a good tribute to the late Chuck Schuldiner, and those of you who decide to invest in a digipack or vinyl version of *The Birth Of Tragedy*, can expect further bonuses.

RUNEMAGICK

Requiem Of The Apocalypse

Aftermath

With their 12 years within the Swedish death metal scene, these Gothenburgers can label themselves veterans, and after three albums on Century Media they've taken a step back to the underground. Their new home became the Norwegian label Aftermath Music, who last year released the 7"EP *Ancient Incantations*, containing some old demo material. The new *Requiem Of The Apocalypse* is with it's almost 63 minutes a pretty massive piece of music, however it is a pleasant one, and the long running-time feels only as a bonus and does not bore you out. The dark death metal that they deliver in the 11 songs (plus intro and outro), is spinning further on the classic Swedish style of death metal from the time these guys started the band. This should appeal all the fans of old Stockholm death metal, but don't expect Runemagick to sound exactly like those bands because they don't. They just come from the same roots.

Runemagick's music is filled with own ideas and they've found their own personal style. This is nothing for speed-freaks as they like to keep the tempo down, and sometimes they get close to doom, yet it sounds great all the way through.

SACRED SIN

Translucid Dream Mirror

Demolition

According to the bio, Sacred Sin is one of the biggest metal acts in Portugal, and their debut album was highly praised in their country and considered being the best death metal album ever. I have not heard that particular album (*Darkside*, 1993), but what they play today is not death metal. The songs on *Translucid Dream Mirror* are some kind of progressive black metal with a lot of synthesizers (of course), with a touch of symphony-elements added to it. This music does not give me anything what so ever, and the whole album seems quite pointless. The keyboards and the vocals occasionally cross the fine line between being just boring, to become really irritating, and generally the album feels way too long. At the end of it, there's a cover of Slayer's *Evil Has No Boundaries* and even if Sacred Sin's version of this classic is quite acceptable, it does not justify a purchase of *Translucid Dream Mirror*.

SAD HARMONY

Elektrula

Redblack

When the really annoying intro ends and *Those Pilgrims* starts spinning, it seems as we are about to listen to some classic rock n' roll. I realize that that's not the case the second the singer opens his mouth and starts with his almost growling vocals. He's mixing hoarse and dark vocals with clean singing and the music varies pretty much as well. It's basically rock, but names like Paradise Lost (the rock-period) and Nightingale pops up in my head as I make my way through *Elektrula* and most of the time I think it's pretty good. No slow and experimenting doom with male / female vocals which is what many bands from the eastern block compose. Sure Sad Harmony uses female vocals as well, but they use them only where suitable. Sporadically in *From Mill To Mill* and completely in one of the best songs *Rolled Essence*. This is a pretty harmless album amongst the competition in this magazine and definitely one that sticks out. I like the way they melt the heavy riffing with the melodious stuff, even though it sometimes tends to get too commercialized. This really was a surprise, and a positive one as well, but I think that they should move away from the growling singing and go for a more dark type of singing. And they should have definitely not placed *Tanya Pulkanova* on this album.

SADISTIK EXEKUTION

Fukk

Osmose

Sydney's sickest metal band strikes again with a new album, the fourth in their career. *Fukk* is opened by the sounds of Rok, enjoying an ejaculation with a gasmask on (or so it sounds, anyway) and shortly afterwards the insanity begins. Fast and chaotic black metal is mixed up with some slower stuff (which might have been written after listening to the magnificent metal band Autopsy), the whole time accompanied by the vomiting vocals of Rok's. OK for one listen or two, but good? Not really. Above all, the album could have been shortened by 11 minutes in the form of the meaningless *The Final Exekution* at the end of the album, before the important message "Only Death Is Real" finishes *Fukk*. I've never considered myself being a fan of this band, and this album has made it sure it stays that way. In fact, I've never figured out what's so special about them, that many consider them being some kind of a cult band. Don't get fooled by the cool cover-painting!

SANATORIUM

Internal Womb Cannibalism

Forensick Music

These Slovaks sound today as a whole different band compared to what I heard on the 1996-demo *Autumn Shadows*. There was some stuff that reminded of the American gruff-gruff death metal already back then, but mostly it was a whole different kind of metal with some melodic parts. Now they seem to have taken a closer step towards the other side of the Atlantic ocean (or maybe they did it already on their first full-length *Arrival Of The Forgotten Ones*), and they've written music that is close to their idols Prophecy, Dying Fetus, Fleshgrind etc. The kind of bands that America is filled with. I'd like to say that their evolution has gone sideways, rather than forward. I wrote in the review of the above-mentioned demo that they should try to come up with some stuff of their own, and I still think that. Today it's just different kind of music that they should move further from. Sanatorium is not as technical as their American competitors, and a whole lot of their riffs I'm not sure their idols would even bring to the rehearsals. Some of the songs work out pretty good, though. It's not all bad, but I expected more from a band that's been around for so long. The lyrics are a feast for all the gore-freaks out there, but I have a question for the band. How can a virgin be a whore? And above all pregnant? (*Dead Virgin Whore*)

SATANS BLOOD

Christians To Ashes, Angels To Dust

Sound Riot

Christians To Ashes, Angels To Dust is fun for about 10 minutes. What happens then is as with many other black metal albums. It gets too monotonous. These Germans are doing their music after the concept simple and raw, and it does not work in the long run. Not for them, anyway. They would need more variation in the riffing. As it is now, it's pretty basic and predictable.

SATARIEL

Phobos And Deimos

Hammerheart

shifting his vocals from high screams to deep growls, depending on what the music demands, and he always strikes right. He's also competent of singing with a clean vocal, which he proves in for example *Coffin Gateways* and *Greater Than God*. This delicious album is strengthened some more by none other than the heavy weight champion Messiah Marcolin, who does an excellent performance in some of the songs. This album is filled with speed, melodies, heaviness and fast songs like *The Claim* and softer stuff like *Holy Trinity* goes together very well. I was pleasantly surprised by *Phobos And Deimos*.

SCARVE

Luminiferous

Listenable



A lot has happened with French Scarve in the last few years. The last time I heard something from them was the promo *Opacity* back in 1998, and it was a bit disappointing compared to their MCD *Six Tears Of Sorrow* from 1996, which secured them an interview in Amputation mag. In the meantime, they have released the debut album *Translucence* (which I have unfortunately missed) and somewhere on the way, both vocalists and the bass-player have been exchanged. The progressive, technical and fast modern style metal that is presented on *Luminiferous* has bonds to death as well as thrash metal, and it is a really worked-through piece of music. I'm glad to discover that this is the best I've heard from them ever. The musicians play the complex music absolutely faultlessly, without loosing themselves amongst the twists and turns between the melodic and the brutal. The two singers (one is singing, one is screaming) complete each other well, and they find their spots in the music very well. An album that is pretty close to *Luminiferous* is Swedish Darkane's debut album. Not only musically, but also sound wise as *Luminiferous* too was recorded in Doug Out Studios with Daniel Bergstrand. But *Serpent Speech* could have been excused from this album, because even though it's a good song, it does not fit amongst the others.

SEIRIM

Kill, War, Chaos

Cudgel

These Germans started to play metal in 1991. Back then they went under the name Decomposition, under which only one demo was released. The change of the band-name was followed by various small releases, and in 1999 came their debut album *Empire Of The Dead*. On *Kill, War, Chaos*, which is the follow-up to the debut, Seirim shows that they've gained a whole lot of routine, both in composing and performing. The mixture of death and black metal works pretty good the way they've done it. Some of the riffs here and there feels pretty worn out, and a song like *Your Blood* is not all that fun to listen to, but generally it's not that bad. I especially like the quartet *Morbid Animalism*, *Killing Elements*, *Beyond The Death* and *Rulers Of The World*. Whether that's because some of the riffs reminds me of Sarcofago, or something else, these songs are powerful and I enjoy them.

SETH

Divine X

Osmose

Since the last album *The Excellence*, the Frenchmen have not gone through any drastic changes with their music. They have however moved on and taken their music further. There are eight songs on *Divine X*, all of them close to the stuff from the last album, yet this time it's more progressive. They are experimenting a whole lot more and the material is generally more melodic. Softer one might say, but there are still fast riffing and double bass-drums on *Divine X*, and it can still be called

black metal. *Divine X* is better than *The Excellence*, and they both work great for a couple of spins every now and then. Still, it's not an extraordinary release. And for the uninitiated, the French language still sounds funny. These guys are, however, professional in what they are doing, and the result from the recording is a powerful and modern sounding album.

SILENCER

Death Pierce Me

Prophecy

Apart from the statement "Silencer supports your death", Prophecy did not put much other info on the bio that arrived with this CD, and since this is my first meeting with them I can not tell you much about their past. The only thing I know is that this material was composed between 1995 and 2000, and according to the special thank-list in the booklet, it might have been composed in one of our most famous mental institutions here in Sweden. The S:t Sigfrids hospital in Växjö (and that makes me very proud...). Their black metal songs are raw, fast, dirty and smells death and misery from far away, but what made me happy was the lack of the attributes that are so "popular" these days like female vocals, messing around with doom/goth etc. It's not fast all the time and eventually they slow down a bit, but when they do that, the sick and twisted is still present. The singer screams his way through *Death Pierce Me* sounding like King Diamond on drugs, or like Vildvittorna in Ronja Rövardotter. Anyway, even though their mental health is not 100% in order, they sure can make some brutal music and that's enough for me.

SILENT STREAM OF GODLESS ELEGY

Themes

Redblack

The last album, *Behind The Shadows* from 1998, was followed by a small line-up change and now one of the leading bands within the Czech doom-scene (and Grammy-winners of the year 2000) is back with a new full-length. And much is the same as before. *Themes* is filled with melodies and arrangements that will make many other bands within this style to fade away, and this six-piece has once again showed a great sense for moody music. Much of the albums quality is in the violin- and violoncello-parts, which lifts the whole material. And also of course Zuzka's beautiful voice, which also can be heard on the latest albums of Cales and Endless. There is some new stuff on this album as well. The singer does not sound as he's pushing himself to sound as brutal as possible, but uses his voice with more feeling. The new songs are more easy-listened and even though they are a bit softer than the previous album, *Themes* is the best material I've heard from SSGE so far.

SINISTER

Creative Killings

Hammerheart

Everyone who's been/is into death metal must at least at some occasion stumbled upon one of the five albums that this Dutch combo has released during it's 13 years of existence. At least for me, the debut *Cross The Styx* is a real classic. For every album they've released, they've delivered the goods that everyone was expecting from them (uncompromising death metal) and that is also the case with the fresh *Creative Killings*! Actually it's hardly the same band as back in the days, as only drummer Aad (also Thanatos and Houwitsers) is an original member, but he's found excellent replacements for his lost buddies. The guitarist Bart is one hell of a riff-master who works great together with the rhythm-section that Aad and bassist Alex serves for him, and on to of that there are the inhuman growls from Rachel. Yes, a woman is now behind the microphone in Sinister and she's doing a terrific job. Most guys would cut off their right leg in order to produce the sounds that Rachel is capable of. Possessed's *Storm In My Mind* concludes this excellent recording, and I urge

you to immediately buy yourself a copy. Sinister won't let you down, count on that!

SIX FEET UNDER

True Carnage

Metal Blade

As the first taste of *True Carnage* arrived at my place (a three-song promo), I only found *The Day The Dead Walked* to be a quite interesting and decent track. The first track *Impulse To Disembowel* felt quite boring and *One Bullet Left* was totally destroyed by a fellow called Ice-T, who got to ventilate his lounges beside Chris Barnes. Now that I've consumed the whole album I find out that this is not all as bad as I was prepared for. There are way better songs on *True Carnage* than the ones on the above mentioned promo, as for example *Cadaver Mutilator*, *Sick And Twisted* and *It Never Dies*. I stopped to buy Six Feet Under's material after *Warpath*, as I thought that their death metal was not moving anywhere, but *True Carnage* shows that they've found some new ways, without loosing their unique sound and style. You'll easily recognize their pretty simple music in every one of the new songs, and I have regained hope for this Florida act.

SOILENT GREEN

A Deleted Symphony For The Beaten Down

Relapse

Soilent Green have over the past few years produced releases in all kinds of formats, and on this new full-length they continue to deliver their unique style of heavy music that they've made themselves known by. They blend death metal, hard core, grind and sludge into their songs, which include more tempo-shiftings than you could possibly imagine, and they do it incredibly well. Slow and heavy stuff is mixed with hysterical madness in a very tasteful way, and if I tell you that I could fill this page with bands that might have influenced these guys, you'll understand how "wide" their sound is. Soilent Green sounds like no other band and as long as they stick to their formula of writing songs, I'll be more than happy. Keep up the good work.

SOLEKAHN

Suffering Winds

Imperial Maze

There are parts on this CD that are decent, preferably in the first two songs. Apart from that, this recording feels quite pointless. Sure they are performing some OK metal, and they are flirting with black metal here and there, but *Suffering Winds* does not give me any enjoyable experience. And the singer's attempt of singing in a kind of Viking-style vocals does not come out too good. Apart from the music, the sound of the guitars and drums are just contributing to making me bored after a while. There are few death metal bands in France that are worth checking out (that I am aware of, anyway), and Solekahn is not one of them.

SOUTHERN ISOLATION

S/t

Baphomet / Housecore

Sometimes it seems quite hopeless for new artists to release their music, and that's when good contacts are priceless. In this case, the new musician is called Opal and it's thanx to her friend Phil Anselmos label Baphomet/Housecore Records (which he shares with Killjoy) that her music gets out to the masses. Don't expect some horror metal album though, because what Opal does is miles away from any kind of metal what so ever. During these four songs, Opal performs melodious and emotional music with her inner thoughts in the lyrics. She's got a very unique style of singing and despite of the simple guitar-work, the songs just grabs you. I must admit that I was quite skeptical at the beginning, but now I like them more and more for every time I'm listening to them. I like country as well, so what? It's true that some other people have been helping Opal out in the studio,

but Southern Isolation is really a one-woman-show. This is as far from metal as it could possibly get, but very good indeed! Dare I expect a full-length any time soon?

SPAWN

Systems Full Of Victims

Bruchstein

I like most of the stuff on this album, however there are things on it that I find quite weird. It seems that the German's want to stick out a bit by squeezing in some riffs, breaks and bridges that just don't make sense. Just like in *Mass Hysteria*, in which the guitars all of a sudden goes schizophrenic. Those things bother me because I can hear that they know how to make some good death metal, which it is plenty of on *Systems Full Of Victims*.

SUBWAY TO SALLY

Herzblut

Metal Blade

The music of these Germans is very varied, and it constantly takes new directions. Slow - fast, heavy - soft, electronic - acoustic etc. They mix in some rock and metal into their songs, throw in some electronic parts, and a whole lot of their influences comes from the traditional folk music. No, it's not easy to label them and yes, their music is original. They have been together since 1993 and that shows in the professionalism of their performance. Above all I like the acoustic guitars on *Herzblut*. Have a look at the title of this album and you'll understand my problem with it. The lyrics are sung in their native German language and as you might know, it's not really my cup of tea. Besides, the singer's voice is quite irritating and I'd like to see a change of both for the next record. But I guess that would ruin the whole thing with Subway To Sally, huh? This septet is apparently a huge band in Germany, and I don't doubt that for a second, but I don't think they will gain a big success outside of the German-speaking countries.

SUNSETH SPHERE

Storm Before Silence

Hammerheart

The pop/goth of these Hungarians was a bit of a surprise. After just a few songs, I discovered that I liked their material and that is not very common with this kind of music. What I like is foremost that they don't complicate their music too much. Instead of showing the world all the things they can do with their instruments, they build their songs upon strong melodies, which easily get stuck on ones mind. They also use just one female singer (except for one song, in which the drummer got to borrow the microphone for a while), and she fits the music perfectly with her beautiful voice. This girl is also responsible for the keyboard/piano parts, which gets a lot of space within the songs. They manage to combine heavy riffing with soft melodies and vocals without sounding like a bunch of other bands.

TENHI

Airut: Ciwi

Prophecy

I must admit that I have not been too excited about the stuff that I've received from Prophecy in the past, but Tenhi's new creation, I found quite interesting. After the intro, which sounds as if performed by Australian aborigines, you will find two calm songs, that would very well fit in some kind of a dark movie. The piano, flute, keyboard, guitar and other instruments that I can't identify, accompanied by quite "slow" vocals create beautiful melodies. This is not, I repeat not, party-music and I can almost see the band sitting gathered by any of the 1000 lakes and composing this stuff. It is very different from the stuff that I usually listen to, and discovering new music is always nice.

THEORY IN PRACTICE

Colonising The Sun

Listenable

One cannot oversee these boys' passion for the forefathers of death metal, Floridas Death. On their third album (I have unfortunately not yet had the pleasure to listen to the previous records *Third Eye Function* and *The Armageddon Theories*, both released by Pulverised Records), they deliver one hell of a technical death metal with influences from Death's later work. Apparently, this new material is more straightforward compared to their old stuff, and I wonder how it might have sounded before? By now you probably understand that it is not all that easy to get into the complex compositions on *Colonising The Sun*, but once you have gotten into them, they will get even better for every time you listen to them. Melodies are mixed up with heavy riffing, and guitarist Peter Lake is doing some serious exercises on the fret-board. This album is filled with a whole lot of progressive elements, and the members are all eager to show what they can do with their instruments. And they are all very skilled musicians. I have to check out album #1 and #2 ASAP!

THRONEAEON

Neither Of Gods

Hammerheart



Already back in 1997, right after the release of their excellent demo *Carnage*, I requested a full-length album from Throneaeon. It's a shame that it took four long years, but it was well worth the wait. To still mine, and surely many others, hunger they released the MCD *With Sardonic Wrath* in 1999, an album whose four songs witnessed of an increasing form of the band. Now that *Neither Of Gods* is here, it doesn't take long to discover that this one as well is a really great release, although I was quite surprised by it as it wasn't what I've been expecting. The strong Deicide-influences (which were so obvious on the above mentioned releases) are not as strong anymore (they are still there though, yet heavily reduced) and the boys have tried some other ways. Some of the stuff they seem to have been feasting on during the writing of this album, are the Polish death metal masters. I think that their development is going in the right direction and I'm already looking forward to album #2. This album is one of the best Swedish death metal releases of the year 2001, and it will strengthen Throneaeon's position within our country's death metal elite. Buy!

THRONEUM

Old Deaths Lair

Maleficium

Throneum have previously released two demos, and *Old Deaths Lair* is their debut album. No doubt that these Polacs are mainly influenced by the old death metal bands from the late 80's / early 90's, but they have for sure also listened to some black metal. During my initial listening to *Old Deaths Lair*, I liked what I heard and enjoyed their unpolished death metal with dirty sound. However, a few rounds later I've lost most of my interest and I'm of the opinion that the 14 pieces are only OK. Throneum's songs are simply not strong enough to affect the listener the way their idols used to do, but they sure are worth checking out. We've not heard the last tone from the Polacs yet, as they have a whole bunch of splits on various labels scheduled. Maleficium Records will only release *Old Deaths Lair* on MC. If you want the CD, then get in touch with Weird Truth Productions. The LP-version should be out soon on Sombre Music.

UFYCH SORMEER

Anthem To The Glory Of The Great Octagon

Ancestral Craft

It starts with a dark intro with spoken words, accompanied by keyboard melodies and marching drums. Then the first song

strikes and Ufych Sormeer (what kind of name is that anyway?) attacks with some cold and raw black metal. Pretty soon the keyboard gets more and more involved in the whole picture, and the music gets more orchestral. Occasionally it does not sound bad at all, and I can really enjoy the first couple of songs but that's it. The longer into the album I get, the more am I losing the interest in it. This is not the best nor the only album with this kind of music I've received lately, and that's why I'm not all that excited about it. It does sound more black metal than many of the others though, much thanx to the rasping vocals. Some of the melodies and riffing is pretty decent and the bass-player is doing a good job, but I just get the feeling that they are repeating themselves too much. More work has been done with the lyrics, which takes us on a ride into the world of fantasy.

UNDERTOW

Unit E

Silverdust

This new album from the German trio Undertow is nothing for fans of grind and other speed-freaks. *Unit E* is about groove and heavy riffs, which are performed mostly in a slow tempo. Judging from their songs they must have consumed a whole lot of doom in their lives, and one or two of the so called new metal bands have influenced them a bit as well. The main focus is on heaviness, but Undertow also writes their material melodious. There are also guest appearances on *Unit E* from Michael HuBurn (End Of Green) and Kirk Windstein (Crowbar), out of which the later band have affected the songwriting of Undertow as well. I feel it's a bit too slow here and there and wish for a higher tempo, but I like the last trio of songs; *Code-X*, in which they bring on the thrash, *Dividual* and the slow piece *Lowdown*.

V/A

Czech Assault

Relapse

After Brazil and Poland, the time has come to shed some light upon the Czech metal scene with a new assault-compilation from Relapse. On the previous assaults, one could find some really good stuff like Abhorrence, Nephasth, Yattering and Decapitated, and therefore my expectations on this Czech-assault were set pretty high. I've noticed over the last few years that many bands in both Czech Republic and Slovakia have gotten addicted to the US-style of death/grind, and for some reason, I was kind of prepared to find that stuff on this compilation as well.

Imperial Foeticide is opening the album with 4 songs (+intro and outro) of fast death metal, and even though it's quite OK, it's nothing to wet your pants over. The drums are quite stiff and sounds like a machine. The base-drums are a bit too loud and at times, the music gets quite muddle. I think that generally the mixing is pretty strange. The singer is doing a good job, but he does not get too much support from his band-mates.

Negligent Collateral Collapse starts with three songs from their 1999-promo, and compared to the first band, their music is darker, deeper and slower. The vocals sound as if they were recorded by a pig and then mixed to the music in a slower paste, with the bass cranked up to max. It sounds quite amateurish (just listen to the drums on *Runtime Error* without starting to cry) and pointless, and one keeps on waiting for something to happen during their songs, but it just keeps on in the same boring style. The last two songs are from 2001. They are faster and they've tried to make them sound modern, but even though they are slightly better than the old stuff, they are far from good.

The fellows in Contrastic have mixed hard core with metal and some funk in order to (I guess) make their music unique. They seem to have had a good time with all kinds of electronics in the studio, and their music has been enriched with various samples and loops. What surely was meant to be a modern metal recording ended up being a pile of soulless sounds, which have very little in common with metal. At times it sounds like plain

dance music and doesn't fit on a Relapse-record at all. I like White Zombie and Rob's solo-albums as well as Pain, but Contrastic does not possess the qualities of those artists. It's a bit shame, because they prove in parts of the first track *Liars Are Winners* that they can do decent punk/meta.

Prague's Intervalle Bizarre play a kind of technical death metal in the US-style, which does not surprise all that much, but definitely rises above the previous bands on this album. They are twisting and turning on every note and it shows that they've put a lot of thoughts to their compositions. This quintet is a tight unit and as an ending of their appearance they serve us a good version of Terrorizer's *After World Obliteration*.

Fleshless has been promoted as the most known grind band from Czech Republic, but I think they sound more death metal than grind. Anyway, they for sure are responsible for the best music on this CD. In four songs (three are their own material and one is a cover of Mortician's *Slaughterhouse*), they show that they've been around for a long time (more than 10 years I believe) and know how to play their stuff. It's tight and intensive and definitely worth checking out. I suggest that you pick up some of their own releases instead of wasting your money on this assault. Besides, there are better bands in the land of the best beer in the world than those presented on this compilation.

V/A FROM SERBIA

HERETICAL GUILT, MAY RESULT, SCARED, SIMARGAL, STONE OF FLESH

Promo CD from Ravenlord magazine

Mr Zeljko from Ravenlord magazine sent in a CD with various bands from his native Serbia, in order to help promoting a little piece of the music that his country has to offer.

First out is Heretical Guilt with their demo *Neronic Outburst*. This is a death metal band from Belgrade, whose inspiration comes exclusively from the US. The music is technical and fast most of the time, but the occasions are rare when I think it's good. Only riff after riff after riff, but the wholeness has nothing to say. It does not grab me and there is certainly a lot to work on before they can call themselves Serbia's Cannibal Corpse.

May Result is a black metal band, but they seem to have changed their music for every release of theirs. On *Tmina* (released by CCP Records in 2001), they play a kind of black metal that occasionally sounds pretty decent. As many of their colleagues, they too use a keyboard that is constantly present in the background, and that is seldom a good move. The sound is not the best either, and this album sounds as an average demo.

Zacaran works quite well though. The other unsigned band here is Scared, who is representing the grind scene with their second demo *Bangla Borchha, Hate Ballads*. And they do it pretty good. Their songs flows on without irritating too much, and even though it sounds quite basic from time to time, they have not much to be ashamed of.

Formerly known as Abaddon, Simargal has previously released a demo with melodic death metal. Nowadays, the band wants to promote themselves as a black metal band, and even though that label partly suits their debut album *Meeting With* (Rock Express Records, 2001), the melodic death metal is still present in their songs. What they are showing here would need to be further polished, but they are on the right track.

The horde in Stone Of Flesh has two demos under their belt (both released as a MC called *Unveiled Evil* by Demonion Productions), and here they are represented with their first album *Some Wounds Bleed Forever* (CCP Records, 2000). These guys play fast and raw black metal, and this is doubtlessly the best stuff amongst the competition on this compilation. Nothing that will place them in the top of the black metal scene, but their aggressiveness will surely please many.

V/A

To Magic 2

Prophecy

To celebrate their 5th anniversary, Prophecy are releasing this compilation, containing 15 songs from 15 bands. If you want to discover new talents within the experimental music, then this compilation is a perfect album to study. The music here is mostly dark and one could say atmospheric. Anyhow, it is definitely different from most of the music reviewed in Amputation. There is the heavier stuff from Blazing Eternity, electronic metal from Bethlehem, rock songs from Paragon Of Beauty and The Vision Bleak, but the best stuff is the mellow and soft music from Tenhi, Empyrium and Of The Wand And The Moon. Some of the stuff here works pretty good, if you're in the right mood that is.

V/A

Voices Of Death, part IV

VOD

The fourth chapter of the VOD compilations is a way better CD than the third one. While there was a whole lot of black metal on *part III*, there's a whole lot of thrash on this one and this time all the bands are Swedish. First out is Arise, and they are together with Demons Of Dirt the are absolutely best bands on this compilation. Both bands give us a taste of their death/thrash (the demons are more groovy) and I urge you to check out both bands' full-length albums. Chastisement are not all that bad either with their thrash track *Time Zone Zero*, and the same goes for Conformatory, Sin Of Dismay and Withered Beauty (death metal) as well. Then there are bands that don't impress, but doesn't totally suck either, and those are Nightspirit (death/black metal), Spawn Of Possession (death metal), Dark Armorial (Gothenburg-metal), Zavorash (ice-cold black metal) and Abandoned (thrash/death metal). The rest are bands that I think very few would appreciate, and those are 9th Plague, Souls Of Emptiness, Blotseraph, Enchained, Gutted Remains and Moria.

VADER

Revelations

Metal Blade

What can I write about Vader that's not already been written countless of times? How can one praise the Polish kings even more than one already does? Every album that these gentlemen have released this far have been masterpieces and that is of course also the case with brand new *Revelations*. Peter the Great and his combo does not let us down this time either – was anyone expecting that?! On this album, just like on the previous ones, they deliver death metal of the finest quality. A small change since the last time is that bassist Shambo has been replaced by a guy named Simon, and he fits well together with Peter's characteristic vocals, his and Mausers brilliant guitar-work and Doc's incredibly precise drumming. *Revelations* is the latest in the line of their excellent releases, which are more than 10 by now, and there is no excuse for not purchasing this album. In fact, not doing so should be punished by physical torture. If you live in Europe, make sure to catch Vader on their 50-dates tour with Krisiun and Decapitated in September/October. After that, they're going to go to the US, Japan, South America and Australia.

VAMPIRIA

Among Mortals

Icarus

The name alone should give you a hint of what this band is all about. Yeah, it is an orchestral type of "black metal/doom" and yeah, I've heard it before. The music of these Argentines is pretty easy listened and they don't complicate things too much. At times, I can hear influences of Samael as well as Dimmu Borgir and sometimes even Therion and it sounds pretty good. But most of the time they play after the known formula simple riffing, melodies on keyboards and screaming vocals and it does not matter whether the drums are fast or slow. It's just boring. Not good are also the vocals of a certain lady who appears

occasionally with her high-pitched whining, and the moments when the male singer tries clean vocals. Apart from this, at various occasions they succeeds to build up a good atmosphere (mostly thanx to the guitarist) with good melodies. If you're into soft metal, you should check these South Americans out.

VIRULENCE

A Conflict Scenario

Morbid

A Conflict Scenario is a really hard record to get into. At least that's what I feel, and after having listened to it several times, I still can not understand what Virulence want to say with their music. Death/grind/HC is mixed with some jazz-stuff into a cocktail that can only be described as one word, and that is original. There seems to be no boundaries when these Boston-sons compose their music. They are simply ready to try everything. Not many dare to do that, and for that Virulence have my respect. It's hard to find words to describe what at first seems to be pure chaos, but a few listenings makes me realize what a complex and thought-through album this actually is. Just check it out for yourself, and you will discover music you most likely have not heard before.

VOMITORY

Blood Rapture

Metal Blade



With *Chaos Fury*, Karlstads finest opens their fourth full-length *Blood Rapture*, an album that was much longed-for due to the great *Revelation Nausea* from 2000. And almost immediately I can state that the boys have kept up the good work. In a furious tempo they give us 9 new death metal pieces, which strengthen their position among the top of this country's death metal elite. Comparing to last time, not much is left of the Bolt Thrower-like guitars. They seem to have tried to write songs that are closer to the classical Swedish sound, yet without losing their own identity at the same time. It is still Vomitory, only darker and a bit rawer.

WURDULAK

Ceremony In Flames

Baphomet / Housecore / Relapse

The American horror-slave Killjoy has got a passion for Norwegian black metal, and he's been involved in various projects with some of the musicians from my neighboring country before. Last year he and Frediabolo (Gorelord) decided to form a band in order to produce some black/death metal as it sounded in the early 90's, mixing Bathory and Celtic Frost with Emperor, Immortal and Dark Throne, and Wurdulak was born. And imaging a mixture of these bands will take you close to how *Ceremony In Flames* sound. Last time I heard something that Mr. Killjoy was involved in was the debut album from Ravenous, which I liked a lot. This recording however, I was a bit disappointed with at first as it started to spin in the CD-player. I was simply expecting more from a line-up consisting of musicians from Mayhem, Immortal, Soul Forsaken, Gorelord, Perished, Bloodthorn and Necrophagia. Most of the time it sounds quite primitive and that old-style feeling is present all the time, both song- and sound-wise. My disappointment occurred because the riffing sounds a bit too simple at times, especially considering that three guitarists are playing on this album.

Ceremony In Flames eventually grows and after I've been listening to it several times, I found it's charm and now I believe it's quite good. But even though it is well worth checking out and I for sure will play it again, it does not come up to the quality I was expecting.

DEMO-REVIEWS

PS: The bass-player is also playing with Misery (see review in the album-section), so you can contact both bands on the same address.

DUNKELHEIT

Typhoon [CD]

Daniel Lundh, who together with Andreas Lennartsson forms Dunkelheit, writes in the letter that was included together with this demo that they play "noise/dark ambient with influences from Abruptum, Merzbow and Burzum". And since I am not very familiar with the work of those bands, I just have to trust his word on it. You see, I don't understand anything of the three "songs" on *Typhoon*. You won't find any instruments such as drums, guitars, bass etc, and they have not either used any computers, samples, synthesizers or sequencers. How they've created the mysterious sounds (which I guess might be used in various film-sequences) is beyond me, just as the point with it. There are many types of art that I simply don't get, and this is just one of them. It's true that it's dark, but it has nothing to do with metal.

ECZEMA

Solidad, El Llanto De Muerte [CD]

Translated into English, the name of this demo (Eczema's fourth) is *Solidad, The Cry Of Death*. The lyrics are exclusively in their native Spanish language, and what they are dealing with is beyond me. The music on the other hand, is some kind of death / black metal with some influences from doom and melodic features. To begin with that is, because eventually they slow down quite a bit in order to create some kind of atmosphere and that's not good. Some of the fast stuff is not that bad, but the demo is presented as one 30min-song, divided into five chapters, out of which much could have been excluded. I think that this would work better if they took the best of the fast stuff and composed a couple of shorter songs from it. Anyhow, the vocals are what really bother me on this demo. On the CD that they sent in are also songs from the demo *On The Other Side Of The Mirror*, which is better.

HEARSE

Demo 2001 [CD]

I guess that most of you are familiar with Furbowl, the band that during the early 90's released a MCD and a full-length album. Both of them contain a style of death metal that doesn't sound like any other band and I recommend them both. The drummer from Furbowl Max Thornell recently joined forces with his former band-mate Johan Liiva (at that moment unemployed after being fired from Arch Enemy), a guitarist was recruited and Hearse was born. The old Furbowl-feeling is very much present on the three songs on *Demo 2001*, and Johans characteristic and deep growling once again gives me goose bumps. Their roots are mixed with a great portion of good old heavy metal, a blend in which the guitar-melodies gets a whole lot of space and actually I come to think of Mercyfull Fate more than once. My advice is that you order this demo right away, 'cause soon they will be putting out full-length albums and you will be able to brag with a demo for your friends. Make sure to keep your eyes open for this trio!

IN GREY

Above [CD]

In the previous issue of Amputation, I reviewed the demo *Mask* from this Stockholm-trio and I found myself liking their quite harmless rock. On *Above*, they are serving us two new songs and they are still blending goth-influences into their rock music. I'd say that the title-track is a bit Paradise Lost-inspired, while the second song *I Amaze* has got some Type O Negative-vibes. There are really no big differences in their music compared to the last demo. *Above* is maybe a bit stronger and they seem to have worked more on these songs, but they are continuing on the same road as before. I'm actually quite amazed that they are forced to still release demos, when the radio is full of crap. After all, In Grey has been here for 10 years, so I'd say it's about the time they get a proper deal. (50Sek/5US\$)

INSISION

Revelation Of The SadoGod [MC]

Again I am one step behind this Stockholm band. Their previous demo arrived just after the 6:th issue went for printing, hence it wasn't reviewed until months later in #7. And right after the release of that issue I got this tape. Anyway, the important thing is to spread the name of the band and due to the quality of their music I intend to do that every way I can. With a line-up extended to a quintet they once again attack with a tape of high-quality death metal, which kicks serious butt. Countless are the bands trying to come close to what these guys produce. It is a pleasure to enjoy their sheer brutality, which they deliver with a high precision. Don't hesitate to order this demo, containing intro / outro, three songs of their own and Death's old classic *Zombie Ritual*, which they've done a good job covering. Of course you should also check out their full-length on Earache / Wicked World as well.

MAPLE CROSS

Promo 1, 2002 [CD]

Apparently, Maple Cross once was a big name within the Finnish metal scene, which they became a part of already in the middle of the 80's. 10 years later, they had released several demos and one album, but by then they had enough of the band and split up. Five years later, vocalist Marco decided it's time to make some music again, and reform the band with a whole new line-up. I've never heard this band before, but if I'd have to guess where they come from judging from this promo, I think I would have picked just Finland. This three-track promo starts with *Invincibles*, a melodic metal-song that easily gets stuck in ones mind. It's like a pop-metal track, if you know what I mean.

Second comes *Simply Simplicity*, a song that I find quite meaningless. The singer screams his lungs out to a few harmless melodies and the whole track feels very dry. The same goes for the ending *Au Revoir*. I get the feeling that the five members of Maple Cross can't decide what kind of music they want to play. On top of that, the sound and production is pretty weak. They've recorded a total of eight songs during this recording session, which means that a full-length album can be released at once. That is if some label takes the bait, which I think is unlikely right now.

MISTWEAVER

Time Breeds Insanity [CD]

Mistweaver was earlier called Infernal, and under that name they released the demo *Visions And Dreams*. As Mistweaver they have the demo *Denomination* under their belt, but I have no idea of how either one of them sounded. *Time Breeds Insanity* however, is opened by the title track, which is a kind of symphonic black metal, a very weak and cheesy one as well. Song #2, *Periculum*, starts off in the similar style, but eventually the singer starts using clean vocals and all of a sudden they sound like a power metal

gang. There are two more songs in this style on *Time Breeds Insanity*, and none of them makes me change my opinion about Mistweaver. A whole bunch of bands out there are doing similar music as Mistweaver is doing, and not many of them makes me interested. This demo is not totally a waste though. The guitarist is the member of this unit who's doing the best job, as he's simply the one who seems to have the best knowledge of what they are doing. There are moments when they actually don't sound all that bad, but those moments are very few. My advise to Mistweaver is to write some heavier stuff and skip the clean vocals. Or go for the power metal thing all the way. Being somewhere in between does not sound right.

NECROFLESH

Promo 2001 [MC]

Apart from playing Stockholm death metal in Horrid, the drummer Matt is also abusing the skins in Necroflesh. This too is a death metal band, however of a different kind. Necroflesh plays in the US style, which means that their material is more technical, faster and with a whole different sound. I like this kind of music, and the Italians are doing it pretty good. Here and there it sounds really good actually. But unfortunately, once again I think that the weak link is the singer. The guy shows on several parts among the three songs that he is capable of good death metal vocals, so there's no need for him to vary his voice.

NOMENMORTIS

Promo 2001 [MC]

Just as the last time, these fellows recorded their material first and are worrying about a label that would release it later. With last time I mean their five-song promo, which resulted in the full-length *How I Learn To Bleed... For The Things I Wish To Forget* on the Japanese label Jackhammer Music. On *Promo 2001*, the Slovaks have chosen four songs (out of 10 recorded), and when they've found someone who'll release it, which shouldn't be that hard, it will be a CD called *Misanthrone*. With a few changes of the members, they've continued to play good death metal after the American model, where technique and brutality goes hand in hand. Compared to other underground bands that are doing the same, these guys have the skills to pull it off. The new material is heavier and better than the one on the last CD, mainly because of the improvement of their skills. Still I'm not very satisfied with the performance of the singer, and once again I want a radical change on that post. The vocals are of the deep grunting style, and the guy sounds like a pig that has his head deep down in the mud.

NYARLATHOTEP

Promo 2002 [MC]

The crazy Japanese-guy is back with a new tape, and those of you who've read Amputation mag before should know what to expect, as his stuff has been reviewed here before. Makoto Fujishima is known for experimenting quite a lot with his compositions and he's still doing that on *Promo 2002*. His new material is even more metal than on the *Nyarlathotep / Gnome* split-tape, and this new stuff is the most brutal I've heard from him. There's really only one song called *Funeral Dusk* on this promo, even though it is also presented as an "ear torturing version". Whether you listen to that version or the original one, you'll get to experience some bizarre metal from Japan that does not sound like anything you've heard before.

RELENTLESS

Experiment In Excrement [MC]

Mr Kanto, who's usually keeping himself occupied with his own Serenity magazine as well as Metalwire magazine, can do more than layout. He's also handling the four-string axe in the death

metal squad Relentless, and he does that really well. It is quite clear that the majority of their inspiration comes from the US-scene, which means that the music is brutal as hell and the vocals are of the deep and growling kind. That is when Kanto himself isn't doing his hysterical screams. As with the music, the lyrics too are dealing with brutality. You can read about semen, urine, dismemberment, vomiting, anuses and more blood than you can take...you know, all the nice stuff. This is a good one.

REPUGNANT

Draped In Cerecloth [MC]

Maybe you are already familiar with this Stockholm-based band thanx to their 7"EP *Hecatomb* (also released on a 12"EP by Hammerheart Records). If not, you should immediately get a copy of that one before it's too late, as it sure is one fine piece of art. *Draped In Cerecloth* is yet another dose of good Stockholm death metal of a kind you seldom stumble upon nowadays, presented in three songs as a total. Since last time, they have lost their bassist and drummer, but they have found good replacements and the future looks good for them. This demo will bring forth some good memories of past times, if you were around during the golden years of death metal. If not, this is the kind of good stuff you missed.

RESUSCITATION

Injection Of Insanity [CD]

In a lack of competent drummers, a band sometimes needs to satisfy with a substitute, and countless are the recordings on which a badly programmed drum-machine spoiled the songs. In Resuscitations case it does actually not sound all that bad, and the duo Bob (guitar/bass) and Kurt (vocals) delivers five decent death metal tracks of high speed. Even though the drums occasionally sounds a bit too machine-like, the music is pretty good and reminds slightly of Morbid Angels early material. It's not as technical, yet I believe something good might come out of this. They just have to find a human being, capable of handling the stocks. 7US\$.

SEPTICEMIA

Hopeless Age [CD]

It's not all just crap, this promo that the Austrian leute Septicemia sent in for analyze. There are things that they have to work on before a label gets interested, because it sounds like an average demo, but I like the feeling of it. Some of the riffs should have been tossed away already in the rehearsal room, the vocalist needs to shape up a bit and the arrangements occasionally gets pretty lame and mediocre. Their death metal is heavily influenced by the early 90's scene, but there's also evidence of the band being familiar with modern metal as well. Some of the songs are well worth a listen or two, but there are some tracks that are close to bad (*Good Save The Queen* and *Deeper* to name some of them). Go for the quality next time, and don't fill the CD just because there's space on it. I should point out that *Hopeless Age* was put on tape two years ago, so check with the band for some newer material.

SOIL OF THE UNDEAD

Seduced By Mental Desecrations [MC]

The boys from the IKEA-capital offers three songs + intro on this demo (their second I believe), that was recorded in the end of 2001, and it is material they absolutely don't have to be ashamed of. It is death metal with a slight touch of black that from the start

until the end goes in a nice fast tempo, and they seem to be perfectly sure of how they want it to be done. No unnecessary stuff that only confuses, but straight forward seems to be their motto. The duo Henke and Chrille, who are handling all the instruments, have taken some help from Växjö's Slask for the vocal parts, and that man delivers dark vocals and high screams that both sound good. I like *Seduced By Mental Desecrations* and I'm sure you will too.

VEDERVÄRDIG

Demo 2001 [CD]

Vedervärdig is the Swedish word for Repugnant (or similar to that, anyway), and it is quite a suiting name for the music on *Demo 2001*. This is a one-man show of Peter Karlsson, and for this demo he's created three songs that drives me nuts after just a few seconds. We are dealing with some kind of noise, but I guess that this guy is listening to some black metal as well, because there are traces from this style in his compositions. There is nothing exciting about *Demo 2001* at all, and I suggest you listen to their namesake Repugnant instead. That is qualitative music.



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JUDGEMENTS from A MASTER

This is a new section in Amputation magazine, in which we put a musician against the wall and force him to give his opinion on various songs. It might be old recordings as well as new, made by classic bands or up and coming new acts and the music is of a wide range of styles. First out is the thrash-man Cab from Hypnosia, who we grabbed by his throat and made him judge the following material.

IMMORTAL - *Tyrants*

Sons Of The Northern Darkness [CD 2002]

Cab: What do we have here? *Tyrants* from Immortal's new album. An OK album, but I don't like the sound at all. I prefer the earlier works, like *Pure Holocaust* or *Battle's In The North*. Both albums are much rawer with a colder and more suitable sound. I'll give them credit for still keeping the Immortal trademarks and for staying true to themselves.

CALLENISH CIRCLE - *Pull The Plug*

Flesh, Power, Dominion [CD 2002]

Cab: I don't recognize the band, but they do an unoriginal but OK cover of Death's *Pull The Plug*. Nothing more, nothing less. Death is one of my favourite bands of all time, and a huge influence on my own guitar playing in Hypnosia. I bet we'll have loads of covers of Death, now that Chuck passed away!

Amputation: Check out Insision's version of *Zombie Ritual* on their last demo. That one is really good.

VADER - *Dark Age*

The Ultimate Incantation [CD 1992]

Dark Age from Vader's first LP, very good indeed! The drum sound is pretty strange, but the songs are of a high standard, and sounds very good still today. They have evolved into one of the best death metal bands in the scene today, both on records and live.

MASTODON - *We Built This Come Death Lifesblood*

[MCD 2001]

Cab: Strange music on this one! A mixture of everything and done very bad! Alternative music with some rough guitars here and there. This must be from the US!

Amputation: It sure is from the US. This is the new band from a couple of ex-Tooday Is The Day guys.

Cab: Throw a couple of unmatched albums into a blender and this would be the result, and nothing that I'd ever buy!

DESTROY!!!

EXCOMMUNION - *Superion*

Superion [CD 2002]

Cab: Morbid Angel-extravaganza! This is totally OK, but who could it be? Good production and interesting songwriting.

CARDINAL SIN - *Welcome To The Show*

Rock Till Doom, Doomed to Rock [Promo-CD 2001]

Cab: Very Sabbath-inspired. The music is good and reminds me of the Dio-era, combined with some more modern stoner rock bands. The vocals are the weak link here. They don't fit to the

music and are very unpersonal. Sabbath-metal demands a very strong voice! Would like to know who they are, though!

Amputation: They are an Australian band. Check out the review of their promo in this issue.

OVERDOSE - *Dead Clouds*

Circus Of Death [CD 1999]

Cab: It's beginning with a Pantera-riff, and then some clean guitars. Mid-tempo, post-thrash/heavy metal. It sounds American, from the beginning of the 90's. Like the stuff they showed on Headbanger's Ball.

Amputation: America is right, however Overdose are from the South part, from Brazil.

Cab: This doesn't do anything for me. Boring metal. Could be something like Pro-Pain, if I remember right.

IMPALED NAZARENE - *The Madness Behind Absence Of War Does Not Mean Piece*

[CD 2001]

Cab: Drunk black metal band doing some punk/party song. Very bad, I must say!

Amputation: These Finns sure have distanced themselves from their earlier material.

HYPNOS - *Burn The Angels Down In Blood We Trust*

[CD 2000]

Cab: Thrashing death / speed metal! Some good riffs in here. It sounds like something I should know, 'cause it sounds Swedish like hell! I'd like to see this band live, because the music is made for a drunken night at the pub!

Amputation: I knew that it would take some Czechs, to make Cab wet his pants, hahaha.

THEORY IN PRACTICE - *Colonizing The Sun Colonizing The Sun*

[CD 2001]

Cab: This is some highly technical extreme metal. The musicians are very good, everything is perfectly played, and the clean production helps a lot to get all the details in their music out to the listener. I don't know what it is, but it had me interested in hearing more! Lots of tempo changing and interesting arrangements.



NEWS!

> There are no limits to how many projects the Pantera-frontman Phil Anselmo can be involved in. Together with guitarist Jimmy Bower (Eyehategod / C.O.C. / Down) and Joe Fazzio on drums, Phil will be playing the guitar and sing in this new band they call Superjoint Ritual. The debut *'The Once And Destroy'*, which is said to be a "sonic demonstration of a NEW school heavy rock", will be released in May through Sanctuary Records.
<http://www.superjointritual.com>

> If you happen to be at the Biebob club in Belgium on the 14th of June, you'll be filmed and recorded together with Ancient Rites for their live CD and DVD.

> Colombia's Supreme Musick Records have signed American Pastured. The debut CD with fast and chaotic US-style death metal is scheduled for this summer.
<http://www.suprememusick.cjb.net>

> Revelation Records' Drowningman should have finished the recording of their new album by now. While in the studio, they were visited by members from Converge, ISIS, Darkest Hour, Drop Dead, a few others who contributed to the recording in various ways.

> Dying Fetus will tour across Europe together with Monstrosity, Honwytser and Intervalle Bizarre between the 6th and 29th of September.

> Bestial Mockery have released their *'Christening Hammerchansaw'* - album through Metal Blood Music.
<http://www.metalbloodmusic.com>

> Hearse signs to Hammerheart. First a 7"EP will be released, and later on we can look forward to a full-length CD. The band will be in the studio during this summer.

> Avulsed's third album *'Yearning For The Grotesque'* will be released through Avantgarde Music in November.
<http://www.avulsed.com>

> Wolfblood Records is a new old school thrash/black metal label. Check out the contact for upcoming CD and vinyl releases.
Wolfblood_records@yahoo.com

> Upcoming releases in July on Metal Blade Records: Vengeance - *'God Was Created'* and Cartel Decapitation - *'To Serve Man'*. In August, the new album from The Fallen - *'Front Line/ard Enemy'* will be out.

> R. Kronheim has left Enslaved.

> Norway's Mindgrinder have signed with Sound Riot Records, and will have a debut album out in the beginning of 2003.
<http://www.mcgreen.com>

> The death metal pharaohs Nile have finished the recording of their brand new album *'In Their Darkened Shrines'*. The release date for these long awaited nine songs is set for September 2nd. As if that wasn't enough of the good news, here's another one: The band will be headlining a US tour between July and August, with the support of none other than Hate Eternal, Origin and Arch Enemy.

> Out now on Forensick Music: Suppository - *'Painting Out Reality'*, filled with 18 songs of intense grind core. The label is also distributing the Okkult album *'Requie Mysterium'*, containing gothic black/doom metal released on Kiv Records.

> Grand Alchemist, said to play sophisticated black metal, will release an 11-song full-length album for their new label Sound Riot.

Recorded and ready to be released on the same label are Requiem's *'The Arrival'*, Grayscale's *'When The Ghosts Are Gone'*, Rapture Christ's *'Molesting The Entombed Of'*, and Nightsides' *'Ephemeral Redemption'*.

Demon Child and Eternal Grief are on their way to the studio.

> Exmortem has left Hammerheart Records for Osmose. And so have Thriceacon, but they don't have a new label yet.

> The End Records have prepared two new releases for the US market: Architekt's *'The Shattered Mirrors'* and Wishes' *'Reflection Of The I'*. The latter one does also contain the complete MCD *'Of Entropy And Mind'* as a bonus.

The label will also release the new Agalloch album *'The Mantle'* in July, and in fall they will release the new album from Dan Swanö's Nightingale, *'Alive Again'*. Both only in the US.

> Three new songs are written for the next self-released album from Absu. Those are *'Galla Templo'*, *'Night Fire Canonization'* and *'Between The Ashes Of Death And Decay'*.

> Some time ago, the online store of Forensick Music was opened. Check it out for good value CDs, LP's, tapes and T-shirts.
<http://www.forensickmusic.com>

The label has also signed Dutch Suppository, whose debut *'Painting Out*

'Reality' should be out by now, containing 18 tracks of grind core. The band will tour Europe this summer with Sweden's Regurgitate and Germany's Entrails Massacre.

> Uwe Lühs (guitar) and Tomi Götzlich (bass), both ex-Grave Digger, have started a new band with drummer Randy Black (Annihilator), guitarist Bibio Eilen (ex-Varhead) and vocalist Michael Seifert. This new constellation calls themselves Rebellion, and their first power-metal release will be out through Drakkar Records at the end of March.

> Blood Red Throne are about to record the follow-up to *'Monuments Of Death In May'*.

> One of the formers of the Swedish death metal are in the Sunlight studio to record a comeback album with the man responsible for the famous sound: Tomas Skogberg. We're talking about Grave and their *'Bark From The Grave'*. Before its released, you're advised to check out the re-issues of *'Into The Grave'* (including the *'Grotesidious Pain 7' EP*) and *'You'll Never See'* (including the *'And Here I Die, Sacrified'* EP).
<http://www.intothegrave.com>

> Mighty Music will shortly release the fourth album of Slovakia's doom-death combo Thalation, *'Tales Of Dependency'*. In the summer, they promise us a new album from Danish Sacrificial, and before the end of this year, both Anasara and Enter Silence should have new albums on the market.

> Mercenary have a new man behind the drums. After more than eight years in the band Rasmus Jakobsen is out, and Mike Park is replacing him.

> Canada's Eridolion will release their new opus *'Cana Nation For Metal Blade'* in June.

> This summer, Sweden's Dismember will enter the studio to record their debut for Hammerheart Records.

> *'Anger Hate'*, the new album from Ablaze My Sorrow, will be out on the 10th of June through No Fashion Records.

> Marduk are currently working on fresh material with their new drummer Emil Dragtunovic, who replaced Fredrik Andersson. In wait for the new album from the Panzerdivision, you should try the Blackcrowned box, containing two discs with rare and unreleased material, a rare video and a booklet with various rare photos, lyrics, band history etc. It's strictly limited, so hurry, hurry!

<http://www.marduk.ru>

> Sarafiel will start recording a new album at the end of this year.

> Spanish death metalists Kaorthic are recording their new CD for a September release.

> Diverzta, formerly known as Lost in Twilight, have signed a deal with Hammerheart Records and their first release for the label will be the album *'Molus Operandy'* out this June. It's supposed to sound close to Him, Nightwish and Sentenced.

<http://www.lostdinttwilight.com>

> Spawn Of Possession will record their debut album for Unique Leader during the summer. Decrepit Birth is a new band containing ex-Decrepit members, and Tim Yeung will be playing the drums on their first release through the label.

> News from Century Media.

The follow-up to *'Excision Of The Wish'*, which is the debut album from Sweden's Archimedea, has been recorded in the bands own studio.
<http://www.archimedea.space2u.com>

Blind Guardian will play three gigs in Brazil in August. They will also headline the ProgPower Festival in Atlanta, USA between the 15th and 16th of November and rumours say they will do a full North American tour this year as well.

<http://www.blind-guardian.com>

Dimension Zero's *'Silent Night Fever'* will be released in North America in May.

<http://www.dimensionzero.org>

And shortly afterwards, *'Time Of Despair'* from Entwine will be released there.

<http://www.ewtnine.cjb.net>

In April, the debut from Dream Evil, *'Dragonlayer'*, should be released.

<http://www.dreamevil.mu>

> The keyboardist from Children Of Bodom, Janne Warman, has got his second solo album released through Century Media. The album is called *'Beyond Abilities'*, and it will include great appearances from Timo Kotipelto (Savatage) and Kimberly Goss (Sinner).
<http://www.warman.net>

ADDRESSES

BANDS

2 TON PREDATOR, <http://www.2tonpredator.com>
 ABNORMITY, <http://www.geocities.com/abnormityband>
 AETERNUS, <http://www.aeternus.ch>
 ALAS, <http://www.hateeternal.com/alias/>
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 ANANDA, <http://www.multimania.com/ananda>
 ARCKANUM, <http://arckanum.cjb.net>

AURORA BOREALIS, <http://www.auroraborealis.org>
 BETHLEHEM, <http://alexanderwelt.org>
 BEWITCHED, <http://come.to/bewitched>

BEYOND THE EMBRACE, <http://www.beyondthebrace.com>
 BLOODAXE, <http://www.bloodaxe.net>
 BLOODDUSTER, <http://www.bloodduster.com>

BLUDGEON, <http://www.bludgeon.tv>
 BURIAL HORDES, http://www.geocities.com/Burial_Hordes
 BURIALMOUND, <http://burialmound.cjb.net>

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CALLENISH CIRCLE, <http://www.callenish-circle.com>
 THE COMPANY, <http://www.thecompanyweb.de>

CANNIBAL CORPSE, <http://www.cannibalcorpse.net>
 CONTRASTIC, <http://contrastic.dkm.cz>

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 DUNKELHEIT, http://www.geocities.com/dunkelheit_666

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MISTWEAVER, <http://www.mistweaver.net>
 MIXOMATOSIS, <http://www.mixomatosis.cjb.net>

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 NECROPHOBIC, <http://www.necrophobic.net>

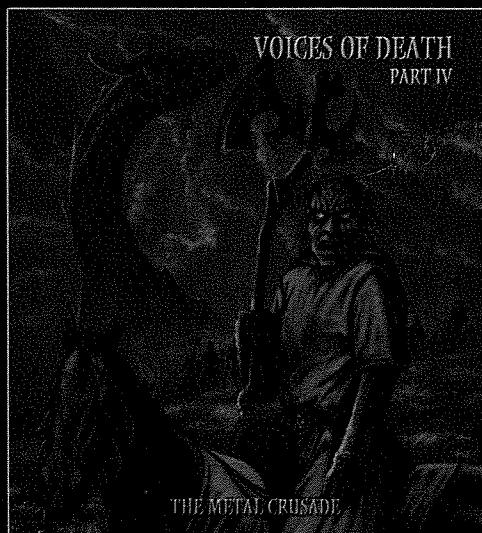
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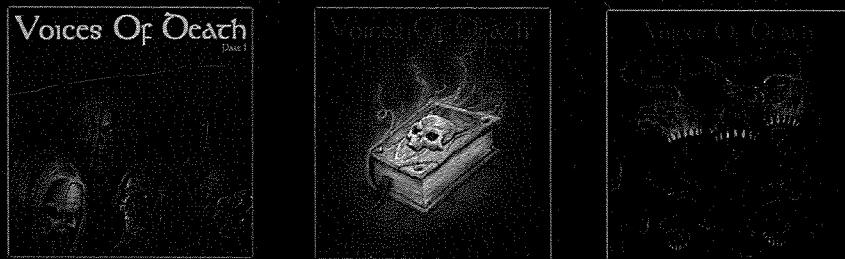
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