

Crashing Rage

Magazine

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**DARKTHRONE
EMPEROR
BORKNAGAR
KATATONIA
NECROMANTIA
IN THE WOODS...
PECCATUM
SOLEFALD
SETH
GRAVELAND
DARGAARD
DIE VERBANNTEN
KINDER EVAS
ODIUM
KAMPFAR
ASGAROTH
NEGURA BUNGET
ENOCHIAN CRESCENT
SAD LEGEND
HA LELA
FURTHEST SHORE**

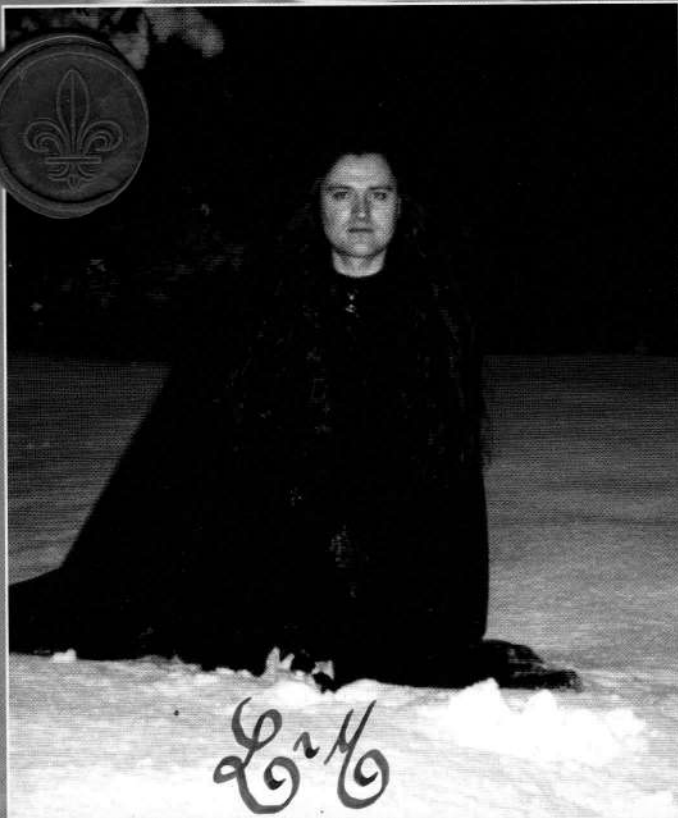
Editorial

Venus smiled at us that eerie autumn night
Candlelight banquet in Victorian halls
Enflamed my love for her
Even poet's passionate verses
Were unable to evoke a true description
Of such tremendous fierceness
Though appearing as sweet woman
Such a beauty could not be human
"Art thou my destiny?"
Whilst we embraced
Moonlight touched thy soft lips
Such pale skin, as white as purest snow
Wind curled thy ebony hair
Like vipers on Medusa's head
Less the horror than the grace
Turned me almost into stone
Infected with such idolatrous shape
My deepest dreams came true
These red magic eyes, like bleeding flowers
Made me slave to her
Erotic kisses under whispering trees
were my foretaste of Eden
Melancholia's fire burnt in highest flames
When she told me to leave
"Will thou be mine again,
most sinful of all demons?"

She: "Crimsoned fullmoon is the sign
When my spirit shall cover thine
At the eldest oak of the midnight forest
I'll teach thee secrets buried in stone
And by a force to man unknown
I shall never be alone!"

Ancient Ceremony "Death In Desire's Masquerade"

"Les grands hommes font leur propre piédestal ;
l'avenir se charge de la statue".
Victor Hugo



Contents

3. DARKTHRONE
4. EMPEROR
6. BORKNAGAR
7. KATATONIA
8. NECROMANTIA
9. IN THE WOODS...
10. PECCATUM
11. SOLEFALD
12. SETH
13. GRAVELAND
14. DARGAARD
15. DIE VERBANNTEN
KINDER EVAS
16. ODIUM
17. KAMPFAR
18. ASGAROTH
19. NEGURA BUNGET
20. ENOCHIAN CRESCENT
SAD LEGEND
21. HA LELA
FURTHEST SHORE
22. CD reviews
27. Demo & 'zine reviews

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There is the Northern ground, something cold, the general blackness, the expression of Satanism as well as the communication through hatred. With albums seen as the essence of the anti-Christian hordes, Darkthrone is a war machine, a fierce weapon that is reborn again, escaping the earth, into the void. Fenris and Nocturno Culto are ready to spread unholy and grim black metal chants that will forever be embedded in your blood...

Dialogue with Fenriz (percussion, satanic poetry & haunting chants) immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

After the release of "Total Death", you decided to enter the world of silence...
In the early years of DARKTHRONE, I was very productive and I grew tired of it. It was too much. It was easy for me to make a lot of music because I had a recording studio at home. The compositions then came easily to my soul. During that intense period, I hadn't enough time to listen to music because I was simply playing too much. So my main activity lately has been to build some sort of a good record collection and to listen to as much music as possible. I haven't done anything precise apart from that.

But what had to happen did happen. The band was on ice for while when Nocturno Culto told me that we were going to make a new DARKTHRONE album. That's typical in my life, I never plan something. When an idea comes, I just go for it. I feel totally free as I don't need to make music to stay alive.

On the tribute to DARKTHRONE, about half of the songs are very close to the original version...

Sometimes they even sound more original than the original itself. Those kind of songs are the most flattering because a lot of work was made in order to perform them and the result is very impressive. But I think it is more interesting and entertaining to listen to some others, like the ones of DODHEIMSGARD or THORNS, which sound differently. I have heard DARKTHRONE's songs so many times that I am kind of getting bored with them.

"Goatlord" was supposed to be released after "Soulside Journey"...

It was originally recorded during summer 1991, that is just one year after "Soulside Journey". But we stopped playing the material and we rehearsed for black metal stuffs instead. Some years later, we listened to this rehearsal tape and we found that there were a lot of good riffs in this recording. And in DARKTHRONE, we don't really care if the material has a good sound or anything. I have a background from the eighties and all the tape-trading of that time, so I am used to hearing strange sounds on tapes, and I like it that way. That why it wasn't a problem for us to release "Goatlord". Only the vocals were re-recorded in 1994 and added to the rehearsal tape. People might think that it's cheap, but we couldn't go through the process of re-recording the whole album.

A new album from DARKTHRONE is said to be released this year...

The album will consist of about eight songs. Up to now, I have written four lyrics that are very hard and hateful and Nocturno Culto has composed three songs that last something like twenty minutes. So half of the album is now finished, but the problem is that I haven't heard the material yet because he lives very far from here, at five hours and a half by train from Oslo. I guess it will be hard to rehearse together. We will have to meet where he used to live, that is only three hours from here. And for the recording, we will have to find a place somewhere between both of our places. Anyway, Nocturno Culto will soon send me a tape as for the moment he just told me that the songs would sound a bit different. I hope they will be kind of standard and not too fast.

Do you sometimes regret the time when Zephyrous was still playing in DARKTHRONE ?

I just think that it is a pity that Zephyrous left DARKTHRONE. It was better when the band was composed of three members and when we were hanging around together. It was really good, but it is an attitude we had a few years ago now. I still think that there hasn't been any real bad period for DARKTHRONE. People sometimes say that it must have been a difficult situation to live when we lost all the distribution. However, it was hard for Moonfog Productions because they had to fight to make people understand that DARKTHRONE isn't a political band and that they

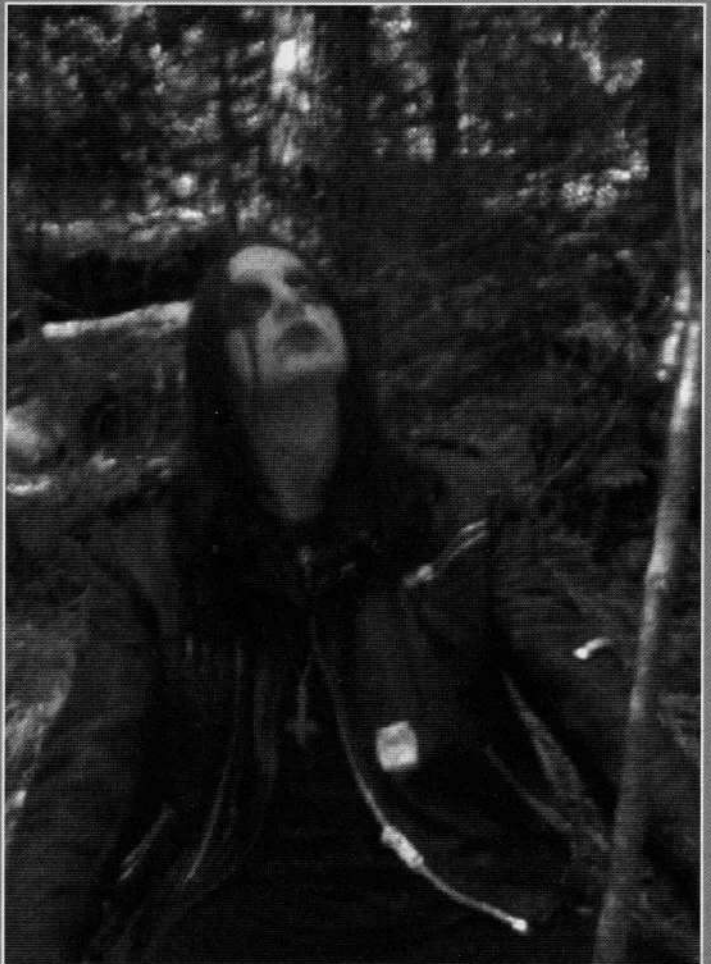
had to distribute our albums. They did an excellent job and managed to get back a good distribution for us. It was really worse for the label than for us. But we don't care about this in DARKTHRONE because we are free to do whatever we want to. We have always had a job beside the band and it allowed us to stay free. Nobody can tell us what we have to do.

Looking back to the past, why did you decide to include lyrics from Varg Vikernes of BURZUM on "Transilvanian Hunger" and "Panzerfaust" ?

It comes from me. Because when someone is jailed, he loses his ability to speak out freely as he was used to when he was still a free man. I thought it would be a great thing if Varg Vikernes could express himself through his lyrics for DARKTHRONE. It is something we did especially for his soul...

Many people from the Norwegian horde wrote lyrics on "Total Death"...

This album was meant for it. The reason is that I saw that the Black metal scene in Norway was starting to split, so it was an attempt to hold people together, for them to think they had done something together. but I see it as some kind of a favour I wanted to do. I thought it was more important that other people did something. But it might happen again in the future, I'm not negative about people writing lyrics for DARKTHRONE. It is not a problem for me.



Is the ISENGARD project still in existence ?

No. For this year, I will do the DARKTHRONE album first, before composing for myself. I'm not very productive because I have now to feed my ears a lot with music and this is a different kind of creativity for me. I try to open my mind to music. That's why ISENGARD is on ice for the moment as I have no time for it. It also seems that in 1999, I will record an album for VALHALL and another one for a project including Maniac of MAYHEM and Killjoy of NECROPHAGIA.

Your relationship to the STORM project is rather ambivalent...

It might not be the best thing I did. With the passing of time, I learnt that I have a problem with the crossover styles. I prefer when a musical genre remains pure. I don't like crossover styles in general. I don't think that putting such a folk touch was a good idea. But it can sound good like in the way of SKYCLAD. STORM was more like total origin folk music than the British band. Some songs on "Nordavind" are very strong whereas some others didn't work at all.

For you, artistry is also the art of shaping your life...

I'm interested in other arts and I sometimes go to contemporary art museums because it is the kind of expression I like the most. It is more surreal for me, but I wouldn't like to analyse it. In this style, as well as in literature, you always have many different ways of analysing the work. But I haven't the time to throw myself into this world because I am already so deeply implied in the musical world, and I don't want to get out of it. It's more for me something to check out from time to time and then work. I have enough with music this far. With my art, I'm a fist in the face of God...

EMPEROR

From "Wrath Of The Tyrant" to "IX Equilibrium", EMPEROR's musical pieces create an endless pilgrimage showing man's grandeur through his art and beliefs. To celebrate such an outstanding musical monument is somewhat hazardous. Suddenly, the superlatives aren't strong enough to honour the result of many years of musical developments. Through winds and storms, the band's aristocratic black metal style portrays a sombre reverence towards the trumpets of a complex concept and the stars of an individual philosophy. "O' Nightspirit, I am one with thee, I am the eternal power, I am the Emperor"...

Dialogue with Samoth (lead & rythm guitar)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

With "IX Equilibrium", it seems that this time you have put more weight on musical rawness and power...

Your thought on this point is correct. The new album is a lot more guitar based and is enriched by a more in your face production. The overall material sounds more aggressive and powerful and holds more deathlike themes. It's important to compromise on the more basic and primitive riffs versus the technical riffs to get a perfect result. If things get too technical, it can often lose its feeling. EMPEROR's musical entity is always based upon thoughts, emotions and atmospheres.



Once again, Ihsahn composed all the keyboard parts and wrote all of the lyrics...

He created all of the synth passages during the studio process. I think the keyboards are not so much floating as before, like on "In The Nightside Eclipse", in which we used almost only choirs and strings. On "IX Equilibrium", there are more short and often abrupt keyboard sequences.

As for the new lyrics, they really belong to Ihsahn's territory. The verses he assembled are written in a symbolic way to express our personal ideologies and thoughts: EMPEROR is a manifestation of journeys through vast nightside landscapes and the inner nightshades of the soul. We treasure those values that lay within us and the era we long for.

"IX Equilibrium" wasn't recorded in Grieghallen Studio with Pytten but in Akkerhaugen Lydstudio. What were the reasons for this choice ?

We wanted to try out another studio, as we felt that Grieghallen halls couldn't give us the sound we wanted to get. Fortunately for us, Akkerhaugen Lydstudio is run by a close friends of ours and is situated about twenty minutes from where we live. Without a doubt, the recording sessions for "IX Equilibrium" characterize the best and most relaxed studio experience I have underwent so far.

Your new release was tentatively entitled "Curse Ye All Men" and you finally opted for "IX Equilibrium"...

In fact, "Curse Ye All Men" was actually just a working title. Unfortunately, it got spread around as being the official title before any permanent name was settled. The "IX" concept is kind of weird. In different combinations and concerning this album, the number IX appears with a variety of meanings and values. This purpose will be a matter of reflection for the interested listener...

Do you think to compose means among other things that one has to constantly struggle against cliché and to free oneself from the attraction of the ready-made phrase ?

We just try to keep a certain intelligence level, honesty and individuality within our musical and lyrical expressions. I would say that to really get into the music and feel its atmosphere can definitely be linked to the act of a ritual. We put ourselves above so-called underground rules. We are here to create, not to copy... And we are here to rule by the strong hand of metal and dark art.

Do you plan to make a video to illustrate one of the tracks featured on "IX Equilibrium" ?

Not at the moment. We'll probably film some shows on the forthcoming tour, and maybe do a live video or something. As for my memories of "The Loss And Curse Of Reverence" video, I remember an incompetent person called David Pasler. He was just running around and tried to act as a professional. Fortunately, the video got good responses, and in the end, served its purpose.

Regarding the line-up, why did you part with bass player Alver ? Have you found a replacement ?

Alver is a very enjoyable person but in the end, he couldn't give us what we demanded. So he thought it was best for him to leave EMPEROR. The line-up now features a permanent session bass player, whose name is Tyr. He's really a fanatic musician. So far the co-operation between us has proved to be very good.

Has Charmand Grimloch become a permanent member of EMPEROR ? What do you think of his own band TARTAROS ?

No, I would say that he's still a permanent "session" member. He's very busy with his own bands, TARTAROS and THE THRILL. Moreover, Ihsahn does not want to leave his keyboard duties to someone else. I like TARTAROS' "A Grand Psychotic Castle" a lot. I've recently listened to some new stuff and it sounds very promising, with much more complex and psychedelic parts. Hopefully, Charmand Grimloch will soon finish the works for his long awaited full length albums.

What do the themes of honour, will, strength and individuality mean for you ?

To struggle for what I believe in and strife for, and to live a decent life with respect for myself and my kind. I have a will to continue with what I do, no matter what I am confronted with. If you have strength, will and honour, you're not a quitter. One must go through strife to accomplish greater things : strength through strife and evolution. For each experience you go through in life, whether it's a good or bad one, you must learn from it and try to grow stronger. Sometimes, you have to jump from the bridge and build your wings on the way down. One has to dare things, and if you fail, then you have to learn from it.

Do you think that people were more sincere and reliable in ancient times ?

It's very difficult to say but I like to believe so. It also depends on the different cultures and epochs. People in ancient times did not take everything so for granted. Due to their often hard life, they cherished more true values than many people do today. I generally think

there were more strong people in old times, with exceptions of course. It's a fact there were a lot a sick and poor people. You were raised to take care of yourself and your comrades. In today's society, you are almost rewarded if you are an unfit loser. I look upon the medieval era with great admiration. I love its dark atmosphere. It's a pure joy to tease my imagination with pictures and visions of such epochs. But I think we should also keep in mind that not everything was that glorious in the past all the time either. Some people tend to glorify it a lot, without really thinking too much about it. I

BATHORY and DARKTHRONE were selected by ourselves. It was Ihsahn's main choice to cover "A Fine Day to Die" as "Blood, Fire, Death" is his favourite BATHORY album. And we took the track "Cromlech" from "Soulside Journey" because this album had an overall bigger impact on me than later DARKTHRONE releases.

Referring to the name you used at the beginning of the band, "Lord Of Silence", do you think you have the silence of those who know ?



guess it's a kind of a trend in the black metal scene to worship the medieval times. I believe it was hard times for a pagan rebel to live in Europe during the inquisition. It was in those days the soul plague, namely Christianity, really started to take shape in Europe. The society is still based upon these dogmas, so the medieval period didn't only bring nice fantasy stories about dragons and black knights.

You are very drawn towards your own heritage, the Vikings...

I don't follow their mythology as a belief, but I like the atmosphere and symbolism of that time. The Vikings had a much more balanced attitude towards life and death. They were in harmony with nature and treated it with spirit, probably because they had spirit themselves. I guess they had their problems back then as well but they grew up to handle them. They didn't have all the stupid artificial worries and problems that so many have today. I believe they were more reasonable and more decent. Their society wasn't full of pity morals, denial of life, fear of death. It all came with Christianity. I am forever with nature, in the shimmering twilight...

EMPEROR have paid tribute to MERCYFUL FATE, BATHORY and DARKTHRONE by covering respectively "Gypsy", "A Fine Day To Die" and "Cromlech".

What does each of those bands represent for you ?

Why did you choose those tracks in particular ?

All those bands have been very influential to me, especially BATHORY and DARKTHRONE. Regarding MERCYFUL FATE's "Gypsy", I must say it was more of a random choice actually. Many tracks were already taken when we agreed to participate in this tribute. On the other hand, the songs we picked to pay homage

I had chosen this name myself. Silence can not only be associated with denial of speech, but also with atmospheres of melancholy and darkness. I worship the silence of soul breeding woods and I have always been of a silent personality.

Ihsahn and yourself appear as guests on ULVER's new release "Themes From William Blake's The Marriage Of Heaven And Hell". What were your roles in this recording ? How do you see this experience ?

We do some minor vocals additions on the last track of the album, "A Song Of Liberty". We were never involved in any composing. Ihsahn and myself just perform these vocals lines in a rather spontaneous way. And I think the new release from ULVER sounds very good, varied and I feel proud to have been a part of this artistic expression.

Faust, Ihsahn and yourself are featured in the book "Lords Of Chaos". What is your opinion about this publication ?

First, it's a pity that the book came out too late. "Lords Of Chaos" is probably an interesting reading for fans but for me, it's more or less old news. I also think this publication portrays the Norwegian scene as being more political and racial than it ever was in reality. There is an annoying mistake as well : in my interview, it is stated that I was arrested in 1992 but it should really be 1993. The complete story is that I was arrested in Autumn 1993 and was charged with one arson assault on a church. I was at an early point released from custody and had to wait until summer 1994 before getting my case on trail. I was sentenced to 16 months behind the bars because of my participation in this arson assault, which had taken place in mid-September 1992.



The title used for Borknagar's third album, "The Archaic Course", clearly states that the Norwegian band follows the epic metal style they traced on "The Olden Domain". "Archaic" refers to an old, ancient, forgotten and mysterious atmosphere while "Course" is linked with the notion of direction. A path marked by dense instrumental arrangements of instrumentation and vocal choirs that give a rich quality to the creation of these skilled Norsemen...

**Dialogue with Oystein G. Brun (guitars)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

After the release of "The Olden Domain", Garm left BORKNAGAR. What were the reasons for his departure ?

Garm left the band because he didn't like the new course of our music. He is still in ULVER and makes ambient music. His other band ARCTURUS no longer exists though he will release a new album. Sometimes I felt that Garm's work was everywhere but at the same time his potential was so big... He was able to do a lot of things and he still came up with something new and refreshing. But



it was really inspiring for us to get a new vocalist, somebody who could spend a lot more time with the band. Because in the end, Garm wasn't able to give us the attention we needed, especially when it concerned touring.

Recently, there have been some line-up changes within the band...

In the beginning of November 1998, just before the tour with CRADLE OF FILTH, two of our members decided to leave the band, namely Grim (drums) and Kai K. Lie (bass). So far, they haven't been fair enough to give a direct and clear reason why they came to this decision. For me, this is nothing but the result of a serious lack of comprehension regarding the understanding and responsibility of being in a serious and ambitious band. A progressing band like

BORKNAGAR, along with our label and our fans can't compromise on terms based on this rather childish behaviour. Being a minority in the band's democracy, they found the easy way of quitting the band. This was predicted and is respected but one should be attempted to doubt their professionalism. In spite of this, it is important to mention that BORKNAGAR goes better than ever and a new release is already planned as well as partly written, replacements are also in process. This will not affect our music in the future of any importance due to the minor impact these ex-partners had during the musical evolution. And I also want to remind you of the fact that every line-up change we have had in the band, which in fact have been a few, has turned out to be beneficial for BORKNAGAR.

Musically speaking, "The Archaic Course" still features some black metal influences but also introduces passages inspired by folk music...

The concept behind BORKNAGAR is to make something unique and special: pure epic metal. I enjoy progressive folk music and I gradually became fed up with the use of grinding tempo all the time. Recently, I listened to some albums that could have sounded far better if the tempo had been more suitable. When I work on my compositions and realize that they crash a bit with a faster speed, I decide to change the tempo whenever it's possible to so. Contrasts are important to me, so I think it's very comfortable to perform the music exactly in the ways we do.

Looking back to the past, was it your intention with "The Olden Domain" to move away from an aggressive black metal repertoire to more subtle and moody compositions ?

When writing the songs for "The Olden Domain", I was very focused on feelings, moods and basic atmospheres. I wanted to give this album a very deep and essential feeling. Finally, the music turned out to really need a proper production and we have almost got it. I guess that some people will think of us as some kind of sell-out band but that's pure crap. The music we do is really heartfelt and the future will show that we aren't betrayers... I was really pleased with "The Olden Domain" at the time when it was released. In the meantime, I had the chance to see this album from a special distance and I realized that a lot of things could have been better. Anyway, that's the way of progression and I regard it as healthy opus for my musical future. What I still really like is the overall mood of the album and the same goes for our debut release. I think that both albums fully reflected our musical standards at the time they were released but today, things would be different.

Your new release "The Archaic Course" presents a new singer, I.C.S. Vortex, who used to be involved with ARCTURUS and VED BUENS ENDE...

The fact that we got I.C.S. Vortex as our new vocalist is probably the best thing that could ever happen to BORKNAGAR. I get more and more sure of the fact that he is the missing link that will make our sound and music perfect at last. He has a voice and a general vocal approach that are different from Garm's but his contributions on "The Archaic Course" prove that he is an outstanding vocalist. In the studio, he had the opportunity to experiment with different things, like how he is able to perform various vocal harmonies.

The story is that you met BORKNAGAR's new vocalist thanks to Garm...

Garm and I.C.S. Vortex have been friends for a while. Maybe our collaboration started as a symbiosis but now he is a fundamental member of the band. He wrote some lyrics and composed a song for "The Archaic Course". His first priority seems to be BORKNAGAR as he spent a lot of time with the band than Garm ever did. I don't know if I.C.S. Vortex will again work with ARCTURUS. This band has always had a flowing line-up and the same uncertain situation goes on today. Sverd may not be with them anymore. The only thing our singer knows is that they completed two more songs without his participation. As for VED BUENS ENDE, I can assume that things go rather slow in that camp.

Your lyrics are influenced by fantasy, nature and folklore...

I have to admit that I feel very inspired by the surroundings but at the same time I'm not the kind of person who sits in the forest the whole day long, dreaming and just thinking about things I will later tell in the media. I have a close and natural relationship to Mother nature. I grew up at the countryside and spent most of my childhood close to natural surroundings. It has - of course - affected me later in life - that's of course a natural thing I now live in the middle of Bergen because of my work, school and the band. But I don't like this town very much as I am rather anti-social. I haven't been in a pub here in town for several months. I prefer to stay at home and compose songs as I'm not attracted by the usual social life.

On BORKNAGAR debut album, you wrote this passage : "A past where man had to learn, respect and fear nature in order to survive. A past in which myths and primeval lore kept generations searching for the true basis and essence in life"

Is it a will to revive, to find again, to recall a cherished past ?

Our albums and image come across with a kind of Viking vibe and I try to live like a Viking in terms of principles. It's important for me to live my life bravely, not to bow down to anyone, to be a free spirit, to fight for what I want and get exactly what I long for. It's the archaic course: the direction led by something old, ancient, forgotten and mysterious. I feel close to heathenism and I truly support the downfall of Christianity from my whole heart. But I think there is only one way to really fight it: ignorance and knowledge. Using these two swords in the right way, Christianity will bleed to death in the near future...



From English word Catatonic, Katatonia is the perfect monicker to embrace the deep, infinite realms of melancholic and depressive emotions. Following a certain link from the very beginning, this mysterious entity has now a strong gothic influence that is focused on the dark essence. When the discouraged ones long for some more funerals to come...

Dialogue with Anders Nyström (guitars, keyboards, backing vocals) immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

With "Discouraged Ones", KATATONIA has musically moved towards a gothic metal repertoire, the only standing connections with the previous releases being darkness and sadness...

We felt this turned out to be the natural direction to proceed into. Having played metal music since 1991, we have now come so far in our own musical journey that we have ended up finding enough inspiration in ourselves to get going. In fact, we have come to a new point. When KATATONIA started out, we took a lot of direct influences from our favourite bands at the time, but the situation today is totally different.

With a closer look at this album, one sees that the entire piece is related to your own beings...

It is an expression of what we have been through the last couple of years. We managed to channel our misery into creativity and did an album upon that. This is how our personalities sound like... This is us. We have always put down our very souls into what we do and obviously "Discouraged Ones" speaks the language of ourselves in our current position and mental state. I still love KATATONIA's old style, but it is something we have completed and passed by listening to the emotions and calls from within ourselves. We kept about fifty per cent of the influences outside of the metal scene and it gave us the ability to come up with a unique style.

There were some major surprises on the vocal parts, which displayed clear gothic chants...

We have been using harsh vocals for over seven years now and we felt that they couldn't keep up with the band's musical development. Nothing new really happened on the vocal front while KATATONIA went through some real musical changes from release to release and we felt it was time to evolve in the vocal field. We could no longer use an aggressive singing style because the new songs definitely needed something beyond growls.

So you started experimenting with clean, harmonic chants...

...And we discovered it would bring a new edge to our sound. I think this change proved to be a perfect move that helped KATATONIA to progress one step further. I heard a few people who think that clean vocals could have already been featured on "Brave Murder Day" and I guess they could be right. But I'm glad that "Discouraged Ones" was the album where everything came natural and was done without any glimpse of uncertainty.

As for contractual matters, you recently decided to leave Avantgarde Music in favour of Peaceville/Music For Nations...

The English based label really showed some immense interest in KATATONIA and offered us a long-term deal that we couldn't refuse. For the next five years or so, we will be working under their wings. Avantgarde Music was a really nice label and we had the pleasure to work with one of the best label managers in the world, namely Roberto Mammarella. But despite our great collaboration, we felt it was the right moment to carry on to a different league in order to obtain the best possibilities for the band.

Regarding your forthcoming album, did you again focus on KATATONIA's essence, which is to create and meditate sadness ?

Indeed, it is a long life concept that overshadows everything we do. We seek sadness in both the music we listen to personally and create as a band. The sadness will always be heard in the music we do. Without melancholy, my

ears would no longer perceive a single sound... You can expect it to be a natural follow-up to "Discouraged Ones". It won't be such a drastic change as the last album was to "Brave Murder Day". We set our new sound and style with "Discouraged Ones" and will just spin the wheel from there. Having composed about fifteen tracks at the moment, I would dare say that I see more variations in KATATONIA's new material. I suppose there is a bit more lead guitar work this time as well as different pace measures. The vocals have been improved too. All the songs are nothing but a blend of harmonies and disharmonies, played both in the acoustic and the distorted way. The lyrics will be dark and discouraged with awful feelings about everything that surrounds us.

Your compositions are driven, fuelled by the awareness of what you have been through both as persons plus as a band over the last years and of what you are currently experiencing...

As persons, we have seen the backside of life and the hidden common day misery of the mind. As a band, we have seen the false facade of the music business and the poor minds within it. What we do is to sum up our experiences and thoughts on the subject. If one puts our lyrical work in perspective, the same themes will come and go all the time. It isn't positive and doesn't have a very bright message for it would be senseless to cover reality in nice clothes. Life is utterly ugly. Some people are disgusting in certain circumstances. By thinking and acting in a repulsive way, they become low spirits...

Do you think that solitude and silence are in the heart of song writing ?

I suppose it is a big part of it. Solitude and silence can be divine and it can be pure agony, it all depends on the circumstances. We are all victims of the circumstances. Creativity is something familiar to me because inspiration comes to me during the whole year. I talk about the nights, especially during the autumn months, when the days are darker and colder. My mind then descends in a constructive state, whether it be intentional or unconscious. I know there are people relating to what we tell, so in some way and for someone, I guess we could be a guide or a spark in the grey haze...



Looking back to the past, why did you decide to have Mike Akerfeldt (OPETH) sung on "Brave Murder Day" and "Sounds Of Decay" ?

The story was that Renkse discovered he had lost his ability to growl and scream. It even went so far that he lost his own natural voice when still trying. As time and money fly quickly, we realized we instantly had to come up with a solution. So we agreed to ask Mike if he wanted to come down into the studio and help us out. He willingly accepted to do so and he made a tremendous effort to perform his vocal duty. When KATATONIA later on decided to do the "Sounds of Decay" mini CD, it was supposed to be the last thing we would ever do with screams and growls. Then, it felt like a natural thing for Mike to end it all gracefully.

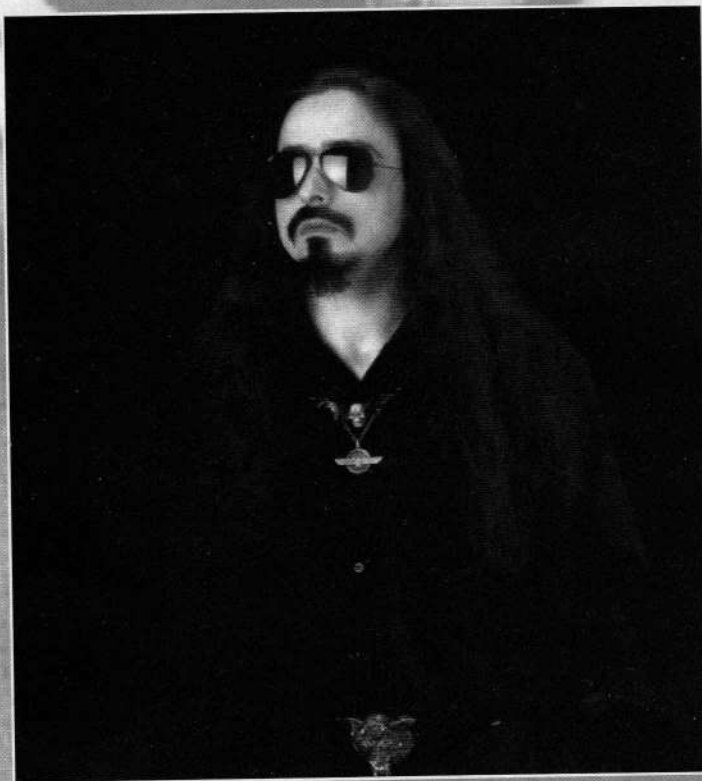
NECROMANTIA

Armed with a pagan orientation, Necromantia strongly honours its own roots through an original and occult black metal style. Following an individual morality, the Greek masters praise the power of blood. An ancient link that have existed from millenniums and connected with the creation and direction of mankind. At the dawn of a new age, the vampire Lord speaks...

Dialogue with Magus Vampyr Daoloth (bass, vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

Do you see "Ancient Pride" as a special chapter in NECROMANTIA's history ?

Yes, definitely. On "Ancient Pride", the music was more straight, powerful and matured, with a variety of speed, anger, melancholy and pagan nostalgia. This mini CD is something totally different for us, which in no way can predict the sound that we will build on our next full length release. It's a special part, full of emotion and pagan honour. Each time we release a new offering, we want it to sound different. Of course, the main elements and the spheres remain the same but it's important for



us to change the details in order to obtain another result in the end.

Why did you cover MANOWAR's "Each Dawn I Die" ?

MANOWAR is maybe one of our earliest influences. Moreover, this is a band that pays more attention to bass guitars than we do. The track "Each Dawn I Die" has also amazing, magical, lyrics that fit to NECROMANTIA's spirit. The other tracks on "Ancient Pride" are very different. I would say that "Shaman" is a pure black metal song, extremely fast and a bit ceremonial, pointing to the shamanic rituals. The title track follows the path led by the lyrics, which are written in a poetic and pagan way. Finally, "Light Of My Darkness" is a distinct erotic based song.

The lyrics are a tribute to the Ancient European spirit, to the essence of the warrior's magnitude...

We wanted to bring an homage to the old European culture, not only the Greek one. In the past, the feelings of honour, intelligence, wisdom and honesty seemed to be much bigger than today. Life was more simple and straightforward. People had more respect for each other and lived closer to Mother nature. They possessed the knowledge of

balance and harmony and didn't need the complexity that rules today's world. Unfortunately, all the great morals and values of the ancient times have now been lost or destroyed by modern Europeans. I think we have a debt pending to those who lived before us. It's ultimately important to think about your own roots. Blood alone moves the wheels of history...

Tentatively entitled "IV Magic", NECROMANTIA's third full length album is said to express much wrathful and powerful atmospheres...

The title of our upcoming release refers to the occult traditions that are found around the globe. And it's true that some of the songs will be the fastest, the most aggressive ones we have ever composed in the story of NECROMANTIA. Simultaneously, other passages will sound even more melodic and melancholic than before. If we manage to combine both elements successfully, the next album will constitute an epic and strange landmark in the extreme genre.

From the very beginning of the band, you have used an eight string bass instead of a rhythm guitar. What kind of sounds and atmospheres do you want to create by using this instrument ?

At the time, we were a bunch of bassists who wanted to create a personal sound : a blend of black, death, doom metal with classical, sorrowful and mystic melodies filtered through a necromantic spectrum. We later decided to use an eight string bass because it has a different, raw and morose tone that suits NECROMANTIA's spirit. This rapidly became a very important factor in our music. Thanks to its recognizable massive sound, I must admit that the use of such an instrument managed to give more originality and personality to our compositions.

At the time of "Crossing The Fiery Path", you adapted Baudelaire's poem "Les Litanies De Satan"...

The words written by Baudelaire in this poem clearly show Satan's tragedy. It describes the loneliness of a powerful and wise being who chose to follow his own way. One must know that darkness hides its secrets carefully. My purpose has always been to embrace those secrets and be able to possess knowledge. Satanism and blasphemy are just small pictures among the immense realm of darkness. I think that Baudelaire is a poet who majestically reflects the dark side of human nature and I have great respect for both the man and his literary works.

Referring to the band's name, what does the ancient art of communication with the kingdom of the dead represent for you ?

Practised either by spiritualism or through ceremonies, necromancy has always been an inseparable part of the Greek religion. One of the most famous necromancers in the ancestral times was the one of Acheron's. As an individual, I have a deep interest in life after death. Death really fascinates me, but not in a fearsome way. I have feelings of hatred towards this entity because it has so much power. My ultimate dream and ambition is to defeat death. That's why I was first involved in the occult fields.

Apart from NECROMANTIA, you used to be involved in various projects, N.A.O.S., DANSE MACABRE, RAISM and THOU ART LORD. What did you choose to end those different musical expressions ?

I think that each of those projects has reached its highest degree of creativity with the release of their latest albums, which will forever stand as their swan songs. All of those bands evolved in different fields because at the time, I wanted to experiment with various musical styles while still retaining NECROMANTIA's integrity. Sounding either dark, heavy or weird, the common thing with all these bands was the occult feeling, which is very important in my eyes. Now, I only take care of my main band, namely NECROMANTIA.

Did you start composing music to feed your mind with thoughts ? Do you think that one of the main purposes of music and literature is to make people think , by composing and writing ?

Living my life within the dark side, the artistic dimension is a way to express myself and channel my energy and feelings to something creative. I would describe this particular state of mind as a catharsis or as an exorcism, a training of my demon self... Art is immortal and we are its expressionists through music and literature...

In The Woods...

Both positive and negative emotions embrace the Norwegian dandies of In The Woods... All the ingredients within "Strange in Stereo" have a handful of soul to themselves and sound like a call to the realm of purity. Their compositions may be pictured as a kind of unbelievable meditation, as a subliminal expression of metaphysical and inspired thoughts.

"We're not dead until our last breath sails out of our room, where final sleep awaits..."

Dialogue with Ovi Svithjod (vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

IN THE WOODS... is about the desire and urge to create something pure and universal...

Innovation is the key word for the musicians who are seriously into their art. "Heart Of The Ages" and then "Omnia" were fine documents of ourselves at the time. All our past activities were necessary to complete what IN THE WOODS... are at the moment. Both releases had to sound that way in order to give shape to our new album "Strange In Stereo". I can assume that as artists, we will never make the same album twice, and that's why those two pieces of art were so unique. Nothing will ever sound like them.

With "Strange In Stereo", you decided to venture even further into the progressive evocative fields...

The new album features shorter and more organic songs than "Omnia", which was a journey in five parts, melodically hypnotic while aggressive and pure. This time, there are also more shifting moods, from dreaming atmospheres to real ones. I would describe our art as a kind of negative energy channelled through the music and transformed into positive energy. We never think about genres and always try to transform different moods into music and words. IN THE WOODS... has no ambition besides developing our expression, and that's why we don't have boundaries.

Your artistic works are based on the emotional side of the road, rather than on the intellectual one...

We don't try to be persons we are not. Whether our outlet is an abstract form of art or not, it is merely for the listener to decide. This way, we might demand something from the audience. If entertainment in one way or another is demanding, and if you give something in order to receive, the listening experience is usually lifted to another plane; We let each song grow on its own like raising a baby before you let it loose to the world... To this base, we add our individual personality, and in the end, we try to make all the elements work together as a symbiosis. We take a lot of time whenever we do a piece of music, so nothing really happens accidentally. It's the only way possible to achieve the emotional intent at the bottom of each song.

Everything on "Strange In Stereo" sounds like an open wound...

That is in fact true. I believe in individual development and personal spirituality. While going through life, you develop yourself and become a more grown-up person. When you want to achieve something pure, you have to become pure. It has to be personal, balanced. Bad is essential to feel good. I know that I have found myself into unknown states several times while painting emotions into visions. We can find reality within ourselves, not in today's society. There is no key about the way life should be led. If we don't feel we live and breathe, then the feelings of anger, frustration and envy will be our sad destiny...

Through your lyrics, do you try to analyse the mysterious relationship between mankind and the universe ?

Roughly, the lyrics deal with the journey through life. You start as a confused and uncertain child and you want to go on with your life. It's a challenge to gain new experiences and to leave the relatively safe childhood. You walk through different stages, gain good and bad experiences. We try to understand the true meaning of things and ourselves. To know oneself is highly important for every human being. It is important to think and use the brain capacity. And the more you think and reason, the more you'll know about yourself. When you think, you know that you live and when you live, you're able to create...

French philosopher Cioran wrote that "what we call pessimism is nothing but the art of living, the art of tasting the bitter flavour of everything that surrounds us". Do you agree with this quotation ?

I agree with this quotation to some extent. I don't believe in good without evil and the opposite : it has to do with balance. Philosophy is good if you

have a personality before you lend your senses to it. If you want to become something, I don't think it's good. As I previously mentioned it regarding the musical field, you have to give in order to achieve. Philosophy can add something, but it can never build anything out of nothing...

The concept of IN THE WOODS... is about the might, the power and the beauty of nature...

We have to listen and look at the essence of Mother nature. Without such an environment, we are nothing, and we might as well enjoy it while we still have the chance. To sleep in mid-nature with the sky as your only roof is an experience each and everyone of us should take part in. Especially here in Norway, I assume, where you are able to explore the beauty of nature from the first day of birth. As you live and breathe within nature's harmony each and every day, you're somehow lucky. Just like celebrating life...

Have you ever felt the ecstasy of crossing an area inhabited by something more powerful than yourself ?

A few times. An example : when I wrote the lyrics for the last song of the debut album, I didn't have a clue of what I was babbling about. While reading it the other day, I realized that someone else helped me out. There was nobody else in the room when I wrote it. In one way or another, either conscious or subconscious, you're being influenced from everything you experience, whether it's music, literature or anything else your senses play a part in. These elements are probably reflected in the music itself, but it is rather difficult being aware of it, if you live and breathe what you compose.



"Mourning The Death Of Aase" was rather a tribute to Edward Grieg as a composer and a wanderer of the wilderness...

Edward Grieg studied classical music in Central Europe from where came all the greatest composers. After a few years down there, where he composed a lot of music in the same way as the masters, he probably got tired of not doing too much by himself concerning innovation. That's why he came back to his original home, the western part of Norway. Edward Grieg then started to make long journeys through vast landscapes, taking almost all his inspirations from nature and old folk tunes that belonged to Norwegian history. This noble person used the surroundings in a way that he almost gave them life, without hurting them and this is probably why I do respect him so much. No other man has been so much influenced by Norwegian wilderness as him. Edward Grieg was an outstanding composer, and we owe him a lot for the cultural inheritance he granted us before he left his earthly existence.



Peccatum was brought to vitality and existence in order to express the individual philosophy of three souls. "Strangle From Within" evolves on a complex, enigmatic and appealing musical path and on the end of it, shall be granted the crown of a deity. Through this first step, they have ascended to their one and only real God : art.

Presiding upon their throne, the candle of wisdom burns and Ihsahn is the flame...

**Dialogue with Ihsahn (vocals, guitars, keyboards)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

Ihsahn, you hardly need further introduction due to your work in EMPEROR but the two other members of the band are not well known in the metal scene...

Ihriel, my wife, was more or less the founder of PECCATUM. She had worked on the concept and the lyrics for a while, and in the beginning of 1998, the band was formed. We discussed much how we wanted PECCATUM to be and got really into the concept and lyrics, before we started the recording around April 1998. Ihriel and Lord PZ, her brother, come from a musical family and were more or less brought up

Of great musical variety, PECCATUM's debut album walks a fine line between the worlds of classical music and extreme metal...

Even though we have natural influences from our experience with both metal and classical music, we didn't limit our music due to genre. It means that we used any kind of musical inspiration which could suit PECCATUM's purpose. It was very important for us not to compromise with ourselves on this issue, whether to have any bounds or to take the music in a certain kind of direction. The music itself is the genre of PECCATUM, it is art metal... Further on, the variation of multiple moods and melodies is a result of this rigorous way of working and we aim to follow this path in our future work too.

You technically wrote all the music on "Strangling From Within"...

You could say this, but without the guidance and inspiration from the lyrics, Ihriel and Lord PZ themselves, the result wouldn't have been anything like this. And I think that this collaboration and the way we worked with the material have had much subconscious influences upon us as well. To some extent, it felt like much of the song material just came by itself. And it seems to me that the best musical parts I wrote are the ones that came most easily. Those passages suddenly appeared in my mind and I don't know exactly how and why they turned out that way.

Classical music is a natural musical environment for you to work in...

This is both due to some of the necessary technical skills and to the fact that we find these ways of instrumentation and atmospheric potential very appealing. As for classical composers, the favourites might vary through periods of time. Because classical music is such a big topic to get into and I could not say I am familiar enough with all the talents from early baroque until the modern composers to state concrete favourites yet. But recently I enjoyed the works of Haendel, Pergolesi and Schubert. I enjoy their fabulous music, and musical skills. I am sure there are many other composers I will enjoy in the future.

In which way is PECCATUM's art experienced and interpreted by three individuals, with their own emotions, feelings and perspectives ?

All the music is based upon and inspired by the lyrical concept. Through this, the three of us have contributed to the best of our abilities to interpret and express the material, though with a very personal touch. I think that the artistic mix between the three of us allowed PECCATUM to sound very personal, yet strong in union and as a whole. Thus, this is not a kind of angry black metal album, with a warpath concept. It is more a mental walk through dimensions, and this walk takes the atmosphere to the deepest valleys of despair and fear and to the highest mountains of brightness. Still, it contains some critics towards the conservatism and materialism you find in today's world. A world with humans forgetting about what makes them humans : their mind, soul and heart.

The lyrical concept contains both atmospheric and philosophical themes that are much revealed in the title itself, "Strangling From Within"...

I think a title, whether it is used for a book, a picture, an album or a song, should give some kind of hint or overview of the contents of the product. I cherish all the different themes, as they all invite to new musical interpretations, and such challenges make me explore and find more sides to my artistic and musical spirit. The first part "The black and white was meant for nothing. The shadows meant for all" can be best described as an aggressive and pessimistic statement. The second part "The carrier of sorrow transforms..." goes a step further and is a more melancholic realisation of the declaration made in the first part. We've tried to combine the lyrics, music and concept all the way through the album, by deliberately using music and vocals to underline the subjects of the lyrics, in order to achieve a wholeness.

PECCATUM was established in order to create music for the sake of art...

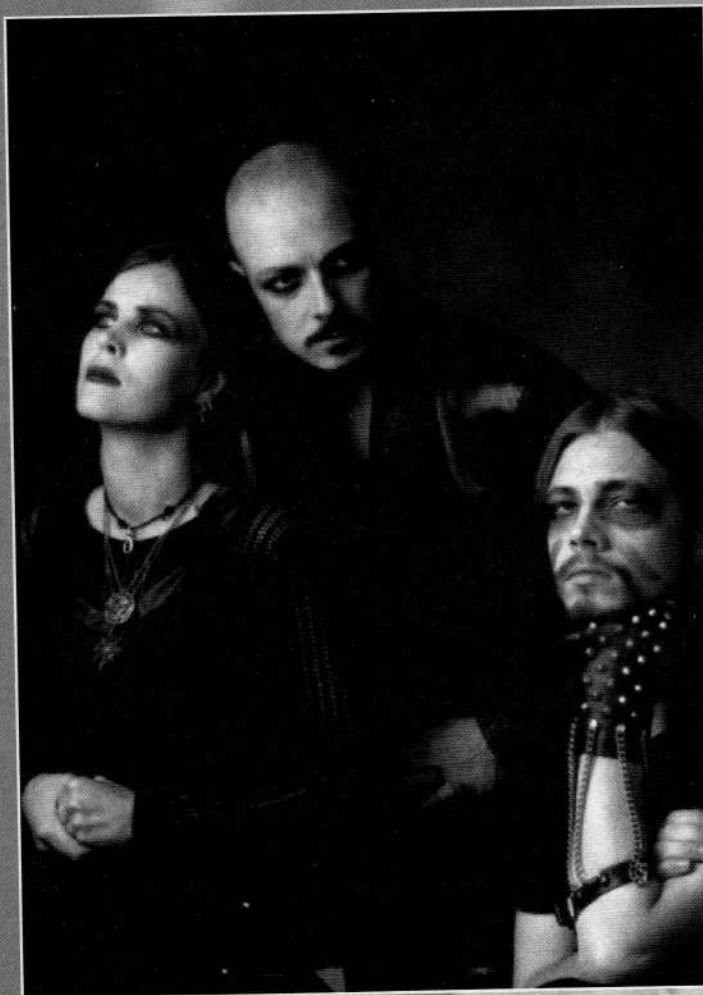
To me, art is a medium to channel emotional energy, through which the artist transfers his visions and feelings. If the receiver is opened for this form, he will experience the outcome through his own individual understanding. Such a medium can be anything that affect and appeal to our senses : sound, pictures, movement, words, touch, smell, taste, spirit etc., whether they are used separately or in combination. Whatever that suits the purpose best. This topic could of course be discussed from several directions, but I believe this explains vaguely my understanding of art.

Each member still undertakes classical training to further expand the depth of feeling and emotion that he or she can convey with the voice...

Obviously the classical vocal lessons were a great help for each of us. Actually our teacher was also a co-producer during the vocal recordings on the album. I must admit that I personally could have given this training much more time and attention. I believe they say that good classical vocals come from ten per cent of talent and ninety per cent of work. An issue that Ihriel in particular has taken as a challenge, devoting more and more time to training and aiming for a degree in classical vocals. This is also a very good inspiration for the rest of us to aim higher.

The recording of "Strangling From Within" was vocally, and in most other ways as well, a challenge for you...

I was able to experiment with different vocal types and could thus discover new potentials and limitations regarding my voice. It has also confirmed very strongly, that in order to use the potential of the voice to its full extent, it is absolutely necessary to practise, practise and practise more, as with all instruments. Of course, good technique in vocals, or any instrument for that matter, doesn't in itself result in good music. But in order to form and express your artistic vision, one has to master the concrete medium of its manifestation. Despite the major technical development of playing and recording instruments, I believe many musicians would like to have a stereo-jack in their heads, but unfortunately this is not available yet. So one will have to constantly practise and work to reach higher achievements. Then again, I think this will to improve one's skills and all challenges are essential forces that enable you to perform a creative work.



with classical music. They both take classical singing lessons, which I also do. Further on, Lord PZ has been involved in the local metal scene since 1987 in several bands and projects. The three of us possess different musical and artistic qualities, but what is much of the force in PECCATUM is our equal urge to create and experience art. The blend of these skills and desires, plus the pleasure and challenge it is to work together naturally inspire and strengthen all of us individually and in union.

solefald

Without a doubt, Solefald's unique form of art has an abstract quality to it. Each time you listen to the music, you hear a different emotion, a distinct atmosphere, emerging at times, to which you find you didn't perceive before. And each of those moods holds the warmth and feel within the piece. It has a unique feel to it, the like of which has never been heard before in contemporary music...

"An abnormal chase for those who still believe in a normal world".

Dialogue with Lazare (drums) immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

The music on "Neonism" still carries fast and monumental parts fighting slow and fragile ones, but the whole expression is much wider than before...

With "Neonism", we bring our old musical expression further by adding on loads of new ideas and concepts. We try to trap people in our music, to enshroud them in a wide range of references and to force them to react. Positively or negatively. "Neonism" is everything that is new - it's the "-ism" of tomorrow and it's fluorescent and dirty. We refuse to get stuck in old ideas and ways of making music. SOLEFALD has always been about innovation, not imitation, to use the expression of a well known designer...

You have used many different vocal styles in order to follow the music and vice versa...

If you regard our music as the macrocosm, then our set of vocals form the microcosm. They are built on the same principles and serve the same purpose. We have always thrived on variety and that phenomenon follows us through "Neonism" as well. The new album turns out to be quite a complex one, with a ton of different references to a ton of different musical styles. I am sure it will take a lot of people by surprise and maybe scare some narrow-minded people away. But to get scared is an excellent reaction...

Do you agree if I tell you that your vocals sometimes remind me of Gregorian chants ?

As a matter of fact many of the clear vocal parts on "The Linear Scaffold" were very much inspired by Gregorian chants. That kind of singing represents the purest form of musical spirituality, as if the singer worships the melody itself. It's a humble and deep approach to music and it is most certainly a way of adding a new dimension to the total expression.

Do you see SOLEFALD's art as the outcome of a wide range of impressions ?

A wide range of impressions gives a wide range of expressions. That's what art is all about. You go out and experience, and then you go home and let all the input come out in a transformed, artistic state. It all has to do with transformation. Like designing clothes, for instance. Avant-gardism in fashion industry is always based on impulses from other parts of society. Those very impulses are transformed into colours and shapes, and they finally end up as weird coats by Jean Paul Gaultier (my favourite designer) or stylised suits by Calvin Klein. Our music goes through that process as well. We do designer music and you are the ones who wear it...

What is the meaning behind the anthem "red music with black edges" ?

"Red music with black edges" is a way of describing our artistic expression : The colour red is the most intensely passionate colour there is, while the colour black is undoubtedly the darkest and most destructive one. We find passion to be a really important part of our music, but at the same time we sense that the same music has its latent elements of destruction and darkness. Therefore, we mix the colour expressions of red and black in order to get a short and concise description of our music.

Your lyrics can be divided into the intellectual and the poetic fields, with a reference to the philosophical tradition...

Philosophers are tools for us to use in our own development. You should read the works of philosophers holding very opposing views, like Kierkegaard, Sartre/Beauvoir and Mill, and think about the differences, the similarities and the relevance their ideas have to your own life and your own thoughts. That's how you gain knowledge tightly bound to your own personality, and that's how you get to understand how other people think as well. It is really fruitful...

Why did you choose to adapt "When The Moon Is On The Wave", a poem written by Lord Byron ?

Lord George Gordon Byron was a tragic figure in many respects, but he had one bright, shining gift : the ability to put his fiery passions into the fragile lines of a poem. "When The Moon Is On The Wave" is said to have been written as an all-consuming curse meant for Byron's lost love. If you read the whole poem, you can feel how the words bite, how the passion runs from one line to another and how the totality of this poem grasps you by the throat and tries to suffocate you... When it comes to old English literature in general, I must say I'm a great admirer of what came out of the Renaissance. Shakespeare, to use an obvious

example, holds many treasures for you to find but only if you're able to dive through his language and into the core of his works.

French writer Paul Valéry used to say that "a poem must not say that it rains. It must carry drops of rain".

Poetry is very different from all other literary approaches in the respect that it tries to be, not to portray. Therefore, Paul Valéry summed up the very essence of poetry in just fourteen words, and you've got to admire him for that...

According to you, is the poetic inspiration a manifestation of knowledge ?

It really depends on how you label knowledge. Seen from one angle, knowledge is physical laws and written ideas, like the banalities of how to drive a car or how to make a good "baguette". Seen from another angle, it's all the things having to do with feelings, ideas, and abstract notions of what reality is supposed to be. Poetic inspiration, I believe, may draw from both of these sources, so in that respect: yes, poetic inspiration can be a manifestation of knowledge, or rather an awareness of the difference between knowing and not knowing.

On "The Linear Scaffold", there is the drawing of a triangle which is orientated clockwise. Each corner is associated with a word : origination, bereavement, and accomplishment. What do you want to express with this symbol ?

The triangle of origination, bereavement and accomplishment is our way of expressing what we believe to be the circularity of being. Metaphorically speaking, things come to life, work themselves towards a certain height, they decline and finally cease to exist. Then, new things are forced into existence and the circle starts all over again. We chose a triangle to explain this process of circularity because the circularity in itself has three parts, namely origination, bereavement and accomplishment. The image of circularity is important for us and we chose our band name, our symbols and our cover art carefully from that idea. They are the themes of SOLEFALD's birth and of our debut album.



"Mon travail est celui d'un homme limité qui doit traiter une situation sans limite" ("My work is the one of a limited man who has to face a boundless-situation"). An exquisite and truthful quotation from Paul Villrio that was featured in the pages of your debut album...

This sentence is a summary of man's place in the cosmos. It puts things in perspective, with simple words on a complexity beyond everything. Paul Villrio has managed to grasp with a simple pattern the complexity that existence actually forms, by seeing it from the outside. Understanding is still an impossible task, but this sentence works as a keyhole for you to peek in. It makes you get a glimpse... When it comes to the language, Cornelius now has a university degree in French, and he thinks, as I do, that your language is among the most beautiful tongues in the world...



Referring to an Egyptian demon, the name Seth is as ancient yet timeless as possible. The concept behind "Les Blessures De L'Ame" is a combination of atmospheric black metal experiences with gothic stories created by vocalist Vicomte Vampyr Arkames from the darkest depths of his mind. When the lyrical and musical purpose is to give birth to your own afterlife...

Dialogue with Vicomte Vampyr Arkames (vocals) & Heimoth (guitars) immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

Your debut full length album "Les Blessures De L'Ame" could be linked to the vision of an ocean, with both calm, stagnant flows and furious, devilish waves...

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames : We don't try to do the same music on each release. Our compositions are sometimes aggressive and fast whilst they can express quiet atmospheres with the use of acoustic guitar parts. Maybe SETH's music sounds personal because of the various arrangements that are coupled with appealing guitar riffs.

Heimoth : The album is musically more structured than the mini CD "By Fire, Power Shall Be...". All of the elements forming SETH's trademark have been better expressed on "Les Blessures De L'Ame". The drum parts became faster, there is a more adequate mix between the guitars and the keyboards and the vocals are now sung in an original way. The production is also much more different, I would say more furious and powerful. As musicians, we have progressed a lot between both releases and it's only the beginning...

With a brilliant shape and rich in reflections, your music sounds like a kind of spiritual poetry. Do you agree with this approach?

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames : Absolutely. I like to use my psychological experience to build the concept of the lyrics. They are written in very personal way and come from my own thoughts, feelings and dreams. I have created a real philosophic



approach in our album. It can be understood by the listener and I hope my verses will embrace many dark souls. I think literature is a good means to spread concepts. Personally, I'm a great admirer of German philosopher Nietzsche and French poet Victor Hugo.

After the release of "By Fire, Power Shall Be...", you decided to sing in French. Why ?

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames : As for the use of French, I would say that my mother tongue gives me more precision in my words. Therefore, it's easier for me to write

down my own thoughts. Moreover, I think this language has more richness and depth than English.

Referring to the title of the album, do you think that soul wounds will never heal ?

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames : You are right. A psychological wound can fade but it will never heal. Your mental state will forever be affected by this ruination. Expressing my thoughts and feelings, my lyrics are combined with elementary concepts. The main theme is fire. It is concerned with the image of a black flame that brings enlightenment to man's mediocrity. As a key force, fire achieves its aim in unity and perfection. Throughout "Les Blessures De L'Ame", I am characterized under the shape of a vampire. Between life and death, he realizes his own unity through the rapture of blood. As a symbol of life, blood is taken by the vampire in a sublime hand. The enlightenment I convey is misunderstood... So I fully enjoy my own elevation in chaos and destruction. This overall lyrical purpose in fact strengthens the meaning of SETH's compositions.

Do you think that the elevation of the soul is the source and the outcome of SETH's art ?

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames : It's true that the outcome of SETH's art can consist in the elevation of one's soul. Unfortunately, mankind is too absurd to become



aware of this great aim. To be receptive to our expression, people have to develop themselves on their own, avoiding stupid human beliefs. Our art is built with grandeur, therefore only initiated persons can understand its foundations.

Would you describe SETH as a dark demon, as a mortal enemy of human civilization ?

Vicomte Vampyr Arkames: Mankind think with its heart whilst we have abandoned all those weak feelings in order to use our brains. We are the army of obscurity. All those sentimental people are incompetent and it is a duty for us to manipulate their souls. Our intellect and personality will be the black weapons to struggle against society's lies. Heroism is an important concept in my eyes and I always try to act bravely.

Could you talk about the SETH Versus CULTUS SANGUINE release ?

I've heard that COVENANT's mastermind Nagash (ex-DIMMU BORGIR) will appear on this CD...

Heimoth : The split CD was recorded during the months of February and March 1999 in a very professional studio located in our hometown. The sound we manage to obtain is quite different and undoubtedly better than on "Les Blessures De L'Ame". This new war chapter presents two new songs : the first one is played in a brutal vein while the second one is rather close the atmospheres featured on our debut full length album. It also includes two covers of CULTUS SANGUINE and a personal adaptation of a track that was originally created by DEPECHE MODE. Unfortunately, the recording sessions of this split CD took place during the ceremony of the Norwegian awards. All of COVENANT members were present at the show because the band had been selected in the metal sector. So it was impossible for Nagash to come to France and record something for us.

I know that the follow-up to "Les Blessures De L'Ame" will be called "L'Excellence"...

Heimoth : Enriched with a better sound, the forthcoming album will probably sound more technical. Being in close contact with some figures of the Norwegian black metal scene, some special guest musicians will be part of "L'Excellence". Fenriz of DARKTHRONE will write the lyrics for one song. From the MAYHEM Horde, Blasphemer will play rhythm guitar while Maniac should stand as a second vocalist. This new release should be available by January 2000. Vicomte Vampyr Arkames: As for the meaning of the lyrics, I will get even higher on "L'Excellence", incarnating an entity that is superior to the concept of God. My aim will be grandiose and supreme, I will reign as a unique force...



Permeated by pagan spirit, folk riffs, darkness and power. "Immortal Pride" differs from Graveland's previous albums with its deeply epic and medieval atmospheres. Led by Darken's strong personality, the Polish duo fights against Christianity, a religion that came to Europe, killed their ancestors, destroyed their temples and raped the laws of nature. Graveland listen to their blood and its voice, the voice of the dying brave warriors...

Dialogue with Darken
(lead vocals, guitars, keyboards, bass, backing vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

Inspired by pagan music and the sadness from the Middle Ages, "Immortal Pride" shows a new image of GRAVELAND...

Besides the influences you mentioned, "Immortal Pride" is also inspired by BATHORY's "Hammerheart" album. This new release includes only two very long songs and great intros that can no longer be labelled as black metal. My music becomes more and more original and spiritual, using folk riffs and pagan melodies. I think that the best name for GRAVELAND's music would be "pagan epic hammer metal". My pagan identity and my hatred against Christianity are the main influences on my music. I am a son of the pagan lands and I can't let Christians desecrate territories that belonged to my ancestors. The Gods showed me my destiny and I must now obey their will. I took inspirations from masterpieces created by Akira Kurosawa, Conan The Barbarian, old stories... Different things created my personality and I keep on developing my spiritual power and identity. To some degree, my enemies are my inspirations because I hate them so much. They make my hatred stronger. In this way, I create better music and I'm aware of the world I don't want my children to live in. Christians killed the world that I love, now we must take revenge...

Your voice sounds like the call of your soul, burning with fire and hate...

I learnt how to manipulate my voice. The most important thing is to set oneself in a proper atmosphere, a specific climate so to speak. Imagination is very important in this field. Many young black metal bands think that they should cry as loud as possible and then, change those screams with the help of some effects. But it is not all. This way their voices are not cult ones. They think that they are so wonderful and this is why they can't hear the real effect of such a work. I think that listening to the voices of good singers, not only to those from black metal bands, is a good way of learning. Besides one must have something to say. If someone plays only for money or fame, he will never create something special and original.

GRAVELAND's concept stands for death, hate and destruction...

Those notions are a form of resistance and revolt against the decadent post-modern fashion and the morality of today's society, which is demented by mania of predominance. The world we live in makes a huge mistake: people think they are very powerful because of the money they own. But money is nothing but a bad master leading its slaves to destruction and death. Time has come to set fire to this morass and clear a way for young, mighty and vital powers of a new pagan era. All of the old civilizations were led to self-destruction in the same way. People forgot the law of war in order to live in a illusory world of peace. Consequently, corruption, decadence and the collapse of the traditions were the winners. But the enemy is always ready for such a situation and has enough power to destroy this rotting civilization. I am sure that something will happen in Europe soon...

Do you think that war is the first duty of all those who live for darkness or paganism?

If one looks at the history of our ancestors, each man had to be a warrior to protect everything he loves and lives for, that is fatherland, faith, family... The world hasn't changed for the law of war and perpetual fight is still valid. With the help of religion, morality and an idea of compassion, some people try to change this law in order to realize an absurd idea of creating a society that would live in perpetual peace, happiness and comfort. They fail because the enemy is so powerful. Saying enemy, I mean the experiences and needs that we inherit in our blood from our ancestors who had understood the law of war. They believed in the powers of Mother nature and lived in accordance with them. Today, each man should be aware of his duty in his life and should cultivate his skills as a warrior. Thus, he would learn many things that are very useful in everyday life.

In which way do you see yourself as a strong individual?

I built my strength on my experiences, beliefs, victories and traditions. All these elements are very important and form a deep heritage of wisdom and immortal pride. They are the history of our identity and awareness. They are our destiny if we open our hearts for the values our ancestors loved and lived for. I always say that life is not only a satisfaction of empty whims and pleasures but a duty of fight. In Poland, people don't play black metal for money or joy. It is a very serious affair. There is only one black metal underground scene in my country and it is united by pagan ideas. Every month, we meet one each others to celebrate pagan feasts. We also make weapons, cloths, tools... For example, Syrkis of North and Hellfrost of My Infinite Kingdom make swords and Slavonic steel helmets. We get stronger and stronger, we have more and more people coming

with us. It is a proof that paganism will soon return. We will prepare a video film about pagan reality in Poland that will be released and distributed by No Colours Records. From 1994 to 1996, these were the true years of black metal in Poland...

It was the time The Temple of the Fullmoon, an elitist satanic order that no longer exists because it was a too dangerous organization. People started to have problems with the police...

BEHEMOTH and VELES were one of the creators of this organization that at the beginning was called The Temple of Infernal Fire. Nergal of BEHEMOTH quickly gave up his ideas when he met two very extreme people from the Polish underground. They were named Samoth and Leinad from Mysteries horde, who joined us to strengthen our cooperation against Christianity. Nergal understood that it wasn't a game, he was frightened and started to break all ties with the underground. The black metal underground scene in Poland is now united by pagan ideas. Those who used to be part of The Temple of the Fullmoon have become members of official legal pagan organizations as Zrzeszenie Rodzimej Wiary "Slezanie". If The Temple of the Fullmoon still existed, many people would be in prison today. GRAVELAND is not a satanic band but black metal was created by people desecrated to Satanism...

Some satanic ritual murders took place in Poland for a few weeks...

Society was moved by such acts and the authorities decided to react against this by investigating the satanic movements. They want to prohibit satanic music, the official distributions of magazines, tapes, CDs and to stop all metal concerts. In fact, everything they will consider satanic and harmful for the youth. Such steps will be the most violent attacks against all fake bands, distributions and labels. The underground will become stronger because if people aren't able to buy music in a legal way, they will come to the underground distributions. From a general point of view, this situation is very interesting as in fact, no one knows what will happen...

Including history of your life, LORD WIND is a pagan folk solo project evolving in the realm of pagan folk melodies.

The debut album "Forgotten Songs" is inspired by old compositions that were once created by bards and troubadours...

I have been keen on old cultures, religions, war tactics, technique of fight and wielding the sword since my childhood. I became familiar with the conquests of Caesar, Cortez and Pizarro, the holy Christian wars and the crusades. I also read Edda, Nibelunge



Sagas as well as Celtic and Slav mythologies. I learnt to respect my true culture, my traditions and started to believe in the old Gods of my pagan ancestors. In the quest for an absolute consolation for my embittered soul, I go deep into the past, into the times of pagan cultures. There, I can find everything that is lost in the modern world: spiritual identity, pagan personality and true ideas. LORD WIND is full of longevity for all these things that passed away, full of respect for pagan beliefs and traditions. There are hope and faith in this music. Its aim is to teach people how to find their pagan identity that sleeps in their blood.

GRAVELAND and LORD WIND are different entities even if I now use folk riffs and melodies in both bands. They are like two sides of my personality: one is full of hatred and greedy of retribution while the other is permeated with longevity for the past. But these two sides remain strongly connected and constantly influence each other.

Dargaard

The moods and atmospheres brought on by Dargaard can be most calm and serene, then transform into the sinister and ghastly. Through dark medieval atmospheric music, "Eternity Rites" evoke the imagery of spectral forms inhabiting ancient ruins. Constantly longing for a more epic, old fashioned aristocratic life, the two souls behind Dargaard will never rest. They will always look to the past, in hope that in their next existence, they will lead the lives they want...

Dialogue with Tharen (keyboards, vocals) and Elisabeth (vocals) immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

DARGAARD debut album "Eternity Rites" consists of endless moments of mystic, dark, medieval influenced symphonic music...

Tharen : Everything comes naturally from my interest in the Middle Ages and the music that existed in the ancient times. I wanted to create a musical expression adorned with a slight nostalgic touch. It was also



important for me to keep the dark path that I have been following since my very first steps into the musical world. As a result of my boundless wanderings, "Eternity Rites" is made of many emotions and melodies that are always embraced with sadness but as well with a feeling of might. The songs are played on various instruments such as piano, strings, choirs, brass, harp and percussions. Therefore, DARGAARD's compositions sound very mighty. An aura that will forever remain in the soul of the listener.

And Elisabeth's voice perfectly fits with the whole instrumentation...

Elisabeth : I composed the vocal lines over the rough mix. It took about three months for me to do all the arrangements, though there were some interruptions. I improvised up to four vocal lines to get a complex result.

These are, among others, the great advantages of studio recording : there are much more possibilities for a vocalist to compose.

DARGAARD's music is supposed to create some kind of hallucination in one's mind...

Tharen : The album doesn't relate one single story. Various impressions should appear in front of your eyes but only if you are in the right mood and have enough fantasy to create these images in your mind. DARGAARD's music is the result of my mind being trapped in my own world and I guess the listener can hear my inner realm. The travel can even be complete but first you have to experience something unique, that is to become one with darkness...

The composition of your music results from a very unorthodox process...

Tharen : I sometimes listen to a single melody that I composed one year ago or so, and then the inspiration suddenly comes in my mind. With the passing of time, I realized that I could compose two songs in one day and then, nothing that would sound good to my ears for the next three months. But it still grows better...The emotional atmospheres within my music and the procedure when creating the tracks originate from my unconsciousness. I do the music in a certain dimension but I don't know why I do it in that specific way. As for my vocal parts, they represent a little dimension of DARGAARD's sphere. I can only say that I used this type of black metal voice without any distortion to stress the darkness that breeds in our music. My vocals are built to strengthen the opposition with Elisabeth's chants that are omnipresent throughout "Eternity Rites" and expressed in a different way, with clear and eerie vocal passages.

Your artistic work is like overwhelmed with a dreamy landscape that I would like you to paint, using your own brush...

Tharen : Imagine yourself standing on a hill, in front of an old castle, maybe ruins, the sun slowly fades away. Creatures of the nights come out of their hidden places... This kind of mysticism, occultism and magic that once had its place in our world are my main inspiration. This is an important part of DARGAARD. I hope that "Eternity Rites" will create that sort of mood in the soul of the destined listener. Sincerely, It is not possible for me to imagine that other images can run through your mind while listening to our music.

The main factor that is developed through the lyrics of "Eternity Rites" is a "non-linear" existence...

Tharen : As the title clearly suggests, the main theme behind this release is eternity, a subject that is very appealing to my mind. And I can tell you that this passion for the things that never end doesn't come from the same reasons as common people. But there are other subjects that are explored through DARGAARD's lyrics, such as soul wandering, experiences with other worlds, rituals... I also used the words of some ancient writers because I like classical lyrics written in Latin. For instance, the lyrics of the song "Arcanum Mortis" were created by Latin poet Ovide (Publius Ovidius Naso). Consisting of mythological poems, his works helped him to become the most cherished author at the very beginning of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, he was banned for mysterious reasons and died in Tomes (a place that is now found in Romania) despite the pleas of his last elegies.

All these themes are also meant to express darkness and evil, which have an undeniable fascination upon your mind...

Tharen : Darkness doesn't only represent evil. It also hides everything that remains secret and ancient, like the theme of forgotten wisdom... It is just what lives and dies in the souls of Elisabeth and myself. Blessed by darkness, I founded the band with the impulse to express the mystical and occult things I am interested in and to create an acoustical painting of my dreams and thoughts. This malefic birth happened three years ago. It's important to know that the name of our dark entity, DARGAARD, refers to a castle from an ancient story that was cursed and lied forever in darkness... I think it conveys the emotions I felt when recording "Eternity Rites" and later when listening to the final shape of my compositions.

How do you perceive dark music as a composer ?

Tharen : Whether it be black metal or the compositions performed by DARGAARD, I do see dark music as a great satisfaction for myself, especially if I create it on my own. I do consider DARGAARD as a unique band because it is a way to explore and express the spiritual side of my life. This kind of art gives me unforgettable feelings of might and freedom. It is only through this musical genre that I can describe the world I really live in. And my realm has no connection with the one that you can find on planet earth. Thou shalt be blessed by darkness...

Die Verbannten Kinder Evas

The symphony of the fallen children leans towards the atmospheric genres, appearing more as a mixture of dramatic dark wave with classically inspired music. Die Verbannten Kinder Evas' compositions are mainly centered around harmonious orchestrations that offer an eerie variety. "Come Heavy Sleep", as the banished children are drowned in a lake of plaintive depths...

**Dialogue with Richard Lederer
(keyboards, keyboard programming, vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS was born from Silenius and yourself, who are the individuals behind SUMMONING...

We both have listened to metal music for many years. Little by little, our desire to create something different increased so much that we started to make more quiet and keyboard oriented music about four or five years ago. I have always been fascinated by calm, dark and mystic moods, but in the past, I was also much into hard sounds. With the passing of time, this interest lost its value, but the love for darkness remained...

In the beginning, your music was meant to be purely instrumental...

... But we later adapted a vocal singing style very similar to classical choral chanting. During my whole life, the only sounds I could make with my voice were metal screams and shouts. When I started DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS, I didn't have the idea to express myself with a normal voice. On day I tried it, without any expectation, and to my big surprise, I was satisfied with the result. The chants are used in a very irregular manner and don't always comply with the old singing chorus method. It was a new feeling for me to sing real melodies. The greatest difference between SUMMONING and DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS is the number of pitches I used. In the black metal project, I am not able to sing tunes on even more than three different pitches. But there is no need for melodic vocals in SUMMONING, so the separation between the two bands is perfect.

Mixing dark wave with classical influences, your music relies more on an orchestral, irregular rhythm...

In the early days of the band, I wanted to make something that would really sound far away from metal or from any other form of rock music. At that time, this kind of music was not so familiar to the metal audience, so I wanted to make clear that there will be no danceable rock rhythms and no beats to which you can bang your head. The different melodies that are superimposed in our albums are as independent as possible from each other and still form a very harmonic sound...

On the self-titled debut album, to compose music with a synthesiser and even to play music without a band was something completely new for you...

Already before the band's inception in January 1994, I bought a synthesizer and for the first time, I was able to compose without the help of other band members. Due to the fact that the music in DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS comes only from the keyboards and the vocals, I was able to compose tunes and didn't care if someone else (like another band member) liked it or not. What was also new for me is that I could make the synthesiser play the same tune again and again for hours, without telling me that it gets bored.

But on "Come Heavy Sleep" this kind of polyphonic music was not so important for you...

On the second release, my interest was indeed to create long tunes. I mean songs which don't repeat after five seconds like on the debut album or for example like metal riffs, but tracks which finish after the fourfold time. For the first time, I composed the vocal parts together with the keyboard passages so that the machine sounds and the human voice show more consideration for each other.

Your second album includes poems written by Shelley and which convey a romantic and melancholic mood...

The reason for this choice is that I see myself as a musician and not as a poet. I am not good in writing poems and I prefer to take lyrics from people who can really write good verses. Shelley has a fascinating way to describe and relate things. Even if he writes about themes like love or life, he

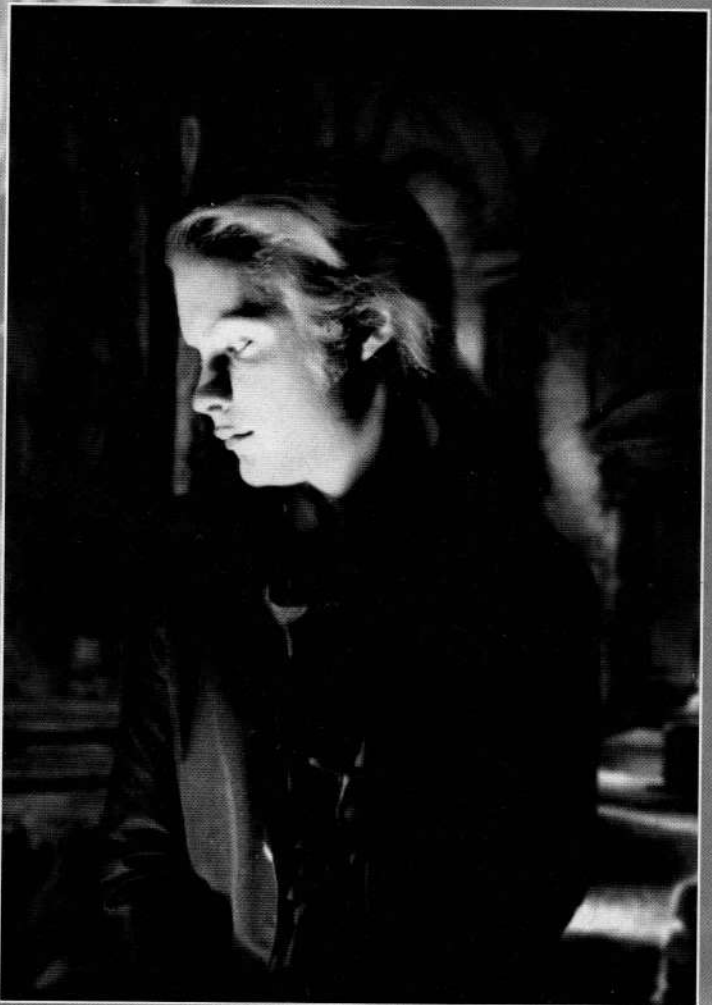
uses very morbid and dark words to illustrate them. And this literary expression perfectly suits DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS' musical purpose.

The feeling of the band's name is a perfect description of your music...

Meaning "The banished Children of Eve", the name offers a very solitude mood to my soul. It has no religious links because I feel like an atheist person. I don't believe in any higher forces above me, either God or Satan. I am able to think and act on my own. When a person hears the name DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS, he imagines dark and mystic music, and that is what I wanted to achieve.

Since both Silenius and yourself enjoy bands like STOA, LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH and LORENN MC KENNIT, you didn't want to neglect female vocals in your music...

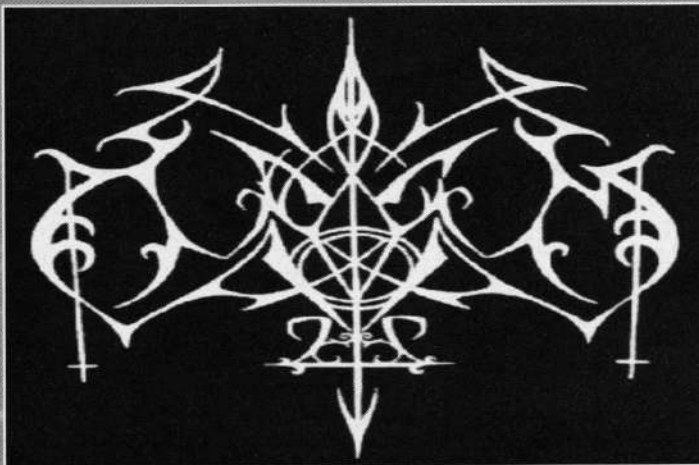
That's why we integrated Nora El Shamma and Julie Lederer. But Nora left a short time after the release of our debut album. She was never really interested in this kind of music and preferred to go to raves than to practise for DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS. Julie is nobody else but my sister, she joined the band as soon as I had to face the problem of finding a



female singer. She is just involved with the vocals and doesn't compose tunes. She also played soprano and baritone record for our live appearances.

Besides SUMMONING and DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS, you're also involved in ICE AGES, a project that pursues a gloomy and aggressive direction...

I must say that I have a strong taste for EBM industrial bands like EVIL TOYS, MORTAL CONSTRAINT or MENTAL DESTRUCTION. At the moment, I only listen to this kind of hard and melodic music with electronically distorted vocals. At the opposite of these bands, my electronic project ICE AGES doesn't use so danceable rhythms. It is a melodic and very dark form of music, mixing melancholic dark wave and industrial with EBM influences. There are no really drum sounds but electronic machine sounds instead and no guitar. It has very complex non-straight rhythms coupled with the in partly deep and in partly sharp distorted voice. In addition to this, the lyrics written by Ray Wells of PAZUZU emphasize the futuristic mood. I have made the experience that it is a musical expression which is very hard to understand for both metal and industrial fans.



As guided stars, Odiium members all fell victims to the darkest skies and were sent somewhere between the clouds, amidst the natural shadows. Centuries later, they are reborn to gather again and to unleash their first compositions. "The Sad realm Of The Stars", their debut offering, takes shape in a dark, warlike style that brings variety and personality to their Northern black metal hymns. The rise of celestial dimensions...

Dialogue with Sechtdamon (guitar & vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

In summer 1994, Demariel, Charon Martyras, and yourself gathered together under the banner of ODIUM to unleash your first compositions...

The following year, Eek of the band FUNERAL joined us on drums. We recorded a six song promotional tape at the end of 1995 and got some



minor contacts with several small labels. During the winter season, keyboard player Bastadon was recruited and at the end of 1996, we started the recording of our debut album "The Sad Realm Of The Stars".

However, this opus was released only in Summer 1998...

The reason for the two year delay comes from the fact that we were involved with several small labels with whom the communication didn't work out. We were supposed to release "The Sad Realm Of The Stars" on French label Velvet Music International but the studio we used was booked all the time. We had to wait for long months between each recording session. Moreover, there were problems to mix the album because we didn't have enough time when we booked the studio for the first time. Another obstacle was that they changed technicians, so we had new persons at least three times. It is kind of hard to work with a new sound engineer who wasn't there from the beginning and didn't know ODIUM's sound. So we had to explain again our aims to somebody who had never heard about black metal art before. We had to mix the album over and over again to avoid the presence of different sounds between the songs. It was quite frustrating, but there was nothing we could do to escape from this situation.

And all together, you spent one year and a half to complete the work...

Nothing worked out the way it was supposed to. The relations with Velvet Music International didn't really work out that good. There was a lot of communication problems and they got tired of waiting, something which is very understandable. I received a letter from them in which they threatened to cancel the deal if they didn't receive all the necessary material at the end of December 1997. But there was no chance to finish the work before deadline. We considered the deal to be off when we got an offer from Norwegian label Nocturnal Art Productions. A big discussion between both labels arose and was concluded with the repurchase by Nocturnal Art Productions of the album rights originally held by Velvet Music International.

Layers and many overtones are applied to your compositions to produce a vast soundscape in which the listener can drown and be fully consumed in the great sea of anger and its ample servings of chaos...

We tried to create our own, individual soundscapes from the first day on, we never cared about trends and have succeeded in fulfilling these ambitions more and more. ODIUM consist of five individual members with partly individual influences and also individual ways of life in several aspects. The common sense is mainly the expression of the deepest inner self, it is getting outer contours through the creation of dark, rather unique and extreme music.

ODIUM's music features many moods and is structured with its highs and lows as well as climatic endings...

The strongest force comes from the majestic feelings of the cold, nightly atmospheres that I get when composing the songs for ODIUM. It is the fuel for my fire. I think creating moods and atmospheres within music is very important. I always write my lyrics after creating a song to get the right atmosphere within the written part. Our compositions are some sort of an act. It's the case for the track "Through the sorrowfilled forest", which tells that an unexpected curse will come in a star bright sky where any kind of abomination can happen. This malediction is expressed in the music by a lot of terrible screams, haunting synth effects and thundering atmospheres. ODIUM's music is a product of the band's own creativity without ideological intent. It's a pure celebration...

"The Sad Realm Of The Stars" deals with the souls that didn't enter the heavenly paradise which we are promised when we die...

And their existences become stars in the sad realm where they mourn for themselves because they didn't reach paradise. They will die and become more like a shooting star that I describe under the name of "the eternal fall". I am deeply fascinated by the night sky because it is the most beautiful thing I can see, with the glowing stars and the enlightened moon. When the night surrounds me, it is also easier to find inspiration since everything is so silent. The music and the lyrics became one, in a place I create in my mind while I'm on earth.

The cover was drawn by Morfeus of LIMBONIC ART. How did you get in touch with him? What charms you in his graphic work?

I got in touch with Morfeus through Master V of MYRKSKOG. He knew him well and I liked what this artist had done on LIMBONIC ART debut album "Moon In The Scorpio". So Master V asked him if he wanted to do the artwork on our debut release and he agreed at once. I think Morfeus did a good job on the artwork because it really suits the title of the album and it gives a nightly atmosphere to the compositions. It evokes exactly the feeling we intended to create. His paintings mainly refer to ODIUM's lyrical conception and express a dark sensuality or seduction, a sombre and eerie emotion that you will feel when looking at them.

Prepare yourselves, for here it shall begin...

The new material will sound more brutal and powerful than on "The Sad Realm Of The Stars", with more technical parts and the expression of an even purer black metal style. The spirit of ODIUM is climatic, ghostly and dramatic. It is something immense, something unfinished from centuries ago. Enjoy the album and farewell for now...

KAMPFAR

Much of the imagery around Kampfar and especially the musical and lyrical concept has a strong Northern vibe. Overwhelmed with majestic, grim and harsh black metal atmospheres, their interpretations plunge you in a world of legends and mythology that will guide your innerself. Thor holds his hammer high, let yourself be devoured by his power...

**Dialogue with Dolk (drums & cymbals, voice)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

Two years of silence separate your debut album "Mellom Skogkledde Aaser" from the "Norse" mini CD...

A lot of stuff happened in the KAMPFAR camp lately but the main reason for this long delay comes from the situation with our previous label Malicious Records. They did a good job for us on our debut album, but there were still many things that really didn't work as planned. At the time, we didn't know what the future would bring to the band. Consequently, the music and the creation of new songs came a bit in other hand for us. It really took a lot of time only to figure out what to do next. That's why I'm really happy with what we live now. We can definitely put everything behind us and just concentrate on the future. The future looks much brighter than ever before...

The song material on "Norse" has become much stronger than before, showing an evolution in both the music and the lyrics...

As musicians who grow day by day, we have worked really hard to be able to put the folkloric parts (which we have always had in our music) more into the riffs and not just as something into the music. In this way, we came up with something new which brought more atmospheres and depths to KAMPFAR. Lyrically, I tried to be even colder and grimmer than before. I spent a lot of time to improve my voice on the forthcoming full-length album which is already recorded and hopefully will be released in May or June 1999. Regarding the production of both the mini CD and the album, it can't be compared to our previous releases because we had enough time to arrange everything carefully in the studio. It was definitely a huge part of the band's musical evolution in the right direction.

KAMPFAR started as a one-man band but has now become a duo which works as one single unit, with a pagan brother handling the guitars...

The collaboration between Thomas and myself proved to be much better than what I experienced before. That's why KAMPFAR will definitely stay as a duo. We create everything together at the rehearsal camp and thus agree with every riff before using it in any song. A totally different thing is the situation with session musicians because hopefully a tour will happen next year. At the moment, we discuss with several people who want to do the job, but this is another chapter, so we'll see...

The name KAMPFAR is an ancient pagan Norse word meaning the one-eyed god Wotan / Odin.

German philosopher Nietzsche wrote : "Wotan gave a powerful heart to my breast". Do you feel close to this quotation ?

It's definitely a great way to express the feelings he had towards this ancient, pagan God and history. Considering that, I can say I feel connected to this quotation in one way or another. I feel a close association to the once strong, ancient, pagan faith which ruled this country years ago, before the pathetic Christianity took place in Norway. In ancient times, the Vikings used to scream out the word "Kampf" before battles in order to get the ultimate strong powers to fight.

One of the most important things for you is to know the pagan history of your ancestors...

A thing that really came to my mind during the last years is that almost all the so-called Christian persons here don't have the clue about their history. They don't even know how Christianity came to Norway and how it was forced upon mankind. To me, this is really horrible because how can you be able to know yourself if you don't know this special period ? And even more important, how can you believe in something when you don't even know the foundations of your beliefs ?

So you think that Christians have to open their minds and just don't walk around and accept everything...

This is in fact the way we want to express ourselves, something like a pagan winter storm filled with tons of sharp razor blades forced upon mankind and pathetic religions influenced by the ancient Norse myths in the strong pagan way. My lyrics are very often my own words but sometimes they are also taken directly out from ancient texts.

The feelings towards nature and its powers have a cherished place in your heart...

I have been enormously attracted to this topic since my childhood because nature in Norway is so alive, from thunder and winter storms to sun and rain. The frosty mighty nature here is the supreme art above all living creatures, more powerful than any other religion. This feeling grows stronger and stronger within myself and in one way or another it helps me to grow my horizons and views upon life in general.

You started on Hammerheart Records under the name of MOCK with the "Cold Winter" split CD and now you're back on the Dutch label with the release of "Norse". How do you see this return ?

It's definitely one of the best things KAMPFAR has ever done. Guido, the label manager, is one of the few persons in this so-called scene which I really can call a pagan brother. We have been in touch for about nine years and he has always supported MOCK and KAMPFAR from the very beginning. Since I also helped him to start the label, I must say that I'm really honoured to be back on their roster. They had done a good work at



the time of MOCK, so I knew what they were able to do. I just regret that we didn't sign KAMPFAR to Hammerheart Records before now. But what is done is done. What is important is that the collaboration between us now works very well. The future definitely belongs to us...

Besides KAMPFAR, you also run your own small distribution label called Nature Of Holocaust Productions...

Unfortunately, I think that I have to suspend this activity for a while because my time is really limited these days. I'm more than busy with the band now, so I have to sacrifice something. And since KAMPFAR is my life, the choice is not so hard to do. But I still have a list from Nature Of Holocaust Productions filled with black metal stuff for sale. Anyone interested is encouraged to write.



"Ancient prophecies announce the coming of a warrior who'll restore the lost magic and become a king by own merit". This is the way Asgaroth like to present their spirit, which cherishes the best values of past centuries. Musically structured in a symphonic black metal style, "Trapped In The Depths Of Eve" gives you an aristocratic and orchestral feel. When personality bears his fruits upon artists...

**Dialogue with Mythral (keyboards, guitars, additional vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

For any involved musician, the usual fact is that one has supposedly evolved and learnt from the mistakes done in the past...

This of course has occurred in our case, but there's something else present in ASGAROTH's musical process : the spirit. When we recorded "The Quest For Eldenhor", there was a special mood that guided us in the writing and recording of the songs. It was firstly expected as a demo, but then we accepted to sign a deal for the releases of a mini CD and a CD. At that time, we weren't very technical, it was pure feeling and atmosphere. I love the albums that sound awful but still have the charm or

Following "The Quest For Eldenhor" mini CD, your debut full length album was an important step in various fields...

We had twice the budget or maybe a little more to spend in the studio. The songs were better and we had better equipment as well as more knowledge in terms of production. The lack of good sound engineers in Spain is appalling, so we have always had to perform the work on our own. Former member Lord Lupus (bass, vocals) and myself really learnt a lot from our last experience and had the chance of trying out a wider variety of music and sounds also. Anyway, the recording of "Trapped In The Depths Of Eve" started in autumn 1996, but the death of Lord Lupus' mother and his military service slowed down the whole process. Lately, we released a new mini CD called "Absence Spells Beyond" featuring "Trapped In The Depths Of Eve" as a bonus. We have gone further and covered a King Crimson's track as a musical "caprice". We've already shot two video clips for this release. The music has evolved and become cleaner in order to have more power. But what I don't like very much is to feel the pressure of success. ASGAROTH is now quite big in Spain and we recently received offers for licenses in Europe. I hope this will affect the least possible our moods and creativity.

ASGAROTH's musical art mixes highly symphonic black metal with multiple moods and melody changes...

We have always tried to find a pseudo equilibrium within music and lyrics and with what black metal means for us and gives us. And our albums are the reflections of this choice. Except for the new release "Absence Spells Beyond", we have always enjoyed the inclusion of a semi-folk track and of instrumental songs. The mixing of moods enables the compositions to gain importance and power, like in a life metaphor, just as if everything was set in a predetermined order. Due to moral reasons, you can't be totally evil or good, if you're not the devil or God yourself. So we don't try to do so and just express an output of our particular mood. It could be described as a method of expressing our character in some way. I am the writer of most of the songs and I guess from my point of view that the limitations imposed by the respect of some style conventions could not be very self-satisfying as it makes the music more "standard", even if it's great. It would be trivial for me to say the usual topics are our main inspirations, but I guess mother Nature is part of ASGAROTH's influences.

The atmospheric parts are one of the most (if not the most) important elements leading your musical expressions...

ASGAROTH's music is always nearly structured around the keyboard lines, just like on the new mini CD "Absence Spells Beyond". I think that synthesizers are the most complete musical instruments, right after the human voice. What really influences us can come from the most metaphysical theories or questions to something apparently mundane. The importance of an influence can stand in the way we translate them into feelings. Just like any musician, when I play the synth and the guitar, the mood helps the usual inspiration moments when creativity is at its top. Musical background is very important in this aspect also, as there is always a direct influence upon what you create. There is always a cause for everything that occurs in one's life...

The lyrics featured on "Trapped In The Depths Of Eve" can be understood in many ways...

That's the intention behind ASGAROTH's lyrical concept. It can be taken as many things, depending on the listener's imagination. In this album, the written part was divided into the three of us at that time. Fantasy played a big role regarding Lord Lupus' personal influences. Metaphysical themes are important, but only lead to man's disenchantment towards life. That's when we try to create a world of our own. In my case, I wrote the lyrics for the opening track "Victorious Men Of Earth" and it could represent the triumph of a man in front of adversity. What one can see as adversity is left to subjective matters. Also British epic poets like Sheridan, Joyce or even Byron somehow inspired us at some point of our lives.

While listening to ASGAROTH, one can depict a bit of yourselves, of your own personalities...

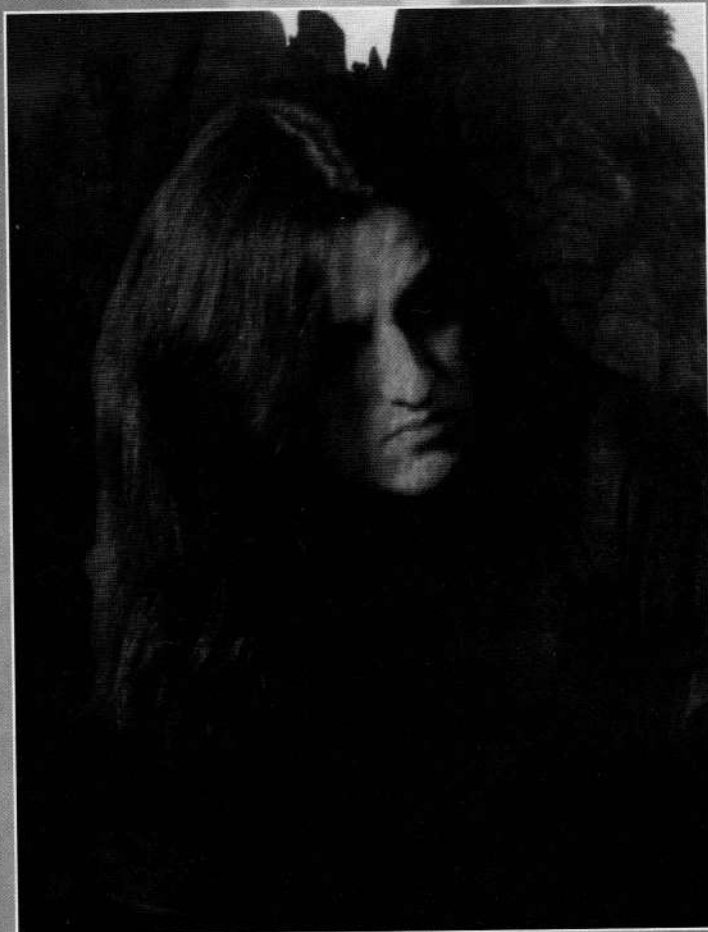
I guess that music can express the way the musician thinks. There is no satanic second meaning in any of our deeds as we don't bow down to any religion. ASGAROTH shall never answer the transcendental question regarding humanity's existence. The spirit forever remains when composing a creation with sincerity, under our utmost expression, that is black metal art. The way of releasing violence, aggression, blasphemy or revenge can be really good through music. It's the quest for art, even if there is a long way ahead...

Your latest release "Absence Spells Beyond" consists of a mini CD plus "Trapped In The Depths Of Eve" and a cover version of King Crimson's "Epitaph including March for no reason and tomorrow and tomorrow" as a bonus...

The new release sounds more like classical metal, with more speed metal elements but musical variety is still felt. We have tried to experiment with the vocals and the drum lines this time and by including a cover track. Everything sounds good to me. After playing some festivals in Spain, we will record a requested cover version of IRON MAIDEN's "Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son". I hope the conditions will be satisfactory because I don't want to spend time with this if the result isn't meant to be good.

Regarding contractual matters, you have recently signed with another label of your native land...

We gained the rights for "Trapped in the depths of eve" by contract violation, as a deal with New Götia Records. We had to wait for almost a year to see the release of our debut album. Fortunately, we have now signed with Abstract Emotions and everything works fine with the label. We have received offers to license the album in Germany and in the USA. Apparently, New Götia Records has repressed "Trapped In The Depths" but they still owe us money, so we recently started a process against them. We are much more cautious on this aspect than before, even if I would prefer to stand aside from these problems because they distract us from what we really are in ASGAROTH.



the atmosphere that makes them special. It is the case for DECORYAH's "Wisdom Floats" or the DARKTHRONE phenomenon. As in any sincere band, ASGAROTH's main priority is to compose music that satisfies our artistic needs as musicians. To share specific emotions with the listener is a different aspect of the whole affair. Through our music, we try to express both extreme power and nature's apparent peace. There is always space for other thematic elements as maybe some sarcasm or even irony towards what we hate, but there are always subjective factors that influence the matter.

NEGURA BUNGET

"The people of Wallachia is highly non-believer, not even God is praised by them, nor the king, the relative or friend. They deceive everybody. Great layers and well-known bandits, always ready to swear and double-cross later with no remorse. Never ever to be trusted." Those words were written by a medieval traveller to describe his desperate journey through Transylvania. Such a metaphor offers a credible picture of Negura Bunget's mythological and spiritual aspirations : to create a bloody and immortal bridge beyond times...

**Dialogue with Negru (drums)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

You come from the land beyond the forest, country of Dracula, of the vampires, with all the mysteries and magic of those immortal places. In which way are you inspired by the ancient mysticism of your old world homeland ?

We see this inspiration more like a natural spiritual inheritance, which we consciously assume. We also try to furthermore cultivate this inclination so that it will grow into something totally new. NEGURA BUNGET believes in a universal transcendent concept of black metal. Our local spirituality helps us to reach the most supreme parts of the black metal inner spirituality. As direct heirs of this local spirituality, we have a special ability to deal and understand it. We see this as Transylvanian spirituality : a complex of practices and beliefs gathered around here from the ancient times, fulfilled through magic figures of the medieval era and still present in the deep spheres of the Romanian folklore.

The most important concepts of Transylvanian spirituality are immortality and the blood...

These concepts are mysteries that can't be perceived through reason. You can experience them only through elaborate teachings of irrationalism, which enable you to access the true primordial nature. And only through black metal, you can brave and explore such methodologies as the magical dissolving of the individual person into primordial archetypes, the ideological and spiritual initiation, the magical mystery of the words... As Romanian mysterious philosopher Lucian Blaga eloquently said : "Man exists as a subject for himself, as a man in an horizon filled with mysteries". An important part of this spirituality is also the natural geographical inner spirituality, which translates its deep influences to the general one.

Through freezing guitars and enchanting keyboards, your debut album "Zirindu-Sa" portrays the vestiges of a great ancient pagan culture : the Daco-Getic civilisation...

The Daco-Gets are the oldest direct ancestors of the Romanian nation. They lived on our present natural location between 400 BC - 106 AC (when the Roman Empire conquered Dacia, the Romanian being the result of the Daco-Roman mixing population). Under exceptional leaders such as Burebista (82-44 BC) or Decebal (87-106), the Dacic civilization became the most important enemy of the Roman Empire. Centred on the savage Orastiei Mountains, around the spiritual capital of Sarmizegetusa Regia, the Dachs created an impressive military system, exploiting the remarkable advantages of natural grounds.

The Dacic spirituality is though much more overwhelming. Focused around the enigmatic and complex figure of their supreme God Zalmoxis, it grew into initiate practices of immortality, heroic cult, magic active participation in existence, death-lust fascination, human sacrifice...

On the sanctuaries of Sarmizegetusa Regia, some could read one of the most exact calendars of the ancient world (with an astronomical year calculated at 365,242307, when today the tropic year is 365,242198). There is actually a system of sanctuaries - where ritual practices took place periodically and which corrected the calendar over 104,91 and 504 years. Unfortunately after the Roman conquest, most of the Dacic spiritual buildings were systematically destroyed. The Romans fought this way to weaken the local spirituality, which they accurately saw as a threat. They didn't succeed totally, as some parts of the Dacic spiritual foundations are still present and active even today...

NEGURA BUNGET fights for the revival of the ancient morals and beliefs...

I think the most important aspect would be the Dacic understanding of immortality. The whole ancient world was fascinated by their strong form of believing and the way they practise the art of immortality. Ancient Greek historian Herodot specifically said that the Dachs "make themselves immortal" - getas tous athanizontas" (IV, 93)- and it is really important. Fortunately, some didn't know how they were supposed to do that. Fortunately, because it was seen as a mystery, which could be accessed only through a complete initiation.

And the Dachs were initiated deeply in all kind of similar spiritual practices...

As a direct consequence of this higher spiritual belief, they were always ready to die, fighting for their freedom and beliefs. Even their leader Decebal committed a ceremonial suicide in face of the Roman victory, preferring to die instead of suffering any humiliation. The Dachs were also well known for their great military skills, for their blood thirst and for their wisdom. They were often assimilated with their totemic war flag ritual animal, the wolf.

One of the greatest honours for them was to be voluntary sacrificed as messengers sent to Zalmoxis...

From 5 to 5 years, they sent such a messenger to their supreme spiritual leader in a ceremony that took place on the top of the mountain. And yet Zalmoxis could refuse this messenger, depending on his spiritual value. Because you really had to be someone important in order to become worthy of his attention.

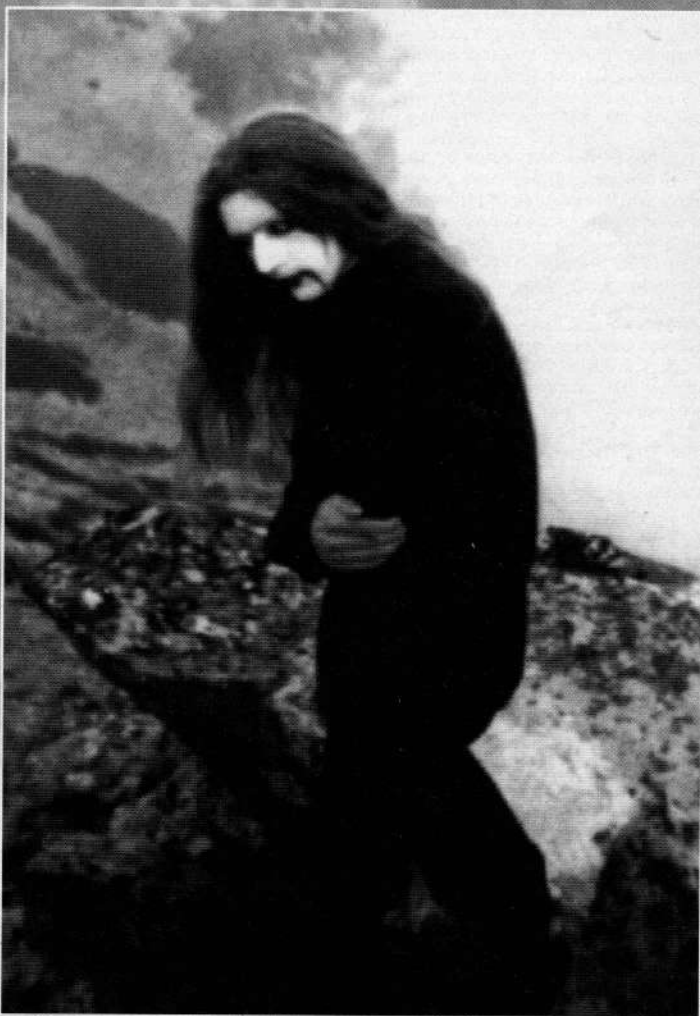
NEGURA BUNGET explores the spiritual remains still present in the Romanian folklore. A remarkable place, filled with archaic presence camouflaged under newer practices, which apparently have nothing to do with such matters. Also, as in many other contexts, Christianity assimilated quite a few pagan beliefs, dressing them with new clothes. Here is our main fight : to reveal their true nature as well as the hypocrisy of the Christian religion.

You deliberately chose to treat this special kind of matters using lyrics written in ancient Romanian languages...

We can speak about such matters only in our local language. We furthermore used even different time developed versions of our ancient language and several transliterations in order to capture very specific phonological atmospheres. I think the relation "word - idea" is very important. Since NEGURA BUNGET's lyrics deal with spiritual matters of high complexity, but especially with a great amount of mystery, we really base very much in suggesting them symbolically through these special phonological magical moods. You also shouldn't feel disadvantaged from the local people, as there aren't at all around many persons who can understand much of the languages we used.

Your message is based on the deep natural penetration, reaching a primordial state that is inner for many people at unconscious levels...

We really try to cultivate this kind of lyrical approach because we really think the best way to properly deliver a black metal message is to reach the unconscious levels of the listeners under the influence of NEGURA BUNGET's music. The musical expression



has the same importance here, as you can create this special atmosphere only through this medium ... But our music is only a consequence of the most important thing, that is the spiritual concept. This is what gives value to our compositions. In the future, we'll furthermore explore this primordial state, using spiritual pictograms...

You have already released a new mini album whose concept comes directly from the Indo-European languages...

Very fascinating, "Sala Molksa" is even older than the Dacic spirituality. But for the same reason, it is actually impossible to translate it in a modern language. The concept is linked with the Dacic form of immortality. "Sala Molksa" is the place of non-existence, where the Dachs went after their glorious death. Some Romanian historians even suggested that this thought is similar with the Valhalla, taken from Northern mythology. But it isn't really connected with reality, as there are quite a few differences, plus the fact that Dacic spirituality is not well-known. Immortality is a spiritual presence that is active in Romania from the most immemorial times. As for the music, we see this material as a transition to the next full-length album that we plan to release later this year. This time we even wrote a song in English, that presents a general view over the most important characteristics of the Dacic spirituality. Those lyrics will be the only ones written in English as there isn't more we can say with this language.

enochian crescent

Dedicated to all things inhumanely possible to advance the collective sound, Enochian Crescent's art is meant to shock, scare and torture your soul through an insane black metal repertoire.

"The chief enemy of creativity is 'good taste'..." (Picasso).

**Dialogue with Wrath (vocal malice)
and Victor (wretched guitars, spirit voices)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

ENOCHIAN CRESCENT was formed to embody the very essence of nihilism, fanaticism and mysticism in black metal...

Wrath : Those are the essence of Victor's sinister trinity. As for me, ENOCHIAN CRESCENT embodies misanthropy, inhumanity and cruelty. We want to express nothing but to spread the word of Satan. The longer you stay in darkness, the more it will corrupt your soul...

Victor : "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo". We were born of a need and shall be no more when that feeling will pale. Time has no meaning, substance is the thing that matters. History is just like the proverbial snake that bites its own tail, always repetitive and in perpetual rotation. We suffer this moment, from the dawn of this decade until today.

"Babalon Patralx De Telocvovim", the follower to your debut album "Telocvovim", features five songs of psychotic grandeur and unfettered aggression...

Victor : We do this stuff to meet our own set standards and to actualize some spiritual quests in the corporeal world. We care very little about what the rest of the world thinks about what we do. If some discordant souls find beauty and meaning in our doings, then it is just an added bonus. What really counts is the channelling of energies and the feeling of pride while reviewing the accomplished work. We are pretty myopic in this sense. I see "Babalon Patralx De Telocvovim" as the logical sequel to its predecessor. As a musician and a perfectionist, I am seldom pleased with anything. But, as a father who has just seen his second little demon of a son being born, and already possessing such spunk, I am very satisfied.

Wrath : On ENOCHIAN CRESCENT's second full-length album, the liturgies and the sermons will be performed in the same profane and deranged manner as before. But this time, thou shalt not escape the embrace of our darkness so easily...

You have paid tribute to BATHORY by including a cover version of the song "13 Candles"...

Wrath : We chose "13 Candles" to glorify the true essence of black metal, the cultivation of Satan, death worship, misanthropy as well as the glorification of all the negative emotions and aspects in one's life. Most importantly, black metal means that every action hurting Christianity is good, whatever it might be. We chose BATHORY to show our contempt towards those who brought the worship of Odin where it doesn't belong.

Victor : This particular song by BATHORY arose some very strong emotions in me through times. So it was natural for us to take it under our dark wings and to keep on spreading its vile message.

You are very experienced in the magic and well schooled in the occult...

Victor : ENOCHIAN CRESCENT is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. A magical space where I transcend myself by the aid of the rituals, incense, music and candles. The music itself means nothing, it's just a very powerful channel to spread the wisdom of Satan. We are a five-piece band in which everyone is dedicated to all things inhumanely possible to advance the collective sound.



Self-mutilation will not continue in your live performances, only behind curtains...

Wrath : ...in private sessions where black candles burn together with human flesh and where the dreadful name of our master Satan is being chanted over and over again. Blood for Satan... When it comes to public rituals, there will be different ways of torturing the flesh. "To worship Death is to further every inhumane action. To cultivate death is to further the degeneration of life. To love death is to further the self-destruction of the living."

SAD LEGEND

The theme for Sad Legend's self-titled debut album is the search for memories, for the forgotten pain of their ancestors. The band's original and symphonic black metal compositions become distinct tales expressing evocative images that are hidden in their conscious.

The picture of a terrible legend in a field of mist...

**Dialogue with Naamah (drums, vocals & soprano)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND**

SAD LEGEND's atmospheric, symphonic type of black metal is based on Korea's ancestral sorrow...

We intend to deliver the bitter age of our forefathers, when Korea was colonised by Japan and lost its sovereignty. Of course, our country had experienced many invasions before, but the Japanese treated our ancestors like slaves. They even cut out their ears and pickled them. Many people went through such cruel things and a lot of Korean women were forced



to have sexual relations with Japanese soldiers, many soldiers per woman. Those who tried to organize independent movements got whips and even killed. The Japanese forced our ancestors to change our names to Japanese styled ones, and tried to obliterate our own language.

In 1945, Korea took back its liberty and independence from Japan...

With the help of the USA, we were able to become independent. I don't hate Japanese people now and I do have many Japanese friends. I merely sing about Korean history because I am a Korean. The conclusion is that SAD LEGEND's musical themes are based on the stories of our ancestors, who were slaughtered at the time of the Japanese colonization. In addition to that, my philosophical thoughts about death and solitude are melt in the compositions, which introduce very unique melodies taken from Korea's traditional music.

Could you relate the stories of "Han" and "A Funeral In Solitude", which are the prologue and the epilogue of your debut album ?

"Han" talks about a king called Sachunwang, who rules over the earth and the underground, over spiritual phenomena beyond death. He has the power of the almighty over the dead souls. Our ancestors did believe in his force and praised him to secure happiness to the dead. Sachunwang protects us and our country from potential enemies.

"A Funeral in Solitude" symbolises our tragic history. The chorus is dedicated to the last Emperor of Korea, who was dethroned by the Japan Empire. In fact, I have arranged the music that was originally played during the funeral ceremony of the Emperor. I would describe this adaptation as a musical palace where the Korean Kings used to live. This song is their sad epitaph...

Your vocals go from mid-range harsh ones to clean and even soprano chants...

The soprano voice is the sound of a female ghost who was first raped by invaders and later killed. My aim is to record songs with many more vocals. The trials that we showed on our first album, such as high-toned vocals, choruses, and soprano voices were great experiences for me, and I have always needed them. I would say that I imagine and reproduce the singing of a woman I know well. I remember that I started to sing when imitating the voice of Kimera, a Korean vocalist who led her musical life in France. At that time, I was only a little kid. In my opinion, the mixing of male and female tones in my unique vocals has built SAD LEGEND's trademark, this the neuter genre so to speak.

Naamah, you are the ultimate authority in SAD LEGEND's development, composing all music and writing all lyrics...

SAD LEGEND was formed as my own band. I have always liked to play such kind of music, but it was too hard to get the right members. The other reason is that I really don't want to get or hear any kind of meddling thing. But from now on, I will try to find skilled musicians here in order to lead a band life. Hopefully, it will be possible for us to play live concerts in Europe in the near future.

The meaning of the album cover is a ghost of a Korean woman who came back to the tree...

...where she had committed suicide by hanging. She had been raped by Japanese soldiers and could no longer stand such a shame in her broken heart...

HA LELA

Through epic and emotional dark metal hymns to the Northern forests of the Baltic lands, Ha Lela truly portray the images and feelings of their pagan beliefs. The band have enlisted the talents of a number of traditional folk musicians within their region to create a fusion of archaic and deep atmospheres.

A musical celebration, under the sacred banner of the Slab temple...

Dialogue with Vaidas Sadeika (vocals)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

Evoking some confusion in the English-speaking world, the name HA LELA is taken from the old Lithuanian war cry...

Words are as meaningless as anything else unless one has given its flesh, its blood, its sperm, its sweat to them. I believe that this statement was quite powerful and meaningful for the soldiers who shouted them. Five or six years ago, we were very interested in this particular subject and we used to read whatever concerned Lithuanian beliefs and history. We came across an old song, in which every line began with "Ha Lela...". It was a funeral chant. Later, I discovered that these words were also used during battles.



You use many traditional Lithuanian folk instruments and structures within a dark metal repertoire...

We use the Lumadelis which is a wind instrument that was used by shepherds who were definitely keen on self-entertainment. Kanklis is a string instrument that looks like a wooden box with six, nine, twelve or thirty-six strings tied on its side. The mechanism used on the album is a six-stringed one. People play kanklis on every occasion, whether it be a funeral, a wedding or simply dances... Dambrelis is a widely spread instrument. It is a small iron stick to be put in the mouth, its small tongue being struck with a finger. You can change its tone by moving it in your mouth.

Your lyrics weave a web of enchantment and majestic splendour through which dance mystical images of ancient charms, legends and dark earth-rituals...

There are a lot of old themes and concepts that I used to be interested in. "Pabudimas" ("Awakening") is meant to be an awakening in as many meanings as possible. Through HA LELA's debut album, I tried to evoke the moods and the feelings I was mastered by at the time. It was a real obsession. The warlike atmosphere you can feel both in the music and lyrics are an answer to the subjects that stormed in and out of us during that period. One track is strongly linked to the past of our native land, "Isjojo Bernelis" ("The darling rode out..."). When writing this song, I was thinking about Lithuanian battles, Lithuanian soldiers, Lithuanian blood. The other songs are clusters of images generated all in different ways like to walk through sparse pine woods, to experience reading or to sense the world of dreams. With "Pabudimas", we had to burn old thoughts and ideals and to build new empires that are to fall someday too. Only time shall tell what these new kingdoms will look like...

HA LELA's line-up includes Ramunas (guitar, bass, keyboards, backing vocals), who is also the driving force behind POCOLUS and ZPOAN VTENZ...

We knew him before creating HA LELA as we lived in the same town. We went then to the POCOLUS's rehearsal room and we asked Ramunas to arrange something for the guitar. That's how he became a member of a project called HA LELA. We also found an anecdotal project that should be released later this year under the moniker of SALA. It is a ritual music plan, but it doesn't mean that we invoke Baphomet. Recently, we worked really hard on the invocation of the "cosmic laughter", also called "non-form ritual" by Antero Alli (who established "Parapsychological Theatre"). So far we have released two tapes that can be obtained by sending 7\$ (each) to my address: Vaidas Sadeika, Taikas 10-11, 4910 Utena, Lithuania. It is definitely entrancing... Imagine eight or ten people who are sat in a big echoing hall and who play drums, wooden sticks, metal plates, scissors, voices, guitars, reverberation, delays, children, toys ... Such a musical expression is essential for those who are interested in various ritualistic and minimalist experiences.

Furthest Shore

Released through Skaldic Art Productions, an emerging label run by Falkenbach's mastermind Pratyas Vakras, Furthest Shore's debut album is the first book of an epic metal trilogy built in Tolkien's tradition. Put on your helmet, saddle your horse, polish your long sword and follow the pure hearted warriors to the battlefields of Hethenesse...

Dialogue with Hexenmeister (bass guitar)
immortalized by Laurent MICHELLAND

Some time after the release of "Autumn Roars Thunder", DARKWOODS MY BETROTHED split into two parts because it wouldn't be sensible to carry on with such versatile styles as epic material and Scandinavian black metal within one band...

That's when FURTHEST SHORE was officially born, in late summer 1996 and when I left DARKWOODS MY BETROTHED. In the autumn, Nattasett (Pasi uses this name now to differentiate him from the drummer) and myself met several times to review the song ideas that we had and to finish up the material of the debut album. Back then, NATTVINDENS GRAT was more or less on ice, so it was the perfect time for us to put up a band that would combine the epic elements of "Autumn Roars Thunder" and "A Bard's Tale". You could actually say that FURTHEST SHORE is the epic continuation of NATTVINDENS GRAT. There are in fact three full songs on the "Chronicles Of Hethenesse - Book I : The Shadow Descends" that were originally written for this band.

With lots of choirs, acoustic guitars and added folk elements, FURTHEST SHORE plays pure epic metal in the vein of BATHORY's "Hammerheart", "Twilight Of The Gods" and "Blood On Ice". Through the whole idea of "Chronicles of Hethenesse", do you want to offer an epic experience one has never dreamt of?

I must say that I have worshipped BATHORY since 1987 and besides the epic albums, I love all of Quorthon's works except for "Requiem" and "Octagon". It's a pity that he ran out of ideas for more epic albums. That is basically the starting point of FURTHEST SHORE, which translates that we wanted to continue where Quorthon left. We obviously use the modern sound technology and keyboards to further enhance the power of the epic compositions. So I reckon we take the whole concept one step further. And as far as I know, FALKENBACH and our band are the only ones to play music loyal to this tradition. The German band still draws influences from "Blood, Fire, Death" and uses screams besides clean vocals. We will never use screams but clean vocals only.

There will be a series of three albums with a story continuum, the plot of the tale covering the whole millennial history of this world, from the creation to the end...

Hethenesse is a fantasy world that I created as a combination of elements from both European Middle Ages and Tolkien's Middle Earth. It is a peaceful land until one night the Seven Priests come and bring their own religion to which all the people have to convert. The magic of the Seven is so strong that only few people can partially resist it. Even the dullest of donkeys must now see the resemblance to the European medieval history. The last of the master smith forges a magic-filled weapon, the Blade, that is the only thing that can beat the magic of the Seven, but only if this weapon is wielded by a pure-hearted warrior. In "Book I : The Shadow Descends", there's a resistance movement with a brave leader who wields the Blade, but unfortunately he isn't the chosen one and he fails miserably. The Blade is stolen by the Seven and taken to a cave, where a golden dragon keeps it. The first chapter concludes with a prophecy that the elders keep on singing...

From an aesthetic point of view, you also wanted to create a trilogy that looked like one...



The idea is to have a concept that is half a compact disc and half a book. The cover format will be of similar nature for all the three albums, the map under the tray, a painting covering 2/3 of the back page as well, the logo and the album title in the same place with the same font. The booklet will be illustrated by background graphics reminiscent of the other albums, the back inlay card having a book-like description of the story instead of the song list that everybody uses. In some years, when putting all the three albums beside each other, you will be able to notice similarity beyond the point of just being Furthest Shore's albums, but also of being "Chronicles of Hethenesse".

CD reviews

All CD reviews by Laurent MICHELLAND

Guidelines :

Country / Running time / Musical style / Comment

Comment :

Loathsome / Boring / Likeable / Interesting / Thrilling

Nocturnal Art Productions

LIMBONIC ART "Epitome Of Illusions"

Norway / 45:02 / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
Though released after "In Abhorrence Dementia", Epitome Of Illusions is in a fact of collection of Limbonic Art's early demo tapes that are now pressed on CD format. While listening to those very first steps, you will understand why the inspired duo has come up to all expectations, opening doors to worldwide acquaintance. Even if the production has been slightly recreated, you can feel the history of a time to come, of a symbiotic and majestic black metal repertoire, of an appetizer to the following masterpiece named "Moon In The Scorpio". Daemon and Morfeus cleverly comment this release as something that may amuse some and bring frustration to others, but their final message to our audience is this : take it for what it is...

Moonfog Productions



DARKTHRONE "Holy Darkthrone"

47:53 / Satyricon, Enslaved, Thorns, Emperor, Doheimsgard, Gehenna, Gorgoroth, Immortal / Interesting
To celebrate the 10 years of Darkthrone and its most influential role in the black metal scene, Moonfog Productions has succeeded in gathering some of the finest Norwegian acts. Each of the bands featured has paid a truthful and heartfelt homage to the cult uncompromising horde. Fenriz and Nocturno Culto must feel honoured by such a dedication to their raw, forever true black metal art. Sounding like an ultimate reverence, "Holy Darkthrone" is a compilation that may assume to be an historical event.

THORNS Vs EMPEROR

Norway / 48:49 / Industrial black metal / Likeable
Formed in 1989 as a trio, Thorns comes from the same black metal generation as Darkthrone. It has now become a one man band under the influence of S.W. Krupp, who has always been the creative force. The highlight of this release should be the epic and orchestral version of "Thus Spake The Nightspirit", an adaptation that will surely please all of Emperor's addicts. The war has begun...

Head Not Found / Voices Of Wonder

ADORIOR "Like Cutting The Sleeping"

England / 47:19 / Epic black metal / Interesting
Of Latin origin, the name Adorior means to rise and attack. A name that really fits to the band's musical aspirations. "Like Cutting The Sleeping" indeed combines brutal black metal together with violent demonic cries surrounded by majestically occult atmospheres. The three band members are deeply involved in the satanic philosophy, especially drummer Paul, who has completed a degree in theology and is currently writing a book on Satanism. And when you know the line-up features Demoniac's bass player Chris, you'll have understood that Adorior is definitely uncompromising and unholy union emerging from the British shores.

Jester Records / Voices Of Wonder

ULVER "Themes From William Blake's The Marriage Of Heaven And Hell"

Norway / 49:02 + 52:18 / Avant-garde metal / Interesting
After drawing the curtains on their musical descent into the mysterious world of Norwegian folklore, Ulver unveil a new fanciful journey, this time manifested as a two CD musical backdrop to the illuminated writings of William Blake. This fourth album also features guest appearances of Fenriz from Darkthrone as well as Samoth and Ihsahn from Emperor. Musically speaking, Garm and his companions draw elements from a wide range of styles, blending their ancient folk and metal influences with contemporary electronic settings. Without a doubt, one of the freshest and most innovative releases in the scene for long.

ARCTURUS AND THE DECEPTION CIRCUS

"Disguised Masters"

Norway / 48:07 / Avant-garde music / Interesting
"Disguised Masters" basically offers Arcturus' last recorded song "Deception Genesis", that hints towards darker pasto-

ral settings, plus a re-recorded version of "Du Nordavind", that the band never felt they brought it to its proper fruition. This new release includes a freakshow of various outside collaborators, Phantom Fx, Magenta, Infelctio, When and the arctunians themselves who deliver bizarre interpretations of the amazing masterpiece of musical art "La Masquerade Infernale". In this hurricane of aesthetic contraries, dimensions collide and form a special treat from a successful band with a scarce discography and an uncertain destiny.

ESPERANZA "Esperanza"

Norway / 49:03 / Atmospheric music / Likeable
Esperanza indicates the dark muse's very presence. Their self-titled debut album is almost cinematic in its sinister and shimmering exposed. Well realized sound-scapes generated initially by two keyboards and complemented by an assemblage of organic percussion, audio experimentation and playful tinkery. A clandestine form of music that is suggestive of influences from Eastern mysticism to science fiction.

WHEN "Psychedelic Wunderbaum"

Norway / 42:29 / Psychedelic music / Likeable
Six albums and 12 years after its inception, When is still an active vehicle. With "Psychedelic Wunderbaum", they leave their twisted brand of national romanticism behind for the benefit of psychedelic, feverish delirium and dusty highway excursions. All conceived within the scope of such notables such as Tom Wolfe and Aleister Crowley.

BOGUS BLIMP "Men-Mic"

Norway / 24:36 / Avant-garde music / Likeable
Like old vaudeville acts, Bogus Blimp offer tuneful melodrama to the masses. Combining the dark 30's of Europe with avantgardism, each song is another act in a play venturing from dark, exotic and bombastic monuments to stumbling and naked moments of beauty. A journey through tales of visionary reporters, sleepy space travellers, naughty old men and hyperventilation. All wrapped up.

Voices Of Wonder

PALE FOREST "Transformation Hymns"

Norway / 53:43 / Melancholic music / Interesting
The Pale Forest sound can be described as a sweet, extremely intimate journey through the desperate landscapes of Autumn months. This six piece band manage to mix elements from atmospheric metal and dreamy music in a unique sensitive way, leaving a both powerful and majestic expression. The compositions are embraced by warm, insightful and melancholic atmospheres, with Kristin Fjellseth's breathtaking vocals floating on top. A lonely fallen leaf coming to your heart...

RED HARVEST "Newrage World Music"

25:03 / Power metal core / Likeable
This new mini CD is in fact the first release since 1996's album "Hybreed", "Newrage World Music" sounds like a very raw and powerful production, showing an even more aggressive and bloodthirsty musical approach than the one found on their four previous efforts. Through oppressive rhythms, distorted vocals keyboard parts, the five piece band strengthens its career that already started in 1992.

Aftermath Music

THE EMBRACED "In My Dreams... I Am Armageddon"

Norway / Advance Tape / Dark metal / Likeable
Hailing from the city of Trondheim (Bloodthorn, Bethzaida), The Embraced presents its first step, featuring 8 songs played in a melodically dark death metal vein and with a raging spirit. Released through a local label, "In My Dreams... I Am Armageddon" is an enjoyable effort that somehow sounds close to the Goteborg style. Still one needs to get their things together in the songwriting department, even though the concept is well-considered.

No Fashion Records / Musisoft Distribution

ALLEGIANCE "Vrede"

Sweden / 38:43 / Black/death metal / Interesting
After the furious attacks of their previous two albums, Allegiance once again unleashes their Northern aggression, this time including more arrangements than before. Together with mastering producer Peter Tägtgren, the trio recorded "Vrede", which displays once again the band's strong musical competence in the field of a technical, powerful black/death repertoire. Formed 10 years ago, this musical entity featuring some members of Marduk have gradually become of one of the top acts within the Swedish metal scene.

OPHTHALMIA "Dominion"

Sweden / 38:31 / Dark black/doom metal / Interesting
Words that are meaningless without the structured weight of action behind them... From their inception over nearly a decade ago, Ophthalmia have truly embodied those words, both in spiritual and earthly manifestations. Ophthalmia is a fantasy world where Elishia is the Goddess, a woman living with the demons. Mastermind it has also created the surroundings of this land, its creatures of this land as well as a language for Ophthalmians. With the release of their third studio album, the cult Swedish band forge a testament to their conviction, by building inspired dark metal litaries to strengthen their yet established conceptual edifice. Ophthalmia again prove that their power is generated solely from within and unable to be swayed by outside influence or opposing ideology.

HYPDCRITE "Into The Halls Of The Blind"

Sweden / 42:08 / Death metal / Likeable
"Into The Halls Of The Blind" contains 11 mind-blowing, yet melodic Swedish death metal songs with a special touch,

that is melodies and harmonies combined with sheer brutality. Hypocrite's melodic brutality could be compared to names like In Flames, Dark Tranquillity and At The Gates. Armed with members of Mörk Gryning, the Stockholm based trio will reach a wider audience and please their brutal fans.

VERMIN "Millennium Ride"

Sweden / 43:02 / Death rock / Likeable
After two albums of brutal, skull crushing, violent and aggressive Swedish death metal, Vermin has now evolved in a musical vein close to Entombed's latest releases. Even though "Millennium Ride" still features brutal elements, memories of the past, you'll clearly noticed the emergence of new ingredients taking influence from groove and rock. The story of a metamorphosis in 10 songs.

Cold Meat Industry

THE PROTAGONIST "A Rebounds"

Sweden / 47:52 / Classical ethereal music / Thrilling
By participating on a number of prestigious compilation albums, giving a couple of well-timed concerts in Europe and putting up enticing musical samples for public scrutiny on the web, The Protagonist has been turned into a name mentioned with utmost respect by those who are familiar with eclectic matters. Mainly due to the ingenious tactics by the person behind the project, Magnus Sundström, "A Rebounds" emerges as full-fledged contender among albums subscribing to a neo-classical idiom. The classically designed compositions draw a lot of inspiration from cinematic and literary sources, leaving little doubt about the ardour with which the artist approaches his calling. What we have is a proclaimer of the beauty in darkness who transcends both spiritually and musically musical mediocrity and ugliness.

RAISON D'ETRE "Collective Archives"

Sweden / 73:33 + 73:42 / Dark ambient / Interesting
"Collective Archives" documents the development of Raison D'Etire through the years 1991-1996. This double CD set includes a huge collection of songs previously only available on cassettes and compilations. In addition, there is also 3 previously unreleased compositions and 5 exclusive remixes from the debut album "Prospectus I". Peter Andersson is the sole entity behind the mournful strains of raison D'Etire. His music consists of a collage of synthesizers, chants and samples that meld together to create music for a society whose spirituality has been rendered impotent. The trademark's chants hold more substantially as memory, sitting through the eons while the experimental edge expresses itself though dismal drones and a skewed, disorientating balance of sounds. Raison D'Etire is the sound of all hope nullified.

BLOOD AXIS "Blot : Sacrifice In Sweden"

USA / 69:39 / Esoteric neo-classical bombast / Interesting
In November 1997, Blood Axis was invited to fly to Sweden and present a special live performance for the Cold Meat Industry 10th Anniversary Festival. This show was recorded and gave birth to "Blot : Sacrifice In Sweden" : a crystalline and intense summoning of everything, from haunting heathen mantras to electronic aggression, traditional European melodies and crushing bombastic anthems. The set list reflects the band's entire work, from the earlier beginnings to the newest horizons. This is no ordinary live since some songs are performed here are even stronger than their previous studio versions. The sacrifice has been made, the spirits summoned and the results will be seen and felt by those who dare listen.

Woodcut Records

THYRANE "Black Harmony"

Finland / 35:12 / Satanic black metal / Interesting
Originally recorded in 1997 as a demo tape, "Black Harmony" is now re-released on CD format. Thyrane's black metal compositions are very intense and varied while the sound of the keyboards can be compared with the one performed by Dimmu Borgir on their latest release. Watch out for their upcoming, highly promising second attack that was recorded in December 1998.

THROES OF DAWN "Dreams Of The Black Earth"

Finland / 44:59 / Original dark metal / Interesting
The follower to "Pakkasherra" shows an important progression regarding Throes Of Dawn's musical approach. Played in a black heavy metal style, the debut album sounded raw and was basically guitar based. On the other hand, "Dreams Of The Black Earth" features much more mature and sensitive dark metal compositions. All of them rest upon a great work in terms of melodies, that are performed on keyboards. Recorded at legendary Tico-Tico studio, this technical and mysterious new effort sounds like the time of recognition for this Finnish act.

Euphonious Records / Voices Of Wonder

WITHERING SURFACE "The Nude Ballet"

Denmark / 41:57 / Heavy death metal / Interesting
With "The Nude Ballet", Withering Surface have found a much more mature sound without losing the ingredients from their debut album "Scarlet Silhouettes". Far more melodic, technical and atmospheric, this new release is still influenced by the Swedish melodic death metal scene, that is the famous Goteborg style. But this time, you can also note inspirations from more diverse bands such as Sentenced and Paradise Lost. All this results in 10 tracks varying from melodic ("Nude & Humble") to fast ("White Brides") and melancholic ("The Ballet") atmospheres.

SATURNUS "For The Loveless Lovely Nights"

Denmark / 35:59 / Atmospheric doom/death / Interesting

Following "Paradise Belongs To You", this mini CD is seen as an appetizer for the next full length album that will be out in Spring 1999. "For The Loveless Lovely Nights" features four unreleased tracks as well as two songs that were recorded live during the Rockside Festival. This new chapter brings a conceptual coherence in the band's carrier. Saturnus has an ability to build melancholic doom/death compositions in which rich arrangements dialogue with sad vocals and intimate moods. Somehow close to early My Dying Bride, the Danish band has know how to keep the taste for disenchanting feelings and depressive journeys.

GIGANDHI "Chaaval"

Denmark / 65:18 / Industrial metal / Likeable
With an atmospheric and transcendental industrial metal style, the music displayed on "Chaaval" basically continues where "Bafflesia" ended. The band members label their expression as "industrial" because of the Indian inspiration in both music and concept. Gigandhi mixes metal riffs with cold, atmospheric soundscapes and harmonic Indian-inspired melodies. Having been a big part of the Danish underground for the last 7 years, this five-piece act again brings a fresh breath to the industrial metal scene.

Valthalla Records / Voices Of Wonder COMPULSORY "...And The Death Of Vanity"

Denmark / 40:20 / Power thrash metal / Likeable
Being very diverse, Compulsory's music includes many elements, ranging from death metal over thrash metal to grind core. Sounding like a cross between Slayer, Morbid Angel and Konkra, "...And The Death Of Vanity" is a brutal and back to basic musical piece. A debut album that is filled with feelings of energy as well as a lyrical concern for the members' own sex and its future.

Black Sun Records / Focusion

DIABOLIQUE "The Black Flower"

Sweden / 53:04 / Gothic rock / Likeable
"The Black Flower" is an extremely confident album showing a fundamental development from the band's previous effort "Wedding The Grotesque". Masterminded by Grotesque and Lars In Wait's ex-member Kristian Wahlin aka Necrolord, Diabolique has composed a melancholic and sentimental album. An unexpected release that blends the early eighties' melancholia with sixties psychedelic and seventies arrangements into their own laid-back and shadowesque sound.

SINS OF OMISSION "The Creation"

Sweden / 41:43 / Swedish death metal / Interesting
Sins Of Omission's debut album displays fast and technical death metal, sustained by extremely brutal vocal lines and with a concern regarding melodies as the development of harmonies. Exploring the unknown dimensions of Swedish death metal, fast and tight drums fight together with raw, powerful riffs and mind blasting solos. Lyrically, "The Creation" exposes fantasy worlds beyond human imagination, thus completing this trip through cosmos.



HARZALAH
Hildskjalf

Misanthropy Records

BURZUM "Hildskjalf"

Norway / 33:47 / Ambient folk / Thrilling
I must tell you at once : Varg Vikernes has returned with a strong piece of art. "Hildskjalf" enables Burzum to slip in multiple signatures and still retain a balanced and clearly arranged whole. Though this release is entirely atmospheric and instrumental, there's a clear difference between the songs individually. Enriched with numerous folk ideas, this concept album is born under the sign of the runes...

IN THE WOODS... "Strange In The Stereo"

Norway / 63:16 / Atmospheric progressive music / Thrilling
Incredibly agile and busy, "Strange In The Stereo" features 11 new songs that sound really mature and atmospheric. When focusing on the compositions, you'll easily notice that In The Woods... have once again realized an intelligent and proficient effort in terms of timing and teamwork. The beautiful, emotional vocals of Ovi Sythjord and Synne Diana are simply wonderful and sometimes sung in a talk-type manner. Now that the band have eliminated most of their original black metal roots, the songs are mainly comprised of progressive runs and melodies over a highly complex signature. A haunting and gripping release in connection with the band's artistic aspirations.

SOLSTICE "New Dark Age"

England / 66:07 / Epic doom metal / Interesting
Solstice's style is a highly recognizable sign, always observational and breathless, the one of epic doom metal. Following the sound of their debut album, "New Dark Age" presents a dark and cold universe, like a little persistent

drizzle impregnating the climate of the English hills. The purely British atmosphere which wraps this album leads the listener in a deserted musical land where the instrumental heaviness and the refined melodies make one in an harmonious way. The band expresses its adventure in the folkloric field, its emotions and thoughts, which are destined to those who have been overcome by sorrow, to those who can understand the suffering. Living with tears instead of blood. Solstice remains strongly faithful to its roots.

MADDER MORTEM "Mercury"

Norway / 51'59 / Melancholic doom / Interesting
Discovered on the "Misty Sleep" mini album and the "Presumed Guilty" compilation, Madder Mortem follows its way on the paths of a melancholic and sophisticated doom metal. Without a doubt, this Norwegian band is inspired by noble and charming atmospheres. But there is one thing constantly present and which stands out of "Mercury": Agnete M. Kirkevaag's warm and sensual voice. Her chants express feelings of sincerity and truth throughout this album. Madder Mortem refines its style with the band's own elements.

all of humanity and isolation from the rest of society. There is no hope, drown in your tears...



Eldehorn EWIGKEIT "Starscape"

UK / 43'40 / Atmospheric black metal / Interesting
"Starscape" is almost wholly dedicated to a soul fulfilling bid to ascend into the realms of unknown space and beyond. The music still holds the mid-paced black metal-ish feel and is largely keyboard driven with vocal, guitar, drum accompaniment as this is Ewigkeit's strong trademark. The lyrics go far deeper into the subject than on "Battle Furies" and the vocals are delivered more harshly. This second album sounds more experimental and there is a great improvement regarding the ambient and orchestral keyboards, which have become of a more spacey nature.

HA LELA "Pabudimas"

Lithuania / 44'47 / Folk pagan metal / Interesting
Running through "Pabudimas", it becomes evident that it concerns a band hailing from the Baltic shores since their sound displays a strong likeness to the folklore of their native land. Under the sign of a mid-paced dark metal repertoire, Ha Lela's musical trademark is revealed through seven epic and emotional hymns to the dark Northern forests of Lithuania. This debut album has plenty of room reserved for traditional folk instruments that sound haunting and powerful. A beautiful portrait of the images and feelings that are inked in Ha Lela's spiritual beliefs.

ZPOAN VITENZ "Gime Nugalet"

Lithuania / 60'03 / Folk war music / Interesting
As a solo project developed by Ramunas Porsorius from Pocolus, Zpoan Vitenz makes you embrace the folkloric and warlike hymns from the Lithuanian lands. With energy and grace, "Gime Nugalet" whispers intriguing stories that combine an ambient, ethnic and metal music with old Slav chants. Pretext to the memory of a pagan universe guided by the Baltic kings Videvitis and Brennis, this album starts the elaboration of an original and strong work which makes of Ramunas a first-rate composer. Through revived pictures, in the strained eyes of the men who remember...

RAGNAROK (UK) "Domgeorn"

UK / 76'33 / Warrior metal / Likeable
This new album, "Domgeorn" (meaning "Eager For Glory") features new versions of the nine tracks from the 1995 cassette "Beloved Of The Raven God" and four new songs, including the band's version of the folk standard, "John Barleycorn". As if the use of traditional instruments and melodies wasn't enough, Ragnarok (UK) have further enhanced the archaic heathen ambience of the album by writing and singing many of the lyrics in the ancient Saxon tongue.

Wicked World

THE ELYSIAN FIELDS "We... The Enlightened"

Greece / 47'16 / Atmospheric death doom / Interesting
The awaited follow-up to "Adelant" is again a proud homage to the Ancient Greek legends and legacies. "We... The Enlightened" is a diverse album that is basically aggressive, using the common metal denominators such as fast rhythms, attack-mode guitars and screamed vocals. On the other hand, The Elysian Fields include piano parts and orchestral sounds together with varied chants to serve their musical and lyrical exploration inspired by the golden age of their native land. Listen to the neverending tales of struggle and perseverance for those who fought to maintain a dignified, exalted way of life.

DECEMBER WOLVES "Completely Dehumanized"

USA / 31'08 / Death/thrash metal / Likeable
Leaving their black metal repertoire behind them, December Wolves now concentrates on creating harsh, raw music that encompasses musical ability with an all out thrash attack. Somewhere between death metal blasts, thrash rhythms and dark melodies, "Completely Dehumanized" unleashes a malevolent, hateful sound based on brutality. A release that takes its roots in the undiluted raged fuelled by frustration.

GANDALF "Deadly Fairytales"

Finland / 46'45 / Death groove / Likeable
Musically close to country mate Convulse, Gandalf carve out carefully crafted songs that rely as much on memorable choruses as they do on basic groove and melody. Originally formed as a pure death metal band, those musicians have gradually progressed towards other boundless horizons. Sounding like a cross between Sentenced and late Carcass, but with more groove, "Deadly Fairytales" gives new variations to the death metal style.



Osmose Productions

IMMORTAL "At The Heart Of Winter"
Norway / 46'09 / Black metal / Interesting
With the ferocity of a broad sword severing an armor plated limb, Immortal emerges from fire and ice with a majestic release. As a musical illustration of the Norwegian frosty landscapes, "At The Heart Of Winter" surrounds the listener with a relentless assault on the senses that is both mesmerizing and punishing. This time, the duo has achieved a much heavier black metal sound that combines skull-pummeling brutality with memorable melodies and thick riffing to create the atmosphere of a corpse-littered battleground. Abbath's intensely demonic and possessed vocals have connected immortal to words of praise...

BEWITCHED "Hell Comes To Essen"

Sweden / 45'06 / Speed metal / Likeable
This live album was recorded during the World Domination tour in December 1997 to capture Bewitched's energy and insanity on stage. "Hell Comes To Essen" is an expression of the initial concept, that is the revival of 80's European speed metal, but this time shared with an audience. As a matter of course, the songs comes out rather coherent, jointed in most areas and globally sound much like a collection of the same timings and melodies with the omnipresence of period patterns.

ROK "This Is Satanik"

Australia / 31'15 / Noise metal / Likeable
Extreme noise with a death metal appearance, this is the way ROK sounds, a project led by Sadistik Ekeulon's vocalist. There's little to no patterns, not to mention, but who cares: sick stuff is the magic world here, so musical contents or whatsoever are beyond disputes anyways. This goes far beyond music, opting for a twisted sound, distorted blur and some kind of non-understandable snarl that seem to be the vocals. For extremity freaks only.

Velvet Music International

HELGRINDR "Cold Might Of Winter War"
France / 43'24 / Black metal / Likeable
Strongly influenced by the Norwegian black metal, Helgrindr uses all the elements of the genre to compose their debut album. Even though the compositions are pleasant, you'll easily understand that the band members still have work, practise their instruments to develop their skills. This way, they should be able to express carefully the atmospheres arising from Mother North. An honest debut, now it's time to progress towards musical wisdom and maturity.

Noise Solution Records

MUSIC FOR THE DEAD MASSES "Various Artists"
Necrophagist, Skinned, Mortal Flesh, Exhumator, Excavation, Godzilla, Traumatism, Scarve, Damn Nation, Admortem, Conqueror, Morphism, Gods Of Empitness, Dead End, Benighted, Bloodsuckers, Uncreation, Lividity, Loggerhead, Sacred Sin, Absent Cadence, The Darkening / 76'52 / Likeable
Music For The Dead Masses is a brutal death/grind compilation featuring no less than 27 bands from all over the world. These blistering tales of relentless brutality are highlighted by the presence of promising bands such as Necrophagist, Admortem, Conqueror or Dead End. This release takes the shape a musical slaughter, surely one of the most intense compilations in the field of underground death metal.

Holy Records

MISANTHROPE "Libertine Humiliations"
France / 48'10 / Extreme heavy metal / Interesting
This is what happens if a producer like Mr Fredman gets his hands on a band like Misanthrope, that has an infinity towards atmospheric, doom, heavy and death metal. The material on "Libertine Humiliations" is heavy death structured with additional blends of the aforementioned styles over it, whether or not in combination. Vocals are capable to adapt to any style and mood, including grunts and regular toned lines. This album is as a whole as multifaceted and unpredictable with a special credit to the powerful sound. A fine effort in terms of details and structures.

YEARNING "Plaintive Scenes"

Finland / 41'38 / Symphonic dark metal / Interesting
If the first YEARNING's album presented a unique point of view, the one of tragic and atmospheric doom metal, then its successor offers a more varied listening. "Plaintive Scenes" makes you follow an eventful journey in which the feelings and their opposites are mixed, from brutality to

sweetness, from energy to calm. The death metal passages are next to pure atmospheric moods while Juhani Palomaki's guttural and clear vocals just emphasize this contrast. At last, the female vocals and the frequent choirs end the portrait of a band which has chosen the musical experimentation as a motto.

ON THORNS I LAY "Crystal Tears"

Greece / 44'26 / Gothic atmospheric music / Likeable
Leaving the mythological world of Atlantis and their doom/death style, On Thorns I Lay appears with a new face, definitely angelic and refreshing. Fundamentated by an atmospheric mood, the material on "Crystal Tears" is guided by charming female chants, clear male vocals and reinforced by the inclusion of orchestral arrangements. Since the members now live in Romania, maybe the cold atmospheres that are proper to those haunting landscapes this taste for sorrowful emotions and dark romanticism. From a realm of waves to a snowy domain...

STILLE VOLK "Ex-uvies"

France / 43'17 / Ambient folkloric metal / Likeable
"Ex-Uvies" is an experimentation irrelevant to musical fashions and norms. Stille Volk has left the medieval atmospheres of its debut album to move towards a curious and paradoxical repertoire mixing pop, metal and industrial influences. The overall musical and lyrical concept is disconcerting and complex. One can regret the enchanting rustles of legends, stories and myths featured on "Hartaoma". An album reserved to the contemporary music lovers.



Season Of Mist / Rape Of Mind GEASA "Angel's Cry"

Ireland / 51'52 / Celtic black metal / Interesting
"Angel's Cry" presents Geasa's concept, meshing atmospheric black metal with a deeply melancholic Irish feeling. This troupe has majestically enlarged this atmospheric affair that is mainly channelled through the overall melodic instrumentation and the plaintive vocals. Draighdean's chants sound like a collection of different pains that are engraved in his heart. Sometimes close Deinyonichus' specific vocals, his singing moves just above the mid-range and has a strong appealing appearance. An enchanting travel through Irish nature and folklore.

...AND OCEANS VS. BLOODTHORN

"War Vol. I - Finland Vs. Norway"
Finland-Norway / 41'57 / Interesting
Here's the first release of Season Of Mist's war collections, featuring a total of 8 tracks, with 4 songs per band. Each act has to create two new songs, to recreate one of the other's work and to cover a song from an unusual band, GGFFH on this release. Regarding...And Oceans, it's clear that they still play symphonic black metal in the vein of their promising debut album. On the other hand, Bloodthorn shows a new face. They now perform faster, harsher and more technical compositions than on "In The Shadow Of Your Black Wings" while still maintaining a taste for slow and mid-pace depressive songs. A kind of appetizer for the upcoming full length albums of each band.

ANATA "The Infernal Depths Of Hatred"

Sweden / 42'16 / Death metal / Likeable
Anata's debut album features a technical, brutal and intense mix of Swedish and US death metal with a similar balance of styles in terms of vocals and riffs. Of isolation and carnage, "The Infernal Depths Of Hatred" is a blistering musical tale that is highlighted by the flesh-ripping low-tuned guitar work and powerfully harsh vocals. When Morbid Angel meets At The Gates through the realm of the Swedish death metal underground...

FURIOUS TRAUMA "Roll The Dice"

Denmark / 45'09 / Speed rock / Likeable
Including the guest appearances of Michael Denner (ex-Mercyful Fate, King Diamond) and Andy La Rocque (King Diamond, ex-Death), Furious Trauma's third release differ from their previous efforts. This time, they display a repertoire close to Motörhead's spirit, with a direct, in your face musical approach. A sudden shift of attitude towards a more trivial sound.

Kron-H

DRILLER KILLER "Reality Bites"
Sweden / 70'58 / Punk crust / Likeable
"Reality Bites" basically follows where "Fuck The World" ends. Still inspired by The Exploited, here's a new hard-hitting crust hardcore repertoire that is meant to excoriate, in other words, to strip or rub off the skin. For the fans of The Rocking Dildos, DeLamorte and Disfear.



Candlelight Records

PECCATUM "Strangling From Within"

Norway / 43'27 / Experimental black metal / Thrilling
What makes Peccatum stand apart from others is their close to continuous flow of symphonic themes and inspired melodies that, mixed with the rhythmic, adds a dramatic dimension. This is reinforced by the variable, story like vocalage and background usage of keyboards. The emotive and atmospheric laden sections mesh the nature of the material while Ihsahn's strong vocals are sung spoken and nicely adapt to the moods and the music. Peccatum turn out to be proficient musicians with a niche for melody, teamwork and subtlety. With "Strangling From Within", Peccatum have redefined the term of musical art among the extreme genres.

EMPEROR "IX Equilibrium"

Norway / 44'03 / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
Revealing an impulsive and violent musical orientation, "IX Equilibrium" enlightens the listener on a new side of EMPEROR's personality. Close to a punch, this album overshadows the diffuse orchestration featured on "Anthems To The Weikin At Dusk" in order to favour efficiency and revolt. Because both Samoth and Ihsahn fight with their fists to revive the foundations of black metal art by bringing new influences. The discontinuous speed of the riffs, the death metal sound and the fiery nature of this album reveal the exacerbated feelings of this bewitching duet.

Cacophonous

EBONYLAKE "On The Eve Of The Grimly Inventive"
England / 48'44 / Avant-garde gothic black / Interesting
This suite of musical digressions orchestrated by EBONYLAKE offers a singular counterpart to the classical structures. "On The Eve Of The Grimly Inventive" is an inextinguishable album in which madness and horror are omnipresent pictures. This damned tale overflows with feverish compositions that are adorned with death metal passages, medieval interludes and sometimes gothic influences.

ANCIENT CEREMONY "Fallen Angel's Symphony"

Germany / 48'07 / Gothic dark metal / Interesting
With the constant will to analyze and elucidate all of the mysteries that deal with vampirism and Satanism in their connections with the universe, Ancient Ceremony follows its exploration and initiation with "Fallen Angel's Symphony". A mature album combining various elements taken from atmospheric death metal, darkwave, melodic heavy metal and classical music. This new release appears like the fruit of a minutely detailed work and not like an hazardous and chaotic wander. The band has kept the stylistic emblem of "Under Moonlight We Kiss", to which the female choirs confer a new dimension. After about ten years of existence, Ancient Ceremony follows its quest with an astonishing endurance.

Mordgrimm

TEARSTAINED "Monumental In Its Sorrow"

USA / 55'05 / Depressive dark art / Interesting
A longing for the end of existence... This is the main sound and atmosphere echoing from Tearstained, a solo project formed by Mikael of black metal act Night Conquers Day. "Monumental In Its Sorrow" expresses a heavy dose of melancholy and vocals that includes various styles of sad weeping and falsetto, influenced by Bathory and Mercyful Fate's distinct vocals. A sense of dark ennui and suicidal misanthropy is rampant in the songs, the theme of the album being a great despair towards

THE UNKINDS "Violence Is A Girl's Best Friend"

Sweden / 34'47 / Crust metal / Likeable
Close to the Hellcoasters, The Unkind's play dirty rock metal in a trivial and speed vein. Instead of low toned power grooves and a productional bottom-end punch to drive the guitars with, they have opted for an upper-range sound that is rather dry, harsh and aggressive. This is "Violence Is A Girl's Best Friend", a modern mould crossover that borrows from punk and metal.

Kaly Productions**DEMENTIA "Answer"**

France / 63'38 / Atmospheric dark metal / Interesting
With a rich and mysterious sound, Dementia plays a melodic, somewhat progressive form of technical death metal that is quite enjoyable. Their debut album "Answer" reveals a mature approach to composition and songwriting while still maintaining a driving death metal pace throughout. A refined and original adaptation of brutal sounds.

Drakkar Productions**HIRILORN "Legends Of Evil And Eternal Death"**

France / 63'38 / Epic black metal / Interesting
Following the promising "A Hymn To The Ancient Souls" demo, Hirilorn proves that its debut album is a turning point. The band has found how to orchestrate a ceremony in which the powers of hate and obscurity are strong. With long compositions, "Legends Of Evil And Eternal Death" develops an epic black metal style, dived by a certain personality and ready to conquer. Forever worshipping darkness...

**Ancestral Craft Productions****DARK SANCTUARY "Royaume Mélancoïque"**

France / Advance tape / Atmospheric medieval music / Interesting
Dark Sanctuary has explored the dark catacombs of classical and symphonic music to compose this new funeral march. Beautiful and wavering, this musical collection is carried away by purely atmospheric compositions with lyric accents. A whole climate of mourning and dram relates this melancholic realm where grace and despair live together. Marguise Ernia's chant is dramatically fluid, ethereal and expresses with a lot of emotions the poetic contents of French, English and Latin verses. "Funeral Cry" gave the image of a future dramatic composer: the prophecy became true.

Deadsun Records**GODLESS TRUTH "Burning Existence"**

Czechoslovakia / 43'35 / Brutal death metal / Likeable
The music displayed on "Burning Existence" consists of technical and brutal death metal compositions, mixing aggressively intense guitar riffs with fast precise drums and a collection of deep growls. Hailing from the Eastern underground death metal front, Godless Truth sound like the direct sons of Vader and Krabathor.

Shock Wave Records**AMORBITAL "Invidia"**

Slovakia / 30'08 / Melodic brutal death metal / Likeable
"Invidia" creates an atmosphere of claustrophobia and desperation with its sluggish, chopping guitar work, relentless blasting drums and apocalyptic howlings. This varied death metal recording combines sheer brutality, devastating hatred and twisted violence with soulful melodies. Emerging from the now fertile Eastern underground, Amorbital can be seen as the brothers of Vader, Krabathor and Dementor.

**Napalm Records****MACTATUS "Provenance Of Cruelty"**

Norway / 45'30 / Atmospheric black metal / Interesting
It was in the autumn of 1997 when I discovered with a great enthusiasm Mactatus' debut album, bringing a deeply emotional form of black metal art. With this new jump into the depths of hell, Hate Rodvittnesson's voice has become a true hateful lunacy that invades your soul and carries you away in the flood of a refined repertoire. From the atmospheric parts to the numerous changes of rhythm and the inclusion of female chants, "Provenance Of Cruelty" turns the obscure atmospheres in your mind until death devastates it. Violent and tragic, the album of a band who has musically matured and superbly enhanced its strength.

DARGAARD "Eternity Rites"

Austria / 47'42 / Medieval symphonic music / Thrilling
That's a real amazing feat realized by Dargaard which imposes a style and a world with its debut album. Everything is here, not only symphonic music and medieval atmospheres but also majestic female vocals worthy of a princess. With a rare mastery, this work shrouds you in a strange funeral sweetness, echoes of Arcana and Summoning. Such a heartbreaking musical beauty, such a phenomenal vocal purity can only be explained by pure talent. "Eternity Rites" is the title that suited this innovative album. Thanks to its evocative strength, the richness of its style and the plenitude of its pictures, this opus will be part of the memorable ones. A delight of eternity.

VINTERSORG "Till Fjälls"

Sweden / 40'15 / Folkloric black metal / Interesting
This is the solo project of Otyg's mastermind, namely Vintersorg. Though there are some similarities between both bands, it's important to note that Otyg plays pure folkloric music while Vintersorg sounds more metal, with heavy solos. It's a real enjoyment to sail across those atmospheres led by evocative vocals, which sing texts written with ancient Swedish words. An archaic and modern release that strengthens the talent of a strong composer.

THE SINS OF THY BELOVED "Lake Of Sorrow"

Norway / 54'47 / Gothic metal / Interesting
Sons of Theatre Of Tragedy and Tristania, The Sins Of Thy Beloved brings to light the vertiginous diversity of the gothic metal style. "Lake Of Sorrow" spreads a long moment of nostalgia, minor effects between female and male vocals, violins and keyboards, which brings you back to the sceptre of tragic feelings. Incredibly close to Liv Kristine Espenæs, the female vocals are elegant, feline and without harshness.

HEIDENREICH "Trance Of An Unholy Union"

Austria / 41'32 / Black metal / Likeable
Gathering together Peter K. (Abigor), Thurisaz (ex-Amestigon) and Lucia M. Faroutan-K., Heidenreich turns a particular glance towards black metal. The music of this Austrian trio could incarnate the chaos theory integrating a lot of samples, programmed rhythms like strange, synthetic and sometimes experimental sounds. More elaborated than the debut album, "Trance Of An Unholy Union" evokes a highly disharmonic and blasphemous universe. Thus, the pictures of hate and hostility are more convincing.

OBTAINED ENSLAVEMENT "Soulblight"

Norway / 41'24 / Black metal / Likeable
"Soulblight" sports some multi-structured, atmospheric and symphonic black metal compositions. Obtained Enslavement has a taste for the creation of long complex musical themes that are complemented by an extensive use of the synths. Filled with extreme vocals and fast riffs, the band's third release is a fairly instrumental affair with a lot of schemes.

CCP Records**ENID "Nachtgedanken"**

Austria / 45'57 / Atmospheric black metal / Interesting
Enid... A name that refers to the most beautiful virgin who lived during King Arthur's reign. Such an appealing moniker is directly to the varied black metal fantasies performed by this inspired duo. Martin Wiese and Florian Dammasch have gradually developed their own style of composing, greatly influenced by classical music and somehow close to Summoning's works. "Nachtgedanken" features 8 philosophical poems that alternate between symphonic, dreamy and catchy, brutal musical parts. An enchanting release enriched with both clear and growling male vocals as well as angelic female chants.

VOBISCUM "Traum Ewiger Finsternis"

Austria / 41'27 / Black metal / Interesting
Supported by melodic and symphonic keyboard sounds, Vobiscum succeeds in creating a plurality of atmospheres, that mixes feelings of hate and rage with the calm beauty of the night. Even though the band's black metal repertoire is dominated by guitars, the keyboards play an important role in "Traum Ewiger Finsternis" and they even become a driving force in some songs. This combination of atmospheric parts and aggressive, fast passages is completed by the lyrics of vocalist Arcanus, who turns his thoughts, feelings and dreams into words and relates the victory of darkness over the light.

JACK FROST "Glow Dying Sun"

Austria / 36'59 / Gothic doom / Interesting
Jack Frost's third release explores the inspiration of a dark metal repertoire with a sensibility taken from doom and gothic. The insistent and uninterrupted rhythm of "Glow Dying Sun" establishes a perfect harmony with the Manfred Klahre's low voice, close to a pray. His wise vocals make

you enjoy the moments of loneliness. An album that takes you to the eternal sleep...

M.O.S. Records**L'AME IMMORTELLE****"... In Einer Zukunft Aus Tränen Und Stahl"**

Austria / 56'14 / Symphonic electro / Likeable
L'Amé Immortelle's philosophy is to make music based on feelings and momentary sensations. The structures of their sounds build contrasts, combining classical, warm melodies with cold, aggressive electronic passages on the one hand and female chants with distorted male vocals on the other hand. The band's lyrics are one of the most important parts of their work. They contain personal experiences and actual events that affect them deep inside. Since... In Einer Zukunft Aus Tränen Und Stahl" doesn't rest upon one single style, it enables the trio to bring a flexible, boundless form of electronic music.

Hall Of Sermon/ Focusion**LACRIMOSA "Aleine Zu Zweit"**

Germany / 16'25 / Gothic rock / Interesting
After dedicating almost the whole of the year 1998 to live performances, Lacrimosa set off for England to record their new single with the London Symphony Orchestra. Consisting of 4 tracks, the main focus of this mini CD lies on two surprisingly contrary versions of the title song. The first one contains the most sensitive performance of its inventive lyrics while the musical power of the second one brings out the full potential of this theme. The third track is an exclusive bonus that goes through a series of changes, from a basic rock song to a bombastic orchestral work. The final track is the smothering "Coyca" from the 1995 album "Inferno", remixed by Samael. A razor-sharp and uncompromising release that presents again the widely differing talents of Tilo Wolff and Anne Sumri.

Metal Blade Records**GOD DETHRONED "Bloody Blasphemy"**

Holland / 39'33 / Death metal / Interesting
"Bloody Blasphemy" basically features all the trademarks of its predecessor "The Grand Grimoire": diverse blast beats, heavy riffs and atmospheric parts. God Dethroned have found their own style, which is a mixture of death, thrash and black metal, with a good dose of the aggression Slayer once spread on the "Reign In Blood" album. A dark, hateful and deeply anti-Christian release that testifies once again the band's musical potential and technical abilities.

THE CROWN "Hell Is Here"

Sweden / 47'11 / Brutal death metal / Likeable
Originally known under the name of Crown Of Thorns, the Scandinavian band was recently forced to change its moniker to The Crown because of the pressures made by a Christian band also called Crown Of Thorns. However, those barbarians have lost nothing of their violent and destructive visions. "Hell Is Here" is divided into 11 tracks that blend hellspawned riffs, blasting drums, melodies, heavy metal solos, guttural vocals and possessed lyrics. A catchy death metal effort.

Nuclear Blast Records**DIMMU BORGIR "Spiritual Black Dimensions"**

Norway / Advance tape / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
The continuity which is established here with "Enthroned Darkness Triumphant" is the one of the war against christianity. Because if the content hasn't changed, the form is more cruel and murderous. Punctuated by fast and efficient scenes, one can guess that each note, each melody, each word pronounced in this album has been diabolically planned. "Spiritual Black Dimensions" has been composed close to the enigma that links the feelings of hate, musical aestheticism and the coldness of the words. Dimmu Borgir passes through this enigma with animosity and thus unveils a facet that one couldn't suspect.

**Solistium Records****FORBIDDEN SITE "Astralgeist"**

France / 57'26 / Romantic dark metal / Thrilling
Forbidden Site's second assault is another homage to the great spirits who once contributed to the building of France. Through their musical dark art, the dark aristocracy revives the essence of refinement, elegance and nobility. The emotional verses exhales the romantic ideals and betrays the constant laceration of the damned soul. Always between melancholy and enthusiasm, between damnation and sublimation, "Astralgeist" sounds like an aspiration towards the infinite, a glorification of beauty as a quest and a frantic way of life and death. The portrait of an endless resistance against mediocrity...

AZURE "Moonlight Legend"

Sweden / 44'13 / Fantasy black metal / Interesting
Azure is a one man band led by Amorth who handles every instrument except for the drums, that were performed by Mathias Holmgren (ex-Naglfar, Embracing) during the recording sessions. "Moonlight Legend" evolves in the realm of fantasy black metal, influenced by the Swedish sound and symbolises the beginning of a long story to come. This first chapter tells us that a young blacksmith named Belheit suddenly finds out that he shall be the emperor of earth and universe within a month but some sacrifices have to be done first... A promising overall musical and lyrical concept. To be continued...

NOCTI VAGUS "Venture In Sombre Passion"

Germany / 53'24 / Black metal / Interesting
Nocti Vagus' qualities are to be found in their passionate way to conform their music. The band's feelings try to express themselves through a repertoire close to Dissection's "Storm Of The Light's Bane". This influence is combined with a musical picture featuring a certain rawness, strong atmospheres and a good melodic sense. Adorned with philosophical lyrics, "Venture In Sombre Passion" is a well considered affair for this new corner.

TUNRIDA "Hierarchy"

Finland / 40'11 / Black metal / Likeable
Since the band's inception in 1996, Tunrida's aim has always been to create and perform a melodic form of black metal together with a Satanic concept. In regards to their previous demos, "Hierarchy" shows some improvements in the fields of songwriting and technical ability. Out of the growing Finnish black metal scene, Tunrida should take a seat and work again to access higher steps.

Prophecy Productions**TENHI "Hallavedit"**

Finland / 15'46 / Folk progressive music / Interesting
Somewhat close to Empyrium, "Hallavedit" is an ambitious mini CD reflecting the beauty of nature and the theme of infinity. The melodies of this Finnish band brings a purely melancholic and atmospheric atmosphere, that ignores the feeling of heaviness. Beautiful and languorous, the harmonies are so convincing that they make you share their serenity. What is important for Tenhi is the discovery of new delicate and dreamy horizons. The journey has begun...

DRAWN "Plan To Be"

Norway / 29'37 / Innovative metal / Likeable
Drawn comes from Norway but doesn't evolve in the black metal field. Their debut mini CD "Plan To Be" combines musical elements from all genres, from psychedelic over metal to ambient music. The intense and direct thrash riffs contrast with the calm passages brought by the demonic hopeless male vocals and the beautiful female chants. A progressive and aggressive release with an emphasis on variety.

Invasion Records**MITHOTYN "Gathered Around The Oaken Table"**

Sweden / 55'11 / Viking metal / Interesting
Mithotyn follow their crusade through a mix of influences, ranging from heavy, death over black to Viking metal. Their third journey, "Gathered Around The Oaken Table", is the one of wisdom and maturity. In a short period of time, the band has strongly developed its musical skills and what you have to do now is to saddle your horse and gallop through Mithotyn's relentless epic assaults.

HELLSPELL "Devil's Might"

Sweden / 40'54 / Black metal / Interesting
Really intense black metal from the Swedish shores. From start to finish, each song on "Devil's Might" draws on influences from the typical Scandinavian sound. Mainly based on the technical and powerful sides, Hellspell's debut album features ripping guitars, over-the-top drums and hellish vocal howlings that make this band true devil worshippers.

INFESTEAD "JesuSatan"

Sweden / 35'07 / Death metal / Interesting
Featuring legendary Dan Swanö, Infestead redefines the boundaries of the extreme death metal genre at its finest. Their method of layering ear-bleeding demonic screams over deep-throated Satanic roars is brutally sounds brutally effective all along the line. For those who have been disappointed by the last works of Decide, "JesuSatan" is undoubtedly the right choice.

INDUNGEON "Misanthropocalypse"

Sweden / 35'30 / Deaththrash metal / Likeable
Formed in summer 1996, Indungeon was born under the impulses of members from Thy Primordial and Mithotyn. Played in the same vein as their debut album, "Misanthropocalypse" includes a death/thrash metal repertoire inspired by the eighties. A war metal affair so to speak that is consumed by atmospheres of conflict, destruction and total annihilation.

SKYMNING "Stormchoirs"

Sweden / 54'10 / Heavy death metal / Likeable
With galloping guitars, catchy melodies and lot of energy, Skymning sails across a technical and fast songs. Various influences come to your mind, whether it be thrash, heavy or death metal. Produced by Andy La Rocque (Mercyful Fate, ex-Death), "Stormchoirs" proves that these musicians are skilled and able to perform an overall compact, powerful and effective repertoire.

Last Episode Productions

EMINENZ "Anti-Genesis"

(On The 8th Day I Destroy Godcreation)

Germany / 55'23 / Black metal / Interesting
Renowned for its concerts with legendary Mayhem, Eminenz presents its third album in ten years of existence. The band's melodic black metal style is filled with contrasted accents and an ambivalence between classic riffs and varied keyboard parts. The themes of Satanism and destruction of Christianity are in the heart of "Anti-Genesis (On The 8th Day I Destroy Godcreation)", presenting a repertoire in which brutality and violence are restrained. An album that exhales a perfume of burning ashes.

NEBULAR MOON "Mourning"

Germany / 49'25 / Gothic black metal / Interesting
Nebular Moon's debut album has a concern for black metal, gothic and atmospheric music. Consequently, the scenery changes at any moment, the melodies cross continuously each other and something uncertain is forming. Full of brainwaves, "Mourning" suggests a refreshing listening, each title being the key of a minutely detailed gearwheel. A manic and fluid album, both grave and dazed, that avoids the trap of a pathos excess.

EISREGEN "Krebskolonie"

Germany / 51'52 / Unusual black metal / Likeable
Produced by Andy Classen of The Stage One studio where bands like Nagelfar or Rotting Christ recorded their works, "Krebskolonie" surely feels belonging to the black and death metal scene. The follow-up to "Zerfall" presents morbid and extreme song structures enveloped in a powerful sound. The recent addition of a violin player turns out to be a real improvement in Eisregen's music. Kept in German to ensure an identification, the lyrics relate popular stories dealing with subjects like death, passion or the decline of values and are told by an I-narrator for the most part. A cynic and cold release.

BLACK MESSIAH "Sceptre Of Black Knowledge"

Germany / 38'22 / Varied black metal / Interesting
Don't trust the apparent simplicity of its style, "Sceptre of Black Knowledge" is infinitely more complex than it seems to be. Black Messiah's essence is carried away with plenitude through an epic, furious black metal sound which dwells in a whirl of blood and hate. Full of entrancing and possessed scenes, this album makes you share many questions about the strangest scenarios and the alchemy of our diabolical thoughts. Of stone and flesh, a dedication to destruction and apocalypse.

PAGAN WINTER "Inferos"

Germany / 33'54 / Extreme black metal / Likeable
The recording of "Inferos" results in a blasphemic cross-section of new material and of old songs taken from the sold out "In The Shadowlands" mini CD. Pagan Winter stands for rough, fast and rough black metal, with an uncompromising spirit.

PENETRALIA

"Carpe Noctem (Legends Of Fullmoon Empires)"

Germany / 57'28 / Mystical black metal / Interesting
As a variety of mixture of black metal, gothic and dark wave, Penetralia debut album will convince you through a mystic dimension that sends out a penetrating dark force. The charismatic vocals of Daniel Droste, Bianca Eyeremann and Felix Gramling bring numerous changes and make the songs sound even more effective. "Carpe Noctem (Legends Of Fullmoon Empires)" has become a mysterious album which gains in tension each time you listen to its musical power.

VILKATES "Angeldust And Blasphemy"

Germany / 38'18 / Satanic black metal / Interesting
With a band name that refers to a werewolf that caused a horrible disaster in the area of today's Lithuania at the time of the early Middle Ages, Vilkaates has composed a musical tribute to the advocates of satanic thoughts. The dark in depth lyrics mirroring demons, the contempt of human beings, hate, sodomy and the essence of Satanism are illustrated by a powerful, very rough and traditional form of black metal that includes the skills of former Dunkelgrafen guitarist, Lord Asgaun. "Angeldust And Blasphemy" definitely sounds like an aggressively native document of true black metal, the way it is meant to be: straight, uncompromising and brutally devilish.

ISEGRIM "Isegrim"

Germany / 25'31 / Black metal / Interesting
With a compact and strong production, this self titled debut mini CD reveals Isegrim's instrumental skills to perform fast, brutal and powerful black metal. Inspired by the Norwegian black metal sound, especially in the vocal field, the four songs work very well and make this piece of art a well considered affair. Let's wait for the debut full length album of this promising one man band...

Serenades Records

SOULSEARCH "Abred Vs. Annwn"

Austria / 52'41 / Dramatic doom metal / Interesting
The title "Abred Vs. Annwn" symbolise the contrasts in the life of each individual. "Abred", the world of mankind is opposed to "Annwn", the other world from the Celtic mythology. Written in German and English, the lyrical conception is embraced by a symphonic and a great musical variety. Avoiding any barriers, Soulsearch sails across immense doom beats, epic metal hymns, rhythmic folk songs as well as dark ambient pieces inspired by gothic and classical music.

Merciless Records

DESASTER "Hellfire's Dominion"

Germany / 46'29 / Traditional black metal / Interesting
Desaster again make no compromise and follow their own effective way for which they earned attention and respect in the underground scene. The follow-up to "Stormbringer" features blasting black metal compositions that combine skull crushing riff attacks with straight ahead rhythms and pure violent aggression. They again mix black speed parts, mercilessly raw thrash passages and epic medieval sounds to show their metallic roots better than ever. With "The Hellfire's Dominion", the German band storms forward, ignoring all modern musical influences and commercial trends.

SCEPTER "I'm Going To Hell"

USA / 31'54 / Straightforward metal / Likeable
For Scepter, the spirit of the old metal gods will forever endure... Indeed, the band's debut full length album results from the musical and attitudinal culmination of the best death, thrash, black, hard rock and heavy metal style have to offer. Through a straightforward brand of heavy, crunching metal, "I'm Going To Hell" has no other restrictions than honesty, integrity and resolve. Once those qualities are mastered, power, honour and glory should follow.



No Colours Records

GRAVELAND "Immortal Pride"

Poland / 50'29 / Epic hammer metal / Thrilling
With slow and heavy epic compositions, Graveland has definitely built its own musical style. Filled with pure pagan power, "Immortal Pride" is a journey back in the glorious ancient times. In the vein of Bathory's "Hammerheart", this majestic opus is permeated by unforgettable hymns guided by folk melodies, epic keyboards and charismatic choirs. Dark clouds of war, the flock of black ravens in the sky are the sign of the time of a big trial. Every man takes his sword and shield and goes conducted by the sound of war horns. Through songs of fire and steel, the end will never come...

NARGAROTH "Herbstleyd"

Germany / 69'43 / Black metal / Interesting
Produced with extreme horror atmospheres, "Herbstleyd" displays a strongly hateful and misanthropic form of black metal. Nargaroth's debut album is filled with more than one hour of pure aggression, expressed through haunting riffs somehow close to early Burzum and painful screams. A release that shall be best described as tortured black metal with a deep pagan forever immortal spirit.

HELLFIRE "Into Fire"

Sweden / 25'52 / Black metal / Likeable
Out of the burning fire, Hellfire's debut album sounds like an homage to Bathory's early sound. Played in the vein of "The return" and "Under The Sign Of The Black Mark", this opus takes the genre of raw black metal and batters it into an even rawer musical form of extremism. Intense and uncompromising, "Into Fire" lives up to its title which such flames of hatred towards the churches.

URGEHAL "Massive Terrestrial Strike"

Norway / 36'45 / Black/thrash metal / Likeable
Recorded at Endless Studio, Oslo (Ulver, Arcrotus), this second satanic holocaust mixes raw black metal influences together with thrash/speed parts. Supporting the war against Christianity, Urgehal has an horrified feeling and soul. There is absolutely no sweetness involved at all in this hellish deluge, just unholy grim black metal and satanic hatred to the bone.

SORCERY "Bloodchilling Tales"

Sweden / 46'59 / Death metal / Likeable
Recorded in 1990 at legendary Sunlight Studio and mixed by Thomas Skogsberg, "Bloodchilling Tales" had been released exclusively on vinyl in August 1991. Sorcery's debut album is now re-released on CD format, including the "Rivers Of The Dead" 7EP (summer 1990) as a bonus. Adorned with a true Swedish death metal style, this release is a way to remember the underground scene that existed ten years ago.

MINOTAUR "Power Of Darkness"

Switzerland / 31'30 / Old thrash metal / Likeable
Again a re-release, this time of Minotaur, a band that reached a certain status in the underground network at the end of the eighties. Recorded during the years 1986-87, "Power Of Darkness" is now available on CD format and shows their skills in building a repertoire close to the early works of Kreator and Sodom. The trio was promised to a bright future in all relevant publications but due to problems between the members, they finally split up in 1992.

Skaldic Art Prod.

FURTHEST SHORE "Chronicles Of Hethenese - Book I: The Shadow Descends"

Finland / Advance Tape / Epic metal / Interesting
Featuring members of Nightwish, Wizard and Darkwoods My Betrothed, Furthest Shore plays pure epic metal in the vein of Bathory's "Hammerheart", "Twilight Of The Gods" and "Blood On Ice". Their debut album "The Shadow Descends" is an attempt to fill the gap Bathory left in metal when Quorthon quit doing epic albums. The result is really convincing and exhibits a work of high quality in terms of compositions, arrangements and sounds. With pounding drums, heavy guitars, versatile bass lines, clean powerful vocals, choirs, acoustic guitar and massive keyboards, Furthest Shore definitely belongs to the epic metal elite.

Morbid Records

ASHES YOU LEAVE "Desperate Existence"

Croatia / 55'44 / Doom/gothic metal / Interesting
This long melancholic soundtrack to desperate beauty sounds like a documentation of the band's relentless journey on the path to musical experimentation. Leaving their influences from My Dying Bride behind them, Ashes You Leave explores the depths of depressive moods through the clever integration of violin parts, flute arrangements and atmospheric female vocals. A realm of sensible emotions.

JUNGLE ROT "Slaughter The Weak"

USA / 33'39 / Death metal / Likeable
From an historical point of view, Jungle Rot was the term given to what happened when soldiers in Vietnam stood in filthy, stinking water for hours and in the end, the sodden flesh literally fell off their bodies. An outrageous vision that dictates the merciless brutality running throughout "Slaughter The Weak". This band from Wisconsin manages to recapture the spirit of old school bands like Sodom, Kreator and Destruction, thus building a barbarian repertoire sounding like a gore-soaked mayhem.

APOPHIS "Heliopolis"

Germany / 48'15 / Death metal / Likeable
Following "Gateway To The Underworld" and "Down In The Valley", Apophis third album presents the image of a mature band who has found its sound. Hailing from the Southern part of Germany, this young four piece act has composed a brutal death metal repertoire that is balanced between ultra fast blast beats and melodious parts with an emphasis on the guitars. Recorded at Exponent studio, where Krabathor produced their latest album, "Heliopolis" is a way to discover again the roots of the death metal genre.

HAEMORRHAGE "Anatomical Inferno"

Spain / 30'31 / Grindcore / Likeable
The title of Haemorrhage's third album says it all, both lyric-wise and music wise. There is still no sign of the Spanish band having gone over to breeding doves of peace. "Anatomical Inferno" stands for a kind of painful symbiosis of grindcore and old school death metal mixed with noise core sounds. A modern and yet traditional way of keeping music through the non commercial channels.

System Shock / Sure Shot

MALEVOLENT CREATION "The Fine Art Of Murder"
USA / 56'22 / Death metal / Likeable
From the beginning to the end, "The Fine Art Of Murder" rips and slaughters through 7 minutes of the most intense death metal in the history of recorded mayhem. Malevolent Creation is one of the few bands in the US death metal genre to follow-up their previous blows with an equally sophomore album. This already sixth release is definitely a merciless assault of relentless, yet mature brutality.

CASTIGATE "Bring Me The Head Of Jesus Christ"

Germany / 40'20 / Death Metal / Likeable
Standing for extreme aggression and brutal death metal, "Bring Me The Head Of Jesus Christ" sounds like a powerful mix between Massacre, Carcass and Cannibal Corpse. Extremely direct, right in your face, Castigate play a ferocious, hard-driving style of death metal that drags you by your hair to the top of a burning building and throw you off the roof.

VADER "Live In Japan"

Poland / 61'35 / Death metal / Likeable
Recorded on August 31, 1998, those 18 tracks presents Vede's fierce intensity and technical skills in front of barbarian audience. "Live In Japan" is a swirling musical nightmare of powerful drums, gut-wrenching bass chords, frantic guitar blasts and brutal-as-fuck vocals. This is a landmark live album in the history of death metal.

PATH OF DEBRIS "The Eyes Of The Basilik"

Melodic death metal / 38'52 / Likeable
Showing up with their debut album, Path Of Debris combine different influences, from doom over death to melodic metal. With a brutally powerful delivery, "The Eyes Of The Basilik" rips your brain from your skull and stomps it into oatmeal. All in all, a varied and epic death metal release with heavy metal roots.

Mascot Records

SKYFORGER "Kauja Pie Saules"

Latvia / 40'22 / Black metal / Interesting
"Kauja Pie Saules" brings Skyforger back to its past, relating the period from the 10th to the 13th century, when the Baltic nations were the rulers of their lands. This tribute to the ultimate pagan tribes of Europe survives by means of an epic and avenging black metal, in the pure Slav tradition. For each respectable guide, panoramic standpoints are

needed. By reviving the local folklore in two songs, those warriors distinguish themselves and put their sweetness in verses, their fears in pictures.

DARGOLAR "Incantations"

Belgium / 44'51 / Death metal / Likeable
Dargolar is a horror project from two ex-members of some well known thrash bands from the eighties. Their debut album "Incantations" sounds like a storm of raw death metal adorned with dark atmospheric keyboards and samplings of various sound effects. The lyrics of the first four songs take their inspiration from horror movies of the thirties while the other tracks will enable you to travel in a heroic fantasy world, full of knights, dragons, bloody battles, swords and mortal epidemics.

Hammerheart Records

KAMPFAR "Norse"

Norway / 12'07 / Viking black metal / Interesting
Seen as a transition before the release of Kampfars second full length album, this mini CD features three great Norse black metal songs that are heavily influenced by folk music. Deeply rooted in the Viking age, the atmospheres featured on "Norse" sometimes make you remember the medieval passages created by Satyricon and Storm. This new sign of life is an immense pleasure for your ears and strengthens once again Kampfars growing status among the Norwegian black metal elite. A deserved reward for mastermind Dok.

MANES "Under Ein Blodraut Maene"

Norway / 37'15 / Black metal / Interesting
Even though this their debut album, be sure that Manes isn't a new comer in the Norwegian black metal scene. Hailing from the city of Trondheim, this band has been in existence since 1992 and released three successful demo tapes. Now the secret is finally revealed and what you have in your hands is an inspired opus of grim and original black metal. Featuring session members of Bloodthorn, "Under Ein Blodraut Maene" offers apocalyptic and chaotic compositions coupled with eerie atmospheres and majestic waves of keyboards. The return of the elder...

ISHTAR "Krig"

Sweden / 55'31 / Black metal / Likeable
Somewhat close to Dimmu Borgir and early Emperor, Ishtar's debut album shall be described as a blend of powerful and epic Scandinavian black metal, featuring all the trademarks of this legendary style. Exploring the limits of intense music with an emphasis on effectiveness, "Krig" proves to be a mind-blasting and ferocious effort in the field of isolation and carnage.

Displeased Records / Rape Of Mind

EVEN SONG "Path Of The Angels"

Hungary / 45'19 / Gothic doom / Interesting
Six lost souls woke up from their dreamless slumber under the grey sky of the lost Hungarian territory. Trying to escape from that darkened void of reality, Even Song chose the way of dreams, the path of the angels. Their debut album relates the tales of the ancient world when magic filled the air and faeries danced under the glorious moon in the enchanted forest. A well-done depressive effort filled with beauty, desires and played in a charming yet atmospheric gothic doom vein.

HOUWITSER "Death But Not Buried"

Holland / 36'47 / Death metal / Likeable
Houwitsier started in 1997 by an idea of drummer Aad (Sinister) and guitarist Michel (ex-Sinister). They soon completed the line-up with singer Mike, also from Sinister. The result is a combination thrash, grind and death metal influences with an aggressive spirit. Brutal vocals, thunderous drumming and fast howling guitars all create a punishing onslaught.

DSFA Records

TRAIL OF TEARS "Disclosure In Red"

Norway / 47'25 / Atmospheric doom/death / Interesting
Far more than a single musical expression, Trail Of Tears summons the melancholic atmospheres and translates them into gothic doom visions. Helena Iren Michaelsen, the queen of all nymphs, will make you dream of romance and passionate images through her sensual vocals. Tormented melodies as well as atmospheric keyboards enchant this spiritual travel through multiple moods and infinite charms...

Diamond Records International

RESURRECTURIS "Nocturnal"

Italy / 43'18 / Death metal / Likeable
The 10 songs featured on "Nocturnal" cover a wide range of musical styles, from thrash to melodic death, from grind core to dark gothic, the whole thing performed with a very personal killed edge. Female guest vocalist, Gloria, offers a stunning performance further widening the Resurrecturis' musical horizons. Renowned noise metal producer David Landi gave this album a powerful, clear sound that emphasizes how brutality and melody bend together in balance.

Black Lotus Records

HORRIFIED "Animal"

Greece / 33'46 / Melodic death metal / Interesting
After spending some years in the shadows, Horrified is back at the forefront of the scene. Musically, they have left the trademarks of their debut album "In The Garden Of The Unearthly Delights" in order to favour a multi-faced, experimental death metal repertoire. "Animal" is filled with different, sudden turns and in fact, you never know what will happen next.

DESCEND "Beyond Thy Realms Of Threes"

Greece / 46'12 / Thrash/death metal / Likeable
Previously known for the release of two albums under the moniker of Epidemic, Descend is the continuation of this now defunct bands with two former members in its ranks. Armed with a more powerful and melodic thrash/death metal repertoire, the ten songs on "Beyond Thy Realms Of Threes" blend inspiring, sorrowful melodies blend tightly with deadily fast rhythmic guitar parts. Memories of the past, the wraithful vocals remain full of anger and strike the listener with a feeling of vengeance.

AFTERMATH "Eyes Of Tomorrow"

USA / 56'13 / Thrash metal / Likeable
Ten years later after its recording, Aftermath's debut album is now-released by Black Lotus Records. "Eyes Of Tomorrow" was originally self-produced by the band and thus was only available as an import in the European territories. But now you can check out again the foundations of the famous early 90's US thrash metal style through synopated rhythms, aggressive vocals and an overall skilful musicianship. The band members have now formed Mother God Moviestar to explore more experimental musical paths.

Iron Palm Productions

SIX STRING SUICIDE "Piss Around The World"

Greece / 34'19 / Metal core / Likeable
This is the first release of Iron Palm Productions, a division of Black Lotus Records that is dedicated to hardcore and punk. Hailing from the city of Athens, Six String Suicide delivers an explosive and dynamic metalcore at the crossroads between Slayer and Sick Of It All. Their debut album "Piss Around The World" combines straight, fast thrash metal guitar rhythms with the typical hardcore attitude and socially based lyrics.

Seven Records

SADISTIC NOISE "A Decade In The Grave"

Greece / 49'46 / Death metal / Likeable
Sadistic Noise isn't another newcomer from Greece. Formed back in 1967, the band isn't the luckiest one in their carrier since many weird, unfortunate things happened to them. After spending numerous years in the freeze, their debut album is finally released and proves their belonging to an old school heavy death metal repertoire. "A Decade In The Grave" delivers a straight forward brutal style supported by ripping guitar parts and barbarian growls. The curse trio has seen the light of day...

Pagan Records

VARATHRON "The Lament Of Gods"

Greece / 28'03 / Abyssic black metal / Interesting
Belonging to the foundations and the peak achievements of Greece's very own black metal style together with Rotting Christ, Necromantia and Thou Art Lord, Varathron is finally back after a long period of silence. Through 4 new compositions and a cover version of Merciful Fate's "Nurs has No Fun", "The Lament Of Gods" captures the powerful atmosphere and feelings associated with the culture of the ancients. Long forgotten myths and forbidden magic rituals are combined the band's trademark, that is atmospheric and abyssic black metal filled with dark and sinister melodies. Beware, mastermind Necroabyssius has returned...

ESQARIAL "Amorphous"

Poland / 36'12 / Death metal / Interesting
Having been in existence since 1991, ESQARIAL finally releases its debut album after the good selling of two demo tapes throughout the underground network. Led by a flawless musicianship and the performances of a virtuosic lead guitar player, "Amorphous" combines the musical impact of US death metal together with European thrash/speed old school. Through years of work, patience and growing maturity, the Eastern band has composed an amazingly intense assault.

TRAUMA "Daimonion"

Poland / 43'27 / Death metal / Likeable
Together with Vader, Trauma is the oldest and most experienced death metal band hailing from Poland. They indeed started in the mid-80's under the name of Thanatos and later changed their moniker to Trauma. It was in 1992. Four years later, their debut album was released but unfortunately doesn't get much exposure due to the label's quick disappearance. Now, the band is strongly signed by Pagan Records to release "Daimonion", a special album divided into two parts, including brand new tracks as well as old songs from 1992 that were originally featured on their third demo tape "Invisible Reality". The result is an aggressive and original form of death metal, that is not influenced by any specific movement or artist. Through complex songs and clever ideas, Trauma should finally gain the recognition they have deserved for years.

Rock Etrernum Rec. / Immortal Souls Prod.

ABORTION "Murdered Culture"

Slovakia / 39'44 / Crust grind / Likeable
Through razor riffs and terrorizing screams, this insane trio expand the boundaries of extreme music with this grind core album. "Murdered Culture" has a raw sound while still maintaining a hard-driving blasting intensity. A chaos in which everything absolutely grinds at full tilt through blast after blast, bludgeoning riff after riff.

Avantgarde Music

ENOCHIAN CRESCENT

"Babalon Patraie De Telocvocim"

Finland / 17'11 / Black metal / Interesting

While waiting for Enochian Crescent's second full length album, the "Babalon Patraie De Telocvocim" mini CD enables you to fully enjoy the new masters of insanity through a combination of brutal, harsh black metal parts with a melodic and appealing edge. "Throughout the history of mankind, down the ages, there have been men and women who have clung with remarkable tenacity to certain beliefs and tenets, even to the point of dying for them, and there are many ways to die".

Wounded Love Records



TAAKE "Nattestid..."

Norway / 42'03 / Symphonic black metal / Thrilling
As much in the expression as in the structure, Taake's debut album shows the fertile and superb creativity of its unique member, U. Hoest. This Norwegian musician calls nature to witness in order to express the passion he feels for his native land. Recorded in the coldness of the famous Grieghallen studio (Emperor, Immortal, Heiheim, Hades...), "Nattestid..." transforms the sight of the mist surrounding the seven mountains of Bergen into a work of art. For it is an album of pure maturity, cleverly composed, which unveils the meaning and values of epic and symphonic Northern black metal essence. The name of Taake is now written with runic alphabet in the sky of Bergen, of which he is the new prince.

DOLORIAN "When All The Laughter Has Gone"

Finland / 53'13 / Interesting
Dolorian, a word reminiscent of grief, perfectly embodies the band's essence. "When All The Laughter Has Gone" reveals its infinite substance through slow yet powerful music where flesh-tearing vocals portray the gloomy vision of daily life. Everything in this band does is chained to absolute precision and tightness. There are plenty of cyclopean riffs to capture the adrenaline rush just the same. Total class and they deserve a hell a lot more...

Scarlet / Sure Shot

OBSCURITY "Damnations Pride"

Sweden / 41'16 / Thrash/black metal / Likeable
Formed back in 1985, inspired by Venom, Slayer, Bathory and Possessed, Obscurity are seen as one of the forerunners of the modern Swedish black metal sound. After years of silence, their first official album finally sees the light of day. "Damnations Pride" in fact includes the remastered versions of their two demos, "Ovation To Death" (1985) and "Damnations Pride" (1986), which became well-known in the underground scene. With their black/thrash repertoire the way it was meant to be in the mid-90's, they appear as one of the most influencing acts of that time, together with Mayhem, Grottesque, Nihilist (now Entombed) and Morbid. Helped by a new line-up, Obscurity now works on fresh material for the new album scheduled for the end of 1999.

SAERPE METAL UNION "Infernal, Sunshine's Gone, Soul Transition, Con Anima"

Norway / 56'18 / Dark/black metal / Likeable
Saerpe Metal Union features the most promising bands hailing from Sarpsborg (Saerpe), a small city located in the South of Norway. The result is an untypical and original combination of feelings and emotions from four bands who present their original demo appearances in a completely remastered version. In the field of black metal, Infernal is a skilful band with a sound influenced by At The Gates, Dimmu Borgir and Dark Funeral. A macabre and grim portrait of passion and despair is illustrated by Sunshine's Gone, with a repertoire in the vein of Mayhem, Morbid and Grottesque. Led by the vocal performance of Stian Johansen, ex-Mayhem singer and Shadow Dancers' mind-leader, Soul Transition displays classic songs inspired by Slayer's insanity. This compilation ends with Con Anima, whose emotional sense of melody wraps around the infinite darkness.

NECRODEATH "Into The Macabre"

Italy / 33'13 / Black/thrash metal / Likeable
Euryonymous and Dead of Mayhem highlighted Necrodeath as one of their fave acts and a strong relationship between the bands started during the raging years of the black metal invasion. This was in 1987. The same year, "Into The Macabre" was released and for the first time, an extreme Italian band crossed the borders of indifference. Influenced by Possessed, Kreator and Bathory, this historical opus is now pressed on CD format to feel again the passion of the burning years. When everything started...

DOMINANCE "Anthems Of Ancient Splendour"

Sweden / 41'50 / Epic death metal / Likeable
"Anthems Of Ancient Splendour" is a savage path across

Dissection's rifting style, Dark Tranquillity and In Flames' melodic venues. At The Gates' merciless hate and Morbid Angel's brutal, technical rhythm assaults. Combining an aggressive and massive death metal sound with a definite sense of melody. Dominance's compositions are based on solid, technical rhythm sections, fast and melodic guitar work as well as crushing vocals. A mature debut album in the Swedish death metal vein performed by skilled musicians.

ABORYM "Kali Yuga Bizarre"

Italy / 46'14 / Industrial black metal / Interesting
Featuring ex-Mayhem/Tormentor singer Attila Csihar, Abozym is an extreme musical entity based in the unholy city of Rome. Influenced by bands like Sarcrologio, Mayhem, Sodom, Destruction, Morbid, Bathory and Rotting Christ, this frightening horde develops an apocalyptic style, combining black metal, industrial noise, esoteric music and symphonic, cerebral musical deformities. Their debut album "Kali Yuga Bizarre" creates a voyage of weird, violent, strong and isergic black metal through the deepest side of human suffering and perversion.

Dragonheart / Sure Shot THE LORD WEIRD SLOUGH FEG

"Twilight Of The Idols"

USA / 52'52 / Epic metal / Likeable
The Lord Weird Slough Feg hails from San Francisco, California and "Twilight Of The Idols" is their second opus after a self-titled debut CD. Influenced by Manila Road, Manowar and sometimes Sabbath but in a more heavy metal vein, this release is a galloping Celtic (heavy) metal onslaught sustained by a Dungeons & Dragons based concept. The songs gather all the elements of that specific genre, with warriors, battle carnage, wizards and ancient rituals.

Repulse Records

JESUS MARTYR "Sudamerican Porno"

Argentina / 49'21 / Extreme power thrash/death / Likeable
Consisting of 13 songs recorded in three different periods, "Sudamerican Porno" mixes heavy, brutal, melodic and intense music that can be described as power thrash. Except for the vocals, JESUS MARTYR's debut also features strong death metal elements as well as industrial touches. All in all, a powerful and aggressive combination of influences from bands like Strapping Young Lad, Sepultura, Napalm Death and Fear Factory but performed with freshness.

GOLGOTHA "Elemental Changes"

Spain / 59'03 / Atmospheric gothic metal / Likeable
The long awaited follower to "Melancholy" finally sees the light under a new grey sky. As the title of this second album suggests, Golgotha has headed towards new musical shores. They have somehow left the doom nature of their early compositions to favour a more gothic approach, in a vein close to Moonspell's evolution. "Elemental Changes" marks a further step in the band's progression, with the help of catchy keyboard melodies, refined arrangements and versatile vocals.

SCATTERED REMNANTS "Destined To Fail"

USA / 31'40 / Brutal death metal / Likeable
After two self-produced mini CD's, Scattered Remnants presents its debut full length album, combining sheer brute force with writing abilities. Under the shape of a musical slaughter, "Destined To Fail" is divided into eight acts of pure death metal. The repertoire displayed by this malefic trio is in some way similar to country mates Incantation, but with a wider variety of riffs and a higher composite quality.

SEPSISM "Purulent Decomposition"

USA / 39'03 / Brutal death grind / Likeable
Seen as one of America's oldest brutal death metal bands, Sepsism was formed in 1990 in the state of California and quickly grew in popularity through various demos and compilations. Their musical style rides between the heaviest and most intense form of US death metal together with a touch that will remind you Terrorizer's "World Downfall". Sustained by extremely fast and barbarian compositions, "Purulent Decomposition" should follow the path led by their companions of Deeds Of Flesh.

Goldtrack Records

ALLISON "Symmetry"

Spain / 43'17 / Crossover metal / Likeable
Allison has mixed thrash metal sounds, industrial harshness with metal influences to compose the 8 songs featured on their experimental debut album. With this blending of styles, "Symmetry" discharges crossover rhythms and riffs that sound powerful and raging but still with a melodic, ambient edge.

Guardians Of Metal

FIRSTBORN EVIL "Rebirth Of Evil"

Portugal / 41'29 / Heavy black metal / Likeable
Lustianian band Firstborn Evil was formed to express their belonging to their ancestors. From a musical point of view, their debut full length album is very influenced by old heavy metal sounds. The black metal repertoire displayed on "Rebirth Of Evil" is performed in an epic, atmospheric way, and is basically inspired by the rituals and beliefs relating to the Satanic philosophy.

Cogumelo Records

LETHAL CURSE... "Rape The Innocence"

Brazil / 48'55 / Dark metal / Likeable
Lethal Curse unites the spirit of the 80's extreme metal sound, along the lines of Celtic Frost, Possessed and

Bathory, with a modern approach. Written as a single theme divided into different moments, "Rape The Innocence" shows a variety of tunes and expressions through a doom death/black metal repertoire. From vigorous aggression to atmospheric passages, from speed catchy riffs to denser intensity with a somewhat atmospheric touch, the band's debut album sounds gloomy, well-structured and with an emphasis on heaviness.

Hammer Musik

WITCHTRAP "Witching Black"

Turkey / 31'27 / Black metal / Likeable
Having been very active since their inception, Witchtrap are the first black metal to emerge from Turkey. The overall sound on "Witching Black" is crunchy and sharp-toned with a lot thrust on the guitars. The compositions are incredibly harsh and have several settings that include straight-forward black metal-ish modes. The extreme scream vocals compliment this encouraging effort.

ETHEREAL TRAVEL "The Mad Cartridge"

36'31 / Atmospheric gothic/doom / Likeable
Very atmospheric and dreamy, Ethereal Travel's debut album sounds like a balanced mix between doom metal and gothic sounds with the help of refined female vocals and the integration of violin parts. Many influences are gathered in "The Mad Cartridge" but one can say that their extremely melodic musical pieces come close to The Gathering's latest works. With pure and innocent feelings, those young musicians evolve on the path of soft music and dimensions.

Necropolis Records / Focusion

ABOMINATOR "Damnations Prophecy"

Australia / 56'35 / Satanic carnage metal / Likeable
Abominator's only aim is to musically convey their own violent way of life, that is based on carnage, hell, torture, aggression and a lust for blood. Led by ex-Bestial Warlust maniac Damon Bloodstorm, this infernal trio explores the realm of musical extremes: with a all-out speed of Bestial Warlust collides head on with the dark old-school feel to create punnelling black/death material. With the added musical influences of acts such as Slayer, Sodom, Possessed and Kreator to name a few, "Damnations Prophecy" sets out the band's quest for carnage.

WITCHERY "Witchburner"

Sweden / 25'23 / Thrash/death metal / Likeable
Masterminded by Patrik Jensen of The Haunted/ex-Saorance, Witchery have already completed a follow-up mini CD to their debut "Restless & Dead". "Witchburner" contains ripping cover versions of classic metal anthems from W.a.s.p., Judas Priest, Accept and Black Sabbath. Besides that, it also presents three new compositions that come you at full speed, with a relentless barrage of riffs bringing back the old metal feeling. A kind of foretaste to their upcoming full-length effort "Dead, Hot, And Ready".

DEATHWITCH "The Ultimate Death"

Sweden / 46'18 / Brutal black/death metal / Likeable
Featuring Niklas "Terror" Rudolfsson of Sacramentum and Swordmaster on vocals and guitars as well as the bass guitar work of ex-Destruction stringburner Peter Palmndahl, Deathwitch's third release has again hints of the old vein. Taking influences from bands like Sarcrologio, Venom, Mayhem, Iron Maiden, Sodom and Destruction, "The Ultimate Death" is an intense journey through the borders of cold and brutal black/death metal compositions. Armed with a new and skilful line-up, the hellish Swedish horde has evolved towards even faster and rawer sounds.

Relapse Records

MORGION "Solinari"

USA / 52'49 / Epic doom metal / Interesting
After months of seclusion, Morgion offers a new chapter of intense, heavy doom and atmospheric grandeur. "Solinari" takes the most diverse aspects of both power and beauty and merges the two extremes carving a passage way to musical escapism. Heavy and warm guitar tones envelope your soul, while both spoken and forcefully growled lyrics convey timeless tales of wisdom and knowledge. The royal production services of Schneebi (St. Vitus, Obsessed) compliment the band's thick, yet melodic song structuring, enthroning Morgion as the sovereign ruler of epic, monolithic metal. Discoveries are constantly being made... into the upcoming millennium and beyond.

Dwell Records

DEAD FOREVER "Tribute To Motörhead"

48'34 / Coffin Texts, Deceased, Hate Theory, Acheron, Hostile Intent, Vile, Blood Covenant, Tchort, Tyrant, Noctuary, Engrave, Decay Of Salvation, Black Witchery / Likeable
This powerful collection contains nothing but the greatest Motörhead classics being punted out in adroit fashion. Through a modern and relentless aural assault, the 13 bands here featured redefine the British band's famous standard trademarks, that are hard, fast, short songs with a gravely in-ye-face powerful vocal. "Dead-Forever - A Tribute To Motörhead" harkens back the past era of metal and prods it into the modern era of musical extremity. Born to lose, live to win...

Moribund Records

JUDAS ISCARIOT "Try Dying Light"

USA / 52'00 / Black metal / Interesting
From "The Cold Earth Slept Below..." to "Try Dying Light", Judas Iscariot has developed a cold barbaric and medieval black metal sound in the Norse tradition. With anti-Christian and Nietzschean ideology, this one man band send shock waves with grim atmospheres and tormented emotions.

Such a strong and powerful expression of raw, true black metal consumes you all. The darkness descends to make



you join Akhenaten's supreme spirit...

BLOOD RITUAL "At The Mountains Of Madness"
USA / 42'31 / Black/death metal / Interesting
Blood Ritual plays an overwhelmingly heavy and brutal style of black/death metal while at the same time delivering devilish musical arrangements and a true satanic sound. The vocalist sounds as if he is trying to sing with a throat full of warm blood and the guitar work ranges from eerie to blistering. "At The Mountains Of Madness" will skin you alive and bury you in a grave of salt.

Breath Of Night Records
NEGURA BUNGET "Zimindu-Sa"
Romania / 37'29 / Transylvanian black metal / Thrilling
"Zimindu-Sa" has been conceived under the sign of an immortal, appealing place, namely Transylvania. In this regard, Negura Bunget's debut album has a strong supernatural taste that is fuelled by majestic and unforgettable keyboard passages. This proud collection of ornaments is mixed with the fundament of a cruel black metal repertoire and the presence of archaic Romanian lyrics expressing a considerable courage in terms of interpretations. Listen to this haunted piece of art and feel deep within yourself the world and spirituality of the ancients. Forever magic...

SARCASM "A Touch Of The Burning Red Sunset"
Sweden / 41'27 / Dark death metal / Interesting
Composed during the years 1990-94 in pure wrath and malice, the compositions featured on "A Touch Of The Burning Red Sunset" are played with the decadence and conviction of the old Swedish death metal masters. A raw and brutal repertoire mixing aggression, hatred with blasphemous, heathen atmospheres. With the help of a strong vocalist, Sarcasm proudly holds the flag of the hard underground attitude. An uncompromising yet varied death metal release.

Red Stream Records
HIMINBJORG "Where Ravens Fly"
France / 43'12 / Viking metal / Interesting
Influenced by the most epic works of Bathory, Hades and Helheim, Himinbjorg display a mature approach to composition and songwriting while still maintaining a driving black metal pace throughout. Each of the track featured on "Where Ravens Fly" is highlighted by sophisticated musical arrangements and the use of choirs to create a brooding, atmospheric mood. The overall musical work is complimented by lyrics inspired by Northern mythology and appealing vocals that will make you fly through rituals and beliefs that took place in the ancient Scandinavian mountains.

NECROPHAGIA "Holocausto De La Muerte"
USA / 39'48 / Death/black metal / Interesting
Formed in 1983, Necrophagia is one of the founding forefathers of death metal and the first band to combine gore and death metal with sheer horrific vocals, influencing milestones of bands from black metal to death metal. "Holocausto De La Muerte" is the band's first new bloody album in almost 12 years and its violent, uncompromising bleak ferocity opens the door full of flying maggots through Killjoy's possessed voices and the thundering musical armageddon. Necrophagia has upfitted from its dusty tomb, ready for more gut munching and violent throat slitting.

BETHLEHEM "Reflektionen Auf's Sterben"
Germany / 23'39 / Dark black/death metal / Likeable
"Reflektionen Auf's Sterben" is a unique collection from the Bethlehem vault issued as a mini CD. This chapter starts with "Wolfsstunde", an updated and re-recorded version of "Varglimmen" from the band's debut album "Dark Metal". Next is a completely remixed version of the song "Gestern Starb Ich Schon Heute", which was retitled in English "Yesterday I Still Had A Beer Today". Thirdly there is a live in studio instrumental track "Angst Armet Mod", taken from "Sardonischer Untergang Im Zelchen Irreligiöser Darbietung" and renamed "You Must Play With Yourself". Fifthly is "Varglimmen", which is a very different mix of the first track. And the title track "Reflektionen Auf's Sterben" closes out this special release.

The End Records
EPOCH OF UNLIGHT "What Will Be Has Been"
USA / 47'56 / Death/black metal / Interesting
The debut album of this hellish band from Tennessee reveals a symbiosis of death and melodic black metal streaming to a state of harness and untamed brutality. Composed of skilled musicians, Epoch Of Unlight take

technical metal to new levels of extremity. They feverishly carve musical plateaus with their blackish guitars, blood-curdling vocals and stellar battery. "What Will Be Has Been" offers a hateful and violent dark metal repertoire that sounds different from the European sound.

SCHOLOMANCE "A Treatise On Love"
USA / 50'49 / Progressive death metal / Likeable
Built upon dark, esoteric visions and a poetic lyrical concept drenched in deprivation's bitterness, "A Treatise On Love" features 9 songs that are constructed on multi-layered orchestrations. They encompass brilliant radiance of variant elements with bizarre and dazzling guitars, shredding solos and immense keyboard arrangements. Together with the anguished vocals, the music unleashes a frantic dynamism drawing from opposite dimensions. Influenced amongst other by Voivod, Arcturus, Beethoven and Rachmaninoff, Scholomance's technical and complex musical pieces sound noble and artful on one end while raw and obscure on the other.

Self Productions
KEMET "Pieces"
France / 29'35 / Melodic doom/black metal / Interesting
"Pieces..." leads you to a place of furious beauty, with a mood of deep melancholy admirably delivered through the 4 tracks of this mini CD. This obscure atmosphere takes its influences from doom, black and progressive sounds. Describing the torments of a soul, the plaintive vocals sing romantic and depressive texts. Kemet has built a captivating form of musical poetry...
Kemet, C/O Vincent Van Maenen, 39 Impasse Des Ecurieuls, 69960 Corbas, France.

FORGOTTEN SILENCE "Senyaan"
Czech Republic / 47'20 + 50'55 / Symphonic doom death / Interesting
Follow up to the earlier released "Thots", "Senyaan" sports some 16 songs that bring a new angle to the death/doom genre. The greater part of the material or at least its fundament, is distinctively atmospheric shaped but still it doesn't sound like you heard it before. In growing madness and winter insanity, Forgotten Silence has composed a double CD reflecting the variety of human emotions. Original music performed by innovative artists.
Forgotten Silence, Machova 487, 665 01 Rošice U Brna, Czech Republic.

FAIRLIGHT "Le Bal Des Eternels"
France / 38'00 / Atmospheric death metal / Interesting
Fairlight's musical vision incorporates atmospheric and death variations but its interpretation is way different as it's more a blend of the aforementioned genres with technical and progressive elements. "Le Bal Des Eternels" features multiple moods, timing and melody changes with a lot of refreshing turns. A professional effort that shows a lot of promise.
55.00FF / \$ 12.00 (ppd) - Fairlight, C/O Christophe Saumont, 317 Rue Du Tennis, 84400 Apt, France.

Demo reviews

All demo reviews by Laurent MICHELLAND

Guidelines :
Number of tracks / Sound / Musical style / Comment
Sound :
Unbearable / Rehearsal / Average / Good / Professional

DARKEST SEASON
"The Nakedness And The Glamorous"
3 tracks / Average sound / Dark metal / Likeable
Featuring a member of Necromicon, Darkest Season displays original dark metal compositions that sound catchy and effective. The band members prove to be skilled musicians who create an awesome aggressive sound while maintaining a musically accomplished edge.
\$7.00 (ppd) - Darkest Season, C/O Markus Tervamäki, Spovgränd 13, 974 55 Lulea, Sweden.

BEREAVEMENT "Pursued By Nothingness"
8 tracks / Average sound / Melodic death metal / Likeable
Featuring Loic Cellier of black metal bands Asyndess and Belenos, Bereavement has created a technical death metal repertoire, mixing slow guitar parts with powerful blast sections. The vocals are really deep and brutal, thus reinforcing the atmosphere of terror brought by "Pursued By Nothingness".
30.00FF / \$6.00 (ppd) - Bereavement, C/O Loic Cellier, 31 Rue Raoul Briquet, 62217 Beaurains, France.

MODERN FUNERAL ART "Almost Angels"
4 tracks / Average sound / Gothic rock / Likeable
Walking the fine line between gothic and nostalgic atmospheres, Modern Funeral Art's current material sounds like a kind of mixing of Love Like Blood and Killing Joke. The songs are mid-paced, with a dark dreamy appearance, enhanced by the overall lead vocal harmonies and accessibility of it all.
30.00 FF / \$6.00 (ppd) - Modern Funeral Art, C/O Arnaud Spitz, 238 Avenue Jean Rieux, 31500 Toulouse, France.

IPHICRATE "The Dawn Of Victory"
7 tracks / Average sound / Nordic metal art / Interesting
Musically inspired by the Norwegian black metal sound, Iphicrate's cold atmospheres are more than a musical

expression. "The Dawn Of Victory" reflects the spirit of a man, who relates his own visions towards death, the ancient times and future. The Northern poetic lyrics are written like a reverence to the forces of nature and cosmos. The prelude of a time to come...
35.00FF / \$7.00 (ppd) - Iphicrate, C/O Isendorn, Rue Le Bas Des Forges, 14210 Missy, France.

NEMETON "Journey To Pain"
5 tracks / Rehearsal sound / Dark metal / Likeable
Nemeton explores the path of an experimental dark metal repertoire through technical, powerful and atmospheric compositions. Adorned with both guttural and clear vocals, female chants as well as some violin parts and flute passages, "Journey To Pain" is a haunting voyage towards the world of obscenity.
30.00FF / \$6.00 (ppd) - Nemeton, C/O Ogn, Av. J. Giono, Bat. J. Giono C1, 13090 Aix En Provence, France.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING
"The Lady Who Didn't Want To Be"



5 tracks / Average sound / Atmospheric black metal / Interesting
Under the magic essence of Lord Adrastis Korgan, Love Lies Bleeding's debut demo is a majestically symphonic tribute to musical tragedy. Complex musical arrangements are highlighted by charming female vocals and impressive keyboards parts. The musical richness is complimented by beautiful romantic verses that make one with your soul. "The Lady Who Didn't Want To Be" shall become an instant classic in the realm of nocturnal bleeding art.
35.00 FF / \$7.00 (ppd) - Love Lies Bleeding, 16 Avenue Beaujeour, 94230 Cachan, France.

DEVILIUM "Devilium"
4 tracks / Average sound / Death metal / Likeable
Devilium has opted for a straight forward death metal approach, with a few black and thrash influences. This second demo couples flawless guitar work with harsh vocals to help keep a brutal and barbarian atmosphere.
35.00FF / \$ 7.00 (ppd) - Devilium, C/O David Ramoin, 55 Route D'Auribeau, 06130 Grasse, France.

BELIEF "The Fifth Season"
4 tracks / Average sound / Black/death metal / Likeable
At the crossroads between black and death metal influences, Belief delivers unholy black metal with certain pride. Due to fact that has been in existence since January 1998, there's a lack of maturity regarding the style. With more practise, this young band should strengthen their march towards the apocalypse...
35.00FF / \$7.00 (ppd) - Belief, C/O Schaffner, 72 Chemin Des Chênes, 06130 Grasse, France.

ORDO DRACONIS "When The Cycle Ends"
4 tracks / Good sound / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
Ordo Draconis' appealing genre results from a dark mixture of classical music, folk, symphonic and gothic elements with a black metal basis. This way, their excellent debut demo "When The Cycle Ends" sounds somewhat in the vein of Arcturus, Dimmu Borgir and Dissection. "As the Dragon guards his lair of treasures, so that sentinel keeps secrets undisclosed".
\$ 6.00 (ppd) - Ordo Draconis, Archimedesstraat 12, 2871 XL Schoonhoven, The Netherlands.



PEST "Pest"
2 tracks / Good sound / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
Previously known under the name of Nordtys, Pest have recorded a 7"EP that is fast-paced, symphonic black metal affair with intense screams, fast riffs and sotted mixed in crisp guitars. This inspired duo have built strongly emotio-

nal atmospheres of hatred, reinforced by the unholy atmospheric synths and the usage of dark melody guitar lines over the riffage.
Pest, C/O Alexander Schorn, Am Galgenberg 9, 87700 Memmingen, Germany.

VALE OF TEARS "The Lord Of Illusion"
6 tracks / Average sound / Atmospheric black death metal / Interesting
Vale Of Tears performs an ambivalent style that borders between black atmospheres and death elements. "The Lord Of Illusion" has a certain eerie atmosphere and incorporates female vocals that give the material an emotive finish, coupled to the rather balanced and tranquil performance, makes the whole work sound rather promising for the future.
Vale Of Tears, C/O Ferenc Mulez, 5300 Karcag, Szent Istvan sgt. 61, Hungary.

WOODLAND CHOIR "Faerie"
16 tracks / Average sound / Atmospheric music / Likeable
All instrumental demo tape that was entirely composed, produced and mixed by a single soul, Attila Bakos. "Faerie" sounds like a collection of tranquil and floating key notes that come by and fade away. Woodland Choir offers a journey of sweet melodies that are entirely set on the synths and its accompany moods, providing a relaxing atmosphere.
\$5.00 Europe / \$6.00 Worldwide (ppd) - Woodland Choir, C/O Attila Bakos, Ady endre 71/B, 8200 Veszprem, Hungary.

ETERNAL DIFORMITY "Nothing Lasts Forever"
10 tracks / Good sound / Gothic metal / Interesting
Overall, the songs on "Nothing Lasts Forever" are slow, moderately paced and well diversified with not just one signature repeated over and over again. Eternal Diformity's music incorporates significant atmospheric moods with the use of violin, flute, keyboards and female vocals.
\$4.00 (ppd) - Eternal Diformity, C/O Wojciech Zawilinski, Ul. Polna 2d, 39-200 Debica, Poland.

DEMIMONDE "The Warrior's Poets"
7 tracks / Good sound / Doom/black metal / Interesting
Demimonde's musical concept mixes a doom/black metal repertoire with medieval and gothic influences. The sweet, appealing and melancholic atmospheres are a kind of reflection of the refined female vocals. With a will to escape from reality, "The Warrior's Poets" will help you to struggle against death, despair and fatality.
\$5.00 Europe / \$6.00 Worldwide (ppd) - Demimonde, C/O Pavel Pavlik, Habova 10, 155 00 Praha 5, Czech Republic.

HUGINN "In The Land Of The Old Hills"
5 tracks / Average sound / Symphonic black metal / Interesting
Huginn's third demo is built upon fantasy themes that are musically pictured through symphonic black metal compositions. "In The Land Of The Old Hills" relates the story of a shamanic experience and further express the band's will to restore the pagan beliefs that once ruled the world.
\$6.00 Europe / \$7.00 Worldwide (ppd) - Huginn, C/O Marco De Rosa, Via Crespi 4d, 28100 Novara, Italy.

SULPHURIA "Nera Celebrazione Elettrica"
4 tracks / Average sound / Black metal / Likeable
In the vein of their previous promo tape, Sulphuria follows its quest for an original, dark heavy black metal repertoire with emerging death metal influences. As an ambivalent release, "Nera Celebrazione Elettrica" has a typical Southern black metal sound, that is a powerful, morbid and mystical.
Sulphuria, C/O Francesco Tedeschi, Via Solferino 15, 63014 Montegrano (AP), Italy.

'Zine reviews

All 'zine reviews by Laurent MICHELLAND

HERMIT'S CHANT
Issue 2 / 84 A4 xeroxed pages / Written in English / Interesting
Contents : Paradigma, Enthroned, Unholy, Thrashing Rage Magazine, raison D'Elre... plus CD demo and zine reviews, classical music, graveyard poetry...
\$4.00 Europe / \$6.00 Worldwide (ppd) - Hermit's Chant, C/O Elena Governo, Via Genova n°63, 20025 Legnano, (MI) Italy.

OCEAN MORPHIQUE
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Contents : Misantropie, Forbidden Site, Thrashing Rage Magazine, Hiriorn, Demimonde... several reports (Peru, Czech Republic) as well as CD and demo reviews.
30.00FF / \$6.00 (ppd) - Ocean Morphique, C/O Maximilien Varrier, 161 Avenue Alsace Lorraine, 52100 Saint-Dizier, France.

LA LETTRE DE SAPPHO
Issue 2 / 6 A4 xeroxed pages / Written in French / Interesting
Contents : Kemet, The Gathering, Blood Stained Host, news, plus CD, demo and zine reviews.
6.00FF / \$1.00 (ppd) - La Lettre De Sappho, C/O Sappho Musique, 11 Rue Du Quartier Neuf, 88230 Fraize, France.

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