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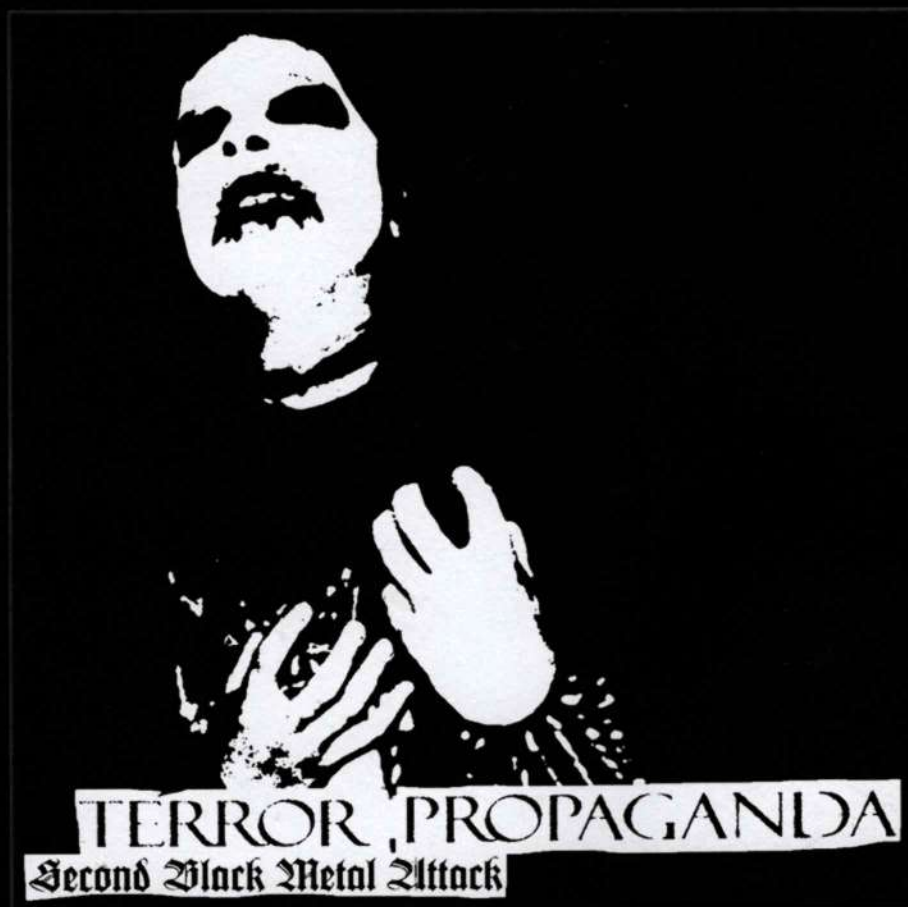
The Vomit on the Crucifix Is the Art of the Devil!



Necromantia
Satyricon
Acheron
Malign
Thorns
Mañes
Varathron
Stregoica zine
The Voice of The Dark zine
Satanic Art
Blessed In Sin
Wacken Open Air 2001
Inferno festival 2002

issue #2 2002

the second album of swedish terrorists craft...



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contents:

<i>Editorial</i>	3
<i>Necromantia</i>	4
<i>Satyricon</i>	6
<i>Acheron</i>	10
<i>Malign</i>	12
<i>Thorns</i>	17
<i>demonstratus</i>	18
<i>Manes</i>	41
<i>Varathron</i>	14
<i>vinylized!!!</i>	37
<i>Stregoica zine</i>	27
<i>The Voice of The Dark zine</i>	34
<i>Satanic Art</i>	36
<i>literature</i>	43
<i>Blessed In Sin</i>	46
<i>Wacken Open Air 2001</i>	37
<i>Inferno festival 2002</i>	78
<i>per aspera ad astra</i>	50

editorial

Here we finally are. I, Mr. *Northwind*, am thy new guide in these blackened gardens. *Tadas* is getting more and more occupied with his label & mailorder activities, so he needed someone to, basically, take over the *Ad Arma!* Imperium... And I was there. We both have a fairly similar background as writers in the Black & Death Metal underworld – me having my past as the editor of *Northern Crown* (1993), *I Came From Darkness* (1993-1997) and *I Return To Darkness* (1998) and *Tadas* had his *Brainstorm* (1992-1995) and *Ledo Takas* (1996-2000) magazines. Blending mine and his experiences and knowledge, we would eagerly let ourselves believe that we're making something quite special here.

Those of you who've indulged in *Ad Arma!* #1 will most probably sense a slight turn towards Hell in this follow-up, and I believe I myself have partially aided this development. But this does not, of course, mean that *Ad Arma!* would have become exclusively a Black Metal magazine. We support the creative forces of Darkness, and those can have many faces and forms.

In the editorial of #1, *Tadas* was raving about the excellence and importance of contributors. Well, this time around, we have been slightly disappointed, as some certain interviews and features never arrived. Should you have what it takes, we are quite interested in adding capable and reliable contributors to our roster.

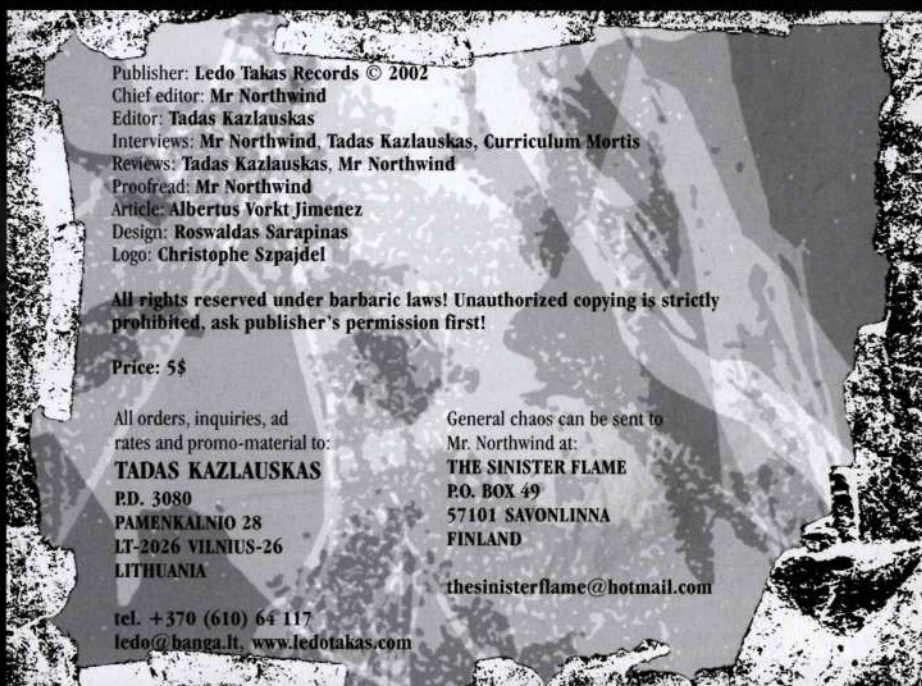
Another thing is that there is no compilation CD attached now. There was supposed to be one, but due to reasons I will not bother you with, we dropped the idea. Personally I never liked the idea in the first place. And there are so incredibly many Black & Death Metal magazines out there doing just that already now.

As for *Ad Arma!* #3, we will, of course, start working on it slowly, but the 'when' is a question I can't, wouldn't, couldn't and thus won't answer. We'll get it out there when we feel like getting it out there.

In general, I'd like to outline and emphasise that *Ad Arma!* is an underground magazine that is devoted to the monumental Darkness in music and spirit, and is written accordingly.

I'm afraid that's all. Dive in the abyss. And never return.

Sincerely,
Northwind



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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MARTYNAS MEŠKAUSKAS.
MARTYNAI, MES BŪTINAI SUSITIKSIM.

STILL AVAILABLE:

Ad Arma! #1 (80A4) – Morbid Angel, Tormentor, Obtest, Vomitory, Skyforger, Musta Surma, Clandestine Blaze, Primordial, The Ravenous, Grief Of Emerald, Canaan, Metal We Have Lost special (Exciter, Protector, Artillery, Necrodeath, Nocturnus, Macabre, Tankard, Frank Stover, Dark Angel, Whiplash, Infernal Majesty), articles on initiatic pain and occult practice in national-socialist Germany + 79 minutes soundcheck cd with Obtest, Bloodshed, Nifelheim, Nokturnal Mortum, Dornenreich, Watain, Ephel Duath, Funeral Rites, Aghora, Mystifier, Stargazer, Denata, Paul Nelson, Nebular Mystic, Divina Enema, etc. 6\$

Ledo Takas #8 (84A4) – Darkthrone, Sinister, Rebaellium, Thyrae, Pentacle, Blood Axis, Empyrium, Myrkskog, Galgenberg, Penitent, Descent magazine, Babylon Whores, Avulsed, Bloodshed, Karninos, The Kovenant, Mactatus, Malevolence, Lycanthropy, Robert Frost, Celtic Tradition, Wacken Open Air 1999 + 72 minutes soundcheck CD with Dissimulation, Avulsed, Malevolence, Tharaphita, Ringnevond, Cryptic Revelation, Ens Cogitans, Valefar, Kranium, Unhola, Centinex, etc. 6\$

Ledo Takas #7 (56A4) – Ordo Equilibrio, Negura Bunget, Dissimulation, Krabathor, Sleeping Flowers, Whiplash, Joe Petagno, Solefald, Oskorei Productions, Gehenna, Skyklad, Keep of Kalessin, Saturnus, The Celts, Charles Baudelaire 5\$

Necromantia

If I think about **Necromantia**, it is always the feeling of a dark monolith that comes to me. However close you might crawl to the Kult, it still remains as the Kult. Throughout the years, this band has been praised, cursed, forgotten and remembered again and again. Such perplexing steam of emotions has never bothered the creators of the raw, Elitarian Black Metal music, once announced as leaving the time far behind with their double bass guitars' sound. It's great that a certain circle of musical connoisseurs learned to appreciate **Necromantia**, and their wanderings within eclectic Metal music continues!

The Magus (a.k.a. *Magus Wampyr Daoloth*) has never been this talkative, but who'd say that the mysterious aura around his person has vanished after this chat? Sink the teeth deep and realize yourself, we are talking to a man who knows what he does!

Tadas

Scarlet Witching Dreams

I am not sure if it was only myself, but it was indeed surprising to lose **Necromantia** out of sight after your *Ancient Pride* MCD. What happened? Can you claim it was the label that has been handling things in a wrong way, or were you the perpetrators yourselves? And what exactly caused your separation from the *Osmose* roster?

"It was entirely an inside matter. I was occupied by lots of things, plus my work, and I did not have time to dedicate myself to **Necromantia**. Songwriting and lyrics are pretty demanding and I want my attention focused totally to the band.

About *Osmose*, when we told them that we are ready to release an album they told us that the release schedule was full for 2000 and that we would have had to wait for 2001! It was too much, so we left! We are still good friends with *Herve*! He is the most honest guy in the business!"

When I received *IV Malice* and went through the booklet visuals, the first thought was: *they have moved on the modern way*. Do you agree that the CD layout is done with certain contemporary hints – you could not find images like that in, let's say, 1992. Is it your answer to the ever-changing world? Searching for new forms of expression?

"We always wanted to have the best graphic work for our releases, but in the past we simply could not find anyone with the ability to make our visions a reality. Finally after all these years *Spiros* (from *Septic Flesh*) managed to give that visual aspect to our nightmares. I do not consider it modern or old-fashioned. Simply magnificent and as twisted and deviant as it can be!"

To discover absolutely chilling Black Metal there was in a way yet bigger and the main surprise! I hear **Necromantia** stepping back from the loose melodic approach of *Ancient Pride* to the roots and essence of the Greek Black Metal – a genre the co-origina-tors of which you actually were. What's the story behind it?

"I was so frustrated with everything in my life the 2 years prior to the writing of *Malice*, so I decided to fuel my rage through **Necromantia**. No melancholic atmospheres and sentimental keyboards! Just straightforward Black Metal fury, man! The true essence of Black Metal! Besides, I was so fed up with all those gothic Black Metal bands that I felt the urge to do something about it! And then came *Malice*....."

That first riff of the title-track... was that done intentionally to pay tribute to the mighty **Morbid**, or have you just composed it without any relation to these old recordings?

"Yes, the **Morbid** riff was done intentionally! I fucking love the band! **Yezzzzz!** **Morbid** actually was one of the first bands that I discovered through the underground network 13 years ago. They definitely marked my visions of music!"

And I can see why!!! I think it's another proof of you remaining loyal to the tradition of the most perverse and mysterious Metal, isn't it? Seems like the experience you have certainly gained with **Necromantia** throughout the years has made your devotion yet stronger? Is there a difference how you treat all those bands and their music now to how it was ten years ago? I mean **Morbid**, yes, but also a bunch of others you always respected and enjoyed, be it then **Metallica**, **W.A.S.P.**, **Morbid Angel** or **Judas Priest** – whatever.

"I still like the older giants as **Morbid Angel**, **Slayer**, **Death**, **Manowar**, **Iron Maiden**, **Celtic Frost**, etc. The fact that most of them have released lately crap albums does not reduce the respect I have for them! I still bang my head with their hymns, man! I am 32 years old and I still play fucking Black Metal! What is there more to say? And I do not make a living out of it!"

Yes, but I think age truly is not the most dominant factor for someone to be loyal to Black Metal. It must be stuck inside one's heart. Well, I myself am feeling very good about being almost 27 and discovering more and more of this music all the time. I feel it is the next, more intense stage I'm entering in these days, and if anything changes in the future, then just about the growing quantity of (Black) Metal I will deal with! Everyone crying about the fall of the scene sounds pathetic to me – such people are simply fed up with that, or they have not learned to seek in a clever way!

"There is no fucking fall of the scene!!! The scene actually is better than ever! Millions of bands covering all kinds of Black Metal, from the raw stuff to atmospheric/gothic, etc. Simply choose what you like! And all these stupid people complaining all the time that there is no True Black Metal anymore are simply losers!!! What does it mean 'True Black Metal', man? That the band-members believe what they sing about or that they really are involved in Satanism and occultism? If so, do you know how many of the older bands were fully into it? Not even 30% of them! The rest were using Satanism as a theme for their lyrics, which is also fine by me as long as they make good music! Black Metal is a music form, not a church or a philosophical movement!!! I do not go around saying that I am true etc. If they ask me I reveal my beliefs only if I desire so. The rest can fuck off!!!"

Besides **Morbid**, can you name some other bands that made you step inside the Black Metal circle? When you started there were not so many bands of this genre at all. And then all of a sudden the Greek school was founded. So I wonder what pushed you and, say, **Rotting Christ**, to bring Metal to another, cruel and barbaric yet shared with certain mystic and magic, stage? Or maybe it weren't Metal bands at all that inspired you?

"I cannot tell you about **Rotting Christ** because I always thought that their knowledge about the Darkside was pretty limited! They make great music, but that is a totally different thing...."

As for us, it was purely the urge to create something utterly dark, sinister and original. Something which had not been heard before. There were no specific band inspiring us – though of course everything we like is filtered through our music – but more the thirst to create something which when you listened to it would give you the same feelings of darkness that a book by **Lovecraft** or *A Magical Grimoire* would create!"

Please share some remembrances with us about the time when **Necromantia** was just getting started. There were some demo- and promotapes floating around before your infamous split album with **Varathron** came about. Can you reveal the details about them all?

"Yeah, sure! Our first recording – the promo 1990, entitled *The Utter Darkness* – was recorded in one night at a local studio! We started early in the evening and we finished early in the morning of the next day! Most of the instruments were played live with no overdubs! The atmosphere was unique! The whole demo – with more than 30 minutes duration – was like an incantation to ancient gods and demons! It was so primal and raw that it still amazes me to listen to it! It was not that professional recording, but the feelings entrapped in the tape were very intense and dark oriented. Imagine that the whole lyrics of the demo were written a week before in a deserted house under the candlelight the minute we decided to form the band in late 1989!"

When exactly were the *From the Past We Summon Thee* recordings done? I saw it (bootlegged?) on CD

by *Wild Rags* once... and it was also released on a 7"EP, right? Was that official?

"The seven inch EP contains some of the material of the recording I described above! The vinyl version is perfectly legal, but the *Wild Rags* CD is a fucking bootleg! The man is an asshole, ripping off everybody!!! We never gave permission for that! Our previous label wanted to go against them legally, but we said: 'well, leave that pathetic bastard, he will fade away anyway...'"

And he did. To be perfectly honest with you, to a certain point in my life the Greek Black Metal was not a favorite style of mine. Later it has changed. I think I've got matured enough to realize its power. By the way, *Crossing the Fiery Path* is still not my preferred disk. But *Scarlet Evil*, *Witching Black* was probably the breaking record to open the myth. What is special in this particular episode of the Necromantia quest, and with the Greek manner of delivering blasphemy, as far as you are concerned? "*Scarlet Evil*, *Witching Black* was a turning point for the Necromantia history. It was the first album that had a bigger recording budget, and the songwriting was so diverse, well organized, containing a huge variety of emotions and moods. It was the first time that when we played the album at home we said: 'Fuck god! This is amazing'. It was, and still is in some sense, pretty much ahead of its time with all these orchestrations and epic, dark feelings. It was full of vampyric expression and sinister dreams! The whole vampire thing in Black Metal started after the release of this album. It still is a diabolical masterpiece in my ears."

As the years go by everyone starts to pretend to be so smart and speak through symbols, metaphors and such that not so rarely simply lose the grip of ancient straightforwardness. You never seemed to be very primitive with your ways to express The Sinister through art, yet it was always clear and in place. And *Malice* is just like that again. A personalized way to transmit what's inside your darkened soulstorm? "*Malice* is the most evil, twisted, corrupted, sexual, apocryphal and morbid album I have ever written, concerning the lyrics! As I told you before I had a strange period in my life and combining it with the inherited darkness I carry within me, the lyrics turned out to be one of the most blasphemous poems ever written! If there was a censorship committee for English speaking albums in Greece, they would have surely banned it!"

Some bands do not pay attention to the lyrics! To me they are mighty important! To me it is the reason I make music! To dress up my lyrics! A primitive way to express your Satanic identity is childish and naive! We were never naive with what we did! We still take our beliefs and lifestyle pretty seriously. As you said, it is clear in our lyrics!"

But I believe the music is not an inch less important either?! Do you mean you write the lyrics first, and then try to catch the vibe creating music?

"Exactly! We shape the music according to the lyrics! When I write lyrics I have pictures in my mind! We try to transform these pictures into music!"

The latest album was issued under your own label *Black Lotus* in Greece. Did you want to control all things concerning production and distribution yourself, or were there no good enough offers for you? I haven't seen *Malice* properly distributed yet. I mean catalogues, mailorder-lists...

"We do not work much with mailorders. Most of them do not pay the invoices and they just try to rip you off! We work with individual distributors in every country and they do a good job! And actually, yes, we wanted to have total control over everything and the freedom to release our albums when, how and where we wanted! *Necromantia* is not a business band. We just play what we feel!"

One characteristic, or a trademark, of *Necromantia* is your interpretation of classical themes, with the emphasized bass guitar line of course. Why so? Any particular passion for classical works? I doubt you would see the band as another reincarnation of classical, orchestral or symphonic music, unlike the trend bands are treating themselves? Remind me what is the theme in *Invictus*!

"We like classical music pretty much, and everything we like is filtered and used in our music whether it's Metal or not! Good music is good music! To tell you the truth, I think that classical music is very close to Metal! It's heavy, violent, emotional and really dark sometimes!"

You surely mean the *Murder, Magic and Tears* song! (*Of course, what a mistake I did... - Tadas*) The classical themes are from the *Swanlake* and *The Night on the Bold Mountain*!"

Ah, again an opportunity to smile upon my classical music knowledge... Anyway, you keep moving on with the legendary band, running your own label, exploring things you want to, leading a life that you prefer. Is that a desired path of a Satanist (whatever this word may represent or associate for you - feel free to interpret in your way)?

"You are very close to the point! The Satanist never rests, always explore new things. He tries to master his fate and leave his mark on the world! A world that he sucks dry with all his pleasures and enjoys life to the fullest. Let death worry the simple mortals! I have walked my path and followed my path as sinister, twisted and dark it was and still is!"

I bet it explains a great deal of the statement 'We are not people anymore, we are wind' in the booklet of *Malice* & your website! You must have meant the spiritual progress, in comparison with common people?

"Yep! You are one of the few people who understand what I am saying! The Satanist always strives for excellence and has a deep thirst for knowledge and power! That is quite logical if you consider that the whole philosophy behind it is pretty revolutionary and egoistic! To tell you the truth, I do not want a world full of Satanists! Imagine that everybody would try to rule over another! I prefer xtians, moslms, etc., who are brainwashed and sheep-like minded and are more easy to handle. Satanism was always for the few daring to embrace it. It was, it is and it will always be like that..."

Yes, I can say that "Satanist" is a nice way to describe me, but not the only one!!!!!!"

Well, sure, it is pretty limiting. But could you share a bit more your viewpoints on what is Satanic and what is not? And what do you mean with other ways to describe yourself?

"Satanism is only an aspect of my life. Let's say that it covers my dayside thinking, meaning the ethics with which I live my everyday life with! Well, my nightside is another matter. Let's say that I am researching immortality the last few years because I hate death pretty much! And it does not involve Hollywood blood-drinking and crap like that!"

In the early photos you used traditional Black Metal imagery, including the corpsepaint. Later on it has changed into fairly emotionless figures with sun glasses. How does it correspond with your art? Satanic Metal tradition (like *Acheron*) or any other special explanation to this?

"It was simply not something we liked anymore! We were really into it when we were doing it in the beginning. It fit the whole atmosphere and it had a theatrical element like the tragedies of the ancient Greek theatre. Later on everyone was doing it and it became a 'must' for Black Metal bands! Well, we simply do not like 'musters'. We create our own way. It has nothing to do with Satanic traditions or anything. We just felt that way!"

What about that *Blair Witch* cult? Is your song anyhow related to that infamous movie all the world was obsessed by? I feel you either just made an allusion to that, or you have a completely another viewpoint to the story. Is that right? Is it your way to share the feelings about the matter, or kind of an attempt to present the real thing about it?

"The thing which really impressed me with the whole *Blair Witch* thing is that they made such a clever promotion years before, so everyone believed that it was a real story! That's kind of magical, man! The creation of an illusion! In our song it's the witch herself who speaks, confirming all the bad things told about her and even worse! She's a fucking hellbitch!"

What about your current line-up? How come you were left two-some? There was no info about who recorded the drums on *Malice*. Was it computer, eh?

"We prefer it that way because we have total control over everything and there are not that many arguments, and we can focus on our cause more easily! As for *IV Malice* we used a real drummer, but we triggered them later with a computer, to make corrections and things like that!"

There's a special album, celebrating the 12 years of the band's existence, and paying tribute to the past. Why twelve years? It's not the first time *Necromantia* do covers either. Like that thing?

"Twelve years since we started in 1989! Plain and simple! We wanted to give something to our fans that will appreciate and remember! A CD with a best of, four covers and one new song! Actually it is *Makis* who likes doing covers much more than I do and he was responsible for arranging the whole thing! I just played and sung! But, nevertheless, these are bands which have marked our path when we were kids, so it is like a tribute to them!"

So, you are working on the new album right now. I guess that the success of *Malice* had its share on the band that is pretty much active now with the new recordings! Will it be the continuation of that fury and stream of anger found on *Malice*?

"Well yes and no! It will still be packed with speed and violence, but we are thinking of following a more diverse way in songwriting. Nothing is sure yet... Wait and see!!!"

Check out the blood-red site of the Necromaniacs: www.necromantia.f2s.com/main.shtml



SATYRICON

From the Infernal Fields

Say what you will, but I've always had deep respect for *Frost* and *Satyr* as positively dark-minded individuals and for *Satyricon* as a band that's perpetually progressing yet never failing *'the Flag of Dominion and Hate'*.

As a matter of fact, they may very well be the last great old Norwegian Black Metal band still worth admiring, if you ask me.

'No doubt this is the best interview I have got from anyone,' says *Frost*.

Damn right. You don't get to read this in *Terrorizer*. You just don't. We spoke about Life, Death and the Sinister Existence with the legendary Satanist.

Northwind

Darkened greetings, *Frost*. How are you?

"I am feeling rather strange for the time being... Strange thoughts and ideas are storming uncontrolled in my head, leaving me in just as strange moods. It's not that negative, really, but I find myself having some concentration problems – for instance when doing this interview."

Rebel Extravaganza was a pretty extravagant record. It opened a lot of new doors musically as well as lyrically, yet maintaining the extremely grim Black Metal we've come to appreciate Satyricon for as its essence. How do you yourself view that record today, now that it's already two years old?

"I am still most satisfied with *Rebel Extravaganza*, it is undoubtedly our best album to date in my opinion. It is also the most aggressive, dark and intense one. The music has a sharp, cutting edge to it, which is further enhanced by the production. *Rebel Extravaganza* stands as strong today as it did when it was released."

What about Satyricon's previous material? How do you look at those releases today?

"I find each and every album to be unique; they all shine in their own way. Production-wise, *The Shadowthrone* is by far the weakest album the way I see it, but still it has definitely got its charm."

Concerning the musical content of the albums, all of them belongs to the elite, and all of them have been considerable contributions to the Black Metal genre."

It seems to me that Satyricon revealed an entirely new face of itself with *Rebel Extravaganza*, in pretty much every way imaginable. More dirt and filth. Should we expect something along those lines from your new album as well, or is it yet again as full of new, obscure details as *Rebel Extravaganza* was?

"Every new *Satyricon* album brings a new world of music, and there will be no difference this time. Our forthcoming album differs as much from *Rebel Extravaganza* as that album differed from *Nemesis Divina*, which again was totally different from *The Shadowthrone* – and so on. What you always can expect from *Satyricon* is high quality, uncompromising music and a strong essence of Darkness. Apart from that, we are fairly unpredictable, which is a healthy sign of a band being at the forefront of its kind."

What else can you tell us about the next album?

"Less aggression and intensity, more cold, eeriness and darkness. We are moving closer to the core with this album, meaning there are less technical details that would take focus away from the atmosphere in the songs. There are certain rather prominent Thrash and hardrock references, but the overall feeling remains utterly dark and cold."

Have to ask you about that tour you did with Pantera. I think it was a shock for a lot of narrow-minded people as myself. But you told me that the tour went quite okay, and that *Phil Anselmo* managed to impress you in a way...

"It would have been a shame if we had spilled the chance to tour with the worlds largest Metal band. It gave us the opportunity of reaching where we otherwise could not reach (in several ways). It is pretty obvious that among *Pantera*'s crowd there's a good deal of people that are receptive to more extreme music – they just haven't got to hear it yet. These souls could be won by showing them the dark splendour of *Satyricon*, and I am sure we won quite a few on the tour."

Meeting *Phil Anselmo* was truly an enrichment. He is an outstandingly charismatic person with deep roots in Black Metal, and a remarkable sense of humour that only intelligent individuals possess. His support on the tour did for sure make a lot of things go easier for us. But then he personally wanted us as guests on the *Reinventing the Steel*-tour in Europe."

Then we'll dive deeper to you as a person... People have recently started talking about values. What would you say are your values of life?

"Strength, courage, expansion, pride, individualism, dignity, scrupulousness."

How do you see your place in the modern society? Obviously the values you just mentioned differ from those which fundament the basis of our world today, so how do you relate to the fact that you can't really live by your own terms without compromises, even if that would be the ideal within the mind? There are laws, morals, norms, rules and restrictions of all kinds set up by Judeo-Christianity that are completely alien to human nature. In fact, aren't we all just living in the very illusion of freedom, chained by the Jews?

"It's truly so that I cannot live my life totally without compromises, and it is a goal of mine to put myself in a situation where compromises need not to be made. Still, in the big picture, no one is really preventing me from doing what I want, it's all up to me how I want to deal with my life-situation and my surroundings. I do not like to see myself in any way as a victim of the stupidity of Judeo-Christianity, or by the stupidity of man for that matter. My task is to deal with the situation at hand."

Hmm... Talking about the illusion of freedom, which you mention, I think we may very much live in an illusion of freedom, but we are rather chained by biological forces than by Judeo-Christianity. That shouldn't leave us to surrender, anyway."

What are your thoughts concerning individuality? Many speak of self-development as a key to a higher level of human existence, doing what they want, ignoring the rest of the world, but of what worth is such egoism if the natural life and order are dead, as we know it?

"It's worth a lot if you do not depend that much on your surroundings or if you see yourself removed from society. Personally I value self-development very high, as energy put in developing personal strength and abilities pays much better off than working with changing my surroundings. It is possible to change the world, but it requires total dedication to that matter. The world will never change into my ideal-world anyway, as my ideas are far too extreme.

I don't feel any responsibility or love for our society, that is probably why I care so little but for myself and the few I like – meaning I am egoistic in the common man's view. Coming to think of it, what do *you* mean by that 'natural life and order' which you are referring to? I have a slight feeling that hoping for the world to return to a more primitive state directly regulated or ruled by the laws of nature, is futile. In *my* eyes it isn't really anything to strive that hard for either. Then again, I might be wrong in my assumptions."

As a Norwegian, how do you feel about the Norwegian race and culture of the past and present? Do these things mean anything to you?

"I feel a *belonging* to Norway that is for me beyond logical explanation. I really have little in common with my countrymen, and I care not for them. Being a Norwegian still gives a good starting-point: our early forefathers were, for hundreds of generations, to strive hard to survive in this cold and desolate country, resulting in people of strength and endurance. On a later point they developed into skilled warriors, merchants and boat constructors as well as farmers and hunters that managed to survive from often very poor natural resources. A good heritage, indeed... Norwegians are, especially considering there are only 4.5 million of us, making a remarkable impact on many fields in the world, showing we are a people of many talents. So that is all positive, but not that important for me personally. And it doesn't help the fact that the common Norwegian is, as every common man, downright stupid.

And the culture...it doesn't interest me that much. I could for sure mention outcomes of Norwegian culture that I like, for instance certain architectural features, but it isn't important for me in a bigger perspective. What I really like about Norway is the climate and nature; it's variety and splendour, and the fact that the country is populated to such a low extent."

A Judeo-Christian value called equality is enabling and forcing racial integration in Europe. How do you feel about the fact that our Nordic landscape is coloured up by a whole bunch of different races and cultures? Do you care?

"Equality...hah! A disgusting term, indeed. Still, the qualities men can have that I can appreciate are really not depending on race or culture. It would be no use saying it is impossible for an African or an Asian to develop certain skills or to have certain abilities or qualities - even if different races are characterised by different qualities - and therefore I reject no one solely because of racial belonging.

This does, however, not imply that I accept the stupid idea of equality, not even racial equality. I am totally sure that increased racial integration will inevitably lead to increased problems for the society. Different peoples have different preferences, backgrounds and understandings of the environment they live in, and hence they will not live in harmony. Then again, I care not much for society. My opinions are so far from the general that it's a waste of energy to do futile attempts changing society. I can get where I want regardless of it."

You have quite openly labelled yourself as a Satanist. Satan has His origin in, and belongs to, Judeo-Christianity, and dark forces and powers are also to be found from the mythology of your own country, your own blood. The obvious question is that why do you believe in a force that is from Israel?

"This is actually quite a lot about semantics. 'Satan' is the name given to the arch-force of the Left Hand Path, the fiend and the opposite of the Christian God. The deity Satan occurs in the Holy Bible, but is there used to promote Christian purposes (and is hence bound to the role of a loser). The idea was, however, inspired by dark forces known even before the birth of Christianity; forces from various cultures known by names like Scheitan (the same or similar names in different languages), Set etc. I strongly oppose the idea of Satan having His origin in Judeo-Christianity. In my own world, other names than Satan could have been used, but for me *Satan* has come to represent the idea of supreme strength, pride, darkness and splendour; probably because the name 'Satan' was the first name for a deity of the Darkside I got to hear. Which better arch-type could there be?"

Is there any point for a Satanist to fight against Christianity, when ultimately in the end he himself is keeping the Judeo-Christian mythology alive by supporting their terminology?

"As stated earlier, I care not much for society, and therefore it is not important for me to fight certain elements of it in order to make changes. Nevertheless, everything that in some way harm Christians or their religion fills me with an almost childish joy, just because I hate them so much. Christians represent and advocate everything I hate about man – herd-mentality, *agape*, stupidity, weakness, guilt and irresponsibility – so fuck them eternally, but they still create very few obstacles on my way that need to be removed.

Even if there were to be a change of paradigm, and Christianity was replaced by some other religious or philosophical foundation, I believe that the herd would cling to a herd-mentality-promotive basis – like today.

I have big problems imagining that sharing terminology with Christians supports them in any way. I do not accept their definitions, that is more important."

The 'good' and 'evil' are also terms, favoured by dualistic religions such as Christianity. As I know you personally tend to use the word 'evil' in

your vocabulary, don't you think man can pass through a level where such things as 'good' and 'evil' are left behind, as they are nothing more than Christian terms for the prevailing Christian morals, anyway? Is there anything that is 'pure evil' to everyone on this planet?

"I do fully understand your viewpoint, and I agree that 'good' and 'evil' are words without any universal meaning (there may be nothing that is pure evil to everyone). However, I do *not* agree that they are *'nothing more than Christian terms for the prevailing Christian morals'*.

They obviously have different connotations than those of morality. I feel that there are situations where 'evil' would be the most descriptive term to use, for instance when describing the atmosphere of certain **Bathory** or **Darkthrone** themes. In this case, 'evil' is not assigned any moral qualities, but it is still a strongly subjective term, of course. My main point is, anyway, that there are so many terms that have different meanings or connotations for different individuals, - and their meanings are also depending on the context in which they are used - especially terms that are used in describing qualities or measures (adjectives, mostly). Just think about words like 'fine', 'cruel', 'naughty', 'beautiful', 'big', 'wrong', 'tasty' etc. etc. These are words used frequently, but they would not mean the same for everyone using them. Still, even if all individuals have different meanings, understandings, experiences and feelings, and hence different interpretations of words, they manage to communicate (somehow). Our ability to understand everything in contexts is the prime reason for this to be possible, and is also the reason why terms like 'good' and 'evil' are to be understood - at least close to - correctly.

I would like to mention one example that I like. I read an article written by a man who had for a long time been working in the forest department, and had walked the forests of Norway for more than twenty years. He was clearly non-religious (which he also stated in the article), and just as clearly not superstitious in any way. But one place in the article he mentioned that he had *'seen the desolate and naked, vast landscapes of Fimmark, and felt the evil in the ancient woods of Telemark'*. He was all rational and down-to-earth about it. I guess that 'the evil' he mentions in this article comes pretty close to a universal understanding of that term; something obscure, menacing and wicked – a dark and mysterious force. Terms like 'cruel', 'spooky', 'threatening' or 'dark' just wouldn't cover it. And I assume that even to, for instance, Satanists, or other individuals of the Darkside, this force - or what you might call it - mentioned could very well be regarded in terms of evil. Note, however, that again *no moral* qualities come into the picture.

In the Norwegian language, the translation of the word 'evil' ('ond') comes to mean something that goes beyond 'cruel', 'annoying', 'bad-ass' or 'nasty'; I guess that applies for the English term as well, even if it is widely misused. Used properly, I find the term 'evil' to be just as suitable as any other describing term. It is, then, imperative to avoid the connection 'good' = 'right' / 'evil' = 'wrong'. By the way, 'right' and 'wrong' would be as terms just as problematic, at least in moral contexts, as 'good' and 'evil', right?"

They are. But going further into the depths of Satanism, how would you describe your branch of Satanism? A sincere belief into the Beast or a sincere belief into the things the Beast represents?

"To grow, take responsibility, realise your own ego, to scrupulously gain what you want, and to proudly walk on the way to dark splendour; discarding guilt and inferiority-inducing 'truths' and norms – that is the way of the Satanist. This is the way I am walking; more and more do I realise that my personal joy is connected to actively strengthening myself in every way – I have spent too much time in ignorance and laziness, not taking responsibility. And, of course, although most humans have an annoying effect upon me, I am joyous in company with the people I like, my love is for those and not at all for humanity in general – I detest *agape*.

Satan as an *a priori* deity could very well exist, but would in that case be out of the range of comprehension. I have decided to let the whole question concerning the existence of such deities remain obscure, as all I could come up with on that field would be mere speculations, or based upon such. And that would do no good at all. I see gods as arch-types or principles that can in some way be channelled through the subconscious."

What is your aim with Satanism?

"There is no aim. Satanism is not something I have chosen in order to accomplish a certain task, it is rather that my own philosophy of life is basically in accordance with the Satanic principles. My aim with *life* is to grow in strength, to grow in knowledge, to be able to live my life as fully as possible according to my will and be joyous thereof. To reach this goal I am walking the Left Hand Path, but that is because I naturally belong there."

But of what value is the Satanic spirit within the self if no action is committed against the modern society, which is constantly trying to fight against everything the Satanist represents? And, do you think it is better to die fighting for your beliefs or just fade away into the woods?

"I do not share your obvious concern for society... I feel that society isn't preventing me from going where I want. Fighting it would take all the energy I have - and it would probably still be futile - which can be way more effectively used otherwise. If it turned out necessary to fight in order to continue with a worthwhile life, I would. To death, even. But I can see nothing negative about retiring to the woods..."

What is it that keeps you going? What is that source of inspiration that makes you love life so much that you want to wake up yet to another morning?

"There is a lot in life that I appreciate, which makes existence worthwhile and overall positive. I may mention music (both performing and listening), friends, my wife, sex, nature, movies, literature...I indulge in a lot of different things, exploring possibilities."

There are some Satanic organisations around. What do you think about them? Do you think Satanists ought to unite to strengthen the Unholy Alliance?

"I would not want to join any kind of organisation, unless a) I would gain something from it, and b) I felt that I could contribute with something to that organisation. As the situation is now, these requirements are not met. This may change, on a later point – when I have grown in knowledge and experience – joining an organisation could benefit me, who knows."

You have said you'd like to increase your magical skills. There are magic and connected magical rituals of several kinds, could you speak of the magic you're into and what do you aim to reach with the increased skills one day?

"First of all, I must point out that I am no magician, in the sense that I don't exercise regular magical practices. All the magic I have done thus far in my life is simple visualisations."

The nature of magic and its possibilities is, anyway, extremely appealing, and I have decided to dig into this world when it is due – probably in a couple of years. At this stage of life it is much more important for me to concentrate on other activities; I am rehearsing a lot in order to become a better drummer, which is important both for me personally and for **Satyricon & 1349**. Then I am exercising in order to get better fit physically, and moreover I am studying computer engineering to ensure my future economically. This leaves me with no time and energy for any other demanding activities. It has to do with priority, I can't have it all at the same time. If I am ever to get physically better fit (in regard to my drumming and exercising) it is imperative that I do it *now*, when I am still young. My education should be finished the earlier the better.

A direction of magic that seems to have great possibilities, is Chaos Magic. The written fundamental theory and the doctrines made immediately sense to me. So, what would be my aim with magic? To get where I want to go, but can hardly or not at all go without it. It is an instrument to overcome certain physical limits, and a way to gain control of one's own mind. And a lot more...It's undoubtedly highly valuable."

'Satanists are born, not made'. Agree?

"Yes, *very true*" he said hastily...In this case, as in most other cases, I cannot but shake the foundations of The Absolute. I think that to become a Satanist you must somehow have it in you, but no one is solely a product of heritage. Every experience has an impact, shaping the individual to a greater or lesser extent. Some people will need a catalyst to release their full potential. I think it is fully possible for an individual that is born with Hellfire inside to fade away into a tragic loser, a drug-addict or what not. That is, if the mentioned individual does not take action in life. Whatever resources he/she was born with will not take action on their own. A lot of people never discovers and/or utilises their capabilities, and thus they get nowhere. Likewise, I think it is just as possible for someone originally stupid, a grey member in the herd, to, by some fortunate external or inner stimulation, suddenly break out of the herd, to put Will to work and gain what he/she did not originally have. OK. In most cases the statement you came with is valid, anyway. Most people never change dramatically."

You have once stated that you are first and foremost a Black Metallist. Don't you find it a bit strange that you are more committed to a music style that is but a bi-product of the actual essence of it all, Satanism? There is Satanism without Black Metal, but there is no Black Metal without Satanism.

"I'll take the first first: The reason I consider myself first and foremost a Black Metallist is that Black Metal is the most important issue in my life. I have made it a lifestyle – it became naturally to be my Way. I am a devoted fan of the music, and an even more devoted performer of it. I prefer to wear black clothes, spikes and bulletbelts (I am *not* doing it as a felt necessity in any way, it just suits my taste, but even the former point of view could be appreciated, depending on the motives behind it), and I wear explicit symbols of the Darkside. Truly, I stand wholeheartedly for the dark philosophic basis of BM."

Very well. If Satanism in itself were the no. 1 issue for me, then I would definitely have chosen a more sophisticated way. Out of respect for their magic powers, I would certainly not have used Peter-crosses, inverted crucifixes, pentagrams etc. in that explicit fashion as is part of the very visually dramatic side of Black Metal. Don't get me wrong here, I stand fully behind what these symbols represent, but the explicit way of wearing them suits the Black Metal style much more than, say, a Black Magician's everyday-outfit.

Then: is Black Metal but a bi-product of Satanism? NO! It is of the uttermost importance to conceive of Black Metal as a *unique and extreme style of music*. It HAS its feet in the Darkside, true, and the darkness IS present in the music. Still, to view BM as merely an outcome of a philosophical/religious/magical direction would be wrong, and very unfair to the strong musical qualities of Black Metal. To create and perform Black Metal of high quality requires musical talent and capability more than anything else. True Dark music will have its origin in Black Hearts, alright, but remember that the Darkside does not equal Satanism. One could very well have a soul darker than death, without believing in any Satan. Furthermore, there are several dark deities other than Satan.



Black Metal is (extreme) Metal music, with a dark character and dark overall basis. This does not imply that Satanism is a necessary factor, but it could very well be part of the basis."

You just mentioned wearing the black clothes, spikes, bulletbelts and so forth... What do all these visual aspects actually mean to you?

"Visually speaking, the Black Metal outfit is what appeals to me – there may or may not be deeper reasons for why that is so, but they would in any case be rather uninteresting. Ever since I realised that this was for me (i. e. the Black Metal lifestyle), black clothes, leather, bulletbelts and spikes are what I have felt comfortable wearing."

I guess one of the reasons why *style* is important to me, is that I am very concerned about visual aspects, and perhaps that I despise the grey mass of sheep. Conformity sucks."

As a devoted Black Metallist, how do you see the 'development' of Black Metal we have witnessed the last couple of years? Bands have become actually more interested in playing the music and the labels have become more interested in the sale-figures - than fighting seriously against the enemy, in which Black Metal could be used as a tool to reach especially young people. Things weren't meant to be like this in the early 90's! There's nothing wrong with selling as many albums as you possibly can, but are we to forget what this is all about in the long run?

"I would say the Darkness was more present in the older recordings than those of today, but there are exceptions. You must remember that there are so many bands around now claiming to be playing Black Metal, and this surely implies that a lesser percentage of them are good. Why? Because Black Metal is a very extreme kind of music and style, and extreme subcultures like this can only attract the few – that's just how it is. So when Black Metal is now being performed by a large amount of bands due to the fact that it has become known and quite popular, the few truly devoted souls will make up for only a small part of the BM-musicians. And labels, at least the bigger ones, always care about nothing but money, so you know what to expect from them. Add this together, and you will have a lot of bands without originality, essence or edge. It's no fun to hear the weak and dull recordings of today being presented as BM, but I concentrate on what is good, and ignore the shit. After all, there's a lot of strong Black Metal being made today as well, you just have to be more selective than before to find it in the mass of non-worthy crap."

Concerning the musical development of Black Metal, I think it has been both natural (in the way that musicians are all the time getting better technically, and try to find new ways of expression) and necessary for the genre not to stagnate. All that is obvious, really. OK. But you are talking about Black Metal as a tool to reach young people as a part of the fight against the enemy. You are also referring to *'how things were meant to be in the early 90's'*. Now, let us get one thing straight: the driving force of the bands that created the wave of Norwegian Black Metal in '91-'92 (**Darkthrone, Mayhem, Thorns, Burzum and Immortal**) was of a **MUSICAL** nature, first and foremost. It was truly about music more than anything else, even if other factors were an important part of the scene back then. The music they created truly perverted the souls of some young listeners, as the

majority would view it, and so does the really strong music of today. I take it that a youngster hearing for instance a new **Satyricon** album, and get it by heart, will NEVER turn to Christianity or some other white-light shit. We bring them the splendour of Darkness, just as before. And no sale-figures or concern for musical development changes that a single bit."

Do you ever miss the Satanic order *Euronymous* gave the Norwegian Black Metal milieu in the early 90's?

"Yes, in the respect that it gave the whole Black Metal environment a very dark aura that I miss. I do, anyway, know that I would have reacted quite differently to the whole thing if I were to enter a scene like that today. I certainly would have disliked some of the childish 'rules' *Euronymous* expected BM followers to accept as foundations for their lives - like that pain should be sought instead of pleasure, which suits people of a masochistic nature only. I am a very rational being, and oppose the unreasonable.

Now, I do anyway believe that the mentioned order could have grown into something really menacing if it had got the chance to live on and develop. But it was torn apart in its initial stage, when it was consisting of very young people and being very unstructured and vulnerable."

By the way, the rumour has it that there were two American fellows in Norway rather recently to make a documentary about the Norwegian Black Metal milieu, and that you, *Fenriz* and some others will appear in the film. What's that all about? And what do you think about *Det Svarte Alvor* today, where *Satyricon* also appeared, although fairly anonymously?

"The mentioned American fellows, *Aaron* and *Audrey*, are quite correctly making a film in which several individuals from the Norwegian Black Metal scene will appear. To call it a documentary wouldn't do justice to the film, however, even if it has got documentary features in it. I have understood there will be quite a lot of abstract scenes and dark movie-artwork; I am excited to see what they will make out of it.

I believe that *Aaron* and *Audrey's* driving force behind the whole project was their fascination for Norwegian Black Metal - the dark and cold atmosphere in the music, the lyrics and the visual aspects. They must have seen a strong movie-potential in what could rightfully be called the Black Metal phenomenon, and from the impression I have got, I wouldn't be surprised if they managed to create a dark masterpiece of a movie.

Det Svarte Alvor is a boring piece of shit."

Many Black Metal bands, or at least some involved people, turned recently into ordinary Heavy Metal headbangers who just drink beer, listen to Iron Maiden and have their own Blackthrash side-projects. Could this happen to you or *Satyricon* some day?

"This will have nothing to do with *Satyricon* whatsoever. Blackthrash rules anyway."

How do see *Satyricon's* place in the Norwegian Black Metal milieu of today? And what do you think of the fact that there's hardly anyone left in Norway creating Black Metal anymore - well, at least not in the real sense of the word, except maybe *Satyricon*, *Gorgoroth*, *Darkthrone* and possibly a few others?

"In my eyes, *Satyricon* is the most important band in the Norwegian scene today. I can not emphasise it strongly enough. The quality of what we do, the pure dark essence in our music and our impact on the scene makes it so. That doesn't say there are no other important bands here, because there truly are, but among the major bands I feel we are by far the strongest one. You know, *Darkthrone* still rules, but their impact on the scene is small compared to what it was - and I think *Darkthrone* is just happy with that. I cannot even relate to the new

Emperor album, and it is definitely not Black Metal. *Immortal* has turned into a more Heavy Metal inspired style in my opinion, and even if they are really growing big now, their time of greatness is over. *Mayhem* is exciting, but quite far from the level they reached with *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*. So...that leaves us as the leading force.

Of course, I think it is really sad that a lot of the formerly great bands have lost their glory. But I shall not burst into tears, there are still so many strong acts: *Enslaved* has finally risen again with a monstrous album, the *Thorns* album crushes just about everything. *Gorgoroth* still rules, great stuff can be awaited by *Darkthrone* and *Mayhem*. *Aura Noir* will continue to rise hell, and *1349* is an upcoming BM band that really kicks ass...and still there's a lot more that would have deserved to be mentioned."

Some of the more famous Norwegian Black Metal musicians have also started to create 'art for art's sake' or just changed their personalities and artistic expressions completely. I hate that. I personally think a band like *Marduk* is a great example of how never to fail the original concept, but still find new expressions with the music.

"To keep the edge and the essence of darkness, but otherwise be unpredictable, improving and developing is the way of *Satyricon*."

Well, just out of pure curiosity, what are the Black Metal bands you can say you respect wholeheartedly?

"*Darkthrone*, *Bathory*, *Possessed*, *Venom*, *Mayhem*, *Hellhammer/Celtic Frost*, *Thorns*... These bands (and probably several others) I totally respect, in the sense that they have been outstandingly unique, and because of their contribution to, and impact on creating and shaping, the genre."

Lyrically, who are the writers in the Black Metal scene that have given you the most?

"The lyrics of *Fenriz* belongs to a division of their own. His hellish poetry creates the most vivid and dark visions, either I succeed to find any intelligible message in it or not."

Have you ever yourself felt tempted to create some Satanic poetry?

"I personally am not granted the gift of poetry. But strangely enough, I have just started working on a poem or lyric that in essence deals with a vision of Hell. I strive hard to turn my mind into written text, but the process is interesting."

Since *Satyr* has a full charge of the *Satyricon* concept, don't you feel fascinated by the idea of creating something on your own that would suit your ideology completely?

"*Satyricon* suits me just perfect. I am all focused on the drums, and that is how I want it to be. Anyway, I am also playing in a band besides *Satyricon*. It's name is *1349*, and it is insanely brutal Black Metal (half old-school, half insanity), and I am even making some music/lyrics in this band. That doesn't change the fact that I'll basically stick to the drums, though."

Thank you, comrade Frost. To conclude, what will it say in your tombstone?

"I have no plans of having a tombstone. In fact, I'm hardly giving any thoughts to my own death; for some reason (it was something like a vision or a very vivid dream) I am strongly convinced that I will get very old, meaning that personal death feels very distant. When it happens, my body will be burnt and the ashes will be spread in the forest. If anyone close to me wants anything to remember me by, they should be out in the forest and feel its atmosphere - both at daytime and at nighttime."





ACHERON

The Rebirth of the Cult

It must have been in autumn 1999 when Vincent told me he's going to call it a night for **Acheron**. He said he was sick and tired of the whole music industry and everything that comes with it. I went numb. I thought **Acheron** was one of the things that would last forever. And now it just feels good to be right.

Our contributor *Curriculum Mortis*, the ex-*Stregoica* member, approached Mr. Crowley with some questions about this and that.

Northwind

Hail Vincent! Could you present us Acheron in its new form & also Wolfen Society, your new project?

"Well, **Acheron** is back with myself on bass and vocals, *Michael Estes* on lead guitar, *Aaron Werner* on keyboards and session drummer *Kyle Severn* (**Incantation Wolfen Society**) on drums. We just recorded a new 7 inch record called *Xomaly* for **Warlord Records** from Italy, which will be out in early 2002.

As for **Wolfen Society**, it is a misanthropic musical studio project, featuring myself on bass and vocals, *Kyle Severn* on drums, *Lord Abriman* on rhythm guitar and *Thomas Thorn* (**Electric Hellfire Club**) on keyboards, samples and vocals, and *Ricktor Ravensbruck* (**Electric Hellfire Club**) on lead guitar. We recorded a MCD entitled *Conquer Divine* that will be out on **House Of Death Records** (USA) and **No Fashion Records** (Europe) on January 28th, 2002. *Thomas Thorn* and *Ricktor Ravensbruck* left the band after the recording, so **Acheron** keyboardist has replaced *Thorn* and a new lead guitarist is being sought out."

Is there any particular concept or ideology hidden inside Wolfen Society?

"Total Hatred for Mankind! We are those of the Misanthropic Race. We have Occultic aesthetics and ideas, but our main concept is hate! Laughing as man destroys himself."

Why the silence between Those Who Have Risen and the upcoming return of Acheron?

"We never got tour-support for *Those Who Have Risen*, so we didn't get to do much after that release. I just got sick of dealing with the music industry and broke up the band. I ended up missing the music, so I did **Wolfen Society**. After that, the response from the fans was insane. They wanted more **Acheron**. And to tell you the truth, I missed my demonic child.

So I invoked it once again. And things have been fucking great! We hope to find a new label soon and get back to business. Since **Acheron** got back together, we have toured Mexico with **Dark Funeral**, headlined Caracas, Venezuela with **STATUZ** and **LEAVES** and have done a couple select shows in the USA. We are back and we want blood!"

Is the new Acheron different from the ancient one? I know for instance that you've cut the bridge between Acheron & The Church of Satan (and, consequently, the introductions made by P.H. Gilmore). Why?

"The main idea is still there. **Acheron** is still a Satanic Black/Death Metal band that is here to go head to head against the ideas of Christianity. But it has evolved. I am letting others in the band help write the music now, to keep the ideas fresh and make it feel more like a band.

As for the broken link to *The Church of Satan*, it is because of me. At this time I do now wish to be a member of ANY group or organization. That doesn't mean I'm anti-COS, it is just that I am more open-minded to other Satanic views, that may not be agreed by *The Church of Satan*. And as for the intros, even though I liked them, many of the fans didn't want to hear intros after every song. That is why *Those Who Have Risen* only had one intro. And now, *Aaron Werner*, our keyboardist, can do intros that go with the songs, if we even create any. Not to mention *Peter H. Gilmore* is now the High Priest of *The Church of Satan*, so I'm sure he is very busy anyway."

I read somewhere that Peter H. Gilmore has created his own musical production through a band called Ragnarok. Have you heard anything about it? How does it sound? Like the ancient Acheron's introductions?

"I haven't talked to *Peter* in over a year, so I'm not sure what he is doing in the music world. But he was

supposed to do **Ragnarok** a while ago. I'm not sure what it is supposed to sound like?"

For many people, the image of **Acheron** was affiliated with the National-Socialist ideology (judging by some videos like *Lust, Sin, Chaos & Blasphemy*). I guess, it was just to show how misanthropic you were... correct? **Acheron** was also strongly affiliated with the UR's *Temple of the Vampire & The Church of Satan*. So, what's the face of the new **Acheron** like?

"**Acheron** was/is not a political band. We hate ALL of mankind, not just select groups. As for the *Lust, Sin, Chaos and Blasphemy* video, we didn't make that, so you can't really say that represent the band totally. Even though I like that video a lot! A fan did that video.

Acheron has always stood on its own two feet, but people always tried to label us a *Church of Satan* or *Temple Of The Vampire* band, when in fact we were just a band that supported these groups. Now, **Acheron** represents that Darkside. Period! I feel I have evolved as a person and I'm not as narrow-minded anymore. And, in a sense, I think much more extreme than I used to do. We will write what is in our blackened hearts."

What was the goal of The Order of the Evil Eye?

"*The Order of the Evil Eye* was put to rest in 1995. It was an Anti-Christian and Satanic group that battled the Christian masses. We were the thorn in Christ's side. We gave Christian groups as much shit as they gave us. It was great to do for several years, but like any other group, things changed. I thought our short life made a big impact in the underground world. We ended the group having over 2000 members worldwide."

Why have you chosen H.R. Giger to illustrate the covers of almost all your releases? Do you intend to continue using some paintings of this Swiss artist?

"That wasn't *H.R. Giger*, it was Satanic artist *Rex Church*. I am a big fan of *Giger*, and *Rex's* style was very similar. And he created his art during ritual. So I thought he would be the perfect person to do our art. *Peter Gilmore* introduced him to me back in 1989. But **Acheron** will now use various artists on our releases. This is a new beginning and we want fresh and new ideas, while keeping our main roots."

How do you see the evolution of humanity for this XXth century? It seems that it started with a major & deep-rooted conflict between religions, civilisations, races, (sub-)cultures.

"You mean DE-evolution, ha ha... Mankind is going to end mankind. The battle between Religions and Races will never end. That is the whole concept of the next **Wolfen Society** album *Misanthropic Race*. My idea is to sit back and let the bastards destroy each other. These attacks on the USA just show you that humans are not evolving. We are still fighting over fucking 'religion'!"

Since 1989, you've been on a bunch of labels: Guttet, Reaper, Turbo, Metal Age, Lethal, Moribund (Merciless for the European license) & finally on FullMoon productions. Why so many changes? Have you made your choice for the future releases?

"Because none of those labels have ever helped to take us to the next level, so we kept changing in a hope that one of them would promote the band like it should be promoted. We haven't made a decision on a new label, but I will tell you that whoever signs us will have to pay us a good recording budget, plus give us tour-support. No more labels that don't push us!"

There is a member of Dark Funeral (Lord Abriman) in Wolfen Society. How this Swedish guy can contribute to Wolfen Society? Does he live in the USA now?

"We do the long-distance thing. He still lives in Sweden. I've written all of the music for **Wolfen Society** thus far, but everyone in the band adds their own ideas to the songs during recording. *Lord Abriman* is a total Satanic brother and it is a honor to play with him."

There is also Thomas Thorn from The Electric Hellfire Club. Why a guy coming from the Electro/Industrial scene has joined a Death/Black Metal band such as Acheron? Is it because he's first and foremost a Satanist, or is it because you intend to give Acheron a new 'sound'?

"Well, I would consider **Wolfen Society** a Misanthropic Metal band. And we are in no way a Electronic/Industrial band, although we use some keyboards and samples. But the music is old school underground Metal with some modern influence. *Thomas* and *Ricktor* worked with us because I felt they represented what the band stood for."

I don't know if you have paid attention but I have a feeling that there is a great wave of Death/Black Metal in the U.S.A. nowadays, with bands like: Krieg, Judas Iscariot, Thorn Spawn, Cult Of Daath, Kult Of Azazel, Ibex Throne, Cryptic Winds, etc... Is it something you care about and follow attentively?

"There are indeed some good bands coming out these days, but there are also great bands like **Morbid Angel**, **Cannibal Corpse**, **Monstrosity** and **Decide** still kicking ass. These are the bands **Acheron** came up with in Tampa. I support the scene as a whole. I don't separate Black and Death Metal. They are both underground music, and I like it all!"

Metal aside, are you listening to other kinds of music... like Industrial, for instance?

"I have a wide range in music. I listen to just about anything. If the music is original or extreme, I like it. But I hate 'mainstream' radio bullshit!"

It seems there is a trend that leads some bands to reformation. It started with Venom, Mayhem, Necrophagia, Necrodeath, Sadistik Exekution... I heard At War is preparing a split EP with Abigail and Jon De Plachett is working on Necrovore's return. What do you think of this sudden interest of bands to reform? Is it because Thrash/Death/Black Metal has begun a lucrative business? Acheron could be added to this list. What can you say for your defence?

"I'm doing **Acheron** because I want to. This music will NEVER make you any 'big' money. You have to do this music because you love doing it. Which I do. Surely some of the bigger bands are cashing in, but I can tell you that **Acheron** is back together for one reason, and that is to create more Satanic Music for our fans."

How are Acheron's relationships to the other well-established US bands like Macabre, Usurper, Nunslaughter, Absu, Morbid Angel, Incantation....?

"We get along with many of these bands. We don't really have any problems with other bands. Most of them are very supportive. And we support them. No need for egos in this music."

I know you appreciate an old US Thrash/Death band called Sathanas. Paul is working on the new 2nd album? Have you heard it? How does that sound?

"Actually I just saw them live in Pittsburgh, about a month ago. *Paul* is still going strong and I support

Sathanas. Their new stuff is great and I hope they get the attention they deserve."

OK, it's time to accost the usual 'quiz'. I'll give you 6 names. Just answer what you think in a few lines:

Charles Manson

"A mastermind and true manipulator. A scapegoat for the media."

U. Bin Laden

"A stupid son of Allah that fucked with the wrong country. Eventhough I do not mourn the lost lives, I still think that Muslim bitch should be dealt with. But as I said before, I will sit back and watch the world fall apart."

Chuck Schuldiner (who died on 13th December, 2001)

"Someone that helped to put Death Metal on the map."

Peter H. Gilmore

"The new High Priest of *The Church of Satan*."

G. W. Bush

"Another political puppet."

M. Moynihan (Blood Axis)

"A talented guy."

Could you give us a short list of your favourite books?

"*The Satanic Bible*, *The Devil's Notebook* and *Satan Speaks* by *Anton LaVey*, *Secret Life of a Satanist* by

Blanche Barton, *The Antichrist* by *Friedrich Nietzsche* and *Might Is Right* by *Ragnar Redbeard*."

You intend to perform an European tour in 2002, and you are preparing a new EP called Xomaly on the Italian Warlord Records... am I correct? Could you describe us your upcoming Acheron album Rebirth, your first MCD of Wolfen Society Misanthropic race and, finally, could you give us the program of Acheron & Wolfen Society for this damned Judeo-Christian year 2002?

"Well, it seems like the European tour in 2002 with **Incantation/Acheron** has fell through. We tried to make it work, but things didn't work out. But we still hope to tour Europe in 2002! **Acheron** is presently writing music for the new album *Rebirth* and we hope to have a new label to do it on soon.

As for **Wolfen Society**, we are just waiting for the MCD to come out. It has been delayed for a long time. I'd like to record the next **Wolfen Society** album *Conquer Divine* in 2002, also. So this should be a busy year for me."

The word is yours:

"We just reflect the reality of mankind. The music we create is a mirror. You don't have to like the music, but you can't deny the truth behind it. **Acheron** and **Wolfen Society** were created to cause a reaction within this politically correct world. We are back and we are not going away! In the name of Satan.....Ad Maiorem Satanae Gloriam!"

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Somewhere South of Heaven

If you ask me, **Malign** is the best Black Metal band in Sweden. And that's not a statement made because I've known the band's founder, *Mörkkb*, the last 7 years or so, but because **Malign** do deliver their raw Black Metal with a twist of something extremely inhuman and obscure. That something **Mayhem** used to have.

But there is much more to **Malign** than music and that's, of course, another reason why I had to interview them. They bring back some connotations to Black Metal that have been unjustly abandoned by others.

Northwind

Darkened greetings, comrade *Mörkkb*!
"Hell comrade."

I think you belong to the very marginal group of Black Metal artists who value the ideological side over the actual music. You see yourself first and foremost as Devil-worshippers, and Black Metal is just a mere outlet of creativity.

"That is correct. There's not much more to add to what you just said. We are religious men who coincidentally happen to be Black Metal artists. There is a link, though. Black Metal, if you ask me, demands the upholding of orthodox Satanic values. My religious life by far surpasses my interest for the pathetic and blasphemous 'Black' Metal movement. Surely our musical works reflect our views, but still not all of them.

What I'm trying to say is that we do not integrate **Malign** into our religion but rather the other way around. When we commit acts related to the band, we do not do it in the shape of representatives of our temple, and we do not bring our 'Black Metal personalities' into the temple either."

You have officially declared a while back that the real elite, when it comes to Black Metal Sweden, are those of Funeral Mist, Ofermod (R.I.P) and Malign. There might be quite a few who'd be quick to disagree.

"We have received quite some response to proclamations like these. Perhaps these ignorant people shouldn't be that quick to disagree. We might not sell more than your rockstar 'Black' Metal outfits, neither do we desire to do so. My honest opinion is this; musically the trinity of **Funeral Mist**, **Ofermod** & **Malign** are by far the most animated acts in Sweden, and ideologically these are the most orthodox, worthy and capable servants of His will. That's why we've uttered these announcements. We did not say this to get more attention or records sold. We spit upon pathetic labelings such as 'cult' and 'elite', and to show that we have seen through the veil of

these pubertal bigmouths, I made this statement.

The whole concept will be developed. We will cleanse the ranks of the 'Black' Metal movement for sure. If you think we are wrong; consider yourselves warned. If not, feel free to contribute in the inquisition. The *Deathkull* shall reign!

Just yesterday I visited one of the bigger acts' concerts where some people - from bands labeled as 'Death/Black' - had great difficulties with my opinions. Very odd that they don't play punk or dance music when considering they are mostly nothing but normal folks growing up, with rather 'politically correct' and 'moral' values. Black Metal should not be a matter of rebellion against the adult world or a matter of achieving self-fulfillment and freedom. It is meant to be a burden which only the - by the establishment so-called - sickest and most perverted minds are able to bear with splendid success. I understand people's relation to the music, I do, but we wish to point out that Black Metal is no longer to be considered as a musical genre, it is our Gospel!

We are not really looking to get enemies, we just wish that people will estrange what we do from what these other 'Black' Metal clowns carry out. Whereas they put on a show of imagery and extreme views, we rather tone down our views when it comes to the music.

I don't know if it's a result of what we proclaim, but things have started to happen and there are some other acceptable bands at the moment. I'm rather interested in looking up the members of bands like; **Antaeus** (FRA), **Watain** (SWE), **Hirilorn** (FRA - R.I.P) and I support acts like **Svartsyn** (SWE), **Triumphator** (SWE), **Sorhin** (SWE) and a small section of others. But still the members of most bands in the scene deserve punishment for acting like heralds of the world when they are, in fact, nothing but simple unrighteous dabblers in something they have no conception of. But sure, people can change... I'll admit it must look like **Malign** has changed as well - or 'developed' might be the word I'm

looking for here - quite drastically when it comes to ideological statements. We have chosen to become more outspoken, and we have, of course, developed over the years... After all, we were in our teens when we started the band, so it was bound to happen.

I'm not late to admit that I find some bands' musical talent extraordinary and I might even stand being around them at times, but such things are irrelevant when it comes to certain issues. His eyes are upon us... searching..."

How important is it then for you to actually play Black Metal? Malign performs after all very enjoyable and dark musical art, and needless to say artistic creativity is not the worst thing to concentrate on in this soulless world.

"It is still a significant part of my life, not in the same way it has been in the past, but music does possess certain magic.

Artistic creativity might not be the worst things one can spend time on, I agree, but neither is it one of the best unless it is done with insight, dedication and for a purpose, as is the case in the aforementioned trinity. It's not really about artistic creativity... rather about a calling or a duty. We aim to embody His spirit, to manifest the otherworld. If you are not an individual of decided faith, you will not understand our message. You might be able to enjoy it, but not the way it is meant to be."

You have a very special, many would say warped, way of life as far as your religious and ideological thoughts go.

"Well, I suppose. However, I'm not allowed to utter myself too informative about how our religious lives are manifested. All I can say is that it is a matter of fine-line balancing between having to face certain detestable physical issues and still keep a pure soul. It's a long way to reach the goal, but in some aspects, the way is the goal.

We are not the ones who are warped, we are not the ones who are content and imaginary happy with working nine-to-five, denying the spirit, humiliating ourselves, just because the current Afro-American or whatever trend tells us it's what we really want and the way to get accepted, suffocating our true thoughts with Judeo-Christian thinking and values set out in secrecy through the conspiracy conducted by the tribes of Jakob. No, we are monks in spirit, waiting for the flesh to be conquered by our craving spiritual needs. We are building a paradise amongst a world of snakes. We are fearsome warriors gathered under the banner of Gehinnom, preparing for war."

Unlike almost all the others involved in Devil-worship, you are not opposed to Christians. You see them as slaves of Satan.

"To claim to be involved in Devil-worship and not love the ways our Lord has used Christianity and other religions to haunt Jahve and conquer the earth is beyond foolish.

Hah, how can you 'worship' Him without bowing down and paying homage to the deeds like the Christianizing of Europe, the suppression of negroes in America, the ways of great men such as *Torqueemada* (a converted jew, certainly, but still under the impression of serving the 'good'), *Vlad Tepes* (you would all be facing the stone of Khaba and speaking Turkish now if it wasn't for him, guess you all will anyway soon if Europe keeps decaying at this rate), and other proclaimed 'servants of God'... Ha, Gott Mit Uns? One nation under God? And that is not half of it. Those who do not see the brilliance in Satan's plot must be drooling mongoloids. I'd rather support institutions like the Catholic church instead of '*Lord Ugrabascamocho*'s Black Forest Horde' from Poland or whatever these fools go on about. I'd rather blow up a busload of 'Black' Metal kids than a convent of misled and suppressed harlots & nuns.

I do not support what Christianity is meant to be... Fortunately I have yet to hear of a single Christian who serves righteously. If someone's thinking Jesus, then stand corrected as the New Testament has been modified and censored. Observe that I'm not even going to get into the contradictions of worshipping images and building churches et cetera... One must, indeed, be blind if they don't understand what's going on when they, for example, open up their Jewish newspaper every morning on their way to their zombiefying jobs.

I might point out though that if we're talking about Christians as individuals, I have to agree with comrade *Belfagor* of **Ofermod**; the individual is always to be looked upon as an enemy and therefore it doesn't matter which religion he or she confess."

I think you probably don't have any sympathy for your heathen forefathers either because the Christian ways

were forced down their throats, and that is evil, to say the least.

"Sympathy? Au contraire, however, it is the acts of evil as well as the twisted ideology that once was Christianity that amuse us. The point is not necessarily the fact that they killed, raped and pillaged in the name of this merciful religion, but that they committed these deeds at all. But, of course, it doesn't make it less splendid that they did it with their scriptures as the moral justification.

No, there is no 'sympathy' for any victims of anything that gains our interests. No, we feel no obligation to our race or earthly ancestors. Don't get me wrong, we do make a difference between races et cetera, but that is a discussion I don't want to put in connection to any official information about my person or my band.

By the way, isn't it funny how I can say 'Rape children' without being punished by our state, but I can't say 'I deny that 6 million hooknoses died during the war'. Goes to show how 'Christian' our western-world is."

Do you think there is an absolute, universal Evil, beyond all moral conceptions known to man?

"Aye, far beyond. Thus the lack of human symbolism and language makes me avoid any deeper discussions about these subjects, and most definitely do not make me want to share my thoughts in a magazine that any fool can read. I'm not here to salivate people, I'm not here to force things down people's throats. We gain more from getting people to turn to atheism and other non-monotheistic ideologies than to make them see the face of God. The only reason I'm now saying even this much about the subject is that I've discovered with time that most humans have no other purpose in life than being misled fools. They wouldn't turn to faith even if God's breath was upon their face. And yes, the people who laugh at these words I utter are surely not the ones who get the last laugh. True knowledge is madness to this world and, obviously, that's how things are supposed to be. So, to not make things hard on myself and your readers, I'll narrow my answer down to a short and simple 'Yes!'"

How do you feel about modern Satanism then?

"Satanism? Hardly! 'Satan represents devotion, not passivity,' they claim... Where is the 'devotion' in being a normal bloke who does everyday things and use 'common sense' - I do not encourage so-called 'common sense' - but in difference to other people, who at least don't hide their ways of life, claim that it has something to do with the behorned one? To claim that you have the Devil as a role-model and still be preaching 'forgiveness to those who deserve it' - hard to define perhaps - is like singing Gregorian chants about German pornographic moviestars. To deny divinity, and still desecrate His infernal names, is beyond my understanding. To 'perform magic' and think that it comes from the human being himself is laughable. If so, who or what put the magical potential in you? Fools! Why would you waste your time on casting spells, praying and so on if you think there is nothing there? Do they dine on empty plates as well and pretend the food is in the mind of the human?"

No doubt, *The Church of Satan* is no more than a circus, however, not a very amusing one. Not only is it pathetic to go on these decadent talkshows in America in general, but to do it and claim you are a representative of Satan... It's so pathetic that I can't even think of a punishment cruel enough for it. In a way, yet another group who in themselves are just tragicomical examples of His power to overthrow the human mind, but still they are basically Christianity's antipole, thinking they're 'evil' when they are obviously a bunch of retarded bald old jaguar-driving bums. Why 'Satanism'? Why not a more accurate description like a 'moron' or - to skip the sarcastic comedy - an 'egoist'?

Some C.O.S.-like organization tried to establish themselves in Stockholm a few years ago. Need I say that they were not very 'Satanic' when they tried to pass some ridiculous flyers to members of my order... It was not even a matter of turning the other cheek, rather a matter of hiding in mommy's skirt. I later heard - by the way - that their 'leader' got imprisoned for leaving 'threatening letters' under churchdoors, signed with the very fearsome moniker: 'Satan's True And Real Servants'. Allow me to lay down on the floor with laughter.

Make no mistake, heretics! Our Lord is very real and His grasp will embrace thee one day. Why burn a church because some weakling of your breed was forced to build it - see it as a beautiful monument of suppression instead - when you can burn a daycare-center just for the hell of it. However, I wish to make clear that I have nothing against church-burnings. There are positive aspects to that phenomenon as well.

I have a great deal to say about this subject - Satanism - but I'm out of words and almost about to get really enraged...

As for Mr. LaVey personally, did he honestly think that no one would have read the books he copied when conceiving his 'Satanic' bible? Did he expect everyone to be as dazed with drugs as his likes? How anyone can consider this flea to be intelligent is beyond my understanding. May he be suffering the most severe of torments this very minute."

You have said you're not really all that keen on exposing yourself as a person in the public. Why is that actually?

"I have mentioned some reasons for my in exhibitionism earlier and I can assure you that had these questions been asked by anyone but yourself, *Northwind*, the answers would have been different.

There are many aspects setting in here. Amongst other things, what I consider as completely natural and even positive does not often correspond with the standards of the law, political activists and so on.

This is probably also a non-current phenomenon that I give such definitive answers. And it is also a matter of development and timing. I never felt any need to give this information out to readers of magazines. You, if anyone, can testify that I've undergone quite a drastic change of attitude and personality, or I have at least developed certain sides that weren't so obvious a few years ago..."

You sure have.

"I don't consider any interview I've answered before, say, 1998 to be representative in every way. I'm quite far from the *Mörkbb* of '94-'97 today. Salvated, if you will.

Actually I still don't feel any greater urge to preach fully, we are not doing this for the sake of pleasing any fans but because it has to be done. As stated earlier, it is a matter of performing Gospel!

If someone is interested in knowing more, they can contact us personally and we'll see what can be done... I'm still quite far from spilling my guts here though. As I said, we do not represent the temple when going about music-related issues and vice versa."

Although formed in 1994, Malign hasn't released but Demo '95 and Fireborn 7" EP. Is there anything you could say for the defense of this infernal silence?

"I suppose, but why mourn the past when one can look forward?"

True, but I think the aforementioned silence as well as your lack of promotional efforts have created a definite cult status for Malign in certain circles. No one seems to know about you, though yet you are always there. Do you think all this will work for your benefit in the future?

"I don't know which circles you refer to but it's been said before. The thing is that someone probably says the same things about heretic bands. We do, indeed, have a very fanatic clique of supporters - 'fans' is such a ridiculous thing to say. We are well aware that we could have been less underground by today than we are, but it's nothing that makes me bitter. Speaking about own experience, most people know very well about our existence. Perhaps not the really young or 'overground' people, but most individuals who are somewhat aware of Black Metal history.

I suppose this could be to our advantage if we wanted to sell as many records as possible. It doesn't really matter if we do or don't, I'm not very keen on the thought of being recognised too often and bothered by meaningless humans, we already have too much of that. Had such things attracted me, I'd have indulged in a musical career a long time ago. I dare to say I have the competence to outshine your average pop or rap or dance et cetera composers. Personal benefit does not interest me in that way, we are carrying out a mission. Then, if a bunch of ketchup-vampires admire us as persons or musicians is not really important. I might get to meet individuals I wouldn't have met and accomplish some things if it wasn't for Malign, but not for my personal sake... We are but His tools, ready to obey His every command."

Even though discographically Malign might not be the most active band around, it's still been quite a ride from '94 to this day, don't you think?

"Without a doubt many absurd things have happened to us and it's still chaotic. We've been so fucking poor that it's ridiculous, we've faced tons of hostility and we've survived some weird shit. Still it has been worth it.

Not because I think it's 'cool' or anything but me and *Norddb* were a concept back in the days. Obscure rumours, violent acts of terrorism towards anyone we did not approve and just chaos everywhere we were present. We, and some people around us, did some very nasty things on most Black Metal gigs that took place in Stockholm in '93-'97 and there's still talk of it. Needless to say, it was quite 'problematic' growing up in one of Sweden's most foreign-invaded areas with all the gangs and so forth. Being us was not very popular, still ain't, but we're 'too old' to start fights with them now.

As I said, we've changed. In a way we're more extreme now, but from a different point of view. I can take out the trash now without wearing my bulletbelt - I'm not even kidding. I can now face a crowd of idiots without getting violent - mostly - but I get even more enraged. Let's just say we're, as you have put it, more 'Black' than 'Metal' now."

Not that long ago Sonya Ivarsdotter, the girl who wrote the lyrics of your truly classic *Blod Skall Flöda* track, immortalised in your Demo '95, blew her brains out with a shotgun. How do you feel about that?



"I am quite equal, actually. Sure we used to be very close friends, but such things are not always important. The actual process or event of death itself is always positive, no matter who is the victim. I have no problem with death, I see it every day.

She sure had a sense of humour though. Right before she went, she was on the phone with a friend and finished with: 'I have to go shoot myself now, bye.'

I don't have that much to say about it really. People die. Big deal! We all knew she was on her way for quite some time and even tried to help her out with ending it at times. Quite disturbing though that she had some new lyrics for **Malign** that we never got, but she always said she didn't want to leave any traces of her life on earth when she had gone, so it's doubtful that we'll even play *Blod Skall Flöda* in the future. Furthermore, lyrics in Swedish have kind of lost their point."

But what is then keeping you alive? What is it that makes you wanna face yet another morning?

"The Mission and the Order! It's not a matter of wanting to face another day, it's a matter of obligation to my brethren and Master. Don't think I haven't been close, believe me, I have.

If I'm meant to die, I'll die. I have no problem with accepting that. I rely on my faith and believe in destiny. As someone once said: 'Life is but a slow death.'"

Why do you think you became so drawn towards the night side in the first place?

"I think I've explained this already. Some are blessed with the ability to put the gift to use. Some are not meant to be blessed at all. It is a curse that I bear with presumption and Luciferian

pride. It's a matter of following the voice, to estimate what gains Him the very most. To ignore the gift and lead a pointless life, denying Him, has never been an option for me. I must do His bidding on earth, I wish nothing more than to serve."

Every night, the darkness falls, embracing the souls of the nightbreed with silence and comfort. What have you given to the night?

"Though I don't really understand the question... I have given nothing compared to what I've received. The slightest gazes into the mystery are reward enough to never break my bond with Him.

Physically, I have always been a 'night-person'. I feel sick living life on normal hours, feeling 'normal' and 'good'... Not that I totally lack of 'positive' feelings, they just aren't important."

I know you have a rather violent nature. Do you find great pleasure in beating people up?

"I don't want to develop this answer to any greater extent as I'm charged with a few things and suspected of others at the moment. Let me just state that applying harm to other human beings brings out some of the purest emotions we possess. Sadly it is illegal and therefore I'd naturally never do such things..."

Right! Continuing with the same theme, do you think there are the predators and the prey, so to say, in the human race as well?

"Obviously. Animals mostly kill to survive more directly than

humans whereas humans enjoy killing in a different way, no matter what your parents and preachers told you. There are obviously sadistic features in some animal behaviour as well, if I'm not wrong, but hardly to the same extent as in mankind. Do I need to explain it further? Turn on your television and judge for yourselves."

Malign is by now known as a violent and dangerous band to have on stage. Blood, fire, death, and more blood. What do you aim to say with your performance?

"Our live-show is an attempt to supplement our music... Therefore it includes violence, fire, hatred and similar features. That's all I feel I need to say about it. What we aim to say is, to put it in short terms, 'Fuck Off!'"

Thank you for the interview, comrade Mörkkh. To conclude, what will it say in your tombstone?

"If I have my way, there won't be a tombstone. I'd prefer my body divided and distributed to certain chosen parties. I wish to donate my body to the temple as I have already done with my soul. However, I suppose this violates some filthy human law and some moron will make up a bunch of lies about me at some ridiculous funeral. Oh well, when you think about it, the body is but a shell that hinders the spirit to do what it must.

If someone now feels he must raise a tombstone upon my remains with some poetic nonsense, how about: 'A human destiny, but nothing human inside!'"

Shadow Records, c/o Malign, Box 490, 114 79 Stockholm, Sweden



The Black Dragon Roars

Have you ever noticed that whenever the name of **Varathron** is brought up, no matter the context, it's always accompanied by the word 'cult'. No kidding. Just go to your fanzine collection, and check out any of their interviews or reviews. I bet it's written there somewhere. But if you come to think of it, I don't think there really are any other human words that would capture better the dark spirit of this Greek Legend.

I got curious about the life and existence of **Varathron** years ago, so I just had to finally confront the man standing behind the dreadful eyes of the dragon, **Necroabyssious**. His knowledge of English grammar may be limited, but I decided to leave his answers completely 'unedited', for even the very structures - the mythic exclamation marks and all - emphasise very well the passion with which **Necroabyssious** strives forward.

Northwind

Darkened greetings, comrade Necroabyssious!

"Hail my brother **Northwind**!!! Here everything is cool and the weather so cold, so snowy!!! A very good time to answer your questions!!!"

Varathron is a band that has dwelled in the pits of the black underground for uncountable years, yet I think it was just with the release of The Lament of Gods MCD in '99 that the group got some of the attention it really deserves. Not to say Varathron changed or anything, but somehow this material turned out more 'accessible' than the previous album, in my opinion.

"Well, the history of **Varathron** is coming from the early days of 1989!!! We have recorded and released a

lot of stuff (demos, a 7" EP, a split LP, LPs, CDs), and we've had great attention, with every release!!!

After the **Walpurgisnacht** LP we started to work on the new material! **Walpurgisnacht** was a great album, but released on **Unisound**, which means: no promotion, no free promos to mags, radio-shows, distributors! I personally sent the CDs all over the world, which I had bought from him for promotion in the first place!!! So, after that release, **Cursed** released our two first demos on CD, and he's still making great promotion for us! Then **Pagan Records** released our **The Lament of Gods** MCD, and he's doing great promotion, together with my own promotion, and the final result was... perfect!!!

As you know, since our beginning until now, we

have had so much bad luck with labels through the years! I think we will gain more attention with our next release *Crowsreign*! We will see!!!"

The Lament of Gods MCD surely is something you just can't listen to once and forget all about it, that's just not possible. There's magic in there. How on earth did you manage to create songs with such great amount of occult tension and appeal inside, anyway?

"*The Lament of Gods* was a 'bridge' between our work with the new material for a full album, until the release of that album! I can explain this... After the release of *Genesis of Apocryphal Desire* CD on *Cursed*, we worked on our new material for the upcoming *Crowsreign* album, and we were looking for a new label for this release! And so *Pagan Records*, my brother *Tomasz* - a great brother from the past - asked us for a good co-operation! And it was he who wanted to release a MCD first (due to some economical problems), and then our full CD! So, we had a lot of stuff for *Crowsreign* almost ready, but we didn't want to break the concept & style of the new album!!! That's why we started to work on entirely new songs for that MCD!!! Me, my guitarist *Kon* and the key-man *Bill*, we created those songs!!! Also, I had a small experiment in the heavy, slow, atmospheric area!!! I like that release and I think it is very good, if you compare it with the time when those songs were created!!! RULES!!!

The magic in there was our dark spirit, our beliefs and our desire for more occult songs and lyrics!!! Sometimes, our nightmares come true!!! ARGHHHHH!!!"

Varathron is also a band that has always felt more drawn to occultism than mere Satanism, though some of the Satanic ideals are surely cherished in the band as well, I believe. To be more precise, what does this occultism hold inside for you, and why do you think you yearn for all this forbidden and forgotten knowledge in the first place? Maybe you've felt betrayed and disappointed by the empty and soulless world of today?

"Well, I'm 35 years old and I've read a lot of books since the time I was 14 years old!!! I've read some 'simple' books, but through the years I've also read some 'serious' books!!! I think the mysteries, the obscure, anything forbidden is a great, great temptation for everyone!!! Sometimes a big temptation, sometimes a small - with a lot of fear - temptation!!! For me it was a great temptation when I read the books. I felt so different, I felt as if loading my empty soul!!! I started by reading about all the religions and I caught some good elements from some eastern religions!!! So I was diving more and more, through the years, into occultism and Satanism!!!

In our 'new' society where we live everything is flat!!! Money-god, shitty religions, governments, the police and the security of people, work, relationships and love!!! Everything is a big, huge exploitation!!! Nothing else!!! An empty, stupid society with millions of puppets!!! I think the forgotten knowledge, it gives you a special gift, you're not a ship amongst the others!!! You're a strong personality who can talk with others without frontiers in your mind, without the lobotomy in your brain from all those priests, politicians, militants!!!

I think any logical person have felt betrayed and disappointed in this 'faceless' society!!! CRUSH THE POLLUTION!!!"

But besides the thirst for knowledge, you also possess a passion for the darker side of life, and that also shines through the musical, lyrical and visual work of Varathron. How would you come about describing this darkness that embraces your soul? Is it a force? On some instances you've talked about a "dark god"...

"My passion for the darker side of life through all these years have been and will be so great!!! I thought the only way to put out my thoughts and beliefs was through *Varathron*!!! That's why our music, our songs and psalms for the Dark Lord, the Dark God!!!

I don't know if the Dark Forces embraced my soul, but all of my ideas and thoughts turn around the Apocryphal Knowledge, the Mystical Apocalypse of

Evil!!! OBEY THE RULES OF DARKNESS!!!"

Have you at any point felt this darkened destiny of yours as a burden? Could you imagine throwing it all away, starting a new life with a different lifestyle?

"I think it is not a burden but a great gift, a great duty for anyone wanting to know the Truth!!! I can't imagine myself with a different lifestyle!!! A poser? A stupid puppet? A shithead follower of fashion? A victim of fat priests? NEVER!!! I like myself just the way I am!!! STRENGTH AND HONOUR!!! A Dark Warrior through the aeons!!!"

You're quite different, if you take the common man in comparison, sharing all this passion for the things most people fear and despise. So, the obvious question is: how are your human relations when living in this world of worthless ignorants through 'ancient eyes'? Do you disguise and suppress your real thoughts and feelings when you're around people, or do you just try to avoid any unnecessary human contact?

"*Through the ancient eyes?* Yes, the world is totally different through the 'ancient eyes'!!! More pure, honest, more true!!! We live in a fake society, a society without feelings, without serious ideas!!! It's such a pity!!! A world of weak people who are reigned over by the stupid religions!!!

I live in Ioannina, a small town with a lot of virgin nature!!! Mountains, lakes, rivers!!! So, I do have to make some contact, when it is necessary for my work, but nothing else!!! In my personal life I have some friends who have the same beliefs!!! I don't like to talk with a lot of people because they don't understand me!!! They're just company of the fashion-victims!!!

I like taking a lot of small trips in the forests. I let my spirit free in the nature and I felt an eternal enjoyment!!! That total silence is a great salvation for my soul, for my alter ego!!! RULES!!!"

How important Varathron actually is for you? How important is it for you to let your thoughts and feelings take an artistic form?

"As I've already told you, *Varathron* is my life!!! Believe me, I don't tell you this as bare words for an image!!! *Varathron* is my life, and I make a lot of sacrifices for this band!!! For instance, I've left my work for the recordings, I've split up with a lot of my girlfriends in the past, I've worked a lot of nights to save a lot of money for the recordings of our products etc!!! *Varathron* is over 12 years old now!!! All these years I've given all my time for this band!!! My time, my money, my personal life, my soul!!! Sometimes I feel as if it would be a part of my body!!! I try to continue to release stuff until my end!!!"

Varathron is no doubt a true Greek Black Metal legend, together with Rotting Christ and Necromantia. You've been there since day one to witness everything that has happened in the Greek as well as in the international Black Metal scene. Is this something that makes you feel proud?

"*Varathron* is one of the few good Black Metal bands in the whole world!!! When we started the Black Metal scene - the Greek and international - were so small!!! I've watched the whole of the Dark Empire from the birth until now!!! Yes, I feel so powerful, so proud!!! It's a strange feeling, a different emotion!!! GREAT!!! GREAT!!!"

I'm sure there would be a thousand stories you could tell us about things you've seen with Varathron... good times, bad times.

"My brother, when you make visits, go to studios, have great experiences with mail from thousands of bands, happenings on gigs, some strange interviews, etc. - of course you then have a lot of stories, a lot of good times and bad times, too!!! I'm sorry but I would need pages and pages to write you about those happenings!!!!!!"

For some reason I've got the impression that you're not particularly fond of the present stage of Greek Black Metal underworld. What's wrong with it? What are the bands you do support?

"In the early years of the 90's the Black Metal scene

was so powerful, so pure and original in Greece!!! Nowadays, it's a 'prototype' of any Norwegian band (well, not all the bands but most of them, anyway)!!! Most of the bands of today copy the old bands, with an 'evil' image, without their own sound, their own personality!!! I've also seen plenty of lies, stupid and fake people, too!!! So, I do like some bands, but only a few!!! I hope some new, serious bands will born in near future!!! The Greek bands I like today are: *Necromantia*, *Spider Kickers*, *Sadistic Noise* and some others!!!"

Is there anything you wanna say through Varathron, then? Is there a particular message you want to propagate all over the world, or does Varathron just serve as a more personal channel to release the thoughts and feelings?

"*Varathron* is my life, a big, big part of my mind, of my thoughts and feelings!!! *Varathron* is a big chapter, a chapter with unholy psalms & hymns for the Dark God!!! Maybe a huge message for the world, a message for the Dominions of Darkness who reign the world!!! ETERNAL RULES!!!!!!"

You've had pretty bad luck with the labels you've worked with in the past, mostly meaning Cyber and Unisound. The Lament of Gods was released on Tomasz Krajewski's already legendary Pagan Records. How has it been with Pagan and do you plan continuing under the wings of this label?

"As I told you before, *Tomasz* was - and he is - a great friend of mine, all the way from the early days of the *Holocaust* mag!!! After our incredibly bad luck with the labels like *Cyber Music* and *Unisound* (especially the latter) we were looking for a serious label... I think *Pagan Records* is a great label with a good promotion and great work on CDs, tapes and vinyl!!! Of course *Tomasz* will release the *Varathron* album in a couple of months!!! HAIL!!!

About the old labels... The main problem was with *Unisound*! *Cyber Music* was a small but good label who made a great work on our CD (the design, the layout, the photos) but their promotion was so poor! *Ted of Cyber* was an honest guy!!! *Unisound* on the other hand was a BIG problem!!! A 'mountain' of lies, fake promises and no promotion!!! No promo copies, no money for promotion on mags, radio-shows, gigs, etc!!! I paid a lot of money from my pocket!!!!!!

It's such a pity that I had a lot of stupid assholes around me during all those years!!! CRUSH 'EM!!!"

Varathron has never ignited on playing live too much, despite the long lifespan. Is it a matter of principles or just another result of the bad luck you've had to swallow with the band?

"Since 1989 *Varathron* has played some great gigs, but not so many!!! The only reason for that was our... bad luck!!!!!! Brother, the years 1989-1991 *Varathron* was so powerful in studios and at blasphemic gigs!!! In 1991 I had to go to the army for my obligatory service - for 21 months!!! During that time a lot of things happened to the band!!! My biggest 'mission' back then was just to keep *Varathron* alive!!! Then some changes in the line-up and some personal problems and the years go on!!!

Believe me, I thirst for live-shows. And this was actually one of the reasons why I created the *Kawir* project with *Panos* and *Eskarib* of *Agatus* in the early years!!! Do you remember this??? The band was created in the summer of 1993!!!"

You have what I would call a very 'Greek' way of singing, referring in particular to your not that perfect pronunciation and its likeness with some other Greek Black Metal vocalists.

"Well, yes, I agree with you!!! My pronunciation is more on the 'Greek' way of singing, but I like it!!! Besides, German is the first language I learner, then English!!!"

I was truly impressed by the lyrical work on The Lament of Gods. That kind of soul-side poetry surpasses by far most of the Black Metal poets of today. There's some real depth in your lyrics. I'm particularly interested in the lyrics of Forbidden Lust and The World Through the Ancient Eyes...

"I've written all the lyrics as long as the band has existed!!! I like writing lyrics and I have two collections of poems (in Greek)!!! I've read a lot of books and poems... most of my lyrics come from the great falling of thoughts and ideas in a moment.

Concerning the song *The World Through Ancient Eyes*, it's about a true warrior who never worship the fucking governments, the police, the religions that dominate our planet!!! It talks about a world that has honesty, the power of the sword, the force and the word of man as its fundament!!! It's an ancient world, not our world today!!! This world that rapes nature, our ideas, our beliefs, our souls, our ears, our brains!!! Look at nature a thousand years ago, and look at it now!!! You can see all the pollution, all the sickness of our world!!!

The song *Forbidden Lust* talks about a man, a human soul who's looking for salvation!!! A confused mind looking for a new god!!! He feels so betrayed, by the god they taught him, by the god he worshipped during the young, innocent years!!! But, now, after a fall of 'forbidden' ideas and thoughts it's time to see the real god... the sight of the Dark God!!! So the forbidden lust, the forbidden desire for him is to sacrifice his soul to the Ultimate, Obscure God!!! RULES!!!

What do you personally think about the quality – or lack of it – of the Black Metal lyrics in general? Are there any poets in the scene who might have made an impression on you?

"Well, in the Black Metal scene any band's lyrics are good!!! I don't want to say 'this is good' or 'this is bad' because any song, any lyrics, is a great creation for the guy who has written it!!! Everyone have their own personality, their own ideas!!! Of course some lyrics are better than others, but all are good like any masterpiece, which has born in human mind!!! That's my poor opinion!!!

Concerning the poets who have impressed me, I'm particularly inspired by E.A. Poe, W. Blake, K. Kavafis, H.P. Lovecraft (he wrote some great poems), O. Elitis, some great French poets like Baudelaire..."

I have to ask you about your vast cultural

heritage. The significance of Ancient Greece for the whole world, in terms of wisdom and knowledge, cannot be underestimated. What is your relationship to it all? And seeing how ruined and destroyed things stand even there today... Hate and sorrow?

"The Ancient Greek Civilisation was the Ultimate Dream, the Paradise of Wisdom and Knowledge!!! I have read about it in my early years at school, and I'll continue reading about that Ancient Miracle!!! I think all the people in Earth who worship that civilisation of ours are worshipping the Light of Wisdom!!! I'd like to see that great communion, but now I see only ruins!!! I see only destroyed things, which look at your eyes and they ask you for a big 'WHY'!!! And the answer is the vanity of the human race, the fanatic Christians who killed and destroyed everything!!! Now, only sorrow, grief and hate... Hate for them!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

There seems to have grown a new generation of bands in Greece who bring this whole ancient entity into the concept of their music, do you see this as positive? Or should Black Metal and anything related reflect purely the Satanic vision?

"I know that 'move', I think it is good, but I'd like a more serious situation!!! I think most of the lyrics around do worship the Satanic vision, but it's not abnormal to have lyrics about the Ancient Greece, Egypt, the Vikings, the Language of the Runes and so on!!! But it has to be done seriously!!! It should not be for any ridiculous image!!! Anything mysterious and apocryphal is accepted in our international Black Metal scene, except the stupid, false puppets of fashion and fake 'glory'!!! HAIL TO THE DARK!!!!"

Is there any certain aim you wish to reach with Varathron?

"My basic aim is only the existence of **Varathron**!!! I wish to continue releasing good albums, blasphemic psalms for anyone who worship the Dark Forces!!! At the moment I'm awaiting our new album, *Crowsreign*, from **Pagan Records**!!! And a split 7"EP with **Apocryfa** (ex-Xecrator), which is a killer Australian Black Metal band!!! Watch out!!!!"

Thank you Necroabyssiou. To conclude, what will it say in your tombstone?

"Thanx for your support, my brother!!! I salute all the Black Metal souls there!!! Beware our blasphemic invasion, the Kingdom of Crow is... coming!!!

Until my end I will create Satanic psalms, and I'd like to have in my tombstone the following words: 'Here is one of the faithful warriors who was fighting against the pollution in our soul and our nature!!!'

Varathron, c/o Necroabyssiou, P.O. Box 1265, 451 10 Ioannina, Greece

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THORNS

The ultimate manifest

From the official *Moonfog* press release:

"10 years! That's about what it has taken to complete one of the most anticipated albums in the history of Black Metal. Although the actual material has been made and recorded between 1998 and 2000, the *Thorns* album is something the Black Metal underground have been waiting for since the early nineties. *Thorns* have inspired most of the leading Black Metal bands of today in one way or another. There are different sides to Norwegian Black Metal, but that eerie sounding riffing which is a big part of the sound, *Thorns* started back in 1990. Back then *Thorns* was seen as mellow, dark and slow. It's still mellow and dark, but it's a lot more dynamic now and the intensity and the relentless drive is a new side of *Thorns*. That incredible guitar sound is still there, but it's now a part of a bigger entity rather than the only thing which was very much the case with the famous *Grymyrk* tapes. The album is also starring Hellhammer of *Mayhem* on live-drums, Aldravn of *DHG* on vocals and Satyr from *Satyricon* on vocals and as co-producer. *Thorns* - The ultimate manifest!"

Tadas

Snorre, is *Thorns* a way of life for you, or just a way of expression, a kind of manifestation through the art-form called music? If it is a way of life, how the *Thorns* unit reflects upon you as a person, both music- and ideology-wise?

"*Thorns* is a way of expression. A channel of the more hostile parts of my creativity. I do not 'live' *Thorns*, I make it... Still *Thorns* strongly reflects some of my views on different subjects."

You are not a beginner, a young kid, who has just found music yesterday and still does not quite know what to do with it. Should this debut album be considered as your experience through all these years that finally got a shape, like an immensely focused perspective? Or is this your recent vision of music, your latest imagination of what *Thorns* should be about?

"I try to be that kid who just found music, as I want to be free to do new things with music. Still, I will never be completely free from my experience."

Sadly enough, I have a weak imagination of how it was long time ago, when you had just started. It was you and *Bård Faust* that created *Thorns*. How the beginning looked like? What was the music about? Can you comment the *Grymyrk* tapes? What was the actual line-up? How were you recording and spreading music back then?

"I never bother to focus on the past. It is more constructive to think ahead. Everybody seems to be very interested in the old stuff, but that is not interesting to me. I believe one should try to see the essence of what happens today."

Whether you like it or not, *Thorns* and yourself, as a musician, are bound to the Norwegian events of '93... Are you up to talking about it now, when *Thorns* manifests itself with music, first and foremost? Not to forget the music, whether the whole bunch of years that you spent as a consequence of those events, have had its role on the music that is manifested through the album? In other words, is your life experience reflected in the guitar riffs and nameless atmospheres?

"I've always made wicked riffs, and that is one of the main aspects of *Thorns*. Also the atmospheres and moods. I've always been into that kind of stuff, regardless of external, non-musical and uninteresting

events, which, as far as I can tell, have had no influence on the music of *Thorns*."

How do you, as one of the participants of the story, find *M. Moynihan's* study *Lords of Chaos*? No bad feelings about how the author puts your persona in that context? What do you think - this book should have put a sort of final point to the saga, or it was an ok thing to cause a bunch of new riddles and questions out there?

"The book is crap, but I do not have bad feelings. What can one expect when an American (with sympathies for nazism?) comes over to Norway and get accompanied by an *O.T.O.*-member to survey the core of Norwegian Black Metal? The people who believes in what is written in that book is not part of my circle of friends, anyway..."

You've been doing *Thorns* on your own all these years, but other people have helped you out a bit. They are, however, well-known in the Black Metal milieu.

"I like to be free to do whatever I please with my music, but I need help to put vocals, drums et cetera. I like the writing and producing part more than playing, rehearsing and recording, so I would even like to get other people to develop music from my ideas."

I think your album perfectly fits the *Moonfog* line: to look forward, to lead and not be led, to threaten others with music, poetry and visuals, but also to never deceive the ideals you had started it all with. What about this and what about reference to other label-mate artists? Do

you enjoy what they do with this extreme way of expression?

"I have much respect for *Moonfog* and the other bands on the label. There is a lot of good things going on, and a lot to look forward to. I've always tried to make sweet music, but I guess I've failed! Came out hostile again... The old ideals are crap, and I do not need them. One has to be able to think new in every way to progress."

Many of the people who started with Norsk BM in the early 90's have turned audience-friendly, and have seemingly forgotten what they have been manifesting years ago. Another edge then is bands like Manes and Carpathian Forest that ignore the modern tendencies and stand as a flagman ship of the glorious past. What's your own position concerning this issue? Furthermore, I am curious how you like the music of both the bands I mentioned?

"I have never heard any of them, and I do not think listening to their music could give me more than a good reminder of the good old days. I like to do and listen to other stuff now."

Where does your fascination to dark industrial come from? A typical metalhead who has found darkness in other music than Metal when it got closer to Metal scene in 90's? In a way *Thorns* sounds like you try to bury the line between the two genres. Is that so? No wish to experiment more with a purely industrial project?

"I am not addicted to Metal in any way, and maybe I'll find another expression that suits me better some day. There is a lot of hostility in Metal, but also in industrial and synthesizer music. I use what I feel like."

***Snorre*, do you live in Oslo these days, or in some countryside town? Depending on that, how does that urban/natural background influence your psyche as a creator? From the musical point of view it seems like it makes you sick quite a bit, or at least provokes some hidden streams of absolutely ethereal ideas that you realize in the studio...**

"Norway is a cold place. Both nature and city are hostile. I think that influences the way we make music up here a great deal. Hehe, maybe the twisted riffs are the result of fever fantasies!?"

Since *Moonfog* strategists do not supply lyrics within promo CD's, I wonder where do your lyrical wanderings bring the unsuspected listener? Song titles pose several intriguing thoughts... An universal level of spreading the negative energy? Or is this way more complex? To what extend your lyrical contribution interferes with the traditional understanding of Black Metal: to spread the Satanic Thought?

"No Satanism whatsoever... Just realism! Read the lyrics..."

Do you dream about the apocalypse? What are the scenes that stick to your mind then, if any? Do you feel the Armageddon in any other way? I believe that you have your own interpretation of the last day on earth. Can you share it with me?

"I think mankind will slowly rot. Spiritually, genetically, morally and politically. But the end of mankind is still far ahead, and maybe we will grow more sensible one day and do things a better way."

Will anyone ever witness *Thorns* live? And if yes, what kind of a performance and for whom it will be?

"No plans yet."

Is the current generation ready to understand your music? Both in live situation and in just accepting your music in simple home conditions? "Some are, I hope! REVEL!!!"

Demonstratus

ABSIDIA

IV

Triumphal Way of Eternal Gods tape '01
Rest In Peace

Not a bad attempt at all, even if this band does contribute to the growth of the watered, melodic Metal trend. The progressive feeling makes them differ at least a bit from the rest, though. Seemingly, Absidia includes all the most typical ingredients of sonorous Metal: the innocent female vocals, male grunts, synths, romantic parts, majestic moments, groovy rhythm section, melodic leads, and even fast extreme segments. In many cases I would say that these are just boring clichés, but here we bounce against nicely stuck music. Forgetting the screechy vocalist, I witness well-put elements that do make me enjoy the final result.

Denis' keyboard melodies bring the listener somewhere far away, where the singing lady Elena is occasionally met, too; and she has a voice, I assure you. The Portuguese Inhuman had a similar sort of atmosphere on their debut record – simple arrangements, but they work. Side B has almost the pace of Black Metal, and even the male voice gets better, more screamy – that's another unexpected turn. The music keeps wandering through dreamy landscapes, but it's a good way to make the sound-spectre richer, yet not actually ripping Black Metal off in its essential form.

A wild guess; how would have this recording sounded like straight from the DAT or CD-r? I just have this dubbed on tape, and here the recording seems a bit sloppy, though I have no idea if it is due to the tape or not. In other words, Absidia would sound even more illustrious if they had proper means to show their best qualities.

Well, as for now, check them out – it is a bit more minor than all your Gathering or Theatre Of Tragedy wannabes, and more energetic than all the 'Gothic Metal' clones. The tape must be available for no more than 5 USD from the label.

Absidia, c/o Ivan Bagaev, Gubenko str. 2-2, 214006 Smolensk, Russia.

Tadas

ALCEST

I

Tristesse Hivernale demo '01
Drakkar

I guess only a fellow critic can understand what it's like to go through all these uncountable piles of 'to-be-reviewed' products. Every now and then you just get so frustrated that you just go and get yourself a beer, come back and start tearing up people's dreams about rockstardom.

Why should this have anything at all to do with a young French Black Metal band's demonstration tape? Well, right now, I'd like to go and get myself a beer, come back and tear up this band's future. It's not *that* bad, but it's *that* mediocre – and sometimes sucking honestly is better than being average seriously, or something like that.

Northwind

ANARAZEL

III

Devil Hymns demo CD '00

After reading about this new hope of Unholy Australian Metal in 666 magazine and getting impressed by their mature attitude towards life in general, I decided to contact them right away. Some 10 nights later there was a package in my mailbox, sent from Victoria, Australia. It was from one of Anarazel's founding members: Lord Maakrylb. For my utter excitement, he had enclosed copies of both; their previous *Rise of the Tempest* as well as this *Devil Hymns* demo CD – both self-released.

So, I had my thumbs way up and pushed 'play', promising myself to interview the band, should their actual music give me reason enough to do so. But... well, after the 20 minutes *Rise of the Tempest* takes to go through, I already knew there was not going to be an Anarazel interview in this issue. Not that it's a total miss or anything, but maybe I was once again expecting a little bit more than your usual Black & Death Metal cocktail where every detail is at best no more than average.

Feeling somewhat disappointed, I turned to their *Devil Hymns*, thinking that maybe, just maybe, it could offer me that something more, and fulfill even some of my expectations. And... yeah, it is better. The opener *Hatred* can hardly be considered a song, clocking only 1:39, but the following *Enochian Christfuck* does introduce us a whole lot more convincing, serious and dedicated Anarazel – not to mention angry. The hate-filled vocal-work of Maakrylb really does the trick, accompanied by the crushing Metal mayhem that goes on in the background. A great song! The closing *Coven of Ghouls* is okay, too – yeah, hail Morbid Angel – but I wouldn't had mind hearing some more of the real Anarazel.

The verdict? Well, *Devil Hymns* – or should I just say *Enochian Christfuck* – did buy them some time, deferring the passing of the final sentence into the future.

Anarazel, PO. Box 26, South Oakleigh Victoria 3167, Australia, anarazel@iname.com, <http://go.to/anarazel>

Northwind

ANGIS

IV

Praetites Venklai tape '01

From the bottom of my heart I must admit that I have been underrating this band, even though they're from my hometown, and even though I know them personally. Either this was a 'close friends' syndrome, when a reviewer is afraid to give too good marks for the band he knows personally, or the Pagan Metal trend has played a bad game on me, since I really did think that Angis were one of those bands you should 'check out later'. Or maybe the guys have truly made a leap forward comparing to their old demo material. First signs of their improvement must have been the numerous live appearances on the main shows available here locally, and their advanced ability to impress public.

This section is for the bands that promote themselves, and for the labels that stubbornly enough keep on releasing demos – be it then on tape or on CD-r. We've scaled everything from I to VI, but, as always, there might be more to the reviews between the lines than in the actual points. You knew that, though, didn't you?

Northwind



ARCKANUM

V

Boka Vm Kaos promo '01
Carnal

WHAT a revelation! I can't believe it, this is SO good! Maybe the long wait for something new from *Shamaatae* has played a bad trick, but these two songs on this promotional tape act on me as a dose of cocaine, so treasured to a die-hard addict!

Indeed, after listening to *Bajomet* and *Vm Kaos Gultm ok Kosmos* for a couple of times I can't wait to hear more and wait eagerly for the next Arckanum album that must be presented soon. If you wonder, beforehand they will be released on a bunch of limited edition 7" vinyl splits with other bands *Carnal* is soon ready to present. Just wait and see!

My tape includes couple of those new songs that most naturally have a decent Scandinavian Black Metal character and a production that fits. I cannot believe Arckanum was named as the most typical Swedish BM band in the past, at least their concept was special – trollish, from the very beginning. And then new material is yet more of that! Seeing a pentagram on the tape cover and *Bajbomet* name in a track-title, I strongly doubt about continuing saga of the most ancient troll of the north, though, and the music just confirms that the guy has got more focused on traditional Black Metal than bands from those countries are so famous for. Expect a raw, determined, razorblade guitar-sound and a heart-tearing shriek – the two ingredients this music cannot be imagined without.

Getting this kind of promotional tapes for review is one of those bright moments you feel great about editing an underground magazine; otherwise it would just be impossible to get one of the 150 copies this tape is limited to! NOT for sale!!! Fuckin' investigate the newly born Arckanum! Their new album is tentatively titled *10 Year Anniversary* – what could this mean? The Very Best Of?

Hah...
<http://arckanum.cjb.net>

Tadas

ASGUARD

I

In the Darkness of the Night demo '01
Fatal Ecstasy

Oh boy... Only a miracle or a lightning from the blue sky could surprise me positively when it comes to the melodic Death Metal fields these days (in case if it would stroke me badly, and then half-conscious I'd start listening to all those mellow bands that dare to call themselves Death Metal). This Belarusian crew is even worse than the typical followers of the Gothenburg wave, because they do not have a drummer. Well, he is listed in the line-up, and even appears in the picture, but the guy is as genius drummer as he knows how to program the shit by computer! It sounds awful, just very bad, clumsy and uninspiring. Like your bad pop music crew with a synthetic rhythm section. Here we have Metal, but those crappy drums make it sound like an UN-Metal band! That's why I can't take it seriously.

Then it is not much of Death Metal here. The music is based on traditional Heavy Metal riffs, lead guitar parts, and clichés. To me personally this combination of Heavy Metal trademarks with the shrieking and growling extravaganza sounds very pitiful... they are tuned lower than Heavy Metal bands, and this is maybe another reason why it should be the Metal of Death? Oh lord Jesus Christ the almighty, I'm coming back to you... ha ha, just kidding. Nein, I better stop to let you people experience the band yourselves, ok? Pro-manufactured tape for 5\$ from the label.

Asguard, c/o Alexander Afonchenko, Simonova 19A-166, 212036 Mogilev, Belarus.

Tadas

BAEL

III

Deathly Pale cassette EP '02
HellWar

Quite nicely disturbing little tape this is. Mostly so thanks to the 'vocals' that will darken thy day in a couple of minutes, however happy a person you then might be. Totally fucked up insanity from the darkest pits of hell. Exclusively.

The accompanying music is that what you ought to expect from a French Black Metal horde who're recording their debut demo. But I don't mean that as negatively as it could be interpreted. Bael's quite ordinary, true, but they do have figured out already at this early stage how to compose some darn wicked riffs that work well in all of their beloved simplicity. It just sounds as if they would know what Black Metal is, which isn't as common as you might think these days. Sadly.

Still I get the feeling I could have lived my life with no bigger grief, had I not this tape in my collection. But, oh well, it's a fine start for another Black Metal cult from France, so, why not, you know...

Bael, 9, Rue de Brest, 54180 Heillecourt, France, paleurmortelle@hotmail.com

Northwind

BERSERK

III

... From the Celtiberian Woods promo CD-r '02

America is not discovered anew, but neither is the Pagan/Black Metal this Iberian (that's in Spain) band cultivates. After a traditional synth-intro you plunge into a still keyboard dominated computer conceived music, which is neither too attractive to praise it or too terrible to mock it. When it comes to Spain I always remember the first bad attempt to create Black Metal there: it was *Blazenth* that really prompted reviewers to stick a bad reputation on many bands coming from the Southern part of Europe. However, times have changed. Just look at those excellent bands from Italy these days! I'm sure Spain can be the next fortress of hatred.

What I was speaking about... Ah, *Berserk*! Well, with such a name they could certainly be more straightforward and hateful with their songs. This release is yet full of synth-melodies and your average Black Metal riffs, borrowed from the Norse teachers. The hymn-like voices as well as the fast blast-beat parts save the whole effort a bit since then dramatism of the music reaches its highest points. In one case majesty dominates, in another – extremity. Still I hear too much fascination of the glorious era of the Scandinavian sound. *Berserk* are quite proud to achieve a great sound, according to them. In my ears it still sounds too generic with an awful beat of a drum-computer. It can be good for a demo-recording to show off your good friends, but nothing more.

Still *Oaken Shield*, a division of *Adipocere Records*, is going to release it as a full-length album, which in my opinion is not the smartest thing to happen on earth. I would let those guys spend another couple of years in the rehearsal room.

Berserk, PO. Box 438, 13080 Ciudad Real, Spain, berserkers@terra.es, <http://berserkers.cjb.net>

Tadas

BILSKIRNIR

III

For Victory We Ride... bis Germanien eruchtet tape '01
Beverina

This German band belongs to the ranks of performers who care more about ideology than the music itself, so expect an average musical delivery once again, but a strong ideological aspect within this very long tape. Yes, these 87 minutes contain two demos; one which was recorded and released in 1997, and another which was recorded during the following couple years, but released in 2000.

contains eight songs, and guess what – it gets unbearably boring after the third or fourth song. I'm sure they will realise it themselves in a few years.

Tadas

ELFOR / SUFFERING DOWN III/IV

Into the Dark Forest... / Suffering Down adv. tape '01
No, it's a not a split tape. Actually these recordings are not even released on tape, but since this adv. tape I got happened to include both, and since it's just cuts and pieces of the actual albums anyway, I decided to review them together. Furthermore, both the outfits have the same guy behind the keyboards – the guy who actually sent me this tape, and who has also produced both the albums on CD, I think.

Let's start with the purely ambient/synth-project **Elfor**. Bearing in mind the generally poor state of synth music created by (ex-) Metal musicians in the past few years, I think this one is listenable. Nothing to jump around about, but an ok experience with some nice vocal arrangements. Yes, the vocals of **Elfor** are sometimes hymn-like or singing, and sometimes shrieky - somehow reminding me of the spooky 'guiltless' parts of **Arckanum** or the Polish **My Infinite Kingdom**. The flyer proudly states **Wongraven** and **Summoning** as influences - would be hard to argue, especially having in mind that both the artists have been a massive influence for the whole 'synth' scene. To me it sounds neither too smartly inspired, or too stupid. Somewhere in the middle. Generally this is not bad, but I think in a long run – the CD lasts for 40 minutes - it might turn out to be too predictable and sweet, in spite of the shrieks. The CD booklet is stuffed with pictures of snowy forests and mountain peaks that definitely are not from Basque Country.

The other band, **Suffering Down**, is Metal. Doomy atmospheric Death Metal, to tell you the truth. I was pleasantly surprised of tracking this very deep and inspirational growling of their vocalist - pure **Sotiris** from the early **Septic Flesh** days. Well, maybe a sentiment, but I deeply admire this kind of deep pitch, and in fact I find it appealing to combine this sort of vocal with quite beautiful Doomy Metal. The female vocalist is an important part of **Suffering Down** as well, yet she still acts only as a nice effect. The guitar melodies and the synth complete the sorrowful but grim feeling. Wouldn't mind to check out the entire MCD (30 minutes), and recommend it for you as well. Strange that the **Elfor** CD costs 11 USD, whilst this MCD is 12 USD. Contact them through:

Eol, Elorritxu Auzoa 2, Loinu (Bizkaia) 48180, Basque Country, Spain. ilun@sarenet.es

Tadas

THE END II Shudder demo '00 Moon Soon / Forgotten Wisdom



This recording is a bit delusive; it generally sounds as typical Thrashing madness, but over half an hour of this grinding experience with the ultimately roaring/screaming vocalist - who I believe do not sing a single conscious word during the entire recording session - it actually gets on thy nerves, as it is much more edge-running than your usual Thrashy music. Yeah, it is that one single element that makes it overtly sick: the voice. No doubt that it has undergone a mass of effects, but the final delivery gets the band

there, where they might have wanted to occur - next to feelings of madness and uncontrollable execution. Typical Metal listeners might have troubles with this kind of an experience, especially when the same kind of massacre continues endlessly throughout the entire set, slicing you into pieces. Hard to listen to, but primitive and simple to perform and realise. I think there was at some point another band that was performing this kind of disharmonised Thrash in France – **Imperial**, at least judging by what I have heard on their demo tape. Strangely, somehow these songs are recorded in **Imperial** Studio, whatever this might mean.

Anyway, **Shudder** gets boring after a while. At least these nine tracks that are very similar to each other are not my cup of strong black coffee, and I think to recommend them would be certainly be a mistake (thank hell I am not paid by bands who want to have their stuff reviewed here). Indeed, it would not be very difficult to say that this is good and interesting just because it goes above the norm, but I prefer and recommend for you only things that are proved 100%. **The End** is for die-hard maniacs, only.

Moon Soon Records / The End, Notre Dame Des Marins, Bat. brick, apt: 354, 13500 Martigues, France.
moonsoon.records@libertysurf.fr, theend@libertysurf.fr

Tadas

EVTHANAZIA II Captured by Insects demo '00 Fatal Ecstasy

When describing this tape in my mailorder catalogue I wrote of **Evthanasia**: angry Death Metal with a keyboard background. And it lets some light in about them, doesn't it? At least if you check out this recording, you will fully agree with me. The only pity is that such or similar music has been played so many times now that it makes the experts wonder: how can these new bands have belief and strength in what they do? Sincerely, to make miracles with the material recorded on **Captured by Insects** is beyond the abilities of any band, but **Evthanasia** keep on rearranging the old good formula.

Generally the songs bear average recording and performing

qualities, yet the keyboard lines make all shortages sound as just tiny defects. However, this is a painfully familiar case: bands from former Soviet Union sound outdated. Yes, it is possible to create well-structured Metal of the past, but then it must be excellent songs from the start till the end, no filler riffs allowed! These Belarusian comrades have plenty of those standard chunks of Thrashy Death Metal, unfortunately, and I believe that their music would be simply boring without the synth. For the time being they have what they have created: straightforward Death/Thrash with a melodic approach (the old demo recordings by **Love History** or **Phlebotomized** might be a relative comparison), but frankly, it does not convince. Only total development in all imaginable ways can save **Evthanasia!** Let's wait and see. The tape is pro-released and costs measly 5\$.
Tadas

FUCK THE FACTS III FourNine promo CD-r '01

The grindcore terrorists return again. These sick apprentices of Canadian gore have released tons of this kind of promos, I can't catch the number their number anymore, as a matter of fact.

Anyway, this nine minute recording features six tracks, one of them was featured on the soundtrack CD of our previous issue, another one being just brutal stuff mixed with jazzy intermezzo (and I catch them moving towards the new trends of the American grind bands, that is absolutely not inspiring, if you ask me), and one more song happens to be a **Beach Boys** cover... gee, who listens to them, anyway?! I have no clue what the **409** tune is all about in its original form, and I don't care know either.

Ah, if you listen carefully you might find a trace of rock 'n roll in here. Grinding rock 'n roll. For me their actual, brutally grinding songs are what counts the most, and we have only three tracks of this kind. Well, must admit that those do sound quite aggressive and maybe improved in comparison to their earlier material. I feel a more Death Metalish energy now, and that's always positive in grind music. It gets weight, losing the 'core' element.

So, it would be interesting to hear at least 20-25 minutes of **Fuck The Facts** material in a time to know if they are able to keep people interested, since these short releases are simply not enough to make a decent opinion about their music. Grind freaks – write and ask them what stuff is available for sale as I have no clue.

Fuck The Facts, c/o **Topon Das**, 451 Preston St., Ottawa, Ont., K1S 4N5, Canada. discocore@yahoo.com, www.fuckthefacts.com

Tadas

GEMATRIA II Memoirs demo '99

Too soft and predictable kind of symphonic Black Metal with synthesizer exertion and female vocals. A familiar episode in your long-term career of listening to this genre, right? Same here. This does not move me a bit, in spite of the few better riffs and some kind of folk/symphonic atmosphere (ever heard of Singaporean folk music, eh?). By 'soft' I mean the weak sound-quality in this context, where keyboard lines usually dominate, and the vocals and drums step in the picture as well, but the guitar - this most essential part of Black Metal - is left somewhere far behind.

And then their performance is very average. It creates a feeling as if the lack of techniques would have been tried to hid under the engineering. Yeah, without the synth their music would be very straightforward, easily predictable and not-so-smart at all. Just basic Black Metal clichés that lack even of that elementary feeling to call them as songs. I personally can't imagine that anyone would still be interested in this kind of third-rate demos these days, although tastes do vary among people. Sometimes people are so enthusiastic about seems-like-total-crap music that even **Gematria** should certainly be able to attract at least somebody's attention. But if third-rate symphonic Black Metal doesn't sound as the most attractive thing to you, better go round this tape.

Gematria, c/o **Dawn Archangel**, Bedok Reservoir Rd, Blk 140, #05-1509, Singapore 470140, Singapore.

Tadas

GOAT SEMEN I Reb. tape '00 Devil's Arts

I don't know about you, but I've lately bumped into too many bands that are just jerking off with their instruments in order to plagiarise what legendary bands like **Blasphemy** and **Beherit** did whole-heartedly and so much better than these copycat bands ever can. Show some respect, man, and cherish the legends' memory by leaving them be. No one needs this.

Northwind

GODZERO II Godzero CD-r '01

This band has been making a stir in the Lithuanian Metal scene for a while now, and made their appearance in the most prestigious festival of the Baltic region – **Death Comes**, yet they sort of disbanded even before that took place, so I consider this recording as their post-mortem convulsion, although the possibility of their continuing career might become reality when/if some members return to abroad. In the meanwhile the drummer has successfully fit in the vacant place behind **Nahash's** drum-slot, whilst the guitarist works with the old, intense Death Metal band, **Burying Place** from Vilnius.

We are not talking about either Black or intense Death Metal here, though – the music is much more primitive, typical and smells of old Metal recordings (in a negative sense). Seems like their live-shows were much more impressive, then. I would call this experience as Doom/Thrash, something we've been trying with friends at the very start as well, because our guitarists were unable to come up with any other kind of riffs and ideas. But I believe that the **Godzero** guys are able to play something else, something much more innovative type of Metal, so why they stick to this unimaginative way of writing music remains as the biggest puzzle to me... Trying to be melodic and attractive for the typical listener? But then the music's too rough, anyway. Longing for the old times when Thrash was the most consumable style, and Doom/Death gained a noticeable position a few years later? In any case, the hardcore overtones in the vocalist's voice are way too much to tolerate. No wonder then that they cover **Sepultura** and play some fun hardcore shit as a joke. But nothing sounds too good due to the limited equipment abilities, even though for a live recording in a home-studio this is rather a good result.

You can try this CD-r with a photocopied cover for 5\$ from my address.

Tadas

INNER HELVETE III Total Bloodshedding Devastation MC '02 HellWar

Coupling the spirit of the night and harsh musical soundscapes, **Inner Helvete** – a fairly adolescent Satanic Black Metal band from the ruins of Portugal – have created a pretty unhealthy pack of devilish hymns to this debut album of theirs. I have myself a limited tape version (166 copies) of the album put out by **HellWar**, a label run by **C. Profanus** and **Impius** of **Inner Helvete**, but **Ordealis** has set this beast free on LP format (500 copies).

The band relies heavily on the primordial Black Metal concept of Satanic Chaos, once brought forth by the likes of **Blasphemy**. They are not, however, even nearly as chaotic as the aforementioned bunch of criminals, and in my book, that's not necessarily a very negative element at all. **Inner Helvete** have come up with all kinds of mysteriously atmospheric, nearly occult passages that accompany the more chaotic aspects exceptionally well, making the whole experience twice more effective.

But it's their vocalist I still have a problem with. The damn **Avulsed** barking is not only infuriating, but it also manages to take away too much from the otherwise evocatively macabre ambience, set up by the music itself. Change that. Please. There are other, much more 'demonic' approaches to take, if that's what you're after.

I believe the word 'promising' would capture quite well the feelings I'm going through in my mind while listening to **Total Bloodshedding Devastation**.

Northwind

INTERITUS DEI III The End of Revelation tape '01 Bestial

I wonder what's been going on with Romanian Metal bands recently? Yet another release of a band that sort of did pretty good with its previous release, but which not only shows no progress on this new recording, even worse – steps back, both musically and recording quality-wise. Comparing to their previous tape, **Interitus Dei** have moved onward to a more energetic way, so 'atmospheric Metal' tag doesn't really fit them anymore. The music has turned more mid-tempo Thrashy Death or Deathly Thrash. But, obviously, melodies and the prevailing female voice means a lot in the shaping of their visage. Kind of modern Metal, if you know what I mean. **Ana** is probably more expressive than earlier, yet I doubt she suits the music all the way. Well, it can be said otherwise – does this music suit her? Not least, only her and the bassist/vocalist **Bogdan** are left from the **Lonely White Idols** line-up, so this might be why they've changed style so heavily.

Oh yeah, the sound is not the best, that is easily noticeable from the very start. I think the guitars turned out really weak and silent in the mix whilst both the vocalists mean too much in the overall picture. This is not a kind of recording quality with what you can pretend to achieve some interest from the public.

Somehow the side two sounds better, and I would accept **Ana's** refrains in the self-titled track as well as in **The Previous End**. Those songs bear a tighter structuring, too. They are more hooky, I would claim. I think that the calmer, more atmospheric songs still turn out better for this Romanian outfit, although I am not here to judge whether they are moving in the wrong or right direction. I'll be satisfied by simply stating that there must be more input and concept in their music.

interitus_dei@yahoo.com

Tadas

VINTERRIKET
Promo 2001 CD-r '01
Neodawn

IV



Those black coloured CD-r's look so fuckin' awesome and true, ha. In a way it is even better than a normal CD, judging aesthetically. I think more and more people in bands and labels will start using them, actually, because it looks cool and you can make as few copies as you want. Another era in demonstration recordings' evolution?

Might be so. Anyway, one thing well noticeable in Vinterriket's, or should I say Neodawn's, career are the numerous re-releases of this material. Some of the songs are re-released now for the fourth time, imagine that?! It's ok with me - this way the name of this project is really well spread, and if people continually demand copies of it, that means their development has got the right shape from the very first demo onwards. It's just strange to learn about all those limited editions that are constantly sold out, pushing the label to make new editions.

However, this promo (I think it will be on sale as well as it has a professional cover and is pressed on to the aforementioned black CD-r) contains the band's debut demo and 7"EP with bonus tracks - the first era of Vinterriket experience. I've already reviewed most of this material in the past and have clearly stated that the early stuff sticks better to my mind due to its innocence and tranquility; sort of coming from the Nordic school of synth ambient music, not turning too cheap or limited when it comes to expression.

Let me switch to those bonus tracks now that show this band basically taking another direction; they are rhythmic, they have a slightly distorted guitar-sound, and even female vocals in addition. And from now on Vinterriket uses only German titles and lyrics, so this is a turning point in their practise, I believe. Once again - I like the older ambient way of music more here. Finally, there is a cover of Burzum, yet I can't totally enjoy it because this song is the worst creation Varg has ever come up with. Who does a cover version of a tune that was released just a year ago, anyway? Hmm, strange.

Tadas

VOKODLOK
Unchain the Wolf demo CD '01
Beauty Of Pain

III

This one stirs up mixed feelings inside my head, but let's take it first as a debut demo of a four-piece outfit that was formed just less than a year ago. Yeah, others wouldn't rush so quickly to occupy a studio and release music, but not Vokodlak that decided that now's the time to appear. Hell knows the demo surely would have been better, had they kept working for it a bit longer. A first demo means a lot, for every band, and if you fail to catch people's interest with it, further on expect troubles in convincing them that it was just the beginning. In this messy age of bands' explosion, the consumer usually chooses that which has looked good from the very start.

The sound is not the best on this recording. It is plainly too weak! For Black Metal, even if it's of a somewhat melancholic type, you still need a rough guitar-sound to give the music the necessary Metal edge. That's what's missing on *Unchain the Wolf*. Programmed drums are very common today, but they still contribute to the trend. And their troubles just start when they stick separate chunks of music into one song. Promising hints are found here and there, but the good impression lasts only to the beginning of the next riff.

Well, I am surely melting when bumping into something that is close to what was once created by Gehenna (think about *The First Spell* here). These Romanian fellas have captured that feeling from time to time, and my hat goes off for that. Yet this shouldn't turn into re-hashing of some old good melodies. If this style is kept on the next recording, I am looking for more of their own identity there.

Oh yeah, this CD-r edition with pro-printed covers and a smart CD sticker has 17 minutes of music, and it is limited to 66 copies. Ask about the availability from their label. The demo is also released by *Axa Valaba* on tape as a split with German *Bloody Harvest*, which is examined and analysed next.

Vokodlok, c/o Pantiru Andrei, Str. Aleea Saturn nr. 9, bl. III, Sc. A, Ap. 2, Arad 2900, Romania. vokodloks@usa.net

Tadas

VOKODLOK / BLOODY HARVEST
Unchain the Wolf... from the Bibel split tape '01
Axa Valaba / Eclipse Of Life Promulgation

III/II

Since the Vokodlok material is already reviewed by me and read by you above, let's concentrate on the other act here - German *Bloody Harvest*.

Umm, not my favourite sort of expression of black music. This sounds so "underground". You listen to it, and cannot really find any distinctive note down there. It's both about the production and the music, of course. It takes more listenings than necessary to get into it, and these days it is obviously a minus for a band due to the overwhelming number of music released. No time to get into all those details. And this band obviously appreciates details... for example, I did catch a wicked atmosphere in *See You in the Face of Satan* - their longest composition - that has this memorable, bell-like, effect all over as well as samples of German narration (a Third Reich allusion?). It adds that extra punch to the otherwise very usual sonic-scapes, though.

Well, a certain industrial feel is present as well, but it is done like many an other Black Metal band has done it before - trying to involve the machine-like sound into their otherwise pretty weak expression. Another thing that I found in a few compositions was sort of dark industrial/ambient, but, honestly, I don't think it was such a good idea. Rather a boring attempt to be evil

and dark. I bet *Bloody Harvest* would do better if they'll just stick to Metal and try to make it more convincing next time. Well, there is also *Vokodlok* on the tape, so you are free to check out this split, if interested. 8DM or 5 USD from *EOLP*. It is also the band's contact address.
www.bloody-harvest.purespace.de

Tadas



WITCHCRAFT
On the Path of Fogs demo '01
Stygian Shadows

IV

Though being just the band's debut demo, I had quite big expectations of their grim and unholy Hungarian Black Metal. Why? I don't know why. Sometimes there are things that you can't explain. No doubt there are plenty of cases where huge expectations are deceptive, and then it is just the plain disappointment that remains after checking out some awful album, or just meeting some stupid person you thought were cool, or having a much talked about but shitty drink. Whatever.

But lucky me, I'm introduced to some inspiring Black Metal this time. *Hellodoro!* Opener *On the Land of the Shadows* kicks in a dose of nordic aggression - certainly their best track! The trio is pretty close to that raw, necro sound, just using more harmonious twin guitar soundscapes in addition. Otherwise the sonic data is very cold and primitive. Positively, *On the Path of Fogs* is one of those cases where you instantly understand that the music is flowing from the depths of the performers instead of being inspired by any rockstarish aims. More than that, not many bands manage to make their demos sound *underground* and still keep the Black Metal majesty in there. A trace of *Marduk* is easily noticeable, but I wish they'd stay away from getting cleaner with the next recordings.

This demo is good by its raw spirit, whilst the bleeding guitar intensity acts as a great flavor to it. A bit short experience, actually - only 13 minutes - but the professionally printed and duplicated tape with b/w design works as a great appetizer for more Hungarian Black Metal to come. Curious to know what they are up to today as these recordings were done already in 1999. If you'll ask them about it soon, don't forget to inform me as well! This tape

is available at ITR for 5 USD.

Witchcraft, c/o Angmar, Bem J. u. 14., H-2119 Pecel, Hungary. witchcraft@freemail.hu, www.extra.hu/witchcraft

Tadas

Ancient Nation Productions, Andrey Gordenko, Lenin str. 1A/27, Building 1, 49000 Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

Backwoods Productions, c/o Laszlo Kaposvari, Corvin u. 17. 2/2, 3530 Miskolc, Hungary

Beauty Of Pain Productions, c/o Alex Brindusesc, Str. Garoafelor nr. 17, 1800 Lugoj, Romania, beautyof@mail.dnntm.ro

Bestial Records, Str. Caras nr. 8, 1900 Timisoara, Romania, tel. (+40) 56163024, bestialr@banat.ro, www.bestialrecords.net

Beverina Productions, Juris Silfers, Lielvardes 139-74, Riga, LV-1082, Latvia, tel. (+371) 9160204, beverina@37.com

Blutbre Records, c/o D. Michalak, Taeglichbeckstr. 42, 45731 Waltrop, Germany

Carnal Records, c/o Pettersson, Fridhemsplan 2D, S-79230 Mora, Sweden, carnalrecords@hotmail.com, http://carnalrecords.cjb.net

Eldritch Music, c/o Dzianis Puhach, PO.Box 74, 220124 Minsk, Belarus, dzianis@eldritch-music.com, www.eldritch-music.com

Eclipse of Live Promulgation, c/o M. Aamon Kreher, Hellingtonienstrasse 35, 71543 Wuertenrot, Germany, m.kreher@web.de

Forgotten Wisdom Productions, Thomas Bernollin, 34 rue Saint-Désiré, 39000 Lons-le-Saunier, France, thomas.bernollin@wanadoo.fr

Funeral Pyre / Fatal Ecstasy Productions, c/o Oleg Barozhinsky, PO. Box 17, 220070 Minsk, Belarus, evileye@tut.by

Garazel Productions, c/o Tomasz Jaremko, ul. Komandosow 7/91, 30-334 Krakow, Poland

In Vain Muzik, Fernando Reis, Rua Firmino Rebelo, No 15, R/Ch Dto, 2780 Porto Salvo, Portugal, in_vain_music@hotmail.com

Ketzer Productions, c/o Alex Hehnle, Maunzengasse 1, 89584 Ehingen / Rississen, Germany, fax (+49) 403603546367, ketzerdistro@hotmail.com

Neodawn Productions, Christoph Ziegler, Pfarrer-Striebel-Weg 11, 88471 Laupheim/Untersulmetingen, Germany, tel. (+49) 1701546695, neodawnproductions@ngi.de, www.goat-neodawnproductions

Odium Records, P. Knight, Llwynderw, Conwy Elfed, Carmarthenshire, SA33 6TL, United Kingdom

Oriana Productions, Eugeny Gapon, PO. Box 8622, 61144 Kharkiv, Ukraine

Rest In Peace Production, Vladimir A. Karolenko, PO. Box 72, 214004 Smolensk-04, Russia

Stygian Shadows Productions, c/o Leslie Fodor, Bartok Bela u. 3., H-2049 Diosd, Hungary, tel./fax (+36) 23360311, stygian@matavnet.hu, www.stygianshadows.com

Tumba Records, Rua 24 de Maio 62, 3 andar loja 465, Sao Paulo - SP, CEP 01041-000, Brazil, tel./fax (+11) 33372784, tumba-records@uol.com.br

Void Sector Recordings, PO. Box 1384, Salem, NH 03079, USA, www.voidsector.com



Lords of the Master's Storm

What we have here is something remarkably special. Something I've dreamed about doing a long, long time - that is to sit down and talk endlessly about Satan and Black Metal with two of the most sinister and insightful Satanic characters our scene has ever carried; *Satan Gestapo* and *Belial of Stregoica*. So you probably better make yourself comfortable as once we got it going, there just was no end to it. But what the hell? It's not everyday you meet the Lords of the Master's Storm!

Due to reasons almost untold, *Satan Gestapo* is now called *Number 666* and *Belial* is *The Punisher*.

Northwind

Darkened Greetings, comrades Belial and Satan Gestapo!
N666: "Salutem Northwind. Lord of the Frozen Lands! It's a dark pleasure to hear from you again."

T.P.: "Hell-o Northwind! It's been quite a long time since we wrote to each other! It seems there are some beings - no matter how physically far apart they might be from each other- that can never give up the Darkness!!!"
It might very well be that not all too many readers are even aware of your existence since you've been out of the spotlight for quite some years now. Stregoica is a name from the past, and it seems to live only in the hearts of those who were a bit earlier in the 'scene', those who never got over your simply spectacular Satanic work. Therefore, a proper introduction of the Stregoica movement could be in order with all its members and activities.
N666: "Indeed. It is obvious that the years during which Stregoica was active are far now, and there has been a great evolution on behalf of every member of the 'brotherhood', since these cursed times.

For those who do not know it, Stregoica was an underground publication of Black and Death Metal, directed towards the Satanic propaganda, which existed between 1989 and 1995. Six years of loyal services to our guide Satan with five numbers of a magazine nowadays 'cult' due to the malefic spirit. Originally, Lord Astaroth and myself were the founders of the misdeed but, incapable of continuing because of a journey in jail, Lord Astaroth left his place to Belial and, a little later, to Goathhead, for an even more disastrous participation. The last one arrived in date, Curriculum Mortis, brought us his help concerning the musical aspect, but only this aspect.

As for now, we have no more news of Lord Astaroth. But if he left us the second time, it was because he was completely obsessed by women, and he thought that being a member of Stregoica could prevent him from devoting himself to sexual luxury, which was, of course, absolutely wrong. To conclude, he's a driver of heavy weights who has credibly no other ambition than drinking liters of beer and fornicating with everybody. No matter if the female is ugly or not. Curriculum Mortis is still active in the Metal scene as due to Internet he is in touch with certain groups and

labels. I know also that he drafts some articles for certain magazines, such as Slayer mag for example.

As for Belial and myself, we are going on with a project about which we shall speak later in this interview. Moreover, with us there is a third partner called Eric (ex-Abraxas), a serious lad whom we completely trust."

T.P.: "Stregoica zine seems to be, at least to me, very far in the past, but at the same time also very present, because it has taken a big part of my life and I loved doing it with passion and anger!!!"

Stregoica was the very first fanzine to introduce Satanic articles of Demonology, History and dogmatic ideas near Black, Thrash & Death Metal bands. And not only as the first in France but first in the whole world! And I fuckin' mean it!!! At the time when Black bands were non-existent and when Death bands were straight-edge assholes... Stregoica were dark evil Satanists."

Some of the members, at least Lord Astaroth & Curriculum Mortis, were dismissed in the course of time. Was it a matter of them failing the concept?

N666: "The case of Lord Astaroth is the typical case of the trendy guy who, from day to day, decides to abandon all his 'friends' more and more. He thought that our meetings could be a brake for his libido, and he was a real hypocrite because he never gave us any explanation and neither did we see him again after his departure. Nowadays, we don't give a shit about what he does. I've heard he'd be back in jail because he had continued to desecrate and profane cemeteries, but it's only a rumour.

As for Curriculum Mortis, the problem is different, even though the main cause was a lack of interest in the real concept conveyed by Stregoica, as you mentioned. One can say that Curriculum Mortis is really a big fan of Metal, but he couldn't be convenient for Stregoica because he only felt a musical interest without any sat doctrine or philosophy. It was so logical that he'd left the circle, even though we're still in contact with him."

T.P.: "Lord Astaroth - Ricardo - is a weak guy and a hypocrite. He has no culture, no education, and that's why he loved so much Hitler, nazism, had hatred against niggers. He has no personality, just the need to give

himself something consistent through other beings. In fact, he is a fun guy who's got only stupid fun games.

Curriculum Mortis is a true Metal maniac, and he also likes nazism and fascism, but he never understood anything about Satanism. He is more into white European race and that kind of silly crap. I still think he is correct though, and we have a good friendship. He had to quit Stregoica because our issue #5 was the outcome of all our work and true experience in Satanism - it could only contain words of strong beings who know what they are talking about.

Of course both of them failed the concept, but I think they never had any real concept themselves. They need to refer to an all-done concept, like nazism or paganism, to feel themselves. We, Satan Gestapo & I, are more creative persons building ourselves with our very own concept. Yet, in the meanwhile, we are so different, but such good friends..."

Speaking of the concept and your publication, I believe it was exactly this divine and powerful Satanic concept that set Stregoica magazine so far apart from the others in the Black Metal scene back then, in my eyes. Many wrote and write about Satanism, but reading your magazine made me SEE and FEEL the darkness - in the lines, true, but even more so in between the lines. There was just no way to escape the haunting and oppressive atmosphere, which was also supported by the gruesome layout with all those bestial pictures and writings everywhere. A magazine like that cannot be created by just anyone, it demands years and years in the Darkside.

N666: "You perfectly summed up the situation because at that time we were completely obsessed by darkness, and we felt the effects of obscurity while composing Stregoica, for our most black ideas were so present in the articles which we elaborated as well as in the questions of the interviews and the artwork. The whole issues inhaled blackness, and only persons like you, who understand and approve our work, could seize all the Stregoica's malefic approach.

Moreover, with the passing of time, I say myself that Stregioica was an 'anti-trendy' fanzine because the trendy people were incapable of understanding the tortuous nuances of our spirit. Only the music counted for them, and therefore it was normal that they couldn't prove a big interest in Stregioica, which was, of course, a good thing.

I am very proud of the work I carried out with Stregioica and I say myself that if it knew so much success, in spite of the fact that it was printed in very few copies, it is because it surely deserved it. Especially because we worked hard with little means, at that time."

T.P.: "Thanks for these compliments and your admiration for our work. We deserve it. Nowadays, I sometimes take a Stregioica issue and read it, sometimes I read all of them - from #1 to 5 - and of course I worship them. I'm still very proud of it because, sincerely, I did it with such emotions. I always had the care and the anxiety to do a perfect Evil work with faith, anger and specially with a full Satanic strength, so I feel for our fanzine greater than ever.

In France we are a Satanic legend, every true Satanic Black & Death maniac here knows Stregioica and now they also know Ordealis Records, but not very well yet. They'll know more about it very soon... blood will flow everywhere."

I know you've followed the development of Black Metal since the early days, so it'd be rather interesting to hear how you view the whole rise and fall of Black Metal! N666: "I cannot say that I have really established a philosophy on the development and the decay of Black Metal. Obviously, at the beginning of the Eighties, I was very happy to see the birth of bands such as Venom, Poison, Hellhammer or the other Slayer because it allowed me to have a counterpart in my dark aura, which continued to develop itself since then. Unfortunately, with the deaths of Dead & Euronymous, the decay of Black Metal became effective and I understood that the main part of the Black Metal bands were only interested in money, sex and drugs. So, what is the difference with rappers or persons listening to dance music? In my opinion, they're 'normal' people because they act, think and have the same needs as 'normal' people.

Even if I've never denied the real concept of Black Metal, I did become suspicious towards any sort of groups claiming to be 'Satanic' in the beginning of the Nineties, and I shall say that I developed a feeling of indifference since that time. Nowadays, I listen to the music I enjoy, and I contact only the bands or the individuals who seem to be interesting."

Stregioica was always on behalf of pure Satanic Black Metal, does this mean your stance is a negative one when it comes to all the other styles and categories also known as Black Metal?

N666: "In my opinion, the difference is only musical. Concerning the Thought, they haven't any. Just compare bands like Dark Funeral and The 3rd And The Mortal, for example, to notice that they are mentally very similar. Both only play for fun and money. Nowadays, only a few bands need to be known, such as Triumphator or Funeral Mist, but I suppose that it's the same thing every time. That is to say, this co-existence of rare 'true' bands and a profusion of 'trendy' bands. My vision about the phenomenon seems negative, but it is just a report of a situation for which I do not feel any interest in anymore."

T.P.: "My answer is definitely YES!!! You just need to read the 'edito' of Stregioica #5, June 1995, again as we simply eradicate Fascist Black Metal, Pagan Black Metal, Gothic Black Metal, and National-Socialist Black Metal (NS Black Metal = Non-Satanic Black metal, very successful nowadays). We stand high and strong for Satanic Black Metal & Unholy Black Metal like old Bathory or the old Mayhem with Dead and Euronymous, Satanic Black/Death like Blasphemy (R.I.P.), Grotisque (R.I.P.) or old Sarcophago and Satanic Death Metal like Decide, Necrophagia, old Possessed (R.I.P.) or old Morbid Angel - which stands higher in our hearts than some Black Metal bands and higher than any of these parasites who try to travesty our cult of Black & Death metal. But nowadays we don't care anymore because all these assholes have their own branches, and the true Black Metal is still safe in its purest form, stronger than ever, and the true ones know each other and we know who the false ones are. Each branch has got its own people and scene with their own trends, but only the true ones say 'HAIL SATAN!!!' and glorify EVIL!!!"

Could you ever have imagined even in your most horrid dreams back when you started that Black Metal would have to undergo all this commercial rape it has gone now?

N666: "My most horrible nightmares never concerned Black Metal. Obviously, at the time nobody could have imagined that Black Metal would become so commercial, but, in fact, it is inseparable with the evolution of the current society. Today, everything turns around the money, the sex and the power, and Black Metal doesn't escape this capitalistic logic, in spite of its extreme side. But, we all know that Evil, the Hidden Face, the Darkness, the Morbid, are very seductive and that's why it's normal that the capitalistic logic seizes this so fruitful market as the Satanic Art. That Black Metal became a real business in spite of its dark side is disappointing, even sad, but if one would have to evoke a positive point, he could say that, with the commercial logic, Black Metal did not lock itself into a vicious circle which surely would have provoked its disappearance one day, because there had not been any musical renewal. Finally, maybe Black Metal needs all those satellite bands so that the hard pit symbolising the essence of Black Metal continues to exist? It's up to us to know if we want to be a part of this hard pit or not. As for the satellites or the shitty flies that invade our world, you're free to fight them or not!!!"

T.P.: "It wasn't visible until the year 1991 (after the birth of the bastard) because Death Metal became a commercial style in the years 1988 & 1989, and 2 years later it was the turn of Black Metal! And of course The True Mayhem phenomenon contributed to that! Bathory played Evil and the truest Black Metal from 1983 till 1988, and Black Metal didn't become a trend! So what happened?!"

Well, Norway is the answer. After Dead's death, Darkthrone turned from Death Metal to Black Metal, and here the trend started. Amputation - fuckin' killer Death Metal demos! GODZ!!! - became Immortal. A kid from the anti-Satanic Death Metal band Old Funeral formed the very known Burzum, and quickly jumped from Satanism to nazism after that. Embryonic - very simple Death Metal - became Thou Shalt Suffer, which then again became the famous Emperor in 1992. Curiously all these suspicious changes happened in the same year, 1991. When Death Metal was exploding and getting saturated everywhere in the world, bands had to find something new for the public, so Dead's suicide and his Black Metal ideology and fanaticism, his 'look' with the corpse paint, were all found to give something 'new', and it did work in front of a blinded public, but not with Stregioica's vigilant editors!!!

But all this trend wasn't and isn't a bad thing, because, first of all, Darkthrone has released 5 albums of excellent Unholy Black Metal, influenced by Bathory and Celtic Frost but with their very own touch and sound - a true resurrection of Satanic Metal in its blackest form. Immortal's 3 first albums are amazing of brutality and creativity, but Amputation had already the dark Immortal sound. Burzum's 2 first albums are great, it's a good mixture of Venom, Hellhammer and some Bathory, but with his very own sound and vocals. As for Emperor, only their demo, MLP and the first album are great. Most of them jumped on commercial bullshit crap!!! It was logic!!! Same goes for Beherit and Impaled Nazarene, they changed. Only Blasphemy (R.I.P.) stayed Evil!!!

Emperor and Burzum brought the nazi trend into Black Metal in 1993 and nowadays they are nothing except for the new trendy kids amongst who they have a big fame.

All this was foreseeable in the beginning of the Nineteen to us. But it has also an advantage because the Satanic Black Metal scene is bigger now and, consequently, the trend is bigger too. We have true bestial Satanic bands such as Funeral Mist (SWE), Messe Noir (USA) and Belphegor (AUT) - to mention only a few - that keep the Satanic Black Metal safe in its purest musical and ideological form." It's obvious that Stregioica valued Satanism over Black Metal any day of the week. My respect and appreciation! Black Metal is nothing more than a splendid channel and a possibility for Satanists to transform the inner life into art, but, unfortunately, this is not the way Black Metallars of today see it. Most of them see themselves first and foremost as musicians or fans, instead of committing themselves to the very core and essence of it all; Satanism! How do you feel about this deception?

N666: "As I already said to you, it is obvious that the main part of the Black Metallars only proves interest in the musical aspect of Black Metal, but, fortunately, there is also a restricted circle of Black maniacs like you and me who know the real essence of the concept Black Metal. To me, only the opinions of the latter count. It is useless to say that the others are in the error or that they deceived us with their hypocrisy because this does not forbid us from progressing and, furthermore, it would be too big an honour to grant them some importance. If they want to live

as hypocrites, it's very easy to play along the same path order to encircle them better, to exploit them, even to manipulate them if necessary."

T.P.: "Well... as I said, some of today's Black Metallars though only a very few - truly stand for Satanism, other just try to get a personality through a way of dressing, drinking beer and listening to Black Metal. But so what? Who cares? They are nothing, just slaves who have to us because we are the True. We are the Masters!!! So, there's no deception, only an invincible and irreversible feeling of superiority!!!"

Well, are there any new Black Metal bands that you particularly enjoy?

N666: "Because of the current profusion of Black Metal bands, there are many of them I appreciate. Particularly those of the Swedish and Australian scenes - that is to the bands that are playing brutal Black or Black/Death in Sweden there are Triumphator, Diabolicum, Octino, Funeral Mist, Infernal, Bloodshed, Watain etc. And in Australia, I could name Nazkul, Lord Kaos and Destroyer 666. However, the scenes in all countries are interesting because one can find some exceptional bands there, like Krisiun, Abhorrence, Rebaellion, Funeratus, Disforter in Brazil; Altar Of Perversion, Mater Tenebra in Italy; Witchtrap in Peru; Witchmaster, Behemoth in Poland; Horna, Musta Surma, Funeris Nocturnum in Finland; Tsjuder in Norway; Judas Iscariot, Thornspawn, Nunslaughter in the USA. The Canadian scene is also prosperous with Anhkrehg, Malvery, Ont6s On, Conqueror and Kralizek. But here you have just an outline of my musical tastes."

T.P.: "We enjoy old and new bands. Some of the old ones are still alive in the scene, like the total godz Nunslaughter (USA), Martire (AUS), Abigail (JAP) and Nifelheim (SWE) to name only a few. A big HAIL to all of them!!! As for the new ones, I like The Abyss (SWE, R.I.P.), In Battle (SWE), War (SWE), Funeral Mist (SWE), Messe Noir (USA), Belphegor (AUT), Kratormas (Philippine), the most Brutal band ever!!!, Bel'ef (FRA), Antaeus (FRA), Anhkrehg (CAN), Inner Helvete (POR), Kerberos (HOL), Altar Of Perversion (ITA), Azaghal (FIN), Horna (FIN), Unlord (GER), Katharsis (GER), Conqueror (CAN), Tsjuder (NOR), Ont6s On (CAN), Malvery (CAN), Arallu (ISR), Nhaavah (CZE), Der Gerwelt (RUS), With Hate I Burn (FIN), Lucifuge (UKR), Bestial Mockery (SWE) and much more... Also Satanic Death Metal bands like Imperial Sodomy (FRA), Krisiun (BRA), Rebaellion (BRA), mega fuckin' brutal & fast!!!, Nile (USA, Black Seeds Vengeance), Disforter (BRA), Christ Denied (SPA), Mortem (PER), Deranged (SWE), Immersed In Blood (SWE), Encabulos (AUS), Mortician (USA) and others. And what about your old contacts in the scene, are they still alive? Most of the bands from the early Nineties have either quit or changed style. How do you feel about that? N666: "Concerning my former contacts, some do write me any longer even though they still are in the scene. In fact, as I was mainly in contact with 'true' Black Metallars, set apart some tapetraders, some didn't answer me anymore because they died - like Dead from Mayhem for example - or because they became too much busy like Demonos Sova from Barathrum or Vorskath from Zemia or even the leader of Necromantia, Magus Vam Daoloth - or because they changed the musical style - the singer of Necroschizma who declared to play in the Judas Priest vein. Presently, my former contacts have become rare. The most faithful is certainly the Mexican Albertus Jimenez from The Voice Of The Dark. Anyway, totally satisfied with only having a few correspondents because I do not want to spend all days writing or typing letters."

Generally, the trendies who play Black Metal will only stay two or three years in the scene. Then they change their musical taste, often after having found a partner after having reached their intellectual maturity - which obviously not very developed. If you pay well attention, there is a sort of natural selection, which is perfect, in my opinion. The bands can change style as often as they want. I don't give a shit about it! To me only those that remain faithful to darkness count. They are the only ones who deserve my attention."

T.P.: "As for our old contacts, I have Azter from Denial Of God & Horror Records (DEN) and I have you, Northwind from I Came From Darkness magazine. No one else."

For the bands who quit or changed style, I see nothing wrong with that. They are free to do what they want, but a good thing they're gone, so only the true stay!!! When Stregioica started and acted, there was no one doing Black Metal in any form in France. Being the indisputable

forerunners in your scene, what do you think of the development of Black Metal movement in your country? At least Gorgon, Mutilation, Vlad Tepes, Seth & Blessed In Sin have caught some international attention.

N666: "The problem in France is that there are only funny people who only think to amuse themselves. That's why there have been no Black Metal bands in my country. The Black metal bands from France specially began to appear with the foundation of The Black Legions - Mutilation, Belktré, Vlad Tepes etc. - and with Osculum Infame. It's useless to speak about Gorgon because it's a very bad band with fascistic tendencies, or about Seth whose commercial spirit is henceforth based.

Today, I think that the French scene has become more rich and specially qualitative. Very good brutal bands such as Malicious Secrets, Antaeus, Arkhon Infaustus, Satanic Blood, Necromantic or Beléf really are excellent and seem to be serious for the main part, even though it's still too early to say because these people are young. So, concerning this point, I am completely satisfied with the evolution of Black Metal in France.

On the other hand, there is a negative point; the ascent in power of neo-nazi ideas in Black Metal, which has absolutely nothing to do with Black Metal. Black Metal symbolises Evil, Satanism or Occultism - not nazism. That's why I consider NS Black Metal as not 'true' Black metal. Musically I can like some NS Black bands, but that's all, particularly because often the nazi concept developed by those bands is very poor and only a problem of racism, no more. Quite superficial, don't you think? A NS Black Metal band that knows what it's dealing with can be interesting. For instance, I'm still in contact with a member of God Forsaken - the band is reformed now - who is fond of nazi concepts, and I can tell you that it's still interesting to speak with an individual who knows the subject he likes. It's the same thing as with 'real' Black Metal bands. By the way, don't forget that Satanism rhymes with elitism, and there's no social ideas here - not such as the ones we can find in NS Black Metal!!! So, as you can see, I'm intransigent with all the superficial bands, whatever they play..."

T.P.: "Well, it's only for about 2 or 3 years that we've seen Black Metal bands playing killer brutal Black Metal here. The ones you mentioned, like Mutilation, are OK musically, but as for the ideology, I'm not into his kind of trip. He has my respect though as he has done some good work these 2 last years - the 7"EP plus the LP Fast raw Black Metal indeed! Vlad Tepes wasn't bad, but it's dead. I never liked Gorgon's music because it sounds so weak to me, but he's been in the Black Metal scene since 1991 & 1992 and still is, so he has my respect. I don't like the ideology of the leader though who quickly jumped on the trendy nationalist or nazi wagon in 1993 & 1994. Seth and Blessed In Sin are both bullshit trends!!! Their music is total SHIT!!!

We have nowadays some killer brutal French Black Metal bands, such as Antaeus (whose music and ideology rules!!!), Beléf (AAARRGH!!! You must hear it!!!), Necromantic (killer brutal Black Metal with very well done old-school parts!!!), Satanic Blood (ultra fast), Celestia (a true brother in darkness), Arkhon Infaustus (brutal Black/Death), Malicious Secrets (very professional), Wisdom By Carnage (very good) and S.V.E.S.T. to mention the most of the good ones. We also have a good fanzine called Eternal Fire in Marseille, with only brutal underground stuff inside, and true Satanic labels such as Drakkar and End All Life Productions. And, of course, our new label Ordealis Records will kill everything still alive on this silly planet!!!

So the development has been good as in the past I always were full of shame about the French Metal scene. Well, we had one killer brutal Death Metal band, the Godz Mutilated, the only band I was proud of here. But the French scene... it was so bad. Nowadays, I'm proud of the bands mentioned before. French Black Metal took some maturity and some power, so I feel great about that, and we are going to release some Brutal French Black Metal, so get ready to DIE or KILL!!!"

Do you still have a vision of how the Black Metal world should be, and what is the general relevance of Black Metal to you today?

N666: "Now I do not have any vision of the Black Metal world such as how it should be, because I've understood it is completely recovering from the utopia, and I've become too mature and indifferent to still have such an unreal thought. At the moment, I'm only waiting for death, unless an absolute decline falls on the world before I die. I would have at least a beautiful satisfaction!

Nevertheless, in spite of my fatalism, I did not change philosophy regarding to Black Metal. It is and will always be a Satanic Art per excellence, in my opinion. And I don't care if the others have a different vision concerning this matter."

T.P.: "My vision is exactly the same I had before! The only difference is that we don't pay attention anymore to the trends, cowards, parasites, detractors, wimps, etc... for us they don't exist! Only the true scene lives in our hearts! THE TRUE BLACK METAL SCENE IS TOTAL EVIL, TOTAL SATAN, TOTAL WAR!!!"

Besides the fabulous magazine, Stregoica also worked as a band, releasing a few rather obscure sounding, very limited, promotapes. What was that all about?

N666: "This time, it is better to let The Punisher speak about the subject because I wasn't a member of the band, even if I wrote some lyrics. I just want to mention that the lyrics dealt with death, hatred, Satanism and blood."

T.P.: "Stregoica's work as a band started in July 1992, and died the 1st of January 1994. It could have become a serious project because Eric - the drummer - is also in Ordealis Records now, under the name No Tolerance. He was motivated and serious just like me, but Curriculum Mortis - the guitarist - failed the day we had to record a track in studio for a split 7"EP with Ancestral Goetia. So, luckily, it didn't happened. 'Luckily' because Ancestral Goetia was a trend of Ricardo a.k.a. Lord Astaroth."

Curiously Curriculum Mortis was the one who had the idea to record a rehearsal with me on vocals and him on guitar & keyboards + drum machine, and yet he was the one who failed when the band had to get really serious, so for him it was just fun. That's another reason why the band had to split and why he had to quit in Stregoica zine. But during those 2 years we did record some evil stuff... I'm not proud of it but not disappointed either. Anyway, it's definitely dead now!!!"

Some of you, at least Belial, committed 'Satanic crimes' and served some time as well. What do you think about such activity today? Do you think a Satanist needs to exercise violence and give an outlet to the more destructive energies floating inside?

N666: "If a person wishes to commit 'Satanic crimes', I won't forbid him, but I don't know why I should do it. I approve all kinds of Satanic actions though. Furthermore, we know very well, you and me, that Evil reigns all over the world. Just look at all that happens with wars, human misery, any sorts of crimes, rapes, tortures, etc. Everybody performs evil acts in the name of what they want, why couldn't Satanists exercise their violence? But, instead of doing it for mealy social or materialistic purposes, they could do it for their own pleasure, which is absolutely evil! If, moreover, it allows them to develop their satanic or occult aura, it is even better. The sole and main problem is to remain free because, after all, a Satanist is certainly more useful free than imprisoned. From magic's point of view, it is unmistakable that the increase of negative energies will be very good in the performance of Black Magic, at the condition that the Mental Control stays powerful, so that it could prevent the Satanist from psychosis or madness."

T.P.: "My answer is definitely YES!!! Of course it's up to everyone to know how much he wants to be involved in Satanism... Some people committed crimes in the name of God - specially shitty Muslims and Christians from Ireland - or in the name of political ideology. Is there a difference?"

Action is for sure the highest form and degree of human expression, it confirms the degree of integrity of the person in what she pretends to belong to, but actions are more often efficient when they are cleverly done. For example, a ritual has its own rules & laws... you have to do it cleverly with lot of method. Even if you build your own ritual, it has to be coherent, clever and rigid to be EFFECTIVE!!!

Some actions are prepared with lot of method and take a long time to be realised and percussive, but when it comes, it kills and destroys! And stays in memory for a long time. Some actions are quickly done, they hurt, but are forgotten very fast. So what can I say is: WHATEVER YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO FOLLOW OR TO DO, DO IT TRULY OR BURN WITH THE WEAK!!!"

I think about such activity today just the same I thought before. I hate the fact I can't do some more, but I'm building myself to be more powerful, and when the time will come, everyone will know that I'm THE PUNISHER - the colder, the hotter and the truest ever!!!"

You are still Satanists, after all these years. It would be very interesting to hear how each of you view your own personal journey on the black path today! I mean, in the course of time, you must have taken serious steps of development, so how would you go about describing how your Satanism has changed over the years?

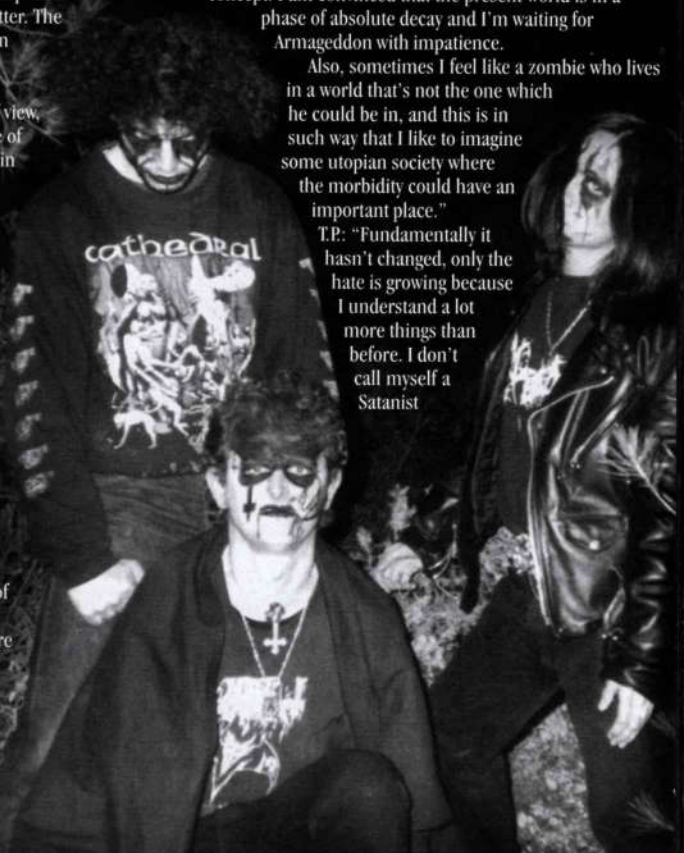
N666: "As to me, I still consider myself a Satanist even though it has been an important evolution in me. Indeed, all the Stregoica members have evolved because Goathead became somebody very nihilistic, and The Punisher does not consider himself as a Satanist anymore even if he still is very evil. As for the others, because they weren't Satanists in the first place, it is useless to mention them, set apart the fact that Lord Astaroth, who was a convinced anti-Christian, showed to be, in fact, a trend."

First of all, almost twenty years ago, it is true that I also was an anti-Christian interested in occult arts with the practice of invocations and evocations and important reading on the subject. In the course of the years, maturity let me abandon the anti-Christian side because I acquired a perfect vision on the subject and I didn't want to stagnate. Hence, I decided to concentrate myself on the mental development with any sorts of exercises of concentration and vision. The whole accompanied with a still more elaborated Satanic philosophy, even though it had less and less to do with the conventional Satanism - the one professed in the Bible, which is very limited and far from reflecting the complete reality. Finally, and it is the evolution of these last five years, I tried to develop and to increase my feeling of indifference towards everything, a naturally-made evolution, and I think I've reached quite well my goal even though I am still far from the purpose which I would like to reach. The main problem with indifference is that it is not possible any more to practise any kind of magic because this one feeds of love and hatred, two original feelings that determine the existence of the human being. But, because the indifference doesn't represent my whole philosophy, that one has also become very nihilistic with a very strong nietzscheian and evocative concept. I am convinced that the present world is in a

phase of absolute decay and I'm waiting for Armageddon with impatience.

Also, sometimes I feel like a zombie who lives in a world that's not the one which he could be in, and this is in such way that I like to imagine some utopian society where the morbidity could have an important place."

T.P.: "Fundamentally it hasn't changed, only the hate is growing because I understand a lot more things than before. I don't call myself a Satanist



anymore because I don't need to have a reference to feel myself, I don't need to qualify myself. I know I hate a lot of things and that many people deserve torture, pain and death, mostly all of us I should say. I hate all these lies and hypocrites, all this weakness. I STAND HIGH AND STRONG FOR THE REIGN OF ETERNAL TRUTH!!!! This one will come at the right time and it's gonna be so BRUTAL!!! So PUNITIVE!!! Everyone shall pay for not having been true in his life, and for not searching intensely the truth. AN EYE FOR AN EYE, A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH, IS THE HIGHEST PERFORMANCE OF PERFECT JUSTICE!!! All the contrary happens today, and in a way it's good, because WHEN THE TRUTH WILL RISE AND TAKE BACK HIS THRONE, NO ONE WILL STAND ANYMORE BESIDE THE TRUE ONES!!!!" Looking at the everyday world, what would you say is the strength of Satanism? What is the most important thing you gain from being a Satanist today?

N666: "I think that what makes the force of Satanism is the human being, because it is the only one who is capable of understanding the notions of Good and Evil with a particular attraction for the Evil. Who provokes wars? It is Man. Who pollutes and destroys the planet? It is Man. Who rapes, robs, kills? It is Man. Who uses free violence? Always Man. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was very optimistic by considering Man aiming at Goodness, did not really understand anything about the real essence of Man... So, the force of Satanism is that morbid attraction of the human being towards Evil and all this credulity engendered by faith and religious morals, which took root in the deepest subconscious minds in the course of centuries.

As for me, if there is something that Satanism brought me, it surely was the development of a strong and inflexible personality, as well as a very pushed knowledge." T.P.: "The world is working for Satan, but they think, God-lovers and atheist peace-lovers, that it's working for peace and goodness just like them, haha... How disappointed they're going to be. Satan's truth will come back straight in their silly faces!!! Being a Satanist today is to be conscious that all what humanity deserve is CHAOS!!! No fuckin' peace!!! PEACE BUILT ON LIES PREPARES NEW WARS!!! Weak people always put their own responsibility on the shoulders of others, always accusing each other instead of doing the true war inside, in the self. War should be first against ourselves to get stronger and stronger, people are too much silly and weak to understand that, so, soon they'll know what is their truth and they'll die from it. That's all they deserve!

Emperor Cesar said: 'If you want peace, prepare war!' That's why we are preparing peace, we'll get war, and that's great! Just look at Israel in their fight against the arabs, Israel prepares peace so they have war! If they want peace, they should kill all these fuckin' stupid under-animal arabs!!!

The strength of Satanism is hidden nowadays, covered by tons of lies, but it's here ready to explode, and it WILL!! That's why a Satanist has to be discreet, wise and wait for the right time TO STRIKE!!!

But that's only my opinion, I don't want to give any dogma as how a Satanist should be, like I used to do in Stregioica, because all I need is always more control of myself, not of the others. They have to built their own personality themselves, not through my thoughts or my severe glance. IF YOU DOMINATE YOURSELF, NO ONE CAN DOMINATE YOU.

Being a Satanist today makes you gain to be true and shrewd. It's fantastic to see all these people completely blinded by democracy, technology, sex, alcohol, stupid love-songs, the silly love itself, meanness, television, holidays (silly days), journalism, propaganda, money, etc... while life & death are so clear in my head... because I carry on understanding new things every single day and night..."

Anyone familiar with your magazine can notice how you trifled with matters such as necrophilia, witchcraft, vampirism, lycanthropy, necromancy, occultism, sadism and sexual orgies - basically anything that the modern society would consider 'dark', 'obscure' and 'inhuman'. Did you really have a passion for all these themes, or was it more of a result of watching the world through very strict dualistic eyes? How do you relate to these themes today?

N666: "Well, concerning this matter, I do have a real passion for these subjects because I am incapable of getting involved in something if I don't feel deeply anything. These topics also are a part of the dualistic structure of the being, but we would be wrong to only consider them under this aspect. At least, they have nothing of inhuman because they're born with Man, so

they are human consequences. Only Man can feel what those topics represent.

Today, I am still very interested in these subjects, notably in necrophilia, witchcraft, occultism and sadism, and I would like very much to have a relation with some fresh flesh cadaver - female, I clarify - which is a desire I haven't realised for the moment. As for occultism and witchcraft, as I mentioned previously, the indifference that gangrenes my mind induces that I cannot be interested in a practical way in this kind of Arts any longer. For the rest, I see lycanthropy more as a clinical case of freedom of primitive and animal instincts, even though it can be very effective from magic's point of view. In fact, everything is a question of Faith. Whatever we do, if Faith accompanies us, there cannot be any obstacle that we cannot surmount."



T.P.: "I don't think the modern society considers sexual orgies as 'dark' or 'inhuman', on the contrary, they all love sex in most of its forms; guys collecting how many girls they have fucked or how much they are fucking. And girls are getting even worse doing the same thing; how much dicks they have trapped and sucked this summer... A part of the blindness comes from this, but it also makes you understand a lot of things if you are clever. Nowadays, mostly all girls dress like bitches, no difference. Women have got more rights and they are not just something man likes to fuck and lick!!! Mostly all political and rich people, married or not, fuck with bitches. Some of them are weak homosexuals or pedophiles. Even vampirism and witchcraft are perceived as science-fiction and many people are interested in the fantastic side of magic.

occultism and especially necromancy - so many silly superstitious people believe in it or like it as a fantasy.

Yes, I had passion for these themes. I was looking for a perfect Evil system or an ideology, but I had to built it myself because none of these themes were absolutely Evil.

You may be right about the influence of our dualistic perception of this world... My perception stays dualistic nowadays, but I have built something very personal and very realistic. I have less interest in these themes that are mostly foolish thoughts of weak beings, I'm more into Nihilism and rational things. The world is dualistic itself (fire/water - men/women - night/day - hate/love - noise/silence - war/peace - etc.), and with Ordealis Records we are creating our very own Hell. It'll be very special, the symbol of Evil represented by the serpents and the fire will be present everywhere...

Anyway, I had to read all these themes and have a long reflection on all I have read and study. Self-reckoning and introspection in the deepest of myself gave me the opportunity to a stronger evolution and comprehension, a doubt to be even more sure afterwards! My thoughts are nowadays stronger, more coherent and efficient than all these themes can ever be..."

How much do you think your somewhat Christian upbringing has influenced your personalities, in a sense of giving you this dualistic platform? Has it had any consequences on your Satanism?

N666: "It is true that when I was a teenager and a convinced anti-Christian, confrontation between Goodness and Evilness, unconsciously professed in the successful education, was able to influence my Satanic Thought. But, I very early distanced myself from this trickery. Maybe because my Christian education was very small, even non-existent, if it is not by the intermediary of the medias. I fast realised that religious upbringing, which is in big part steered to manipulate the unconscious, only aimed at the indoctrination of the mass people to a very standardised and moral plan of society. The consequence on my Satanic Thought was that I considered that real Satanism exactly was the emancipation from any religious or laic truth. In brief, Satanism constitutes absolute Freedom - in my opinion - which allows us to evolve without any moral or physical obstacle because, after all, a Satanist being intelligent by nature, he does not need anyone to dictate him with what he has to do to know what is good for him. To sum up, the weak Christian upbringing which I received - because I suppose that I unconsciously received some - allowed me to become aware of the mental enslavement of any religion, and, therefore, of any morals, and so, to be able to release myself from the chains of the current society very early."

T.P.: "I'm not influenced, never have been, by Christianity because I've had the great luck to not grow with Christian education. My dualistic side comes from the deeps of myself... When I was 3 years old I was very violent already and always ready to fight and to defy to show that I'm the stronger. I was kicked out from school when I was only 3 years old because I did disfigure two kids of my age, the will to destroy and dominate was in my heart already then. And so the dualistic platform became stronger inside because I didn't want to obey no one. As soon someone wanted to impose me something, I wanted to kill him. My parents had to suffer a lot because of the ferocity of my character, but nowadays they are proud that their son NEVER BENDS UNDER THE YOKE!!! I hate submission, that's what has influenced my Satanism the most!!! And that's what still influences me in all what I do in my life... Just DOMINATE!!!

By the way, you can notice that my family name 'Berdugo' means an 'Executioner' in Spanish language. Killer, no? That's why I'm The Punisher!!!"

Stregioica always battled against the LaVeyian concept of Satanism. Has this changed in the course of time, or do you still think the whole Satanic Ideal of The Church Of Satan is nothing but a scam, made by people who are more interested in the almighty buck than anything else? N666: "Since LaVey's death we can realize that The Church of Satan only owed its fame to the charismatic personality of its founder because, today and more than ever, we notice that only money counts for those people.

Let us say that from a Satanic point of view we were not really against The Church of Satan, but what we didn't approve of were the goals and the attitudes of the organisation. LaVey liked to use the 'grand guignol' side of Satanism to attract the crowds, notably the rich and 'middle-class' people, earning a lot of money. In such case, The Church of Satan is no more than a sect because

we all know that the main goals of sects are money and sex. Nowadays, Peter H. Gilmore, with whom I was in contact during several months in the beginning of the Eighties, is the new boss of the Church and he appears to be a more serious 'Satanist' than LaVey. As for the Californian division, I've heard that's managed by the daughter of Anton LaVey, and that the commercial aim of the organisation is a reality, because the members try to sell CDs of Marilyn Manson, for example, proclaiming that band to be Satanic. Maybe Marilyn Manson is affiliated with The Church of Satan, but this is not a Satanic criteria. Anybody can become a member of the Church if they pay. How could we grant our credit to these kind of things, which seem to reduce Satanism to a simple mean of release and to a charitable religion? Peter H. Gilmore explains that the Satanism of the Church is Manichean and hedonistic. The concept is interesting but quite reductive, and has sometimes nothing to do with Evil, with laws recommending the non-molestation of children and even of animals. That's why I consider that The Church of Satan is more an Epicurean organisation than a Satanic one.

By the way, I consider that the sole fact of dictating laws is an aberration because, in my opinion, a Satanist is free to do what he wants. He doesn't need any laws." T.P.: "I think now more than ever that The Church of Satan has been built by a coward and is just a silly American farce! What's so almighty or even mighty here? Anyone who belongs to a church of bullshit is weak!!! Hear it faggots!!! It's so easy to reach the ideas & conception of The Church of Satan, as easy as to reach Christianity.

And about the practise? Nothing effective, just words and mass parody. LaVey was a slave of his sex, he invented his ideology - that has nothing new or original - to fuck as much women as he can, and gain money. No Satanic Trust behind that, only atheism, and that's what he said himself in his book 'Magick' where it is written: 'The devil doesn't exist, it's a false name invented by the Black brothers to put a unity in their ignorant confusion'. So that means Satan is dead... 'Hail Satanism!' What a paradox! Fuck you LaVey! He says 'Hail Satan!' He could say 'Hail Nothing!' It would be the same thing for him!

I don't think Satan is a goat or that He has a man's head with two little horns, it's so silly and ridiculous. SATAN IS AN INVISIBLE FORCE THAT EXISTS!!! The Punisher will show you who he is at the right time!!! He exists inside the self and outside of it, you can see His work but you can't see Him... He is the one who gives death and pain to all mortals when the day/night of suffer and/or death comes for each of us... hehe... no escape...

I could talk to you about the ETERNAL ABYSS named TEHOM or about the ROCH HATEHOM, but this is too difficult to explain here, and no one would understand anyway, because you have to study very hard and get a lot of knowledge to understand such things..."

In an interview in Abyss Ritual #7, you Satan Gestapo talked about a feeling of indifference. Do you consider this 'indifference' more as an achievement than a burden? Also Belial talked about reaching this level of indifference where all emotions fade in Stregioica #5.

N666: "I don't see why I would mention the concept of indifference as being very important in my life if I considered it a burden... As Belial said, just read Stregioica #5 to notice all the coolness of our comments. However, I want to precise that I'm the only one in the clan who has developed that feeling in a philosophical way. I consider that the feelings aren't really important because they can constitute a trap for mental development. To develop the concept of indifference allows to go to the main thing without troubling yourself with pointless feelings, which only delay the fulfilment of our acts. The action of not proving any love or any hatred implies any constraint and any mood. That's why I consider the indifference as an achievement and not as a burden."

T.P.: "I'm not sure this question concerns me, but I feel like saying something about it... The level of indifference is just a part of Satanism, not the whole. But to reach this level you have to first reach a level of maturity. It means you are taking control of yourself. If you care about what some people & detractors could say to you... it means you are weak, you depend of others and so you can be manipulated. Here the role of indifference is very important. It's for me neither an achievement or a burden, but MEANS. Every reached means is a kind of achievement, but certainly not a burden, on the contrary, it is real freedom!!!

By the way, sometimes it's weaker to be indifferent than to confront, it depends of the situation. Nowadays I'm not fighting all the time for everything as I used to do. I fight when it's necessary, I'm indifferent when it's useful. BE A WARRIOR BUT BE A CLEVER ONE! STRATEGY IS IMPORTANT!!"

However, whereas the feeling of total indifference may be 'evil' - when seeing things through the common joe's eyes - I do have to ask you if there's really any point in that?

The natural, ideal, life is supposed to consist of a colourful spectre of feelings, so what's the point of living your life if you don't feel nothing but indifference? Why not end it then? Maybe you don't feel that indifferent about yourself, as you continue living.

N666: "I was certain that you would not agree with me. So it is necessary to explain that my concept on the indifference is very particular. As I said it previously, I just want to eliminate all the obstacles which could prevent me from life-progression. To sum up, in a mental point of view I think indifference is essential, even if there's still the problem of the magic, which needs Faith for a real result. Nevertheless, my philosophy regarding the concept of indifference concerns two visions of my life: my relations in confront of the others or in confront of the entire world, society and universe, and my own life. Both can interfere, but in the whole I can tell that I'm totally indifferent in confront of the outer world and that's what's make me free. Because I don't care about anything and anybody, even if I'm in contact with some people.

By the way, I just wanna tell you that you're question is very conformistic in the sense that like all the 'common' people you think that indifference leads to suicide. I'm over all morals or ethics, and that's probably why I can stand indifference, solitude and yet I feel so strong. I don't think a lot of people could stand this way of life, even and particularly in the Black Metal underground. One last thing: I don't need to prove indifference to commit a suicide. I could perform that act when I want, even when things are going very well for me, as presently, because suicide also makes part of my philosophy and certainly is my doom!

By the way, I can tell you that indifference is perfect for a man who's living day after day without caring about the future and, if I sometimes feel like a living dead in this shitty world, indifference permits myself to remain strong and powerful in my mind. I prefer to be myself than a stupid guy full of emotions and desires that he cannot or doesn't want to control as he's enslaved by the physical and materialistic world."

T.P.: "Well, who told you that living in - as much as possible - total indifference doesn't make you feel anything? Let me tell you that indifference to most of this wimpy world and people makes you feel different things than just the common silly feelings. It gives you a stronger structure, a greater personality and, most importantly, it gives you a vision of life very clear. You can see and feel what the common people can never see or feel, all their blindness is so clear at your eyes.

Even if I would have felt total indifference about everything, even myself, why should I kill myself? If I have no feelings for nothing, it means I have no feelings for life and no feelings for death either, so it's no difference if I'm alive or dead..."

Who told you that the natural, ideal, life is supposed to consist of a colourful spectre of feelings? Well, I'm naturally dark and always thinking deeply and hard. I haven't been educated in a materialistic form of life and haven't been oriented into a life-concept with a colourful spectre of feelings. I believe that what is invisible and palpable is invincible and stronger than all materialistic forms. I think 'man has invented art in order to not die of truth (Nietzsche: The Will Of Power), but truth will rise and kill most of the people because 99,99% of them are False!!!

Anyway, as I told you, indifference to me is just a MEANS so I have normal feelings too, but I control them easily, except anger. When people get on my nerves, I break down, but I'm getting more and more control of that too through the use of indifference, it's a true exercise of self-control.

If I don't commit suicide it's because one night/day or another the Angel of Death will take my soul, like he does to everyone, no escape for anyone... haha... All condemned to rot... That's so fantastic..." Satan Gestapo, in the same Abyss Ritual interview you said: "My main hope is the birth of a new race: the Satanic one with the eradication of stupid and mentally enslaved

people," among other things. Looking at the present stage of the world with the MTV generation, the Internet, cell phones... Do you really believe in the change? What makes you think that anybody will be saved if Russia, USA and others start launching missiles, no matter how educated or well aware of the coming he or she might be? N666: "I still think that we evolve in an era which is very degenerated and that soon a new age should appear. This is to say; what I told in the interview of Abyss Ritual #7 was an utopian world such as I would like it to be, populated by persons who deserve to live and not all these stupid individuals who only think about destroying the planet and each other. I know very well that a world only populated of Satanists and mentally evolved people is impossible, even if the world was eradicated by a nuclear war. In such case, if the earth wouldn't be destroyed, there will certainly be a new race of leaders, but we're not sure they will be the right people. As you can notice, I've become very pessimistic, but my dreams are still sometimes invaded by idealistic thoughts. In fact, my pessimism counterbalances the optimism that I feel towards my very person.

About the technological progress of today, I don't think it's a real danger because only the weak humans are totally enslaved by that progress. I think Satanists know well the dangers and advantages of technology and know how to use them for their own progress. For example, I got a cell phone, a computer, and so on, but I feel more radical and more free than ever. I consider the technology as an amusement or an instrument for my job, nothing more." T.P.: "I know this question concerns only Satan Gestapo, but I would like to say something... You are right! If everything is destroyed that would be fantastic! Enter the (No) Age of Eternal Desolation!!! Hail!!!

No, seriously, I don't dream of a Satanic race, I only dream that everyone should get what he deserves. And that means for most of them Pain and Death. Glory and Life are only for some very few beings. I WANT PERFECT JUSTICE ON EARTH AND THE REIGN OF ETERNAL TRUTH, IF NOT, I WANT EVERYTHING TO DIE FOREVER.

Of course all this technology blinds most people and only a very few use it to reach the truth and gain power. THE FALSE WILL DIE, THE TRUE WILL STAY!"

As a Satanist, does it bother you that no matter how 'elite' you may be as far as your soulside is concerned, you still have to live in a society that is built and dominated by Judeo-Christian values and norms? Do you feel the need to rebel against it?

N666: "Obviously, if we'd live in a society that wouldn't be the Judeo-Christian one - with the condition that it's not replaced by a worse one, I want to speak about the Islam - we could maybe evolve more in our ease, we as Satanists. In fact, I believe that if Indo-European Paganism, and more exactly the Scandinavian one, had survived the monotheism, there wouldn't have certainly been all those abominations committed in the name of the Church or another religion, without forgetting the profound respect that the heathens had for Nature.

Due to my indifference, I do not feel anymore the need to rebel against the Judeo-Christian values as in the past because, after all, the Judeo-Christian society auto-destructs itself very well. There's only one Judeo-Christian matter against which I rebel, and this is that we're living in a world of appearance, of superficiality, of materialism, while I'm mentally living in the sphere of the Being. The problem is that the Judeo-Christian values being profoundly rooted in Man for centuries, it is impossible to change the way of thinking of people who like to be ruled by other individuals. With the propaganda of the media, the problem develops more and more. Just watch some movie in which there are still allusions with moral values. I think that rebellion exists, but it must be as pernicious as methods used until now by monotheistic religions. It is necessary to educate people and what's better than Knowledge for that? So, there is no secret: Intellectual effort is the best way to frank ourselves from any mental slavery. It is great to burn churches, kill priests or commit acts of desecration, but this is too insignificant to have some durable impact on the minds. Churches and graves can be easily reconstructed and the priests can be replaced. Everyone applies his own propaganda, why not us?"

T.P.: "Not really, because I don't think our European society is built up on Judeo-Christian values and norms. There's less and less influence from them; look at all these homosexuals and bitches fucking in front of cameras, freely kissing and licking in the streets, gay-pride

been burnt alive!!!

anyone! People don't believe in religion nowadays in Europe but myself, I can science and technology. Most of them are hippies and things an/or atheistically thinking only about materialistic stuff: death, m/what they are going to buy, where they are going for hypocrite holidays, etc... Laicism is the new cancer of the planet FOR THE and democracy isn't a Christian ideology but have its roots come at t/in the Antic Pagan Greek Empire with Plato - PUNITIVE/homosexuality was venerated at that time. Christians & his life, apopes were dictators and they still are in their own FOR AN J corporation. They even dominated for a long period the PERFOR Emperors and Kings of Europe until the French King happens 'Phillip le Bel' sent his army with a messenger, who gave a TRUTH ybig slap in the face of the pope!!! HAIL TO HIM!!!! He has WILL ST given humanity the best present he could have ever Looking done!!! From then on the power of the popes started to strenght decline and German Emperors & French Kings found back you gain their true places.

N666: "Need to fight Judeo-Christian values and norms? It's the hur dying by itself. The new generation wants sex, games, of und/virtuality, internet, and freedom in general. Most of them particu spit at the church which is living its last years. Churches Man. Ware empty here, no one goes to church, except some rapes, niggers sometimes and some few old dying people. An Always empty religion for dead people.

optimi The one we should fight is the foolish Islam, the really shittiest people ever created! Their religion is still very Man... strong and they are invading Europe, which is becoming of the more and more Arabic with Muslims everywhere. A lot of engen Europeans are sucking Arab dicks and are converted to in the Islam, even European Union and all the diplomats are centu giving their asses to the Arabs, especially the bitch called

As France. The Arabs wish that the whole world should me, i become Moslems and there should be a mosque inflex everywhere, even if they have to impose it by force and TP: "violence to the whole world, or by procreating like lover humbugs and insects. And stupid democrats are sucking and the dicks of such people only because they have petrol... they They are all the same silly crap to me."

their I presume you may have some more words to shed about that the modern, Judeo-Christian, materialistic lives people are peac living today in our soulless society.

Wea N666: "Speaking about people, even though in a critical shou way, is not very good because it means that we grant them doir too much importance. I only see them as consuming agai robots who have no spiritual freedom and need other too people to say them when to consume, to start a family, to the take some holidays, etc. If you saw the film Zombie Th: (1979), you can have a view of how I consider the individuals evolving in the current society: as zombies Th: whose direct unconscious reflex is the coming back to gre shopping centres and the roaming between the shelves in Isr a mechanical and scheduled way. Today, the only free Will th is the choice between several marks of products and ar: between various payment conditions.

This is not only a Judeo-Christian problem, but also a by Moslem evolution, because, whatever one says, the TI Moslems also are very influenced by the power of the th money. In any case, I am proud to be a Satanist who tries to remain impervious to all these factors of mental and d: moral slavery. When one knows that they are people who s: choose this poignant way of life - are they really conscious? n - we can have some doubts on the validity of Judeo-p Christianity."

TP: "As I told, the Judeo-Christian aren't materialistic in I their ideology, but in their acts they are. They use religion to enslave people and make money - which is quiet evil in a way. Today they use democracy, politics and diplomacy to j enslave people and make money, and they succeed even j better than with a religion because people are cheated and happy about it. That's all they ask for, so that's what they deserve. To me it's the same thing, they are all liars - Christians, democrats, politics, diplomats... - so they should all die on their knees!!!

Yes, they're all soulless and blinded by their own silly instincts that are used by the democrats as a freedom theme to enslave people - you have the right to shout and express your silly opinions, to be fucked and fuck, to pay tax for the bitches we fuck in the most expensive hotels, etc. - so people are soulless for sure, and they think they are so good... But the truth is coming, it's very near and imminent... they'll see... they'll suffer... and they won't understand why... That's HELL and HELL AWAITS!!!!

What are you guys really up to these days, anyway? There was at least some talk about Satan Gestapo starting up a new magazine called Missa Nigra, but that idea fell apart.

Use also to introduce your new Ordealis Records more profoundly.

N666: "After the Stregoica experience, we took our distances in confront of a more and more polluted underground scene, and concentrated on our studies or our professional search.

Personally, I've become an employee of the French State since May 2001 d.t. Moreover, in the beginning of June 2001, I had to move to Paris because of my new affection. As for Goathead, he's living in the north of France, near Belgium, where he's exercising the profession of English professor since September 2000 d.t. Nevertheless, Belial and I always are in narrow contact with him because we have just created this label; Ordealis Records. And for us this is a very serious project.

We thought that there were so many trendies who won some money with Black Metal, so, why not us who really are involved in the movement - even if we don't really do it for the money as we all have jobs. In Ordealis, there is also a third person who is a great friend of us and who previously played in Stregoica and Abraxas as a drummer. His name is Eric (No Tolerance), and his managing capacities and mental reflections are very interesting. Goathead started the label with us but, after several months, it seemed that he didn't prove the same interest as us, that's why he decided to leave Ordealis. However, we still have a good relationship with him as he's one of our best friends. A real dark and misanthropic individual! About Ordealis, this is our first-rate label of distribution specialised in brutal, Satanic and original Black & Death Metal, which also risks very soon to become a label of production. Indeed, it has already become a production label. But, I prefer to let Belial speak about Ordealis because he has certainly many things to tell...

From my part, it is better to speak about the magazine Missa Nigra, which was never born although everything was practically ready, a thing that I regret because the idea to see a Satanic magazine distributed nationally in kiosks was great. The problem is that when one works with fickle individuals - I'm always waiting for my pictures of Mayhem, Pierre! - or with people who speak a lot without big results, it's normal that the project collapses when the others don't take it seriously. Personally, I think it's a pity because the concept was very ambitious with Satanic articles, interviews of Satanic bands, reviews of Satanic Art, etc."

TP: "Well, I'm a jurist, a legal writer, and we are running a label & distribution called Ordealis Records. For living I work, and since the split of Stregoica in July 1995 - but maybe it'll be back if the label runs well and if we have time for it - I haven't been involved in any black projects till the year 1999 (after the birth of the bastard liar) when I decided that we could build up a label. Anyway, my personal Chaotic Evil life is a black project in itself!!!

Ordealis Records is a Satanic label that wants to produce and distribute only EVIL music (brutal & morbid), mostly Brutal Black Metal, Brutal Black/Death, Brutal Satanic Death Metal but also all Evil music that could seduce us, like Power noise electronics, Satanic industrial, Morbid ambient, Martial industrial, War music...

We have released:
Nunslaughter (USA)
Hell on Switzerland Live 7"EP 2001
Limited to 1000 hand-numbered copies. Brutal Black/Death.
Nunslaughter (USA) / Derketa (USA)
Split picture 7"EP 2002
Limited to 500 hand-numbered copies. Death/Black and Death Metal.
Nunslaughter (USA)
Hell's Unholy Fire Picture LP 2002
Limited to 500 hand-numbered copies. Fantastic Black/Death.
We are going to release the following stuff:
Inner Helvete (POR):
LP
Limited to 500 hand-numbered copies. Should be ready early 2002. Brutal raw Black Metal.
Kerberos (HOL):
7"EP
Limited to 500 hand-numbered copies. Should be ready early 2002. Brutal raw Black/Death.
And a lot more coming later in this year. 2002!!!
We also distribute CDs and Vinyl of Brutal Black and Death Metal bands such as:

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How important is creativity for you? Is it essential?
N666: "Creativity is important and essential to be able to quickly dissociate from all the others. Moreover, creativity is mental freedom, reflection, movement of millions of cells in all their magnificence. In brief, creativity is life in my opinion because it symbolises the movement - not the physical one but the spiritual one - and always allows to surpass oneself and refuses the congestion of ideas.

I do not believe that Stregoica would have had so much success in the underground scene if there had been no creativity in its pages. I consider that creativity and originality are very similar or, at least, in very good terms when allied. But I must tell that we didn't create Stregoica to reach some success. We made it because we thought there was a lack of true Satanic investigations in the Black & Death Metal scene, and we wanted to educate the people of the underground, still spreading the real philosophy of Black Metal. That was the main creativity diffused in Stregoica and it seems we succeeded in our plans because Stregoica became a cult zine. That's no secret: creativity and originality often means posterity."

TP: "Creativity is essential, but we also need a lot of harshness to counterbalance the creativity in an efficient way, to build it up strongly in order to have the power to destroy!!! WE ARE BUILDING CHAOS TO PUNISH HUMANITY FOR ITS WEAKNESS, and if you are not creative, you can't contribute to such a project. Creativity is essential if you don't want to be a slave or a civil servant - functionary - of this world system that is built on lies, hypocrisy and fiction. But creativity can be used for silly things like the aforementioned three just before, so harshness is here to not let you fall in this crap-snare. By the way, much less people are creative, and that's why it's even more important..."

Thank you for this interview, comrades Satan Gestapo and Belial. To conclude, what will it say in your tombstones?
N666: "The fact is I'll be incinerated and my ashes will be scattered without any religious ceremony and there will certainly be no epitaph concerning me. However, if I could choose one, it could be the following: 'I lived as a Satanist and I was proud of it'.

Thank you very much for the great interview.
Northwind! Long live Ad Arma! and Hail Satan!!! My deep respect for you and the 'true' people who'll read your magazine."

TP: "Thanks to you brother Northwind! It was a big honour and a morbid pleasure for me to answer your clever questions that reveal a deep mind, a dark hard thinker, a strong being who is oriented in serious things and searching for truth sincerely. I hope we can meet one night and talk more about our thoughts. TRUTH HAS ONLY ONE FACE, FALSEHOOD HAS MANY..."

I think on my tombstone, if I have one, it'll be written: 'I'll be back to punish you... to throw you in the Eternal Abyss...' and it'll be signed: THE PUNISHER, ROCH HATEHOM, MASTER OF THE ETERNAL ABYSS."

Number 666: c/o PIERAGNOLI Stephan, 63, rue des Meuniers, 'Boite 6', 75012 Paris, France, ordealis@wanadoo.fr

The Punisher: c/o BERDUGO Elie, 25 Bd Vauban, 13006 Marseille, France, ordealis@hotmail.com

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I'm fairly pleased that I was able to conjure up an interview with *Stregoica* fellows to this issue, but, honestly, I'm just as pleased to being able to track down and dug out from the abysmal grave of time our next guest; thy majesty, Mr. *Albertus Vorkt Jiménez* from Mexico.

It might very well be that not all too many of you are even aware of the fascinating work he did in the Black Metal milieu during the first part of the 90's under the title *The Voice Of The Dark*, but that's just your loss. Here's a lesson to learn for everybody involved in Black Metal. Read and

run.

Northwind

The VOICE of the DARK

Towards the Sinister

Darkened greetings, comrade Vorkt!

"A Hail to all Witches and Sorcerers who read this. An Unholy Salutation to all Beasts and Blasphemers all over the world. May the Grimness of Death be with you while reading this interview, as the Wolves chant their odes to my Mother Hecate. A Hail to Thee, Bearer of the Black Flame, may this meeting be a supreme offering to Darkness. Let's start our walk through the Shadows."

The Voice Of The Dark – as a name in the underground – has a definite cult ring to it, at least for those who have been following the true Black Metal underworld since the early 90's. But let us enlighten the ignorant! Albertus Vorkt Jiménez, who are you and what is The Voice Of The Dark? Please introduce yourself, your releases and your role in the Black Metal milieu.

"Well, first of all, thank you for your compliments about *The Voice Of The Dark*; it is always a pleasure to receive such comments from a person like you who KNOWS what he is talking about.

But you mentioned an ugly and repulsive subject: 'the ignorant'. That's a very disgusting herd, those who get involved with the music but know no shit about the basic ideas behind Black Metal. It is a stinky situation when you have to share your musical tastes with that bunch of idiots and newcomers in general. I mean, those people who just entered the scene because they 'discovered' it via the Internet or wide-spread magazines are not worthy to be enlightened. Even I know of the existence of certain individuals who just discovered Metal music and they want to run a magazine, just a week after they've read one for the first time. That is the situation in Mexico, where a lot of embryos produce their magazines, form their bands and pose at gigs, but there is nothing sinister in their minds. The real essence of Evil is lost and only the music matters. To be a trusty Black Metal listener, you ought to be born for Darkness, and then join the scene. When you grow as a child of Darkness, during your childhood you develop a 'rare' kind of tendency that which is 'bizarre' and 'unnatural' for the rest of people that surround you. When you have decided to avoid the rest of humanity including their belief, their customs and of course their religion, then you are able to enlighten YOURSELF. You read a lot of books, and in spite of their bullies and the rejection of the society towards your person you soon notice that your real Self has now displayed above the person that the others thought you were. After reading and learning about the other reality, you shall find your own way, leaving behind the rest of the empty ideas that your family tried to teach you. That's the difference between the ignorant and us, the wisdom that the Past has given unto us. They are nothing, just CDs. The case I mentioned above is one of childhood, so when you reach your twenties, then you meet a lot of comrades who walk the same Path as you. Then a strong and original circle is formed, one with experienced people, one with real sinister members, one with Darkness.

Anyway, I will say shortly who I am now. I appeared in the Metal Underground in the late 80's, but I came in with an Occult background, as I attacked my hometown in 1987 with a bizarre and Satanic action that gave me the complete hate of the whole population (more about this in my Magazine *Non Serviam*, issue II). At that time I was very happy to see how blasphemous were bands such as *Sarcófago*, *Sodom*, *Blasphemer*, etc. I found their music quite interesting and powerful, and their lyrics and image fell pleasantly in my soul. This does not mean that they were the first bands I heard, though. I started in '84 with *Judas Priest*, *Iron Maiden* etc.

Very soon I wanted to appear in fanzines to spread the word of the Occult, because the subjects used by some bands needed to be explained with certain detail. In 1988 I started to write for some zines from Mexico and Latin America, where the scene was strong and growing. As I was appearing in many zines, I decided to give my articles a general heading, like a name of a special section devoted to the Occult. After many ideas, the name *The Voice Of The Dark* came to be the general name for all my articles which during the early 90's appeared in legendary zines like *Stregoica*, *Daemonium Aeternus*, *Blasphemous*, *Hellspawn*, *Codein*, *Orcustus*, etc. Unfortunately, Black Metal became a trend and I decided to explore other fields, specifically the one of research against the 'Holy Bible'. In 1993 I printed my magazine *Non Serviam* whose first issue was a complete refutation of the book of lies, but no one was interested in it. I eventually had to give it free to my most serious comrades because all the others were so busy with their make-ups and pictures that they had not time to read about the failures of the common enemy. A one year later I wrote the second issue, which showed more themes about the history of the twisted and bizarre. The Anti-Christian Spirit is taken more seriously – that's to say – with a historical background. This edition did not awake the interest of the mass either.

In 1999 I edited a volume with my fave articles of *The Voice Of The Dark*, and the people who have read it have been very pleased with the contents. When you read it, the Spirit of the early Black Metal is again with you.

I don't really know if all this is part of any personal role in the Black Metal milieu, but to me it represents an important participation of my person within the scene when it was the True Scene. That era began ten years ago."

Though you were a very popular columnist in several highly acclaimed Satanic Black Metal publications in the early 90's, some years later, in 1994 or 1995, you all of a sudden seemed to disappear from the face of the earth.

"Yes, I did disappear from the face of the earth, but it was only ten months. I never wrote in fanzines again after my absence because when I wrote a letter to each and every one of them, almost nobody answered. I wrote a lot of letters to my old comrades in the underground, but they never replied! I was

out only 10 months, and when I tried to return again to my impious world, suddenly nobody answered to my urgent calls, and I still don't know why. Only some 4 or 5 friend wrote back to me one letter then, but they did not write after that anymore, except for the True Brother.

I even did a second printing of *Non Serviam* II in 1996, but no one was able to order anything. I never wanted to disappear from the scene, I have always wanted to recover the whole of my contacts, but now with this Internet shit, things are a lot different. If someone reads this and remembers me, I encourage you all to drop me a line, especially my old friends from Norway, Canada, and Greece. All letters will be answered."

Are you in touch with any of your old comrades now as we speak?

"Yes, I still have correspondence with 3 of them. *José Luis Cano* (Mexico City), who was the editor of *Mistical Prophecies* zine has been writing to me since 1989. His room is a monument to Metal and Pornography. I also got in contact once again with *Bård Faust* after six years of silence, and we both were very delighted with this return. The other friend of mine is my Arch-Brother *Satan Gestapo* who has always corresponded with me since 1990, and he has dubbed me a lot of tapes. My apparitions in two numbers of *Stregoica* are a pride to me.

The rest of the old penpals have just quit my name from their list, like *Magus Wampyr Daolob*, *Maini Walter*, *Demonos Sova*, *Jens Pelter Nielsen*, etc. Where are you *Lullaby*?"

Having witnessed the whole rise of the second wave of Black Metal, what was the very thing that pissed you off most in Black Metal becoming a trend among youngsters back then?

"The availability of Black Metal items in the open market. The things that we considered 'sacred' and very important to us were suddenly in the hands of any idiotic teenager who could listen to *Impaled Nazarene* and *Pet Shop Boys* at the same time, feeling the same for both the groups. I saw children wearing Black Metal T-shirts, schoolbags with the *Deicide* logo, T-shirts of *Necromantia* for sale in a Mexican open market for the country people, etc.

Then a lot of Metallers who had nothing to do with the Occult/Satanic scene (*ONA*, *Ordo Sinistra Vivendi*, etc.) were talking about these subjects but with lesser knowledge of the doctrine. This false 'tradition' passed immediately to the very ignorant ones, creating a mediocre and ridiculous horde of assholes whose brains had not the size of *John Paul II's* balls.

Black Metal seemed to be so popular and 'cool' that I felt

pity for the whole scene, and that was back in 1993.

Up to this moment, things have not changed in any way. **Emperor** has been broadcast in Latin MTV, and many characters of Black Metal have been incorporated in some other styles; they have been stolen and played by bands who have absolutely nothing to do with Black Metal. I actually saw in a local TV channel a band of tropical music – a mix between Brazilian samba and Texas' country music – playing on TV, and one of the musicians was wearing a T-shirt of **Immortal**.

The tenebrous thing disappeared completely."

But even if the Black Metal scene failed and made you leave it behind, you did, however, continue your life as a Satanist throughout all those years. What exactly were you up to during the "silent years"?

"As I said above, I was always trying to contact my old, evil comrades again, but I used my time to gain in other fields as well. I became a schoolteacher, but I was fired from a couple of schools due to my attitude towards schoolgirls. I have been accused in many occasions of child-molestation, but always without proof. Currently I am working in a school that is for girls only. This is not in my hometown though, but in one near here.

On the other hand, many teen girls come daily to me, because they think I am a palmist. I "read" their hands and they strictly believe what I say. Their fate is ruled by what I foretell them. A lot of girls visit me or follow me whereas I go for the study of their palms. They don't know I'm just lying, but you should know that one of the most important parts of MY Satanism is to bring Doom towards all kind of humans. This false belief I create among my followers is just a step towards their perdition because they are worried if I foretell a problem, or they are 'happy' or falsely deluded if I foretell something good for them. On the other hand, while they are listening to my words, their faith towards their 'god' is debased. In a one single moment, the whole of their Christian faith is forgotten, at least for a minute.

As a Satanist, alone, I cannot do many acts like rituals, meetings and such, so I have to work on my own, and I cannot form a sect with my pupils because of the law, and I don't want to lose my job.

Anyway, I hope this interview will help me to bring me a lot of new contacts and projects with serious zines. I'll feel honoured if one of you invites me to write again in your pages, even though I am sure that the article that is printed alongside this interview will not be suitable for many."

Now that you have somewhat returned to the scene, how does the present mentality appear to be, from your perspective? Do you think Black Metallers have evolved or changed in any way?

"Bands are more mature, magazines are more professional, labels and distributors are richer, artists are more creative, listeners are younger – but they all are LESS SATANIC."

The material you've written can first and foremost be considered as of utterly Anti-Christian nature. I believe most of our readers ought to know by now why Christianity, in particular, is and will be fought against, but shouldn't Satanists start to look "inside" rather than "outside" as of now?

"I don't know about the situation and role of the Christian church in your country, but you should live here in Mexico to believe what I am about to say.

Here you are born as a Catholic. You are forced to follow the whole dogmas and traditions of the church during your childhood. Religion and the belief in 'god' are so strong here that everything is influenced by them. School, law, traditions, holidays, jobs, daylife – even movies are under the influence of the Latin American Catholic church. So, when you grow up and awake; when you realise that this religion is but a cord that ties your Self to the levels of the mares of the Old Testament, you surely begin to feel an immense hate towards this plague.

The Christian religion was brought to Mexico by Europeans, those pestilent monks who came to brainwash the loyalty of the Mexican tribes. Christians stole a lot of the Pagan festivals, where gods and goddesses representing the Forces of Nature were adored, but the Spaniards came to contaminate our air with fairytales of virgins, angels, nazarenes and all that crap. Our tribes practised rituals with

blood, cannibalism, fights and all kind of things that make a hard heart, but this horde of monkeys from Europe brought their ridiculous ideology of pardon, pity, mercy, prayers and all the bullshit that cover the Christian scum.

This influence of the dogma vomitorium grew with the new Mexican culture, and it is the only one guilty for that Mexico still belongs to the Third World. People expect here to improve themselves, not by their work, but by the 'grace of god'.

During the 20th century the church developed in the way of the old patriarchs. Here in Mexico a lot of Christian sects raised and formed the ruling body for the simplest acts of daily life. Mexican herds have always been obedient to the church, and no one dares to change this view.

As an Anti-Christian, I have had a lot of troubles in order to live a life for myself. Too many enemies, bullies, and even a kind of sympathetic fear towards me, he he. You ask me why do I still attack Christianity? Well, because I hate it. I hate Christians in general as long as this plague exists. Christians are the enemies of Knowledge, they were condemned to ignorance since the beginning according to their very own myth of *Adam* and *Eve*. For as they *knew* they were naked, they were expelled from paradise by their jealous and narrow-minded 'god' and 'creator'. They sent *Galileo* and many brilliant thinkers to jail, who had the proof about the lies written in the book of their invention. I hate Christians because they are against everything that is precious, like erotism in sex, freedom, joy, madness – even the free choice. They killed the 'heretics', and the Greek meaning for 'heresy' is 'free choice'. Anyway, if all Christians in my hometown hate me, why should I not hate them?

But even now, when this stupidity called Christianity is no more than a rubbish in my eyes, I'll always offend it – even with my existence I will offend it. To debase Christians values is my goal, no matter the results. Now we have to recognise the whole decline of a root-based Christian doctrine as most humans do nothing for their Christian faith, but there is still a lot of work to do.

About looking 'inside' rather than 'outside', yes, that is correct, but all that I can find within myself is only there to help my OWN development. Remember that genuine Satanism is for the Individual only, not for the mass-though. Everything that my Satanic sense can create and then produce should be kept for myself only. If I start writing something in favour of the 'community', I am sure my ideas will be stolen by many imitators who swarm the scene. For an example, one of the drawings that appear in my booklet was used now by a Greek band for their logo – is that Black Metal originality?

Satanism is only for gaining of things and experiences for the Self, not for the swine. Anyhow, I ask all of you impious readers; is it not a pleasure to be a member of the Forces of Darkness? Is it not a pride to be apart of the idiotic mass of automaton Christian pigs? Is it not worthwhile to be a lone Black Metal Satanist rather than a mass-ignorant Christian? Just compare; Christian restriction or Satanic decision."

On a personal level, are you any different than back in the early 90's?

"Well, as you have noticed from my previous answer, I have very much the same thoughts today as I had in the beginning. However, I do feel far more *sure* than in the Past. The things that I do now just respond to my impulses and feelings without hesitation. I can do whatever I want in contrast with the actions I did before due to the lack of experience.

Concerning the spreading of the Occult as it was the main purpose for the creation of *The Voice Of The Dark*, I can just say that I don't write anymore in such a way because no one is really interested in these matters. And, by the way, this Occult thing does not deserve to be at the hands of the trendy ones. If I someday find a suitable forum to discuss our values – like this one – then I'd be more than happy to address my words to the Elite. Up to this moment, I only know one person who is a lot into Demonism and Black Witchcraft, and he is from Czech Republic.

In the early 90's I wished to enlighten all those so-called Satanists, but now when nobody is interested anymore, I think it is worthless to waste my time and ideas on them. When I chose Black Metal as a way of living, it was because I thought Satanism was the *main* point in it, and then the music; but it seemed that the only thing that the bands were looking for was fame and money, not the gaining for the Satanic Inspiration. If you are not interested in Black Magic, Darkness, Evilness, Warlike Blasphemy, then why do you call your music Black Metal?

My thoughts towards Satanism and the Sinister are eternal and unchangeable."

What would you say is the aim a Satanist should be striving for in this age and time? Realistically.

"I'll speak for my own. The gaining of experience. Real life experience. The conquering of my ultimate fears. Self-control. Domination of others – and the trashing of the useless ones. You can expect nothing from humanity as they don't have anything to give you. To teach the perspective of an eagle, from above. To live my life as the Sinister person I am forever."

As far as I've gathered, you're a pretty "disliked" character in Mexico – or at least in your hometown. Are they still praying for your soul?

"Fuck the people from my town. This is a very small village, so everybody knows my stance. Older people tell a lot of bullshit stories about me and sometimes they show me their ridiculous faith as a kind of helmet against me, ha ha. My family still prays 'for my soul'; they have even offered their own health to their 'god' as a kind of trade in order to get myself 'changed', but I'll never change. I'll be the same misanthropic person I am now, a bringer of Doom and Perdition upon others."

You're well over 30 now, I think. How important role you think age as such plays in people's heads and development in general? Black Metal people usually aren't the oldest around...

"Age gives you a lot of knowledge, not only in life experiences, but also – as in my case – knowledge about our tastes. Kids of today who fall in ecstasy when they listen to the new commercial Metal & industrial bands try to 'show' me how mean they are, but they haven't got a clue about **Deep Purple** or **Judas Priest**. And when a Black Metal new comer feels like being the only son of Satan because he has just discovered the lyrics, I send him to Hell as he does know nothing about the real Satanic rock bands from the 70's like **Black Widow** or **Coven**.

Many people show their fakeness as they get older; they display that their taste of Metal was only a fashion, a characteristic of their youth, but when you reach your 30's and still feel the same about your old records of **Deep Purple**, **Twisted Sister**, and then about your old tapes of **Cyclone**, **Carnivore**, **Candlemass** and then about your tons of demos of the era of **Darkthrone**, **Beherit**, **Goat Vulva**, **Osculum Infame**, **Alastis**, etc., and then about the new honest bands you still feel the same, then you are a person whose mind is able to endure the scares of time but without quitting your own tastes – something that is yours. I wonder how many people are about 35 years old and still like this music, I'm sure they're very few."

What can we expect from you in near and not-so-near future? Any projects coming up, materialistically or spiritually?

"I think *The Voice Of The Dark* should remain in the legend; it was created in a time when bands like **Emperor** or **Arcturus** weren't formed, so it belongs to the most glorious past.

My further activities are for my own pleasure and I don't think they'd be suitable to be spread to the masses. Anyway, let's see what I could give to the scene in the future."

Thank you for the interview, comrade Vorkt. To conclude, what will it say in your tombstone?

"Thank you so much my devilish friend, *Northwind*, for this interview and for your interest in my work and ideas; this dialogue is truly helpful for me. I invite all Sinister people to write to me and start a pleasant and gentle discussion about the generalities of the Darkside.

About the tombstone, I won't have any, only humans and other stinky animals deserve to be buried. Salve Hecate. Salve Lilith. Gloria Lucifer."

Albertus Vorkt Jiménez, Poste Restante, H. Coscomatepec, Ver. 94140, México

The latest news would be that *Vorkt* has started doing a zine again, in order to "bring back the burning spirit of Darkness & Hate". He's currently looking for qualified individuals who could contribute to the magazine. Feel free to contact him if it's in you.



Satanic Art

'Only the strong survive', 'True Black Metal', 'Time shall tell' – how many times were these sentences said during the first days of the revival of Black Metal in the early 90's? If I remember well, too many.

Many individuals swore that they would never leave this ideology. Many of them said that Black Metal was not an ideology but a way of living, a life devoted to Darkness – and above all, a key to be away from the rest of the human mass. Some others told that the only way to live a Black Metal existence was to please the Dark Lord and bring destruction upon Christianity, and that no other kind of metalheads could get in the Black Metal fields but those with a dark knowledge and a kindred soul with Satanism. Well, fortunately, I belong to the latter group of individuals.

Black Metal, as well as other sinister music, must be justly played, enjoyed and spread among the Satanic crowds that are fond of it. This music should never be at the hands of the mediocre, the feeble or the ignorant ones. Those who only like the music and the album covers – as the first mentioned group – are just curious guys who lived Black Metal as a fashion. Too many of them liked intensely the first work of the band **Acheron**, for instance, but how many of them were feeling the True Anti-Christian essence within their poor spirits, or at the very least had an interest in the Enochian language?

No, Black Metal is not for those impressionable, ninny kids who are proud of their T-shirts and CDs, but lack in knowledge, tradition, and affinity with the Satanic Spirit. Black Metal is not for the aficionado nor for the 'cult' guy who knows a lot about the general rock bands. Black Metal is and should be only for the Sinister and the Misanthropic. Those who live with the Darkness within, and those who hate humans as what they are; scum. Let's face it, this Black Metal concept is almost destroyed now; but it was destroyed some time earlier, during its very beginning, actually.

Let me tell you that in the middle 80's, when there were very few Black Metal bands, both **Venom** and **Mercyful Fate** were openly advertised in commercial magazines like *Hit Parader* or *Circus*. At that time, any simpleton Metal kid could order albums like *Don't Break the Oath* along with **Mötley Crüe's** *Shout at the Devil*, and this was for the listener just the same. Was that Black Metal? Was that what the bands wanted? Well, maybe it was, but that is NOT my concept of BLACK Metal. If **Venom** were the creators of the genre (involving antisocial attitudes and demonism), then why did they change their style and image? Why bands like **Celtic Frost** and **Bathory** turned into softer and wimpy stuff? Maybe because it was not the right time to

run with the Devil and fly with the witches to the Sabbath. At that time, you could read about **Venom** in any rock magazine, along with articles about **AC/DC**, et cetera. Black Metal was nothing but a new branch of Heavy Metal with its brothers; Speed Metal, Thrash Metal, and some other styles like 'Sludge Metal'. It wasn't until the late 80's when the Black Spirit became stronger, not with Black Metal, but with a couple of new hybrids, namely Death Metal and Doom Metal with obscure lyrics.

Death Metal became a trend. During 1989 and 1990 everybody was happily living in the Death Metal fashion. Even cult bands like **Darkthrone** played Death Metal (it's first album, *Soulside Journey*, was recorded in the same studio where **Entombed** got their sound). I remember an interview with them in the greek *Blasphemous* magazine where the editor asks *Gylve* about the scene in Norway, and he replied literally: 'It sucks! No one likes Death Metal here.' (*Blasphemous* #1, printed XXVI A.S., pp.18). I think it – the Death Metal flash – was just a hit to leave the Heavy Metal influences behind, and start a new culture, one of Darkness/Death/Hate influenced basis that fit the elements that the first generation of Black Metal just talked about.

Just after the twilight of this Death Metal scene came the revival of what is known as 'True Black Metal', with bands like **Abruptum**, **Master's Hammer**, **Necromantia**, and many, many others. But with this legion of demons, a new army came to the dominions: the trendy – those wimpy faggots who only liked the music and totally destroyed Black Metal because they suddenly had their own bands, labels and distributors. Then, what we knew as Black Metal and what we took as the Flag for our very deep beliefs was soon converted to 'Black-Popular-Metal'.

Now, in the new century, after 2000 years of shit, when there is not an underground sense any longer – say, thanx to the Internet, which destroyed the supreme magnificence of Isolation – some fists are rising again to recover a little of what has been lost. Once again the Black Metal Spirit will be evoked to bestow its Darkness upon us, abyssic individuals who observe and obey the following conditions:

Avoid any contact with pseudo Black Metal people; be it then bands, label managers, distributors, zine editors, artists, or sole individuals. They are the rotten apple that poisons our culture.

Stop visiting and/or using fake Black Metal websites. The Internet has destroyed the excellence and magnificence of secrecy and

hermitical isolation. Black Metal connections must be in the ancient and original way; postal mail.

Honest labels print reduced editions and sell them only to the honest individuals. Don't throw your work to the pork.

Stop playing with bands that are not Black Metal; otherwise they sooner or later will like them.

Promote the use of vinyl again.

If you think these conditions are restrictive, and hence not Satanic, then tell me a better way to keep Black Metal free from the idiotic nitwit bastards who love CDs, e-mails and shit like that.

One of the aforementioned bands said once to *Daemonium Aeternus* zine this following advice in the early 90's: 'If you want to stop an eventual Black Metal trend, stop writing a zine (even when it's a true) and isolate.' 'stay dark and occult.' (*Daemonium Aeternus* #2, pp. 13).

Now, we, those who have the experience will take Black Metal again and this time only the pure elite will be featured. We all know perfectly well who belongs to our Kingdom; but if we fail, it won't matter, we will always remain pure and loyal to our instincts, those of hatred and rage against Christianity, against the human mass of puerile faggots and their western society mockery, against stupid kids, assholes, teenagers and idiots in general, guilty of false Black Metal – those who only deserve the scourge of Satan because we really hate them.

If you think this is only bullshit, OK, but what can you offer me instead? A life of fun and success, but living as a slave? If you are happy with that, then get out and keep your way, man, but let me tell you that you are a part – a miserable part – of the system; I wonder how and why you got a copy of this publication. We surely need to begin by killing bastards like you.

On the other hand, you, who walk the Path of Darkness, a True depositary of the Black Flame, rejoice, it's time to change our skin as serpents we are. This time commercial 'Black Metal' acts won't count, we're forming the elite, one with the Darkness.

Personally I think that the True bands are those who, in spite of their style or presence in the 'scene', have been strongly loyal to their beliefs and diabolical emotions all the time, ever since their foundation. That's all.

Hail Satan.

Albertus Vorkt Jiménez

The Bulldozer Armageddon vol. II 7" EP
Warlord



Yet another strike in honour of the Italian provokers! This time in action are the purveyors of old Metal from Portugal and Japan, both linked to the Thrashing Black Metal revival movement.

Bulldozer were one of those rare pioneering bands that can be categorised in several ways, one of them being 'Blackeden Metal'. To argue about its morbidity

and terrorism would be as terrific nonsense as to name *Ciccolina* a nun. If we talk about similitude to *Bulldozer*, I presume there is no trouble to recreate that dirty rock 'n roll feeling for either one of the bands, they must be used to this kind of an environment. The listener feels as if riding back in time, when there were not so many bands performing such aggressive Metal.

Well, I am rather disappointed than satisfied with **Abigail's** version of *Hona the Very Best*, and it has much to do with the inexpressive vocalist who could be good for today's Thrashing Black Metal, but who could never fit such bands as *Bulldozer*. Also, their sound is too chaotic to me - Thrash sounds better with more precision, just as **Decayed** do with *Ride Hard - Die Fast!*. Their blackness feels good within the company of an early **Bathory** inspired track. Or should I say they were more lucky to choose a catcher song for this split tribute? Or were better experienced in making cover tracks (think about *The Book of Darkness* CD).

Well, don't miss this split, even if it is too short, as the black vinyl is strictly limited to 500 hand-numbered copies, and those who think it is ok to obtain a tribute without hearing original *Bulldozer* - you'd better change your mind and never ever question who's the father of it all. 78 from the **Ledo Takas** address.

Abigail, Yasuyuki Suzuki, 59-7, Saiwai-cho, Itabashi-ku, Tokyo 173-0034, Japan.

Decayed, PO. Box 4, 2780 Oeiras, Portugal.

Tadas

ABSCISS 9
Open Wound 7" EP
From Beyond

Hell yeah, one more release from *Chris* and co.! It's just a four tracker EP this time, recorded back in 1998 yet never released before. Well, beats me if these songs were too bad for their following albums, or if they were left out due to being recorded separately from the album material. These songs are, indeed, different from the latest masterpiece *Tormented* - more twisted and skin-scratching, I would say. It makes me recollect the first album of the band, *Seminal Vampires*. ... Only now there is not so much of the punk/core element left (that's what finally made *Absciss* a brilliant act, comparing to that debut CD). The guys stick more to slow Death Metal tortures, so I can't really escape directly comparing it to *Autopsy* (*Mental Funeral* times!). *Tormented* sounds more refreshing and kick ass, in my opinion. On these tunes *Chris* also experiments with his voice, which is not that typical of a growl most of the time. Still *Absciss* have never stepped away from the sick and raw Death Metal, so those peculiarities are just minor remarks whilst the music is definitely great and bludgeoning.

Indeed, the listener might regard it as a special release, leftover material, and not the next *Absciss* album. It is limited edition thingie (black vinyl), so kinda believe that only the dedicated ones will reach it. *From Beyond* have made a nice package with a truly underground design and a front cover picture: those gore drawings were popular last time some ten years ago. Now you can see such things among grind/gore crews. But that's about *Autopsy*, ergo... I mean *Absciss*! (I've typed this by chance, not intentionally!!) Investigate this as it is still not too late.

Tadas

AS YOU IN AGONY CRY 5
Laudatur Temporis Acti 7" EP
Diabolical Shapes

This label has done everything in their power to present their first 7" vinyl release the best possible way: interesting artwork, great layout, and especially the 8 page booklet inside that is truly an 'unheard of' thing in a Black Metal seven inch - only the EP envelope could be of a thicker paper.

But the music... yes, however good a presentation might be, the music is what counts the most, and this Italian band has prepared just average, conformist, melodic, atmospheric Black Metal, which is not even nearly as mean as the pictures of these six guys, unfortunately. Can't stand this *Dani* vocal-style, simple as that! Everybody out there: please stop sending me recordings with anything similar! I am more than fine with just one *Dani*, the original one, others can fuck themselves off.

Indeed, there is nothing interesting to tell you - just imagine the next band in line that wants to combine crude Black Metal with epic, symphonic - or hell knows what else - touches, but fail miserably, except for a few short moments in *Ye Dark Quest for Knowledge*. All the worst Swedish bands are actually better than this. And their band-name is contemptible - I cannot find any relation with it and Black Metal. Weeping music... Ok, play what you want, but stop mixing it with raw Metal, then!

Comes in an edition of 999 copies on a black vinyl, costs 6 USD. If the label does not have them in stock anymore, you can get this EP at any vinyl distro around. Next!

As You In Agony Cry, c/o *Nicola Di Sarlo*, via C.A. Pizzardi 48, 40138 Bologna, Italy. namnhar@hotmail.com, www.infinito.it/utenti/agonycry

Tadas

VINY LIZED!

As you probably know, we here at *Ad Arma!* headquarters are quite fanatic about preserving vinyl, and if it was up to us, we wouldn't really think twice about resurrecting the heyday of vinyl worldwide, had we the power to do so. Anyway, this is our column devoted to vinyl - be it then seven inches, MLPs, LPs or whatever there is. The releases are scaled from 0 to 13, as in the debut.

Do us a favour, though, before you start going through these reviews. Put on some dusty, forgotten jewel to the turntable and bow down to that rasping noise from hell. Thanks.

BLACK MASS OF ABSU 4
Looting the Tomb of the Aramatbean 7" EP
Fudgeworthy

I don't want to sound arrogant, but this piece of vinyl does not strike me as obscure and evil as some other American Black Metal bands have on some of their 7" EP releases. Well, I mean *Wind Of The Black Mountains*, *Havohej* or *Judas Iscariot*, for instance. This is not so Black Metal actually... This (anti-) music drifts somewhere on the experimental edge, where traditional Metal or rock instruments - drums, guitars, vocals - are enriched by scary, heart-slicing keyboards, and another distinct feature is the unbalanced variety in-between the short grinding attacks and the slow torturing riffs and drumming. To me that combination creates an experimental feeling, even if there is not that much of real non-Metal music involved. On the top of it all, we have some havoc rushed by the vocalist's throat that, at times, creates pretty good Blackish screams, but otherwise he uses too a growling style to give this creation even a ray of interest.

In other words, this is absolutely not my cup of tea. It might appeal to the fans of early *Abruptum* (the demos and the 7" EP) as this is pretty close to what the Swedes were inventing before going totally nuts with their tortures of blackness. I still wonder a great deal what these guys mean with a title like *Homosexual Orgy on the Gravesite of Aleister Crowley*, though?! Is this their trick to get some exposure, or do they have some negativity towards The Great Beast, then? Strange.

Only one thing - besides death - is real; the great looking green marble vinyl, that is limited, but still available at *LTR* for 6 USD. So if you feel like not letting this one pass by, well, you better hurry up.

Black Mass Of Absu, PO. Box 638, Kenmore, NY 14217, USA.
mrskimask@aol.com

Tadas

BLOODHAMMER / VOMITFAGO 8/8
Cold Blood and Boiling Semen split 7" EP
Embers / Hilloos

What a nice, little, nasty vinyl. Neither of the bands know anything about music, in the most strict sense of the word, but that doesn't mean this dirty piece of Black Metal filth wouldn't entertain you. It does. So, if you're in a need of something blasphemous and gruesome, I couldn't imagine a better way to spend your bucks. At least not today.

Northwind

BLOOD STORM / MORIA 9/8
An Attack of Sonic Torment / Evil Rapid Death split MLP
Hellframe

To my surprise, *Blood Storm* and *Moria* have much more in common with each other than I first had thought. I thought *Blood Storm* were more Black Metal and *Moria* more Death Metal than they in reality are. Both the bands share and cherish a robust old-school feeling in their music, which affects primarily the song-structure department.

Blood Storm's present with three tracks. *Clavicula Solomonis* (of the *Lightless Fire*) and *Destroyer* are their own pieces of Blackened Metal while *War Is Hell* is snatched from *Exciter's* classic *Violence & Force* album, and it is, I admit, a great song and I do also like the way *Blood Storm* have churned it out here. Their own songs are no less interesting, though. *Destroyer*, in particular, just coerce the listener into relentless headbanging, and there's nothing you can do about it. An impressive achievement.

The *Moria* death squad delivers two tracks of primitive, old-school Black Death Metal that isn't entirely worked out, but it is enjoyable enough as they have come up with some catchy ideas as well.

Blood Storm, 2729 Pratt St., Philadelphia, PA 19137, USA.

Moria, c/o *Joakim Widen*, Vallmövagen 50, 311 33 Falkenberg, Sweden.

Northwind

CANTUS BESTIAE / PURITAS VIRGINUM 9/6
The Cult of Sterility 7" EP

This EP with two French hordes is self-released in 200 copies, so it already is a collectors' item, and when it comes to the music, or rather the combination of two separate soundscapes, I can't see this release to be on demand from wider audience. It is simply too underground and, well, too exceptional.

Cantus Bestiae, an uncompromising French Black Metal crew that I still remember from their demo a while ago starts the treat. Three tracks are recorded live and bear that typically rough quality descending from the early/mid 90's. Can't claim that these new songs would be the new discovery of the Black Metal underground, but they certainly bear enough ugliness, filth and destruction altogether. The impact is done by that specific shriek effect put through reverb. The feeling is as if *Spica* is sharing his messages from the lands of unholy fire. Still, this outfit is up and coming, I guess we will hear more from them soonish.

Puritas Virginum are next in line, but they have nothing to do with Necro Black Metal or Metal in general. You are quite right thinking that this is another synth project, but this is not childish stuff. It is a kind of weird manifestation of Satanic doom. And doomed is the listener! However, I feel awkward with *Obsession*, one of the three tracks that has a cheap techno (or is it disco?) beat in there. I can't

Northwind

relate it with the rest of their side, especially with the dark atmosphere of *Ve Pas Saurir*. Well, there is a narration and some extra grim feel behind that rhythm, but, anyway. It would better suit some gothic rock troupe.

So, to summarize, this is a weird EP pressed on thick vinyl.
Cantus Bestiae, *Anthony Cormier*, 126 Bd J.J. Rousseau, 72000 Le Mans, France.

Tadas

CECILIA ET SES ENNEIS 8
Mon Engin d'Enfer 7" EP
Telstar

Take a wild guess what we have here. Oh yeah, if you have gone through the album review-section already, the label's name can suggest this and that, but this record is stepping even further outside heavy music in comparison to other rock 'n roll releases on *Telstar*. I am in serious trouble when trying to correctly say what kind of muzak this is... rockabilly, maybe? Whatever that means, huh.

Okay, it sounds like really poppy but certainly groovy rock that is both suitable for dancing and just for listening to at home. One characteristic touch is that they sing in French. Well, could it be that they hail from France? Not sure, but everything here breathes of French culture. Another point is that they have a female singer - chanteuse, that is - who has an appealing voice. She brings subtlety into the picture, as well as mellowing the initially rocky climate.

As far as the tracks' thematic, the funny parts go - *Cecilia* sings about golden engines, vampires, popcorn and pop music. Seems like the four-piece wanna have some fun and amuse the listeners as well while their at it. And last but not least - this music is very 'laid-back', it does not pretend to sound modern at all. On the contrary, at this point it is just as underground as mine and yours precious 'Black Metal', to put it like that. I mean, they do not paint faces, do not hide behind evil nicknames - well, just the usual ones, hah - and they are not even so badly accepted by the general public, but I believe the market is not very big for such 60's memorabilia of music industry. Maybe that's the reason they like vinyl, too? I guess this label has released a bunch of them, as well as other companies specialising in rock 'n roll. I doubt their full-length would suite me fine, though. Too funny stuff, maybe? Ok, for the sake of variety - listen to this.

Tadas

CLANDESTINE BLAZE / DEATHSPELL OMEGA 9/10
split LP
Northern Heritage

There are people who'd like to see the end of the world today. They live in Finland and France. They call themselves *Clandestine Blaze* and *Deathspell Omega*. *Northern Heritage* and *End All Life*, too.

Though I do not respect or agree with the concept all these people have driven Black Metal into, I'm not here to review their thoughts, barely the music, I would like to state, however, in this context that Black Metal has never been about hating all life and ending the planet. Such attitudes are more linked with a 16-year-old boy's pubertal daydreams than with the esoteric concept, soaked in Satanism, dwelling behind what you understand as 'Black Metal'. But this really is not the time or the place...

So, leaving concepts aside, both bands do offer their share of Black Metal rather well. Especially the French *Deathspell Omega*, whose remorseless and grim Black Metal devastation is, as a matter of fact, highly enjoyable. Yeah, it's *Darkthrone* I'm forced to mention... But I would still say there's more to *Deathspell Omega* than their too obvious *Transilvanian Hunger* rape. The 3 tracks here are all well composed, tight and strong Black Metal outlets that will inevitably leave you shivering with a thirst for more of this morbid savagery.

Northwind

DENIAL OF GOD 9
Robbing the Grave of the Priest 7" EP
Warlord



They are turning into one of the main competitors for the biggest vinyl addicts of the Black Metal underground that *Sabbat* and *Horna* undoubtedly are. I am sure this mania is just getting tempos, in *DOG's* case! Seems like this

is again entirely exclusive material, and that is the best quality seven inches can offer for the listeners, in my opinion.

Well, *Warlord* has done its best to deliver a neat package, where artwork shines through even if the front-cover consists only of the band-logo. Yet those colours and symbols all over work fuckin' great with the actual music! Right here I must admit, though, that I enjoy these two tracks less than the stuff presented on *The Crypt Has Eyes 7"*. It is just ok Black Metal, performed with morbidity and attitude, but absolutely not revelational stuff. A somewhat similar feeling I

recollect was listening to *Klabautermanden* MLP. That little extra is missing, but could be transformed with a hook or two, though it's really hard to say how this could be realised in reality. In other words, maybe the problem is just me, or my mood today, as I cannot get into those morose sonic waves of raw, electrifying Black Metal.

The title-track molests with church-bells from the very start, then followed by a merciless onslaught and a certain deathlike smell. The reverse side has an unrepentant rendition of *Funeral Fog*, and again – where is the atmosphere of the original? At least it is very much different, I would say – much poorer in this case – I am talking about the recording itself, and not the skills of those guys to perform **Mayhem**.

Still, I recommend this 7" for Black Metal fans, and do not claim **Denial Of God** got worse after this release. It's just a question of two songs, so take it for what it is – a limited edition (1000 hand-numbered copies) seven inch record!!!! Priced is 7\$ at the **Ledo Takas** address.

Denial Of God, c/o *Ustumallagam*, Noerager 10C, 1.mf., DK-6400 Soenderborg, Denmark. ghoull@get2net.dk

EXORDIUM

Exordium MLP

Northern Heritage

Fairly fast, serious yet unoriginal, Black Metal from Finland. It has the necessary dose of genuine feeling inside, making it impossible for me to trash it even though I, for some obscure reason, feel very much tempted to do so anyway. Why? Because whereas I do respect bands that are willing to sacrifice originality for the sake of purity, on the other hand it means that those given bands have to be even more extravagant at churning out the old ideas in an exciting way. And quite frankly I don't hear that happening when I listen to **Exordium**. Sorry, *Norbwind*

FLAUROS

Third Curse 7"EP

Dark Horizon

Hmm, the label's presentation sounds a bit strange to me; 'these songs are vinyl released only and will not be available on any other recording'. Maybe well not, but *May the Hell Embrace* HAS already been featured once. I cannot argue, though – maybe this is a new rendition of the song. There is nothing mentioned about when it was recorded, but I have the **O / Flauros** split tape in my collection with this (majestic) composition featured. Well, that tape was limited to a certain amount of copies...

That's enough about the exclusiveness of this material. Now, let's admit that *Third Curse* is a really strong third output of this Finnish Black Metal horde. They are not of those dirty 90's sound worshippers, they actually have much more to do with keyboard-friendly melodic Metal. Yet, just as much as **Thyane**, ... And **Oceans** or **Azaghal**, they share a massive part of the music to the unholy Black Metal sound waves, as if summoning the dark powers through their music. It's not just a cliché way to describe black sounds, but something really is springing from these depths. Side B has *Child of Vela*, a bit calmer and different track for them, with clean guitar moments and strange ominous narration. You might like it less, but it still is a very strong song.

I think that **Flauros** are now ready to deliver a full-length album, and this must be the trial for them so far, as these short tape and vinyl releases, as well as their debut MCD, can be good on their own, but they just make the admirers of such music demand more.

Oh yeah, this red as thy blood vinyl is limited to the ungodly 666 copies and comes with a good looking glossy envelope, where a lightning storm is depicted in full colour. Get your copy now, for 7 USD from **LTR!**

Flauros, c/o *Sinkkonen*, Poreite 10 as. 2, 80160 Joensuu, Finland. flauros@hotmail.com

FLAUROS

Suicide picture 7"EP

Embers / Hillios

I don't know which one of these 7"EPs actually felt the burdening light of the world first, but I don't think that really matters. Brother **Tadas** already had his say about **Flauros** above, so now it's my turn.

Having not heard **Flauros** previously, but having read quite a few of their interviews, I was expecting a whole lot more sinister Black Metal attack than what the opener *Suicide* proposes. That song is actually closer to **Sentenced**'s darker passages than anything what I had in mind, but it does work amazingly well, and even so in harmony. The other featured track, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, is then more Black Metal as such – satisfying at least some of my stubborn yearnings.

If you're into Black Metal, or the darker side of Metal music in general, do grab this nice looking vinyl by all means. There are worse things in life, trust me.

FLOWING TEARS & WITHERED FLOWERS 8

Joy Parade LP

In Vision Musik!

If you ask me, their debut album was tragic. Not in the sense that it would have been a remembrance of some tragedy transformed into music, but that effort itself was tragically boring. I never judge the entire sub-genre by its characteristic vibe, and would never claim that all the Doom or atmospheric bands are total waste of time, but this case I am much more pessimistic than with most others. I have been simply falling asleep when trying to consume that debut.

Well, its follower still can't keep me totally awake throughout the set, but at least the music is better stuck together, and has good creative decisions here and there. Yeah, it is absolutely free of other influences than emotions blended with heavy music – you could easily use the term 'romantic' here. But when the listener starts to compare these tracks with something created by **Anathema**, or let's say early **The 3rd And The Mortal** (just examples of excellent emotional music, no direct comparisons!), this is but a poor expression.

I am not quite sure what exactly gives me the feeling of listening to something average – is it the voice of the girl who sings, or doesn't the atmosphere convince me entirely to enjoy it to the max, or am I not totally satisfied with how the production turned out? Or maybe it's that vinyl might not be the best source available with which to play emotional music?!! Heh, vinyl was meant for Metal! Honestly, maybe there were too many attempts to write something good in this field throughout last seven years or so, and you cannot enjoy it anymore when some of the feeling is missing.

Well, I think I know a shortcut to explain my indifference: there is no heaviness in this work! It is meant to be listened to in moments of depression and utter solitude, and I don't feel like being in that mood. Give me more kick in the soul these days, please!! Aye, the LP is black as night, a limited edition, and comes with a standard envelope (good front-picture, though).

FORLORN IN SILENCE

Forlorn In Silence adv. 7"EP

Mournful Silence

Much time has passed since the first songs by this Norwegian outfit were made. They had a break, and after that, only *Adbramalecb* is left from the original 1996 line-up. It is obvious then to expect a step forward, and these two brand new songs do, indeed, show just that.

Still performed in the same majestic, dreamy atmospheric way, it certainly brings forth a Norwegian Black Metal feel, but if a proper label would be demanded, then I would say something like 'a milder version of Dark Metal', with early **Aeternus** in mind. Many keyboard parts, and the riffs are traditionally melodic. So, yeah, this is not anything new, despite that some new heights were promised by Mr. *Adbramalecb* himself. But it does create a safe feeling, especially for those 'melomaniacs' interested in the 1994-1996 Norwegian Black Metal era – when the music got the intention to move in a more melodic and atmospheric way.

Can't argue that **Forlorn In Silence** wouldn't introduce a one single new element in their music, and it is good they do that. I feel here and there, though, that these moves from a fast part to a calm part, or vice versa, are a bit clumsy – music needs more bridges in-between – but it does sound fine, all in all. Except the drum-machine. Aye, that's a job of another participant, *Quille*, who also takes care of synth-arrangements (because it goes hand in hand on that PC program, I presume).

With a live drummer and thicker production this could grow into something remarkable. Their full-length album would be a good chance to see what happens. Do not miss, however, one of these 250 red – or the same amount of black – vinyl copies. They are available for 8 USD or 15 DM each from their own label.

The True FROST

Invoking the Aeon of Satan LP

Hellframe

When it comes to bands like **The True Frost** from Germany, it's always the 'love & hate' deal. There's just no way around it. Is primitive Black Metal but an inevitable result springing from a lack of skilled musicians? Or is this primitive feeling some bands cherish an intentional element brought about consciously to stress the bestial side of the music? Or both? Naturally every related band would be quick to make us believe the latter theory, but I think whereas the primitive feeling might be brought about intentionally to a certain extent, it is nevertheless a result often forced by the lack of talents.

The True Frost are very primitive. The drum-work on the album sounds rather sloppy, unimaginative and... erm... primitive. The vocals are pretty close to those *Nocturno Culto* did on *Panzerfaust* – you know, no effects, just the... erm... primitive scream. I believe the best element on the album is the grim & aggressive guitar-work in all its simplicity, which fits the raw overall feeling of the band remarkably well, resulting in an atmosphere that is at the same time both Satanic and convincing, though yet bordering somewhere on the thin line that separates simple music from getting too simple for its own good.

So? The conclusion? Well... I don't know. *Invoking the Aeon of Satan* can very well be a masterpiece of archaic Satanic Black Metal where even extremities are pushed to a limit, representing one canon of our cult – or, it can just easily be but the laughingstock of German Black Metal for years to come. It depends. There are days, you know, when you really need his sort of raw anger but there are at least just as many days when you wonder why on earth anyone would create, record, print, distribute, advertise or even write about bands like **The True Frost**.

Have to mention that I like the way this vinyl looks, though. The front-cover's excellent. It makes you wanna buy this – that is if you still go for the woods and the moon and stuff. I do.

The True FROST / PANZERFAUST

Wolfszeit / Gotteshaus in Flammen 7"EP

Satanic Terror



besides those blast beats and bloody, saw-like guitar riffs. And they are close to getting away with it.

As far as I can recall, **Frost** were sounding fairly average on their split EP with **Kaiadas** a while back. Their tune here is better. It makes

me believe they have moved on in the quest for the total doom and aggressive provocations of all the white lambs. I do enjoy **Panzerfaust** a head much more, though – by this track they present here certainly has a deeper feeling, even if shaped by the more or less same type of fast ripping Black Metal monolith. Their vocalist fits the picture quite well with his flat 'Norwegian' throat. Something in-between *Nocturno Culto* and *Abbat*, respectfully. And then they have a slowing down part for the end of this tune – superb!! Yeah, definitely they have much to offer for all the **Darkthrone** fans around. Can anyone suggest me where to find more songs of **Panzerfaust**?

The bloodred vinyl and black/white (rather black/grey) envelope are good visual duo in combination, and when the music leaves quite strong feelings in memory, I can't see a reason why to miss this! Oops, the label boss corrects me – it is sold out already... but if you find this 7" from some distro – grab it at once!! Lucky me to get this promo copy!

GOATFIRE

Sacropobic Initiation LP

Sombre

If you've kept yourself up-to-date with what's going on in the most eerie layers of our Cult, you ought to be already well aware of the grim existence of **Goatfire** – a Satanic Black Metal horde from Italy that's been threatening the world with quite a few vinyl releases lately.

Now, I do think the band have a lot to learn and a whole lot to improve, not least on getting their music tighter and more precise, but these tracks do reek of the kind of honesty and will only a band wholeheartedly black-hearted could generate. And that's the highest quality and value in **Goatfire**'s music at the moment. It just sounds so astonishingly... well, astonishingly 'underground' and real.

Well, I think with a better sound-quality *Sacropobic Initiation* could have cut the listener even deeper, but, nonetheless, this is still a pretty enjoyable piece of Black Metal obscurity, and it would be my suggestion that you add this to your collection, but be quick as it's again limited to mere 350 copies.

Goatfire, c/o *Saliari Nicola*, Via India 73, 41100 Modena, Italy. sunandiron@hotmail.com

GONKULATOR / LYMPHATIC PHLEGM

split 7"EP

Fudgeworthy

Can you believe that a vinyl label releasing limited edition 7"EPs is still able to make promotion these days? Personally I have never met anything similar in my practise, and it's *Charlie* who has brought this surprise in. It even says 'promos to tons of mags + zines worldwide' on the release sheet!! Huh, then the number of promos must outrun the actual printrun of the record, hah. Ok, jokes apart, but it's fuckin' great to notice this campaign... I just hope that more vinyl-labels would follow this example and make at least some promotion. Everybody's vinyl is welcomed in our *Vinylized!!!* section, in other words.

Down to the music... it is very extreme on this blue vinyl, but not necessarily as good. Well, **Gonkulator**, the label-owner's band, is very special, combining elements of chaotic grind and slow torturing Metal, as well as some unstructured noise – in the true sense of this word. Add there the intense effect-filled Black Metal-like screaming, and the total cacophony will drive you insane. Yeah, anti-music for special people – the freaks. As he names it himself, *unholy black noise*.

Side two has the Brazilian perverts with their grinding Death splatter gore – a typical case, yet with a drum-machine. It does not matter much in such music whether you use a real drummer or not, though. Lots of brutality, reverb-friendly growls and horrific intros. One good characteristic is that both bands present only unreleased tracks, although **Lymphatic Phlegm**'s recordings date back to 1997.

Lymphatic Phlegm, c/o *Andre Luiz*, R. Joao Sguarino 242, Osvaldo Cruz 1 CIC, Curitiba/PR 81.170-000, Brazil.

GRAND BELIAL'S KEY

Judebeast Assassination LP

End All Life

Ladies and gentlemen, the new album of the Black Metal icon is upon us, and I am more than eager to present it in the right way – right here! Intrigue was fluttering in the air all the time, and lucky was the one who has obtained **GBK**'s latest offerings on small vinyl – one EP was out last year, and another split 7" earlier this year. A brand new album was inevitable, and moreover that, the keepers of **Belial**'s knowledge are not the most productive crew in the world, yet their Metallic attacks as much as the sharp propaganda spread through interviews as well as lyrics is always like a new prick into feeble hearts.

Our dear comrade *Curriculum Mortis* has named this new album as 'ordinary Deathrash', thus implicating a sharp examination of mine before giving it any comment. Well, in a way I can understand his disappointment – indeed, musically **GBK** have stepped into a bit more intense, maybe faster, Metal, but no way have they abandoned the sickness and the evil between the riffs or the masterful, vomit-like growling (screaming, if it suits you better)! It is still there, and I would never claim otherwise, my darling!

Well, if someone out there presumes that there is nothing left from early **Grand Belial's Key** – you are wrong! It's one of those bands you cannot miss for any other, their heritage originates from the very famous *Goat of a Thousand Young* demo-tapes. Damn great that they have not abandoned their roots: the entire set of these eight songs is the best proof of it. I would not accept any single tune as such – not that they are all the same, though – because the album is a one fuckin' whole. To listen to a few separate tracks of it would be like having sex without partner(s!).

To finalise a brand new mockery on Jehovah, they cover an ugly song of a famous punk-rocker (or whatever his music could be named as) *GG Allin*, arrogantly titled *I Kill Everything I Fuck*. I bet this says it all – expect a fuckin' blasphemy!!! Let alone, the gatefold LP looks just wonderful. I almost see **GBK**'s aura around the shape of this precious vinyl slab! Collectors item (of curse limited to the 666 pieces...!)

Grand Belial's Key. The Black Lourde Of Crucifixion, 938
Galbreath Avenue, Marcus Hook, PA 19061, USA.
spmr_of_the_antichrist@hotmail.com, http://
grandbelialskycjb.net

HAEMORRHAGE / GONKULATOR 9/7
split 7"EP
Fudgeworthy

What is the standard of an American 7"EP releasing label? Usually a simple black vinyl and a photocopied sheet of paper without layout, serving as a cover. A familiar picture there, I believe. They sometimes do press a coloured vinyl, but mostly never end up producing pro-printed covers. Not a fatal arrow of critics to **Fudgeworthy** in particular - this has to do with the underground fashion down there, or simply the funds that are not around. Anyway, I want to emphasise that **Charlie** has managed to put out a nicely worked out marble vinyl, and he also adapted the record label with silver and black colours. It looks unpretentious and collector-friendly. Each and every copy of the printed 500 comes with a sticker that has the logos of both the bands as well. But the cover is still photocopied...

However, I enjoyed this seven inch more than the other **Gonkulator** split. Their chaotic manifestations of devilish sonic torture were recorded on the same day - 13th of October, 2000 - but, well, the music is not the same as on the previous split. The experiments are alike, yet played differently.

The Spanish grind monsters make this split EP much more amusing and diverse, though. They bring a dynamic aggression within - something that the above reviewed split obviously lacked. Three of the **Haemorrhage** songs are re-recorded from earlier releases, so their fans will certainly recognise them in a second. But there is no doubt about their worth for a collector. Each and every **Fudgeworthy** EP costs 5 USD for the world.

Haemorrhage, c/o **Luisma**, c/Roma #4, 8^a, 28820 Coslada - Madrid, Spain, fax (+34) 915311122,
lugubrious@repulserrecords.com, www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/
Cabaret/2308-haemorrhage.htm

HORNA / FOG 10/8
split 7"EP
Dark Horizon

It's strange that I've somewhat known the **Horna** fellows since they started the band, but I've never actually heard any of their music, with the exception of **Varjoissa** and **Hidentorni** demos that I didn't actually fancy all that much. It's even stranger, though, to see the status they've gained in the international Black Metal scene, as that's vast, to say the least.

Listening to their side of this seven inch, however, makes me wanna say that it isn't actually that strange at all - the status they have gained, that is. Cold and strong Black Metal art with a genuine feel all over it. Besides, the bands that have played Satanic Black Metal throughout their existence without failing the concept at some point can be counted on one hand. **Horna** is one of them. The vocals should be improved, though, as the basic scream just won't do anymore. Not for me anyway. Not like this.

Fog from the States is pretty competent as well. Nothing I would listen to in total excitement, but still good and solid Black Metal with a grim touch to it, so I think you should get this vinyl if you still are able to find it somewhere.

HOUWITSER 9
March to Die 7"EP
Displeased



A blast from the past!!! One song is more recently recorded, but even it is a cover of **Possessed**, so how can we possibly name it as 'new'? Another one is taken from the older recordings of **Houwitsier**, done in 1998. And this way the EP becomes an exclusive release, although it does sound like a standard release in these days of the vinyl culture's rebirth. No, I'm not against this, and you know it perfectly well! And when it features something as cult as **Possessed**, what kind of a reaction there might be? Kill or be killed! One more collectible cutie for your spinning turntable, especially if Dutch death metal makes thy day brighter... eh, I mean darker! **Houwitsier** has got quite some attention in the last couple of years, so it goes without saying that this limited thing will go out of print literally in minutes, and you'd better rush now to avoid looking for it from some obscure distro-lists months later! A dark green marble vinyl here!

Ah, back to their songs... **March to Die** is firmly downtuned, brutalised, and adopted to the character of the band's music, but it sounds cool, unlike those Thrash bands' covers with the growling vocals in various different 'tributes' everyone is so sick of. You'll find an insane lead part in the middle of the track. Eh, I've just put back **Beyond the Gates** just to compare... Well, the original of course has a deeper feeling, but yeah, that was another epoch... The next song sounds a bit more obscure because the sound-quality is much weaker there, and in general I think that tune was just a passing stage for them. Well, let's just say that if it was unreleased before, then I see the reason why.

Rounding it up, a good slab!

MARTIRE 9
Lucifer 7"EP
Merciless

Yow, one more Aussie band plaguing the way they all plague down under: extreme and berserk! It's not just another pure Black Death manifestation, though, but rather some fast and suffocating Thrash Metal, produced in as dirty as possible! And they scream mouths full about the desecrating power of Lucifer (ah, why do I bother mentioning that, it should be clear from the title!), so make sure to meet an insane metal four-piece named **Martire**.

This release firmly smells of the 80's stylitics, and the spirit is from those times as well! Let alone the vinyl crunch brings another paradigm about what to expect from the featured three songs. Indeed, the style is quite forgotten. If you know what I mean. And I mean the opposite of all those pathetic retro Thrashers: **Martire** is not like that! On the other hand, I think their compositions are still to be improved. Maybe it's just me mumbling, but a few of the riffs sound way too chaotic and messy. They could have a better feeling in each track, sort of like 'main dish' of the music. However, for the fans of **Ursurper**, **Scepter**, and the whole bunch of extreme Aussie as well as the most intense of the 80's Thrash Metal bands this will be a fuckin' worthy purchase.

Black and red colours of the EP layout certainly emphasise the infernal character of this music. You'll find all the necessary lyrics and pictures here as well. And last but not least this EP is limited, so watch out! By the way, **Martire** have made quite some name for themselves when they released a split 7"EP with **Angelcorpse**, so this EP is like the next step on the way. What's next?

Martire, P.O. Box 238, Findon 5023, South Australia,
don666@arcom.com.au, http://come.to/martire

MOURMANSK 150 6
Resistance Strategies 7"EP
Evil Biker

As I am neither a fan nor an expert of noise/power electronics, the only way left is to simply follow my own mind listening to these two compositions, as well as to use the info-sheets of the label that unleashed this piece of - not a birthday cake, hah, but - terrifying noise. **Con-Dom** and **Brighter Death** Now are used as fundamental icons referring this record to, and I would add **MZ #12** as well. And basically that says it all. Well, it may differ in the frequencies, the tones of screaming, or in the intensity of droning machinery a.k.a. 'music' (?), but those are just details to be discussed among die-hard friends of power electronics.

Must admit that **Mourmansk 150** is heavy weighted - not something for a romantic soul who thinks industrial means a nice lullaby before sleep. Not at all! This works on nerves, damaging brain cells and paralysing co-ordination. Yet I know that some of you, at times subconsciously, want exactly that - to be mutated by sonic violence and then fed different from the common people. This might work for some, and not for others, heh. This is a 45rpm record, but it works rather fine on 33rpm as well... at least there is not much difference, if you ask me.

At last, thanks for the band for a free visit inside a monstrous industrial factory without headphones put on. Does anybody have statistics of how many workers of those monster buildings go deaf after working there for dozens of years? Ask **Mourmansk 150**. I bet they might know... This black vinyl is limited to 300 copies, so you'd better hurry to catch this tool of self-destruction... 6\$ from the **Ledo Takas** address.

NECROPHAGIA 10
Cannibal Holocaust 10"EP
Season of Mist / Displeased



Nothing extraordinary on this five tracker, because it has only two new tracks, but what an intense experience it is! Can't believe it - this EP fuckin' rules! This would fuckin' rule, even on CD!! Heh, the raven-black vinyl sounds better of curse, and the artwork they have completed looks better in bigger, 10" size!

Yeah, let's start with the cover, which is evil, ugly and horrifying, just like the rest of the **Necrophagia**'s freakshow. I believe that after the scandalous video set there is nothing wrong with seeing mutated zombie faces full of maggots and blood in the cover, as if hailing you straight from the horror movie. It looks great, believe me.

Then the title-track is worth of it all. It is the music you would expect from **Necrophagia**: hideous riffs and perverted shrieks, voodoo rhythms, strain in the ear, graveyard smell, infernal persecution... It starts with a weird piano interlude, and then bursts into a real necrotic attraction, including a slow, Doomy break. If the new full-length is in this vein, we can expect nothing but a masterpiece! The other unreleased track is not new, but yet unreleased. Kind of an ambient experiment with haunting narration - a short composition that could work as an intro as well. Nothing special, though. Then the guys have also included demo versions of two tracks from their previous album and the **Black Blood**... MCD. Those are for the ultimately devoted fans, indeed. For the rest it's just a nice listen to rarer versions of those songs, most probably played live in a rehearsal studio. And to top it off there's a cover of **Mayhem**, **Chainsaw Lust**. The first part sounds cool, but then that grinding mess ruins the feeling a bit. Or is it my turntable giving a shitty sound?! Hmm, time to think about a better record player... Anyway, a cool release from the crypt! What's next?

NEFARIUM 8
Avernus 7"EP
Maggot

There was an intriguing online advertisement for this release as well as

the label's suggestions, so I have both contacted the band and traded a copy of this piece of black wax. Well, maybe it was for the sake of the **Adversam** drummer and another player who contribute to this recording that I decided to check this one out. And not in vain! I mean, without a real drummer - the way they've been performing until now - this music sounded just average, whilst **Stammum Algor** adds that unforgettable 'live' feel to it. So, even if I did miss the **Nefarium** demo, I dare to claim that this is better stuff and, indeed, music to keep an ear on - especially if you have been a long-time follower of extreme Black Metal, and the Scandinavian school in particular. I find traces of **Immortal** and **Mayhem** in their music, but the sound is not powerful and suitable for the actual riffs and blast-beats. Another drawback is the vocalist **Gbaul**, who tries to sing in the vein of **Abbat**, but much like other followers of this notable singer, he fails to even come close to that bestial and haunting pitch.

This EP is 45 rpm, and therefore it is clear without saying that the running time is quite short - just some 8 minutes or so. That's actually what I do not enjoy about seven inches, and why I would personally never make such a short EP myself. It is simply not enough music to get a picture of the artist.

Alright, when it comes to **Nefarium**, I believe this band will grow into something, but they do need a thicker guitar oriented production and some vocal improvement. Then the Black Metal world might witness another strong Italian team, alongside **Adversam**. Limited to 300 copies!

Nefarium, **Filippone Fabio**, Reg. Fontanalle 26, 11020 St. Christophe, Aosta, Italy, nefarium@libero.it, http://web.tiscalinet.it/nefarium

NUNSLAUGHTER 10
Hell on Switzerland 7"EP
Ordeals

This is for the chosen few **Nunslaughter** is probably the last band I would recommend for anyone appreciating the more 'musical' qualities in Black Metal, and **Hell on Switzerland** is but yet another sinister landmark of that. It is an indisputable fact that hellfire's inside this seven inch - that I can guarantee you.

Recorded live in Switzerland in September, 2000, **Hell on Switzerland** consists of 5 short tracks of fast Christ-strangling Black Noise that will definitely steal the hearts of those who've come to enjoy the inexplicably obscure sounds only bands and releases like this can conjure up. I don't think anyone who hasn't got possessed by the more bestial side of Black Metal could actually ever understand anything about this accomplished BM devotion and madness.

A great release in other words that has the word 'cult' written all over it, in many a way. Not least because this release marked the birth of **Ordeals Records** - the new record company of the former **Stregaica** clan. So, limited to 1000 hand-numbered copies, rest assured that this release does most obviously deserve its place in that dark corner of your vinyl collection. Costs 7\$ (Europe) and 7.5\$ (elsewhere) from the label.

nun666slaughter@hotmail.com, www.nunslaughter.com

NUNSLAUGHTER 9
Hell on Switzerland 7"EP
Ordeals

Nunslaughter do not retreat, they still hope to outrun **Sabbat** in number of seven inch records released! Guess what - they have got this new live EP series going! It is not that unique of an idea in the history of music, or Metal music - that is, but it is great anyway to see the passion of these fuckers to go on with both Death Metal and the vinyl cult! No doubt about it anymore as **Nunslaughter** have been doing this for many years now. There is already **Hell on Germany** released now, and more EPs coming? What else could you expect from the band which gives its record such epithets as *Side Dying Christ* and *Side Hate Festus*, huh? These are the things that make people talk about a legendary status.

Let me tell you, they have fans in Switzerland! Especially for that crew there is one new track, pretty slow and torturing *The Fucking Witch*, whilst others are taken from the first full-length and maybe some earlier releases. Anyway, a fan of the band will easily get the point, despite that the recording quality is pretty rough. Something you could expect from any obscure bootleg live recording from the past. Say, the Deathrash era of 1989 or so. But it is not a matter at the end of the day as this record, limited to 1000 hand-numbered copies, is dedicated to the fans that (strive to) have all the EP releases of the band in their collection as well as to those who are fascinated by vinyl in general.

This EP also marks the birth of a record label, which I believe will gain a respected name very quickly if it has done that yet. **Nunslaughter** is the right choice for this start, indeed! Hail to the **Ordeals** crew!

NUNSLAUGHTER 9
Hell's Unholy Fire picture LP
Ordeals

More **Nunslaughter** insanias on **Ordeals**. First of all, I love the way this one looks. The label has really done just marvelous work in this picture LP, capturing the true essence of Black Metal art in the vinyl that looks so unholy I bet most of the fuckers will just hang it on the wall.

Straightforward. Primitive. Old-school. Dark. Brutal. Those are the first five words popping up in my mind as I'm listening to this bestial annihilation. **Nunslaughter** likes it in-your-face all the way, and there's not a damn thing you can do about it. I do think, however, that a band like **Nunslaughter** works much better on demos and these limited seven inch records than on a full-length. No, it's not boring, if that's what you thought I'm implying here. It's just that their short tracks make somehow a more lasting impression if they're delivered onto you in smaller amounts. There are 18 of their short tracks in this LP, and some of the tracks just get too lost in here.

Oh well, you know what to do. 17 euros (Europe) or 17 bucks (the rest) for this limited release isn't too much.

Norbwind

Evil Dreams / Begotten Son split picture 7" EP
Ordealis

In spite of the fact that I do consider **Nunslaughter** as one of the great grandmasters of the Black & Death Metal scene, this is a battle I'm afraid they'll lose. **Nunslaughter's** delivery on this beautiful picture seven inch is as Satanic and blasphemous as ever, but somehow I can't really concentrate on their material here, because... FUKK! Because **Derketa** is back! FUKK!

That's right, you sinners. You believe this? It's exactly this obscure Death Metal sound I've been longing to hear all these years, and only a band like **Derketa** can conjure up this sort of ancient magic. Listening to these songs of theirs makes me wanna throw away most of the modern Death Metal garbage I have, in a lack of releases like this, mistakenly collected. And that's something **Derketa** can be proud of. The sound of this band glides me exactly back to the heydays of obscure Death Metal, and what a feeling it is to hear this accomplished nostalgia today. I love it.

Just get this limited item (500 copies) for 10 euros (Europe) or 10 bucks (the rest).

Northwind

OBTEST 10

Prieki picture 7" EP
Miriquidi / City Of The Dead

This was a prelude to the glorious return of the heathen warriors, accumulated by yours truly. As a prelude this EP released a few months before the new album, was speaking fairly loud on its own! **Obtest** have never written a weak track, so these tunes are no exception!

In fact, you will find all these songs on other releases, so this is really just a promotional single to make all Metal freaks aware that Lithuanian Metal is alive and hell well!!! The title-track was featured on a **Dangus** compilation album only, and will never end up on any album, so this live version of the song must be the most exclusive of the four pack. Besides that song, recorded in Berlin, there is another live track done in Vilnius, as if making symbolic parallel between two countries. **Obtest** do lots of historical research in their ideology, and needless to say Lithuanian tribes had many historical meetings with Germans. Away from that, another message of this vinyl is to prove to all the sceptic gig-organisers that **Obtest** kick ass live, and there is no reason to ignore them in live situations! Where is your new tour offer, mister? Well, these live tunes are not the absolute best you can get from a live-show as it was recorded in a typical underground way with minimal editing. The vocals sound a bit chaotic and certainly not well put together. On the other hand, they wanted the EP to reflect the live-sound and all the mistakes are just like a part of it. Let it be so.

Both of the featured studio-songs are just raw versions of what is now featured on *Auka Seniems Dierams*, sort of like demo material if you want. Anyway, this EP is essential for every **Obtest** fan, moreover that it has a printrun of only 400 copies! Let alone the picture disk looks genius with all those colours and heroic images! Grab a copy from **LTR** for 8\$!!!

www.obtest.lt

Tadas

PERISHED 11

Grim 10" EP
Apocalyptic Empire

This is fucking great! Not utterly original or anything, but if you love the cold, raw Norwegian Black Metal sound to the insane extent that I do, I guess it's safe to say **Grim** won't let you down. The way **Perished** paint these dark, majestic visions of northern darkness with their music is just beyond any human words.

And the band isn't actually a newcomer either as they've been around since '91 or so, if that's what you were wondering. I still remember adoring their second demo *Through the Black Mist* in '94 as that was rather an exceptional demo with all those beautifully dark melodies. In fact, they've re-recorded the *Autumn Misery* track from that demo here. Nice move. Maybe someone should put that demo available again as *Autumn Misery* wasn't the only song there worthy of re-releasing...

Come to think of it, I really can't figure out why this band has never been exposed to any greater public. Maybe it's been a matter of choosing the wrong labels, or maybe they've been at the wrong place at the right time. I dare to believe, for instance, that their debut CD *Kark* mostly passed the Black Metal consuming humanoid unnoticed, which is a shame as it was a damn fine record.

Well, I feel like stumbling on words here, as is the case usually with the records you really like, so just stop reading and buy this good looking MLP from anywhere you can find it. Simple as that.

Northwind

SABBAT 9

Sabbatical Demonslaught 7" EP
View Beyond

Another seven inch in the never-ending saga of these Japanese Metal kings. It's unbelievable what a following they have among all tiny vinyl labels that have been fighting recently to get hold of some **Sabbat** 7" EP releases! This one's from 1999, just before that boom, so to say, but that's maybe why it is even more a cult piece of music? Bear in mind that **View Beyond** has pressed only 200 copies of this, and also hand-numbered it. Imagine what is the value of it for a **Sabbat** worshipper!

So, this is their Thrashy Kamikaze Metal style at its purest; smashing with rhythmic assaults, crushing with bass and barking screams - is this combination logical at all, ha? - and bombarding with guitar-solos. *Angel of Destruction* is a fast ripping number for the headbanging pit, whilst *Kamikaze Bomber* has a more steady, marching Heavy Metal character - sort of a special track for them, really. Behind those two absolutely exclusive tunes there are a pair of old-time classics, taken from the albums that have still been issued on **Evil Records**, though re-recorded: *Satan Bless You* and *Darkness and Evil*. Next good idea to fill up vinyl space, if not placing there exclusive tracks.

All in all, I still do like to listen to the latest **Sabbat** full-lengths, as they create a much more 'full' view of what they are all about. But this is not a bad effort either. Not at all. Try to catch this red vinyl somewhere, if it's not too late already - that is.

Sabbat, Hoshikawa 1001-4, Kuwana, Mie, 511-0912, Japan.

Tadas

LES SEXAREENOS 6

Can You Do The Nose Mustache? 7" EP
Telstar

An another rock 'n' roll feast here, and once again I have to say that this is not an exception to what I have heard within this musical genre before. **The Beatles** are unbeatable with it all, and your next band can just be the next-in-line wannabes. Yet, in reality, I understand that there is no intention to copy anyone, it's simply that old story that nothing new can be invented anymore. And most importantly - these guys simply have fun and they don't care about what is original.

Yet again, I don't know what to say about this four-tracker. Sounds fine, but nothing special, you know... The biography helps a bit, though; **Les Sexareenos** have been established from an another band, and they already have one album under their belts. This EP has their own compositions and two covers - of bands that you have never heard of before, I'm certain of that.

Ok, nothing else comes to mind - it's all about rock 'n' roll! 45 rpm on black vinyl with a big hole cut in the centre.

Tadas

SVARTSYN 10

Bloodline / His Majesty DLP
End All Life

Man, this is so different from what I heard from **Svartsyn** on their debut album, released by **Folter Records**. Indeed, it was a long time ago, so this time-gap has worked correctly on the band, and finally I can hear some people claiming that this Swedish crew is already a cult formation. Listening to this luxuriously released double album, there are almost no doubts about it! Well, at some point their music can appear as pretty traditional, with words 'Nordic Black Metal' carved in there, but they do catch the right spirit all along those tracks, which is the most important thing, so it works out grimly well, devastating the listener's ears in a second. Who could have believed that in 1995...

This double album consists of two different recording sessions of the band (77 minutes of Black Metal bleakness in total): one organised in the *Sunlight* Studio in 1997-1998, and another held at the unfamiliar to me *Voisin* Studio quite recently (I presume it might be their home studio). That should basically say it all - *Bloodline* has a more polished sound, tighter character, and *His Majesty* is a purely raw, berserk recording with alike music. I think the older album appeals to me better, though - maybe due to the occasional keyboard invasion that creates the right spirit in there. Or maybe it sounds better due to the special kind of sound, which was dropped during the latest recording.

We are, however, talking here about two rather different manifestations of **Svartsyn**, so to compare them to each other is not the best thing to do in this situation. Just take both the parts as they are. Moreover, both sounds better than I expected. A curious thing is that the vinyl factory has fucked up just about everything by sticking *Bloodline* vinyl label to *His Majesty* and vice versa. Be careful before deciding which album is which!

The 500 hand-numbered copies are pressed on traditional black vinyl and wrapped in a gatefold sleeve - don't miss it!

Tadas

UNVEILED 9

Suicide Inc. 7" EP
Shades Of Autumn

This four-piece outfit contribute to the Finnish Black Metal revival with their first 7" EP record that marks also a beginning of a new label (good luck, Mr. *Öhman*!). Well, one can certainly feel their non-conformist Metal of Blackness as well as the raw, ass-kicking attitude. If you hesitate, check a track-file like *Empirium Salbanas* or those pentagrams on the back cover. In other words, there is no doubt identifying them with the Satanic Black Metal movement.

Musically this reminds me of **Enochian Crescent** - though, I am not a fan of them - and have to admit **Unveiled** do rather good with these two songs. Maybe a slight **Impaled Nazarene** touch here and there as well. In fact, their main weapons are mid-tempo and the melodiously arranged, insane riffing. They try to catch a feel with the music, first and foremost. Maybe there is a lack of technical abilities to make the listener's jaws drop, so the emotional side of sickness is touched in major. The vocalist characteristically ranges his pitch from the dark Death Metal growl (think of **Wallachia** and all their followers) to traditionally barking Black Metal scream. Nothing to be excited about for someone loving mean and clean Black Metal, in other words. Must add that with this kind of material, a full-length of **Unveiled** would still be a bit generic.

Well, whatever - I think the right people will move their asses to get copies of this limited 333 hand-numbered copies edition, anyway.

Unveiled, c/o **Lord Luukkainen**, Aironkatu 4-6 a 4, 40100 Jyväskylä, Finland.

Tadas

VOMITOR 9

Neutron Hammer adv. 7" EP
Invictus

Yes, this really sounds like a hammer! Blood flows free in their rehearsals, I believe. Once again the Aussie way to promote death, destruction and the Metal plague here. This is not your fancy New Age Metal/pop, this is Eighties musical dirt to the max. They sort of proudly announce that this was recorded on analogue equipment, and what comes from the speakers is truly a morbid fascination of loud unteachable Metal. Indeed, it might sound too ancient, if you ask my personal point of view. Call it Death, Black or Thrash, it makes no big difference. Simply mayhem music with a possessed vocalist and a South-American feeling in its composing.

A pity that these two short tracks are the entire whole I am acquainted with **Vomitor** so far, but these songs are promising quite a bit. The title-tune is fast and cuts like a knife, while *Midnight Madness* is a mid-paced thrasher with definite obscurity from the early Death Metal underground. I'm holding only an advance tape of this soon-to-be-vinyl release, yet make sure to reserve your copy, as it will be strictly limited, and the first 100 copies will come with an exclusive **Vomitor** patch!

The band did some demo-material prior to this, so ask about that for, say, \$5. I truly believe that this seven inch record will open them for more people, although it is clear without saying that the music they perform is meant to remain deep under the ground.

Vomitor, c/o **Death Dealer**, PO. Box 183, Sherwood, QLD 4075, Australia. devils_metal_legion@hotmail.com

Tadas

City Of The Dead Records, c/o G. Losensky, Kleinruckerswalderstr. 9, 09456 Annaberg-Buchholz/Erzgeb., Germany, cityofthedead@gmx.de

Dark Horizon Records, 6435 West Jefferson Blvd, PMB #666, Fort Wayne, IN 46804, USA, tel./fax (+1) 2197282859, darkhorizon666@hotmail.com, www.geocities.com/darkhorizon666

Diabolical Shapes Records, c/o Franco Tivano, via Revello 6/a, 12037 Saluzzo (CN), Italy, dshapes@hotmail.com

Displeased Records / From Beyond Productions, Ronde Tocht 7d, NL-1507 CC Zaandam, Netherlands, fax (+31) 756704179, displeased@xs4all.nl, www.displeased.nl

End All Life Productions, BP 4, 86 281 St Benoit Cedex, France, fax (+33) 549553872, eal@wanadoo.fr

Evil Biker Records, Laurent Boulouard, Linguennec, F-29140 Saint Yvi, France, evilbiker666@hotmail.com, http://members.tripod.fr/evilbiker

Fudgeworthy Records, 8 Stevin Drive, Woburn, MA 01801, USA, fax (+1) 7819357794, infection@aol.com

In Vision Musik!, Zoodoxoy Pigis 43, Athens 106-81, Greece, tel. (+30) 13304989, fax (+30) 16993343, vision45@hotmail.com

Maggot Productions, c/o Daniele Castagnetti, Via Paganini 34, 20052 Monza (MI), Italy

Merciless Records, P.O. Box 72, 97448 Arnstein, Germany, tel. (+49) 9312604787, fax (+49) 9312604789, info@merciless-records.de, www.merciless-records.de

Miriquidi Productions, Rene Jahn, Haspelweg 6, 09456 Annaberg-Bucholz/Erzgeb., Germany, fax (+49) 3733622554, miriquidiprod2@addcom.de

Mournful Silence Productions, c/o Ringen, Mølleveien 37, N-2010 Strømmen, Norway, l-thom@online.no, http://members.xoom.com/forsilence

Ordealis Records, Elie Bedrugo, 25 Bd Vauban, 13006 Marseille, France, ordealis@hotmail.com

Satanic Terror Productions, Sven Goldberg, Neissstr.30, 38226 Salzgitter, Germany, sven88@freenet.de

Shades Of Autumn Productions, Kirrköjärvi 431, 49400 Hamina, Finland, shadesprod@hotmail.com

Telstar Records, P.O. Box 1123, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA, tel. (+1) 2016592461, fax (+1) 2016539189, telstarrec@aol.com

View Beyond Records, c/o Pavel Tušl, P.O. Box 26, 349 01 Stribro, Czech Republic, vbeyond@atlas.cz

Warlord Records, c/o Alex Vicini, Viale Roma 15, 20095 Cusano Milanino (MI), Italy, tel./fax (+39) 026133672, alexvici@iol.it, www.warlordrecords.com

Art of Electric Impulses

This feature is not here because their debut album is now re-released, or because they have resurrected for the second coming. Well, partly because of that, as it was impossible to catch them for an interview before... believe me, I have been looking for that a long time now. And now they decided to open up for public a bit, so here is maybe one of the first (if not the first) **Manes** interview in years.

I won't go here describing their story – if you don't want to read the interview because of that, go ahead and skip it! I am sure *Skei* (a.k.a. *Cernunnus*) won't be too disappointed! Seems like he commanded the newly recruited *Torstein* to help with some of the answers, but it's here where I shut up and let the wisdom talk:

Tadas

"I talk from my personal point of view. The other members might have opinions and thoughts that differ radically from mine.. Keep that in mind!"

Ok, let me start with the past. You were jamming with Atrax at the dawn of Norwegian Black Metal's explosion. Was it the first band you played in, or maybe some more projects existed? May I ask how were you introduced to musical instruments and which was the first thing you picked yourself?

"I have grown up with music, as my father has been playing things like guitar, piano, accordion, etc., as long as I can remember. When I was around 15 or 16, I started fiddling around with his acoustic guitars, and shortly after, I bought my first guitar myself. Since then I have also 'expanded' to keyboards and played some bass."

There was a time in the beginning when you rehearsed with a full line-up, but then the demos and stuff were recorded as a two-piece project. The new stuff was rehearsed with a full line-up again... Has the recent reincarnation of Manes any other official members behind yourself and *Sargatanas* then? Is the spirit of the time when you were mainly creating all alone still there, or is the bigger crew another kind of a musical experience for you?

"*Manes* is now a 'real' band, with a complete line-up. This is a completely different experience, and have drastically changed my views on what *Manes* should sound like. I still hear the same kind of ideas and melodies, etc., but they are performed differently. Also, I have leaned more and more towards the digital domain, with samplers and loops. As you probably know, *Manes* has always used digital equipment like computers, trackers and samples, but now I feel I know this equipment a lot better and have opened my eyes a bit more. I know what I can do with it, and try to utilize them more fully than before, when I, more or less, just added some electronic stuff 'on top' of the riffs. And, now that *Manes* has a full line-up, there are some different ideas and thoughts concerning arrangements and how to mix analogue instruments with the digital stuff."

Can you predict how the new album for *Code666* can change the status of *Manes*? Are you looking forward to this new venture with an enthused mind, or rather keep your emotions aside, and still have the picture of the band as ascetic - if you allow the expression - as it ever was?

"Change the status? Hmmm, I really can't comment on any status as I have always viewed *Manes* as just something I do for my own pleasure. What other people feel or think about it hasn't really been much of a concern. I have noticed all this 'cult' crap, and I can't really understand it - but I look at *Manes* from the inside, not from the listener's point of view, so... The record labels I've been cooperating with probably have a different view on such things, and, well, it's good that *Manes* and the label have different tasks and methods. *Manes* will continue to be artistic in all ways, and the label will concentrate on the promotional and commercial side, as long as both parts can agree."

It was mentioned about your disease, which caused the hiatus of *Manes* after the demo tapes were recorded. Then *Under Ein Blodraud Maane* was recorded, and again – dead silence followed. Sure I guess it was not about any break of the band, as such things must live in you independently of the releases that are unleashed for the public. Therefore your reactivation was not much of a surprise to me, yet I want to ask you whether you consider writing of music as a relaxing thing? Are you laughing at the bands that write 15-20 songs a year? Do you trash out many ideas before completing a riff or a vocal pattern?

"Nah, it all depends (I think) on your own reasons for playing in a band. If my main goals were to go touring, to sell a lot of records, etc., I would probably do things like most other bands do. But, commercialism and status haven't been my main motivations, so I have done things when I felt like doing them, without any pressure. The diseases haven't really been making any problems as I have had no deadlines, or been dependent on any music related income. I think I understand other bands, which make songs mainly because they want to have new songs, and to fill a record, so that they can go on tour, impress 14 year old girls, and feel important. But it's not really my thing."

About throwing away ideas, I don't really scrap that much material, I have everything lying around on different CDs, tapes, and on my hard disks. There's a difference between throwing stuff away, and not using the ideas. Some day I might go through everything, and perhaps some of the stuff might fit better into what I/we are doing there and then, and perhaps something can be developed further."

Or maybe your writing of music is about the special mood you are catching and can feel only in particular moments of this earthly existence? One of your comrades mentioned to me that you had some personal issues that have been delaying the more active initiatives of *Manes*... Fairly speaking, isn't such things a good inspiration for writing of sinister and dim tunes?

"What 'comrade' are you talking about? Would be interesting to know what you have heard, and from whom... (Okay, it is *Einar* from *Funeral* that has told me exactly what I said to you, nothing more. – T) Anyway, like I explained earlier, *Manes* haven't been on any tight schedules, had that many plans for the future or anything, so there have been no really serious problems. But, perhaps things would be different if I had not had these problems? I don't know, and don't see the point in thinking about it. Things are like this, no matter how, and why. Past and future are uninteresting, we all live in the present ONLY."

Diseases and psychic torture is a good inspirational source, at least for dark and depressing music, because it alters your mind and ways of thinking."

***Manes* has always been a creation of *Cernunnus*, *Sargatanas* only contributing with the vocal parts. Does he create them himself? Have you ever had a vision of suiting it to be a one-man band, that was so**



in vogue back in the early days? Or maybe vocals are not a thing you'd like to take care of?

"There weren't that many melodic vocal lines, he he. All stuff were done relatively impulsively, there and then stuff. Vocals are music-enhancement."

I believe that you have a very strict understanding of what you write and perform. But on the other hand it is much different from what can be found in the Norsk Black Metal history. *Manes* sounds quite atmospheric and mysterious, yet that ancient sound and feeling prevails in your compositions...

"Earlier, I was very interested in, and followed more closely, the Black Metal 'scene', and especially the Norwegian one. This of course (like everything else) influenced my thoughts and ideas, and it just turned out to be Black Metal. I have a lot of the same ideologies and theories now, but I have kind of opened up for a lot of other stuff, and because of this the result is a bit different. The most important thing in music (both when 'composing' and listening to other stuff) is that when it has passed through my mind, it should do something with that grey substance, not just being 'consumed'. Moods and atmosphere are important."

Your lyrics seem to be written in quite a simple and understandable manner. Yet they haunt a person who reads them by their strong symbolical power, and all those sparks between the lines... Is it the way you enjoy expressing yourself, or rather the style of writing from the past?

"With the old lyrics I just tried to enhance the moods already present in the music. They weren't that serious or in-depth, although they were about themes and concepts that fascinated and inspired me. As long as they seemed to fit into the whole *Manes* concept, they were good enough. *Sargatanas* also have a vocal style that fits this concept extremely well. Nowadays *Torstein* is doing most of the lyrics. We have discussed some topics, but he is doing the writing."

Torstein: "When I first was asked to contribute with lyrics for *Manes*, I immediately felt where I wanted to go with them and, to some degree, what topics they would encompass. I have known the other members of *Manes* for

a long time and heard the music develop. Apart from that *Skei* and me have spent many waking nights discussing some of the topics. I don't want to reveal what the lyrics are about... because one of my main goals with the lyrics is to create a mood or atmosphere for the listener. They are there to ignite feelings and emotions for each individual. They don't necessarily have to have the same meaning to each listener, and certainly not the same meaning to me as to you. I feel the lyrics are really dark, yet none of them has the words 'castle', 'ghoul' or 'medieval' in them, strangely enough... They're more introspective, or maybe close, if you will. More personal maybe, although not necessarily personal to me."

Will Manes play live, if your new material receives wider appreciation, and the band gets some offers to play in front of the audience? Carpathian Forest were also neglecting all attention, but then everything changed. Don't you think the decisions must be made in a clever way, and sometimes it is really brave to change your, well, old prejudices, whatever they are? By the way, isn't Carpathian Forest one of those bands you respect?

"Now that we have a full line-up, playing live is a much stronger possibility. I don't know about my interest in doing it, but... When more and more people became involved in *Manes*, I decided that the other members' ideas and thoughts should be just as important as my own. If not, there would be no point in having a line up at all, I could continue *Manes* as a project, or use session musicians for recording and performing. So, about this live thing, we haven't really discussed it too much, but I have noticed that they are much more interested in playing live than I am. So, we'll see... Most probably.."

I don't think it has anything to do with bravery or being clever at all. In my opinion, a band shouldn't be that concerned about how the 'fans' or 'public' might react to what they are doing. They should concentrate on their artistic stuff, expressing themselves their own way.

I don't find *Carpathian Forest* that interesting, really. More or less, they're just 'another band'."

Returning back to those releases on *Hammerheart*, I think they received a limited response from the audience, especially comparing to other (Black Metal) releases. And then your titles were deleted from their catalogues. Can you figure out why? Seems like they contributed to the cult, spreading not so many copies and making only a small budget promotion.

"I don't think they liked the album that much, perhaps it was too different from what they had expected, or what they thought they could sell and promote? Seems like they had some other visions for *Manes* than we had, he he. I heard they have recently re-issued it, with bonus tracks (from the demo-CD's), without asking us, with a different cover and everything. Wonder what they are planning to do with the band royalties? Perhaps I should contact them and ask them what the fuck they are doing? Perhaps they hope to cash in some money, now that the new album is on its way and stuff?"

I strongly suggest you do just that. Well, what about *Til Kongens Grav De Døde Vandrer* demo? It is the only one that hasn't been re-released. Any special reasons for that?

"Mainly because I lost interest in all this 'demo-scene', and Black Metal stuff. Things were going over the top, and I didn't feel like doing it anymore. So, the tape ended up hidden away in a drawer. We have got some offers to release it on 10" vinyl, with a folded poster as cover, but, we'll see. Before we can consider it, I have to find a copy where the tape isn't crumbled that much. The tape I have here is missing parts of the music here and there, some seconds of silence in the middle of the songs, etc..."

You mention *Autopsy* as one of your early inspirations. Quite a surprise, knowing the eerie music of *Manes*. Was it just this one particular Death Metal crew for you, or were your interest in the genre bigger? I remember *Autopsy* as a small pleasant shock in the beginning, both music (vocals!) and lyrics/images... that must have been *Severed Survival*...

"If I listen to other musical styles than Black Metal, it doesn't mean that I automatically have to let that influence the music of *Manes*. Black Metal is/was just a small fragment of the different styles I listen to and enjoy. I



listened to old-school Death Metal a long way before there were something called Black Metal (not counting the *Venom* albums, of course), and I didn't throw everything over board when I heard *Bathory* or *Darkthrone*!"

Hey, what about *Abscess* and *The Ravenous*, two bands *Chris* and his sick friends are involved in these days... Do you appreciate their music now? Haven't heard them."

You must check these, man. Well, whatever, have you solved the riddle yet of what Black Metal really is? Maybe you are on the way to find out the answer, with your music? If such a journey exists, would you like to reach the final point, ever?

"No, I will probably always try to find new music/audio to explore, new ways of expressing my ideas, other untrodden paths to wander. No point in dwelling in the past when there's so much unknown territory ahead."

You are a very rare guest in Metal magazines. It was mentioned about your wish to remain silent in front of the media, and about your disgust with its hypocrisy, where labels basically shape the contents.

"My lack of interest in the commercial side of music is the main reason. I clearly separate the entertainment and artistic sides of music. I'm not interested in entertaining people. I want to create (mainly for myself) and explore. Now and then I feel like doing interviews and stuff, but the interest often fades away quickly when I see how idiotic the music business really is. But things have changed a bit lately. I don't feel that much real hatred towards it, more cynical, more distanced from what I really want."

***Manes* is known as one of the oldest, grimmest and most uncompromising Norsk Black Metal bands ever. Do you feel patriarchal, senior, or at least old, speaking in musical terms? Does the new generation of (Black) Metal seem too shallow, commercially-oriented, deteriorated to you? Where is your research for the new art forms pointed at then?**

"Sometimes I feel old when reading interviews with younger bands, or looking at their need for expressing aggression and stuff, seems like they are loosing control over their adrenaline and hormone levels, he he... I think I have become more relaxed, more distanced in a way. More a spectator than a partaker. I also feel that the bands nowadays, and the music business in general, are turning more and more oriented towards entertainment and money only, forgetting that music is really a form of art. Musicians becoming more and more like puppets, controlled by greedy labels."

You despise modern Black Metal people of today. It is sort of a general position. But then again younger generation might find the real essence of the style in your music, let alone get inspired by it. So, what that despise is barbed at, more precisely?

"I don't think many people understand the real essence of the older *Manes* stuff, as they have grown up with commercialism in music, and really think that *Dimmu Borgir*, etc., and all this German and American shit is Black Metal! So, they have no clue at all what I really want. Of course, all rules have their exceptions, and, if anyone can appreciate *Manes* in any way, good for them. If not, their loss - not mine... But, on the other hand, things like this doesn't affect my everyday life in any way, so I don't really care either."

In one of those rare interviews you spoke about your viewpoint on Satanism and just beliefs you may have inside, emphasizing belief in yourself and human

instincts as the most important. Then let me wonder about the lyrics on *Under*... - either they had nothing to do with that philosophy, or you were covering completely different things back then? Was it a tribute to traditional Black Metal topics that you shared?

"Philosophically, I feel very Darwinist, and because of that, there are a lot of the views in your so-called Satanism I agree upon. I'm not a proper Satanist in any way - I'm not religious, I don't worship anyone or anything. I don't believe there are anything more important than myself and my personal pleasure (including what - and whoever I feel attached to). The usage of Satanic symbolism, I think, is more or less a revolt, or when done by young, naïve people, a way of feeling as a part of a bigger community, to alienate the 'other people', which again is really a quite basic instinct - to spread your own genes to the next generations, you strive for the survival for your 'kind', rid the world of competition. But doing it physical is not allowed in most societies, so you do it verbally or symbolically. In my eyes, the real essence of religion, horde-mentality, "us and them", hooligans, fans, etc. etc. I haven't really changed my views since 'back then', just thought more about it, and come to some conclusions that I really believe in, and see things in different perspectives."

We, and everything we know, is just biology, chemistry, atomic actions and reactions, and, at the end of the day, results of the natural forces. I don't think we have that much control over our lives, our future or whatever. We constantly try to make sense of things, and by doing that, thinking that we do things because we want, and things happen because of our actions. I see things a bit different. I think everything is laid out in space-time, the past, the present, and the future. Our brain tries to make sense of this, and therefore we have these abstract concepts like, past, future, time, distance, weight, etc. When we think something, it's not something we choose, it's already 'decided', but we think we influence it, because of these past and future abstract concepts. I think... Try to zoom (if it were possible) extremely close to a brain cell exactly when you decide to do something. What would you see? Electrical impulses passing between the cells, which in turn affect the chemical and electrical compositions of the cells. So, what else are thoughts, ideas, dreams, hopes, than electricity and chemistry? In my opinion, nothing. And, electricity, and all particles (the building blocks of the cells) are just a result of the four known forces of nature. Thinking that we can affect nature itself is idiotic. A bit off-topic ramblings, but..."

Do you think there can be an explosion in the scene when your new album is released? You see, *Thorns* and earlier *Carpathian Forest* did make some stir...

"Hopefully not, really. I hope that people will get something out of listening to *Manes*, but I don't think the next album will appeal to anyone else than to those who already might be interested in our stuff. I mean, I really hope people will buy the album because of the music, and what it does to their mind and mood, not only because of any hype or promotion, or because they want to be part of any community or horde, or because they think it's expected of them, or something. Take *Manes* for what it is, not for what they want it to be, or what they expect it to be. *Manes* is a purely artistic thing, nothing else."

Torstein: "Yes, the scene will explode. The ultimate pyro-show! *Manes* makes the world go boom-boom. Up is go. *Cheerz!*"

Contact *Manes* (no sure reply) at ulcero@hotmail.com. Be sure to check out <http://go.to/manes> for bio and discography or www.code666.net for updated info and stuff.

Just after the interview was received, *Skei* added something more:

"After reading it through today, I saw there were not that much info about the 'new' *Manes*, so here's some more info for you. Current line-up: *Skei* (*Cernunnus*) - guitars, electronics and bit-processing, *Knarr* - analogue drums, *Eivind* - guitars, *Torstein* - bass, *Asgeir* - vocals. There will also probably be some other persons involved on the new album. At least *Håvard* (*Sargatanas*) will do some vocals. The musical style is a bit different (which shouldn't be too surprising, since the *Under ein...* album material is 8+ years old). Quite hard to describe (at least from the 'inside'), so instead I'll give you a list of bands I feel have something in common with *Manes* (musically or artistically): *GGFH*, *Aphex Twin*, *Anathema*, *Katatonia*, *Massive Attack*, *Radiohead*."

LITERATURE

Zines never die! There's always that ever enthusiastic bunch of people out there just dying to write about the music they listen to and the darkness they live in. Here's a few that have crossed our fiery path lately and not-so-lately.

Northwind

666 #2 (94/A4) magazine

Pure underground. *Sad* and *Spica* - probably more known to you through their various bands such as *Asmodee*, *Covens*, *Cantus Bestiae* or *S.V.E.S.T.* - have created a thick, black publication that follows unbelievably well the twisted path of *Stregioica* and *Strataniel*. The chaotic layout, the bestial pictures, Satan always in sight - it's all in there. Surely nothing literally or linguistically challenging, but that has never been the point either with this kind of Black Metal fanaticism. To explore the deepest depths of the blackened underworld, *666* is more than your reliable guide. It's the Devil Himself.

Spiritual Impurity, Goatvomit, Kerberos, Kratornas, Nhaavah, Enthroned, Seigneur Voland, Profane, Lust, Unholy Archangel, Thornspawn, Anarazel and too much more to mention. 6 USD or a trade.

Cormier 'Sad' Anthony, 16 IMP des Caudres, 72190 Sargé les le Mans, France.

Northwind

Ballbuster #6 (64/B4) magazine

Nope, I will never fully get into the American style of delivering Metal at your door. The subtitle suggests that this magazine is sort of a report of all things Metal, so maybe it should be taken as a thing where everyone involved must report what he has to say, or how should we understand this? Yet for me those 'obliged' conversations with the big bands sound too predictable, dealing mostly with the same things you can figure out yourselves. In other words, it smells of these business-oriented conversations that normally are interesting only for the people involved; musicians, labels, media representatives, or just people curious about what's the kitchen of Metal music biz like. But as a lover of this particular music, I'd rather choose a smaller but more whole-hearted fanzine, where the editor tries to invent a special vibe behind his writings, where every conversation is achieved through blood, sweat and tears - after an incredible research on the chosen artist - and that never arrives to the point of asking crap like: *'Are you guys from the States? - No, Australia. - Australia, I love Australia! I've seen pictures and I love it! (...)* *You have to excuse me, because this is the first time I'm listening to you guys'*. I am not exaggerating, this part is taken from *Ballbuster* #6.

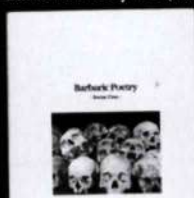
This issue was pretty much delayed in production, thus its contents have got seriously old. I mean, even for the bigger publications it's not that easy to keep things punctually going. And when it comes to the reviews, some of the people writing them - *Miki Griesbauer* in particular - are hopeless, indeed.

To cut the crap, I'm not impressed by this issue at all, even if it features my own Lithuanian scene report - written ages ago, by the way. Besides that you'll find: **Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, W.A.S.P., Crimson Glory, Mactatus, Testament, Immolation, Fleshgrind, Michael Moynihan, Biohazard, Atomic Bitchwax, TNT, Mayadome, Terra Firma, and heaps of others. It can be yours for 6 USD, I believe.**

Ballbuster, P.O. Box 58368, Louisville, KY 40268-0368, USA. ballbusterhard@webtv.net, www.ballbusterhardmusic.com

Tadas

Barbaric Poetry #1 (36/A4) magazine



A smart addition to the world of underground press! If you didn't know that it is a debut issue, *Barbaric Poetry* could be considered as at least a few years old publication. The cause for this is the experience of the editor, *Jamne*, within underground music that shines through in every page. It is especially noticeable in the live-reviews, most of which have taken place a few years back, but his reports sound nevertheless

interesting! Some additional pictures would do, though. This is undoubtedly better than the usual beginner that brings its debut issue full of misunderstandings, and simply crap, printed on paper. The thing that reveals that this is a debut is the editor's level of enthusiasm, which usually calms down after a few years spent behind the editorial desk. *Jamne* goes as far as to comment almost every answer given by his interviewees, even if those people can't read it until the magazine is out. Almost as if the guy wants to keep the conversation alive, but at times it turns normal talk into messy blabbing, and creates an aftertaste effect. In many cases these conversations would do fine without any additional comments.

But I forgot to tell you that I was really surprised by *Jamne's* clever way of asking questions, and by his remarkable English that is tasty enough to not let you fall asleep. Just occasionally the editor is 'too intelligent', but that's not a bad thing.

The reviews seem quite reasonable as well, with a certain individualistic point. Yes, this guy prefers Death Metal over everything, so you need to bear that in mind. The contents speak for itself as well: **Pentacle, Avulsed, Deranged, Mortician, Cenotaph, Soils Of Fate, Headfucker Records, X-treme Records, Darkest Soul Promotions**. There could be more interviews actually, and not so much space wasted on the layout. The zine is an easy read, but with this good quality you always need more.

Ok, a good start - get a copy for 5 \$ from *LTR*. *Barbaric Poetry, Jamne Hubta*, Aprilgatan 72, 415 15 Gothenburg, Sweden. prophecy_jh@hotmail.com

Tadas

Bloodaxe #4 (42/A4) fanzine

To be excruciatingly honest, Belgian *Bloodaxe* is but the prototype of an underground Black Metal fanzine. The editors *Bollborn* & *Wodan* do seem to know what they're talking about, and the zine has a fairly natty overall presentation, but my idea of a GOOD fanzine clashes headlong with this, I'm sorry to say. The interviews and reviews are perfectly okay, they are, but the problem is that they don't exactly make you gape at them in utter and total excitement - and that's just an inescapable no-no when there are like 777 others in every country doing the same thing. You have to make it stand out. You have to make it exceptional. You have to make it... a god! It's art, too, you know. Well, I guess it's no detriment to this review if I mention that this issue #4 still is a whole lot better than their #3 in pretty much every way you can think of. So, they are improving.

Aguynquerran, Bestial Mockery, Black Witchery, Iconoclasm, Impiety, Taake, Secrets Of The Moon, Conqueror, Destroyer 666 and Pyre. There's also the aforementioned reviews, and a couple of portraits of some serial-killers - if you were wondering, I guess 5\$ does it.

Dary 'Wodan' Becu, P. Benoitstraat 1, 8211 Aartrijke, Belgium. woda666@hotmail.com, http://drink.to/bloodaxe

Northwind

Canadian Assault #6 (140/B5) fanzine

At first glance *Canadian Assault* appeared to me as just another Yankee fanzine, supporting the underground for all the wrong reasons, much like *Metal Core*. But that's not quite right.

There's something in the way *Dale Roy* writes that forces me to play with the thought that maybe, just maybe, he is grave-serious about Metal and the underground. But does that alone make *Canadian Assault* worth of your hard-earned money? Well, it does.

I'd say the interviews are the thing that saves *Dale* and *Canadian Assault*. It's right there where *Dale's* experience in the underground and his writing are at their peak, and this results in some pretty damn interesting interviews. I just wish there would be more of them instead of those rather pointless reviews that really go nowhere.

So, yeah, give it a try, even if there are parts in this fanzine that really sicken me, like what this guy said about *A.M.Haugen* in his 'rant column'. Here goes: *'You know I read an interview with that chick from Hagalaz' Runedance. She was bitching about people cutting down and burning trees because they have souls and shit. She says she is writing a book on it, which the record label is going to publish. Yeah, good job, dummy, write & publish a book about not cutting down trees. Yes, kill a bunch more trees so you can have out your book. How about putting the entire book online for all to read free?! No trees die & your message still gets out. I suppose not though, you won't make any cash printed on deceased trees if you did that.'* Why don't you *Dale* go and buy another **Iron Maiden** album, watch some more **Conan 'O'Brien**, eat some more hamburgers, and leave thinking to those who actually can think. Thanks for understanding.

Invasion, Anata, Thornspawn, Gospel Of The Horns, Blood Storm, Darkness Eternal, Slaughter, Ancient Rites, Bestial Mockery and Leather n' Spikes. Lots of 'reviews' and other 'underground stuff', too, for 4 USD in the States and 6 USD elsewhere.

Dale Roy, Apt. #1, 6318 Bingham Street, Philadelphia, PA 19111, USA. metaldale@hotmail.com, www.canadianassault.cjb.net

Northwind

Dark Blaze / Into The Pentagonam #1 (46/A4) magazine I had actually been a bit of expecting this issue, since I thought the *Dark Blaze* #3 was a real fine piece of underground journalism a couple of years ago. So, what we have here is the first co-issue between two Polish zines, two Polish souls...

Syrzag and *Capricornus*. And as you might expect, this issue's very NSBM oriented. Now, I won't go into the conversation about the strengths and weaknesses of NSBM here and now, I'm just content with saying that this issue is actually pretty interesting. They've interviewed some interesting individuals, and despite everything they haven't forgotten the 'Black Metal' side of things either. It's a nice clash of ideologies and music, and I'm sure anyone fascinated by either NS or BM would like to get to read this.

Abyssic Hate, Naer Mataron, Gontyna Kry, Honor, Selbstmord, Kristallnacht, Galgenberg, Realms Of Blood, Lord Wolf, Horna, The Pagan Front and others. There's also some - literally - lethal articles, and a few reviews, too. syrzag@poland.com

Northwind

Dark Legions #4 (44/A4) magazine

This wasn't quite what I expected from a magazine that has enough guts to call itself *Dark Legions*. Somehow I had got the idea that this would be more Black Metal oriented than it actually is. You know, hailing from Singapore, it would have been mighty exciting to learn more about the local BM scene...

Well, it's not that bad, though. *Dark Legions* does give you a lot of info about the local scene. It says *'Singapore's Metal Bible'* on the cover, and that's a pretty accurate description in the sense that the mag doesn't restrict itself to any particular genre as such, but rather covers all kinds of Metal inside. Had this been an European publication, I probably would have burned it, but since it's of Singaporean origin, the result is more acceptable as there's a lot to discover.

Ancient Rites, Nefarium, Ezurate, Gurkkhas, Neurotics Of God, Destroyer 666, Apocalyptic Raids, Korihor, Merendine Atomiche and others, plus reviews and other stuff. Have to mention that the layout is astoundingly original and even inspiring in a way. Can't recall the price, sorry.

Makbluq, Blk 233, #04-418, Jurong East Street 21, Singapore 600233, Republic of Singapore. darklab@hotmail.com

Northwind

Darkness Treasures #2 (48/A4) zine



The layout is, again, simple and familiar to those with knowledge in the underground culture, whilst the front-cover illustration is not the strongest point of this French zine, but I swear it probably is the publication that has made the biggest improvement from a previous issue, in my eyes! Well, at least among that bunch of zines I meet almost every day.

To put it simply: *Darkness Treasures* is now interesting to read! This really counts, especially if

the reader is eager to know more about the underground. Some of the bands may not be of your preference, but anyway - this is readable material from the first to last page. For example, **Devilry's** music isn't really for me, but I found *Sir Holm's* thoughts on particular subjects very thought-provoking. Also interrogated are: **My Dark Sin, Maniac Butcher, Oskorei magazine, Horna, Kristallnacht, Gurkkhas, Demonic, Kratornas, Stargazer, Noctis, Antaeus, Blessed In Sin, Fleshcrawl, View Beyond Records, Baltak**. And a Chilean scene report is included in addition. There are not so many reviews - especially comparing to some certain magazines, hah - and their length is just average, but I think the comments and the critique are fairly reasonable.

Still, I won't enjoy *DT* #3 this much if it is as amateurish in the aesthetic look. I mean, it's no necessity to use so many different fonts and sizes - just look at the terrible outlook of the **Baltak** or **Stargazer** interviews. Anyway, pay 5 USD to get it for the sake of an interesting read. Limited to 300 copies, only!

Darkness Treasures zine, **Thomas Bernolin**, 34 rue Saint Desire, 39000 Lons-le-Saunier, France. thomas.bernolin@wanadoo.fr

Tadas

Final Solution #1 (32/A4) magazine

Haven't actually bumped into many Spanish Black Metal tinged fanzines or magazines during my stay in the sinister underworld. Well, *Exstinctio Sensus* was quite a nice packet by all means, but I guess *Rail* ain't around anymore. Are you?

There's two ways of looking at *Final Solution*. On the one hand it's just another rag without its own inner spirit or raison

d'être as such, leaving the reader quickly with the impression of 'nothing special'. But on the other, the choices of bands and style do go along with mine astoundingly well, so from a fairly subjective point of view, it's still an interesting read, even if the level of journalism within does leave the mountains where they are.

With 4 USD in Europe, and 5 USD elsewhere, you still can buy your chance to read more about **Mutilation, Thornspawn, Destroyer 666, Abyssic Hate, Graveland, Watain, Horna, Beheaded Lamb** and others. A few - quite meaningless - reviews are included, too. I need to add that *Naxso*, the editor, is surprisingly thoughtful man, though. Just too bad that at least *Final Solution* #1 doesn't really manage to reflect his intelligence the way I'm sure it could in the future if he has the energy to go on with the publication.

Final Solution, c/o L.M.P., P.O. Box 23429, 08080 Barcelona, Spain. f_solution@hotmail.com, <http://finalsolutionzine.cjb.net>
Northwind

From Beyond #6 (32/B4) zine

This mag has deservedly a good name in the underground, and the editor *Harald* (a member of **Bloodthorn**, if you didn't know) has worked throughout the years his very own personal approach to musical journalism. He is kind of obsessed by horror/gore movies, so many of the chosen bands are related to this, and he likes to talk about it so much - no less than watch that shit, I believe! Let alone the editor has very individualistically subjective viewpoints concerning this and that in Metal music, so - expect strong opinions and no fuckin' compromises, indeed! That's just what makes underground mags interesting, though not in all cases; only when it is written with that smart tone and has a certain portion of humour inside. I truly admire *Harald*'s way of handling the interviews with **Darkthrone** and **Necrophagia** (most of all) - that's premiere league, a pleasure to read!!! The other interviews feature **Diabolic**, **Decayed**, **Immolation**, **Morbid Angel**, **Asphyx**, **Vomitory**, **Nifelheim**, **Holocasto Canibal**, **Machetazo**, **Macabre**, **Rebaelliu**, hard and hitting Metal in other words! The article on *Jeffrey Dahmer* is also of much interest - if you are bored with serial-killers in every second American zine, pick this to read a story really well put together.

A certain drawback in the layout is that many of the interviews are continued elsewhere, and the reader has to search for a while to find these continuations. It's tiring and not that professional, these days. Also, I wouldn't mind to see more pages in *From Beyond* since 32 is certainly too little for this kind of a magazine. But that's the publisher (**Red Stream Records**) who decides, anyway. You can get a copy for 5\$ from the **Leido Takas** address.

From Beyond, P.O. Box 1756, N-7416 Trondheim, Norway.
zombi@c2i.net

Tadas

Hellflame #7 (36/A4) magazine

Being a staunch follower of the blackest underworld, Italian *Hellflame* serves the Fallen One reliably and well. The interviewees are carefully chosen to fit the malignant concept, and the interviews are - indeed - quite sharp.

Hellflame is a fairly pleasant read for any man who's soul has grown black and obscure. It's very profound in its own twisted way, yet keeping the touch and order of the next zine. My personal favourite is the truly splendid 'No **Iron Maiden**' sign - the messiahs of Geek Metal, please do fuck forever off. I'm just sick 'n tired to be sick 'n tired to Black Metal people hailing 'the roots of Metal'...

Anyway, sadly, this is supposedly the last issue coming from *Nicola*. He reasons that he simply doesn't have enough time for the mag anymore, and taking in consideration that the guy's a professional tattooer, a label manager, runs a mailorder, plays in two bands and tries to attend University classes at the same time, I guess we can accept that. It's a shame, though.

#7 includes: **Vomitor**, **Stargazer**, **Katharsis**, **Necrovore**, **Revokation**, **Watain**, **Lust** and others. Quite a bunch of reviews and some articles, too. I guess 5 \$ should do it.

Hellflame Productions, c/o *Solieri Nicola*, Via India 73, 41100 Modena, Italy. sunandiron@hotmail.com
Northwind

Imhotep #6 (76/A4) magazine

This issue of *Roy* has become one of the most time-consuming zines in my life as I've spent more than a few months reading it over - bearing in mind the limited amount of time left for reading zines these days. Not because it is boring to sink a teeth into, but because of the enormous quantities of information crammed in there. I start to believe it is a similar feeling going through *Ad Arna!*, but as I've never read it myself so far, it's impossible to compare. The readers should do that! Anyway, with *Imhotep*, I'm always the reader, and a damn curious one as such!

#6 is focused on Black Metal unlike any previous issue. It doesn't necessarily mean that *Roy* has moved to the darkest realms of music for the rest of his life, but rather consider this as a thorough attempt to expose some of the bands that made a stir in 1999. He has worked hard with the exclusive interviews we find here - I bet nobody would argue about this special feel that is attached to them. Just not your usual answer-question manner, not at all. Those who know *Imhotep* from the earlier days will certainly know what I mean.

The editor truly is good at live conversations. **Aye**, not all of them were made by *Roy*, that's true. But his contributors are professionals, so it sort of fits the *Imhotep* style pretty well. The

contents include **Bathory**, **Darkthrone**, **Satyricon**, **Thyrfane**, **Gorgoroth**, **Marduk**, **Tartaros**, **Sirius**, **Limbonic Art**, **Thy Serpent**, **Obsidian Gate** & **Soulgrind**. The only one to be out of this concept is the reviewer *Frank Hansen*, who has individual opinions, and that's good, but it is hardly reasonable at times, and it certainly does not fit the rest of this command. I wonder why this guy is still around *Imhotep* whilst he could fit any mainstream oriented BM magazine much better.

And a few words about the layout. It is simple, as usual for this rag, but this time it fits so well the 'Black Metal concept' that I even envy it a bit. I think I hardly could achieve this sort of geniality, being so simple and straightforward. Mind you - it is pro-printed.

To feel the magic behind *Imhotep* #6 you need to get a copy of it instead of reading a bunch of opinions about it. 5 USD to the editorial headquarters:

Imhotep, R.K., Berglyveien 9, 1262 Oslo, Norway.
imhotep@online.no

Tadas

Imhotep #7 (72/A4) magazine

I've personally always thought of *Imhotep* as light and harmless reading, kinda like a thing to read when you don't have the energy to dive in anything more demanding late at night. But if you take, say, *Roy's* #2 - or even his 'Black Metal' issue reviewed above by brother *Tadas* - and start comparing it to this latest issue... well, let's just say *Imhotep* #7 has taken the mag's lightness and harmlessness to a completely new level.

It's like a different publication, in many a sense. The way it's written, the way it's 'laid out', the stuff it includes, all serve *Roy's* intention of making *Imhotep* into an internationally acknowledged Metal publication quite well. The interviews are still long and informative, and there is a personal touch to it all throughout the pages as well, but it's still different.

But is the change for the better? I hear you moan. The truth? Well, it's not. Not that *Imhotep's* ever been one of the zines I particularly admire, but this new issue's just a sad attempt to substitute 'Black Metal' with 'Metal', and I don't like it. It's a matter of taste - or lack of it - of course, but I think *Roy's* target audience nowadays are just the kind of people I wouldn't want to meet. Besides, when exactly did *Roy* turn into this loudmouthed, know-it-all motherfucker, anyway?

Nile, **Solefald**, **Opera IX**, **Enslaved**, **Katatonian**, **Rhapsody**, **Malevolence**, **Morbid Angel**, **Rebaelliu**, **Agathodaimon** and **The Black League**, plus quite a bunch of reviews. This issue goes for 5\$.

Northwind

Isten #100 (72/A4) magazine

I love *Isten*. I just love *Isten*. I love *Isten* because the nice couple of Mr. *Mattila* and *Sanna* love our underground scene so much that they even ended up making a whole issue about the scene. They are so concerned about the wellbeing of our scene that it just has to move you. Can you think of anyone else with this deep devotion to our beloved scene?! They're addicts.

Keep on supporting the underground!

Northwind

La Lettre de Sappho #10 (12/A4) newsletter

One of those tiny newsletters that serve you on a short bus or train ride, when there is nothing else to do. Good for the information, but nothing more. So if anyone does not have access to the Internet, or lacks knowledge about recent underground events, please pick this newsletter, or any other if you can't read French. Indeed, *Sappho* is more oriented to French speaking countries, but is it that difficult to learn it? I don't think so.

Though they have made it a bit thicker this time, 12 pages are not that bad result all in all. Voila, includes interviews with **Chaostar**, **Deluge**, **The Old Dead Tree**, **Heroic Flame**, **Depraved**, an Australian scene report, and reviews - that are a bit too short in general but well put together. The layout is typical for thin zines, with a background image all over, and the whole thing photocopied.

Each issue is available for 1\$, and you can also subscribe it for half a year for 5\$.

La Lettre de Sappho, 11 rue du Quartier Neuf, 88230 Fraize, France. sapphomusique@free.fr

Tadas

Leather n' Spikes #5 (36/B4) fanzine

Well, seems to me as if this Canadian editress, *Calb*, has decided to make it her mission in life to survive in this male-dominated scene of ours. At least she's trying damn hard, this here being already her 5th issue.

Leather n' Spikes is a nice, entertaining, read if you're in a mood for something not so overly serious. Maybe *Calb's* 'metalhead' way of reasoning is a little bit too one-dimensional at times, if you ask me, but the interviews are very interesting, nevertheless.

Nifelheim, **Thornspawn**, **Mayhem**, **Gold Für Eisen**, **Homicide**, **Before God**, **Depresy**, **Siren**, **Diabolicum**, **Myrkskog** and others. Reviews, an Australian scene update, a

huge article about Voivod and stuff like that. Should be still available for 4 USD.

Calb, 35 Brousseau, Loretteville QC, G2A 2R2, Canada.
clac@globetrotter.net, www.geocities.com/nuklearcath

Northwind

Leather n' Spikes #6 (38/B4) fanzine

Here's another *Leather n' Spikes* issue. As you might expect, it deviates in no way from *Calb's* previous stunts. It's all cut 'n paste, therefore invoking rather nostalgic feelings in a reader who grew up reading zines that looked like this. I, me and myself included.

I'd propose this #6 as her best issue to date. And that's, of course, due to the amazing **Dissection** feature, which alone would be worth the price. No bullshit. It's always a joy reading detailed information about a band like **Dissection** that's just engraved in mysteries. You'll just never get enough. Another thing I like about the article is that you can see the work, commitment and dedication *Calb* has put in it, and mind you, I admire such devotion. Just by considering the way she has tried to interpret Mr. Nödvæid's darkly obscure lyrics gives you a clue what it is to go this deep about a band. Great work.

Otherwise this issue's just a nice blend of Metal and Satan that leaves little holy. Some reviews and interviews with **Kreator**, **Disciples Of Power**, **Decayed**, **Ouroboros**, **Anarazel**, **Sons Of Satan**, ... **And Oceans**, **Terminal Descent**, **Cult Of Daath**, **Iron Youth** and **Arctic Circle**. It would be my advice that you check this out for the 5 USD she asks for it.

Northwind

Mandragora #27 (24/B4) fanzine

I wasn't really aware of why this punk/hippie - or whatever - zine had been shipped to me, until I read it. Yeah, there was a small, tiny, Metal review-section, alongside all the punk and rock 'n roll reviews, so I figured that the **Dissimulation** review there had been done by one of my customers, and the editor - a cute girl, I presume, who's turning more Metal recently, claiming to make shortly a Metal zine out of this - was just kind enough to ship me a copy. Well, thanks girl, but I must tell you that this read is not my favourite cup of warm beer, not yet, anyway.

Yeah, it's a short read through the 24 pages, with really BIG fonts and not so much care on the layout. By the way, *Mandragora* so far was known as 59€, if it changes anything. Don't get me wrong, it might be some fun to read through the memories and impressions by some people who describe their travels and adventures, but you must: A) get and appreciate the American humour B) get used to this non-music kind of fanzine fashion. Yeah, it has one music-interview (with a Heavy Metal band **Drizbit**), and that aforementioned handful of reviews, but it looks more like an out-of-place thing than a real musical coverage because of that off-key manner of the other articles.

To cut it shorter, for 3 USD you can experience it yourself. *Mandragora*, P.O. Box 19806, Seattle, WA 98109, USA.
alyrocker@earthlink.net

Tadas

Metal Core #29 (44/B5) fanzine

Who isn't familiar with *Metal Core*? Yep, that long-standing, American supporter of the underground, which is so full of the 'Yankee underground spirit' that I think I'm gonna go and puke. Now.

Chris Forbes, P.O. Box 622, Marlton, NJ 08053-0622, USA.
metalczine@aol.com, www.metalcorefanzine.com

Northwind

Non Serviam #1 (44/B4) magazine

If you'd like to see Christianity from quite an another angle than the one proposed by society, I'd suggest you obtain a copy of this exceptional issue by *Non Serviam*.

Released way back in '93, this debut issue takes the Bible to its special treatment and goes it through in detail, pinpointing very precisely the ways in which Christianity contradicts itself there. *Vorkt* portrays the Bible - and so the entire Christendom - as a wrathful, deceitful and bloodthirsty phenomenon that betrays its own values in many a level. He has really done his homework impeccably, and you can just admire the dedication and commitment put into this unholy work.

If you're the kind of a person who's interested in the sale-figures of **Dark Funeral's** latest, I think you should pass this one by. Available only for the Sinister Race for 5 USD from the following address:

Albertus Vorkt Jiménez, Poste Restante, H. Coscomatepec, Ver. 94140, México.

Northwind

Non Serviam #2 (46/B4) magazine

Whereas the debut concentrated primarily on the Bible, this second issue's much more diverse as regards the contents. Now *Vorkt* doesn't focus entirely on giving the kiss of death for Christianity - even if Christ's quite fiercely humiliated here as well - but he's touching various issues, ranging from demonology to pornography, all from the perspective of the Satanist.

To me the most startling feature in this issue is definitely *Vorkt's* article **Black Mass**, which deals with an incident that happened to him in '87. I won't go into the details, though, as you really should get this for the mere 5 USD he asks for it.

Northwind

Northern Heritage #3 (20/A4) zine

The Satanic ceremony depicted on the front-cover, and the cut-and-paste layout says it all about the third and - according to the editor - the last incarnation of *Northern Heritage* zine. Much more so because as a label *NH* has a cult name in the unholy Black Metal underground, despite the limited amount of information given.

As it is said in the editorial, #3 was a spontaneous outburst of emotions put onto paper after a prolonged silence and times of laziness to do something with this current issue. I still miss more profundity there, as these twenty pages are certainly too little to be satisfied with for such a maximalist as myself. You just start to get into the world of *NH*, and it ends up - earlier than expected! Moreover, the editor has a lot to say with his nonconformist attitudes and emphasized opinions on all the blasphemous and provoking subjects.

Another thing I notice is the slightly one-directional attitude of the interviewer, which might be interesting, but not fully manifesting the ideas and philosophies behind one's music. For me those interviews could continue for a few more pages - I wouldn't mind. More investigation could have been made.

Ok, you will find here these features: **Mutilation, Exordium, Satanic Warmaster, Incriminated**, a few short articles to use your brain on, and a handful of reviews, mostly on Black Metal and of vinyl releases, so it's always a good read.

If this is really gonna be the last issue of *NH*, then I wish the (ex-) editor all the best with the label, and you, my darlings, must own a copy to witness that Satanic Black Metal is not a joke. And never was. 4\$ from the *LTR* headquarters.

Northern Heritage zine, PO. Box 21, 15141 Lahti, Finland.

Tadas

Oskorei #5 (48/A4) magazine



Oskorei grows with every issue in number of the print run and solidity in the scene, and this time the magazine has two compilation CDs attached to it, so for a customer this is as comfortable a purchase as possible. Highly acclaimed is the editor's design style that keeps evolving yet certainly maintaining a firm manner of its own, which is a very important thing for a stability of a printed thing. Yes, *Lars* has delivered again just what people have been expecting from him, and if someone is not so much delighted about this band or that band, both in the interview and compilation areas, then he or she can simply skip it and jump on to the artist.

As usual, I find there bands that are worth checking out, and others - not-so-much worth checking out. *Lars* is pushing some underground commands as well; **Shining, Chalice, Depraved, Darkened Nocturn Slaughtercult**. I am sure those features in *Oskorei* might act as a good promotional engine for them, meaning that this Norwegian magazine is readable in distinct numbers all over the world.

What's not the most pleasant thing for myself are the limitations in both the interview- and review-sections. I know *Lars* make those features pretty short due to lack of space, and in a way it's understandable, but being a writing freak myself, I always enjoy longer in-depth articles more. To ask a band seven questions, a few of which deal with the band-biography and final words, is simply not enough. The reader gets just superficial information, and I think that's not enough to really get captured by the microcosmos that every good band certainly has. To make 400 reviews is a pain in the ass, but some depth would always add that necessary feel of completion to a magazine. *Oskorei* will sell well without my review anyhow, so I'm just using this good opportunity to stimulate the editor to create his solid publication even better.

Other artists featured are **Notre Dame, Enslaved, In Aeternum, Incantation, Ephel Duath, Anorexia Nervosa, Thyrfing, Nifelheim, Seariot, Averse Sefira, Enter Self, Blood Red Throne, Jack Frost**.

Oskorei, PB 640 Sentrum, N-5807 Bergen, Norway.
mail@oskorei.com, www.oskorei.com

Tadas

Psicoterror #6 (48/A4) magazine

Yep, indeed, this Peruvian experience is a good read - that's what I've been predicting, having in mind that intelligent way we have dealt with *Renzo* by mail so far. The guy's been in the scene for quite a time, and this number six of his publication certainly reflects the efforts put in. A good selection of artists - mostly featuring Metallers, but a few industrial and dark ambient performers as well - and thought-out (yet repetitive at times) questions pretty easily make my day. And I feel pleased learning some additional information I have never tracked before, about **Puissance** and **Dødheimsgard** for example. Besides these two, *Psicoterror* features **Lobotomy, Noctes, Judas Iscariot, Peter H. Gilmore, Abigor, Disforterror, Turbund Sturmwerk, Maniac Butcher, Dark Funeral, Hecate Enthroned, Enochian Crescent, Pazuzu, Changes** (this one is totally exclusive and looks like a nice tribute to these bards), **Enthroned**, and **Azazel**.

Besides the relatively small review-section, there is an attempt to bring a wise word to this rag - *Renzo* has placed quite a few quotes of famous people of the past, which yet are not your

typical philosophy but make you really think about the subject, before accepting or rejecting it. Even if the editor has his beliefs that might be different from the most part of the readers, or from the rest of the world for that matter, he manages to deliver it in a polite and solicitous way.

Psicoterror's layout is typically underground, but it does not lack of pictures or logos, yet the magazine is professionally printed, so there is nothing to regret about it. Just order and realise it yourselves! Goes for 5 \$ from:

Renzo Psicoterror, Calle el Galeon 202, Urb. La Calesa-Surco, Lima 33, Peru. psicoterror@hotmail.com, www.geocities.com/warhate_front

Tadas

Satanic Terror #1 (44/A4) magazine

This is a relatively old release by *Sadorass* - more familiar to most as a member of **The True Frost**. I'm sure - but since its concept is delightfully different from most other fanzines out in the market today, I decided to give it a few lines here.

And rightfully so. *Satanic Terror* is about bringing the scene back to the days when it took something to be 'Black Metal'. The interviewees and articles are carefully selected, not really failing the concept at any point. Emphasising the very darkest, destructive, side of Black Metal, *Satanic Terror* serves well the purpose it obviously is expected to serve; war and knowledge in equal balance. Sadly, this magazine is just a one-off thing with no continuation in sight.

Absurd, Astarte, Katharsis, Goatfire, Warloghe, Old Forest, Horna, Hegemon, Urgehal, Vilkaates and others.

Articles & reviews. Ask if it's still available from:

svexXX@freenet.de

Northwind

Satan's Sweet Slavery #11 (44/B4) magazine

Here's *Lady Symleaba Satana*'s rag. I've got the impression that *SSS* has made itself quite a notorious and infamous name in the States, and by browsing through the zine and bearing in mind the typical Yankee mentality, you don't really need to ask why. This magazine plays with fire, literally. *SSS* doesn't waste time or space in trying to cleanse the name of Satanism as a reasonable lifestyle far-from-the-horrible-Devil-worship, but instead take and say things as they are. If folks see Satanism as the same thing as Devil-worship, never mind, who fucking cares what they think or not think? *SSS* magazine certainly doesn't.

The Electric Hellfire Club, King Diamond, Wolfen Society, well-written articles, reviews, news, poetry, Satanic chaos, demons, devils and dark spirits for 5 USD (USA) and 8 USD (world) at:

SSS, PO. Box 28914, Columbus, Ohio 43228, USA.
svnsatana@hotmail.com

Northwind

Slayer #15 (88/A4) magazine

It was my hope to get *Metalion* actually featured in this issue with an interview, but for some reason the lazy Metal bum stopped sending me letters when I mailed him the interview... Go figure.

It's always a pleasure reading *Slayer*, though. Mostly because it has such a strong spirit of its own. *Metalion*'s way of writing and the already legendary layout are, needless to say, truly one of the kind, and they do qualify very well as the '*Slayer* trademarks'. If only other zines could create this intense, very personal sort of feeling inside their pages, the world would definitely be a better place for me. One thing troubles me, though. I know *Slayer* has always been 'Metal', but I still associate *Metalion* and *Slayer* with things much darker than just ordinary 'Metal'. It at least used to be at one point more about 'Black Metal' than 'Metal'. I can understand the guy's disappointed and sick 'n tired to the whole Black Metal phenomenon, but I would still need more of that in *Slayer* today instead of all these countless alcoholics. *Slayer* does feature a lot of Black Metal, even today, I'm not saying that, the feeling's just somehow different. Fuck. Can't explain it.

Well, to set the record's straight, *Slayer* is ALWAYS worth your money. This issue #15 includes: **Morbid Angel, The Haunted, Sadistik Exekution, Blood Storm, Necrophagia, Cadaver Inc., Hypnosia, Thornspawn, Astarte, Apocalyptic Raids, Dreams Of Damnation, Overkill, Nevermore, Artch, Usurper, Destroyer 666, Atrax, Nifelheim, Immolation, Carpathian Forest, Impaled Nazarene**... And too much more to mention. Just get it.

Slayer, PO. Box 447, 1703 Sarpsborg, Norway.
metalion@online.no, http://www.angelfire.com/extreme/slayermagazine

Northwind

Unholy Destruction #1 (16/A4) fanzine

A small, tiny, Swedish zine debuting in the vast Black Metal world. The editor's young age and inexperience in the field shine through too perceptibly in the overall picture, making the whole packet reek of - almost - annoying immaturity. You know what I mean.

Watain, Malign, Tsjuder, In Aeternum, Rebaellium and Dominator. Can't recall the price, but 3 USD should be more than enough.

Erik Westertund, Danmark Viggeby, 755 98 Uppsala, Sweden.
unholy.destruction@sweden.com

Northwind

Vampiria #4 (40/A4 + 24/A5) magazine

Francesco has indeed stepped forward with this issue, especially

in presentation. No more photocopied or stapled sheets of paper but a professionally printed and 'laid out' magazine, which does absolutely not turn into a publication of another kind. It's still about underground Metal music and beyond that! Must admit that *Vampiria* has gained an individualistic aesthetic approach, so you will not find any traces of some things similar to other magazines around - this concerns the graphics, and the interviews to some extent. The printing quality could have turned out better... I mean - darker. The idea to print all reviews separately is not bad, especially given that there was a limited budget for the editor, but the font-size there is a huge pain in the arse.

As usual, the editor lays out his emotions conceived by listening to some bands he enjoys the full 100%, so there isn't really any hesitation about his sincerity. Well, I personally would enjoy more criticism, especially in the review-sections, as some marks do not quite fit what he says in the actual reviews. Not to pass over in silence either that written English must be his worry number one. I find some traces there with my mistakes in the past, actually, but I hope my style has improved a bit ever since. *Francesco* wants to say a lot, he uses many picturesque sentences, but in the end his language is very chaotic and hardly even understandable at times. This is a major drawback for this issue. Luckily it is not felt as much in the interviews, as they are naturally answered by the bands, so the editor speaks less.

The way he presents his interviews and the chosen bands is interesting enough, though: **Anubi, Aborym, Umbr, Autumn Tears, Ildfrost, Lunar Aurora, Maldoror, Love Like Blood, Nazca, Gospel Of The Horns, Thyrfing, Furvus, Decapitated, Novembre, Raison d'Etre, Ulcus, Primary Slave, Hatred**. A good read, after all.

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Tadas

Vampiria #5 (76/A4) magazine



I'm quite fond of *Vampiria* - I'll get that off my chest first. Not because it's a mag to feast your eyes on nowadays - which it nevertheless is - but because of the inexorably genuine way of writing of the editor *Francesco Palumbo*. His knowledge on English grammar and its countless exceptions may be limited, true, but that which he loses in linguistic details, he takes back in genuineness of the spirit. *Vampiria* is an unbreakable

supporter of originality, obscurity & sensations in art - and these very elements create the platform of the magazine. And I like the result.

Do you know when you're reading a really good mag? Well, that's when you read it from cover to cover, not because you like the featured people or bands but because you're entertained by the text. *Vampiria* does this to me, so I cannot but recommend it to you, too. Besides, you'll get two comp. CDs and so 150 minutes of music of varying quality in addition. That's not what I'd call a bad deal at the end of the day, really.

Zyklon, Thorns, Notre Dame, Canaan, Girls Under Glass, Joyless, Chalice, Void Of Silence, Varathorn, The Candles Burning Blue, Rakoth and others, a whole bowl of reviews, some articles and the two CDs should guarantee this issue a place in your shopping list. Send 6 USD to the address above.

Northwind

The Voice Of The Dark #1 (80/B4) magazine

The Voice Of The Dark #1 is primarily a collection of the articles *Albertus Vorkt Jimenez* contributed to countless different underground Black Metal fanzines and magazines in the early 90's. *The Voice Of The Dark* was a name you would bump into while reading *Stregicoica* or *Blasphemous* or *Hellspawn* or *Orcustus* or *Key Of Alocer* or *Daemonium Aeternum* or... oh well, you get the picture.

The articles are of varying quality and length, but the overall concept is so inconceivably Satanic that if you just have the thirst for the darker aspects of human existence, I can guarantee you right here and now that this magazine will not let you down. It's like bits and pieces from beyond... beyond the grace of God. Personally I'm just satisfied with the fact that *Vorkt* hasn't relinquished his Sinister Reality, but continues to debate Judeo-Christianity throughout years and decades. He'll never quit. We'll never quit.

Released in 1999, this edition is still available for 8 USD. Miss it not.

Albertus Vorkt Jimenez, Poste Restante, H. Coscomatepec, Ver. 94140, México.

Northwind

Blessed In Sin



Under the Reign of the Horned King

I like **Blessed In Sin**. Their music reminds me of that autumnal day in '93 when I heard Rotting Christ's *Thy Mighty Contract* for the very first time. I'll never forget it. It stole my heart. Still does. But that's not the point, really. There's more to this band, and that's why this interview was bound to happen.

Northwind

Darkened greetings, comrades Black Christ and Overlord Nasty Metatheos The Hierophant!

BC: "Hail Northwind..."

You've just released the second full-length CD with Blessed In Sin called *Par le Sang du Christ (Opus Luciferi)*.

BC: "Yes, our 2nd album is out now and I can say I'm really proud of it. *Par le Sang du Christ (Opus Luciferi)* contains 10 new songs, which all are varied; including one short instrumental, some keyboard & voice songs, while the others are more 'usual' songs with a long playtime.

There has been without doubts an evolution since our 1st CD, *Melancholia*, in the compositions, of course (even if most of the songs contain a few old riffs, I think we have evolved with the arrangements), but also because on the new CD we have a bassist, a keyboard-player and a great drummer who weren't on *Melancholia*. It was recorded in summer 2001 and it's been available since late September / early October. The label is a new French one called *Nihil Voces* and 1000 CDs were pressed.

Most bands always say that their new album is their best release, and they are so happy to become better musicians, saying their old material was too amateurish, with a poor sound etc., but with **BIS** I like all our songs and releases, so I regret nothing we've done, and I won't say our new album is our best release, even if I am totally satisfied with it."

There seems to be a some sort of "religious" concept going on in the new album.

OLNM: "It deals with the end of Judeo-Christianity & the return of the pagan believes. It is a lampoon against the three sisters and their hypocrisy. One of the songs is a poem written in French, it is a tribute to the French poets. From the blood of Christ will reborn the pagan priests & warriors.

The whole album is made of prayers and petitions to the GODS of our forefathers. It is only for the Initiates, non-initiated clever persons, people who want to seek the way. Stupid, drunken, uneducated, brainless people are not allowed to buy our CD!!!"

I personally think *Par le Sang du Christ (Opus Luciferi)* is overall pretty much along the same

lines as your debut album, *Melancholia*, both the albums carrying the same spirit and atmosphere inside. Dark yet melodic, harmonic but obscure.

OLNM: "I do not totally agree with you, even if, as you say, the link between these two albums is very important. But we can see the songs are longer, more complex, the keyboard is strongly present now. I think this album sounds different from the debut and it is more 'mature', more sophisticated, more elaborated."

BC: "I agree that the atmosphere on both of our albums - and on our demos - is the same; melancholy, sorrow, nostalgia, hate, despair..."

Actually we have to talk about melodies... I mean, the BIS tracks are very melodic and atmospheric, occasionally really stunning the listener with just breathtaking passages. Most other underground Black Metal bands aren't like this as they're rather going for a more grim approach.

BC: "Well, my opinion is that music should reflect the soul of the musician who creates it, and that's why some bands are full of hate, aggressiveness and brutality, and some other bands are very dark & grim, and then there are bands like **BIS** that are melodic with a sad atmosphere. Some 'underground' bands play primitive music with a bad sound and without mood just because they aren't able to do better, though.

Another reason is that in the early **BIS** days, while most other young BM bands were very influenced by Norwegian bands like **Mayhem**, **Darkthrone** and **Immortal**, who played raw, aggressive, dark music, I was more into the old Greek bands like **Rotting Christ**, **Varathron** and **Thou Art Lord** that played BM in a different way; more melodic, sad, and that suits better my own feelings.

I must say sometimes when I listen to the old releases from **Beherit**, **The 3rd And The Mortal**, **Mayhem**, **Tormentor** etc. I feel like creating a few riffs containing similar atmospheres, but most of time I fail because their 'inside feeling' and way of playing aren't mine."

BIS's music has of course a lot of influences, more or less strong, but, as you say, both our albums

carry the same spirit and atmosphere, which comes from deep inside us."

Seems to me as if Rotting Christ's *Thy Mighty Contract* has really made an impact on you back in the days, as your material has always sounded like that album. Even this new record.

BC: "It's no secret that **Rotting Christ** has always been my oldest and the principal inspiration; I discovered this band with *Thy Mighty Contract* in 1993 and it was a big event to me. I'm inspired by their other albums too, though. Even by *A Dead Poem* and *Sleep of the Angels*. They're more 'commercial' albums, but personally I find a similar feeling as in their past songs, the riffs of *Necromayhem* are in the same way.

Like I said in the previous answer, I've been into Greek BM since our beginning, and I still listen to many Greek bands like **Necromantia**, old **Zephyrous**, **Rex Infernus**, **Necranthemon**, **Zemial**, **Funebre Inferi**, **Agatus**, **Twilight** ... And you shouldn't be surprised if I tell you that on our future songs you can still hear the Greek touch."

***Melancholia* was released on A.M.I and *Par le Sang du Christ (Opus Luciferi)* on *Nihil Voces*, both being very young & small French underground labels. Now, I'm quite sure **BIS** could get signed on some much bigger and better label today... What's the story?**

OLNM: "I don't think we'll sign with a bigger label. Labels don't care about our music, they just care about our problems with the justice. In fact, they are just unable to understand what music is, especially Black metal. They just suck.

I don't want to be a prisoner with a deal. Big labels are very dangerous for true bands. If I one day will sign with such a label, I will take care."

BC: "There is no story here; no bigger label has showed interest in producing **Blessed In Sin**. Maybe it's too soon to say because our album is too new to have yet gained any propositions, but I think that our bad reputation is the principal 'problem'. What I do know is that both the labels which have signed **BIS** really do love our music and trust in us without caring about our reputation.

A thing I don't like about small labels is that we pay the studio ourselves, so I must try to sell more

albums - instead of trading them - to get my money back, but that's impossible. Even if **BIS** has never been a way to make money, I'd really like not to lose money with it anymore either, after 8 years of existence."

You've always written your lyrics in French and English. I think French doesn't quite fit to be sang as your songs would require... It sounds fine on the spoken parts, but when screamed, well, it sounds "unnatural" - for lack of a better term. Is this something you're going to continue doing?

OLNM: "French is my language, I will never stop using it. It could sound strange, but it is the way I choose. When I want to express myself in a very 'poetic' way, I have no choice. French is the poet's language."

I am fed up with English supremacy. I think every band could sing in their own language. Perhaps we could add translations for people, but the texts will surely be best written with the use of our own language."

I think most people know by now that you two had to spend some time behind bars a couple of years ago, but could we get the whole story here again?

OLNM: "I don't want to speak about these shitty events in a **BIS** interview."

BC: "The true story is that justice, media and people, all together, have found the perfect scapegoats in us."

You two seem to be the core of **BIS whereas the others just work as session members. Are you brothers in blood?**

OLNM: "We are brothers in blood, that's a fact, and the others are sessions members. But we have very good relations with Storm, Belial, & Rost. They help us out during the creation of songs - especially Belial who creates his parts & songs himself, with my indications. It's important to preserve our identity as a band, that's why we are the major creators of the band."

BC: "More than 8 years ago we two created **Blessed In Sin**. We both are the spirit of the band; my brother does the lyrics, and now the artwork, and I compose most of the music. Since the very beginning I've done our flyers, the **BIS** distro, the mail etc., and all the interviews are always answered by us. Throughout the years a lot of people have played in our band and so a lot have left us - many because they fear our problems with the justice - but even when we lost

some good musicians, and even when in 1996 me and my brother had no more session members, **BIS** never stopped. But **BIS** would die without me or my brother because **WE** both are **Blessed In Sin**.

There are many reasons why other people in **BIS** will never be 'true' members. Too many of our ex-musicians have totally changed after they left **BIS**, so I can't really imagine a human who would enter **BIS** six, seven or more years after our beginning and become a true member. Two of our three actual musicians are 20 years old (while **OLNM** is 28 and I'm 25) so they have no **BM** past and they have not lived what me and my brother have lived through **BM** and **BIS** since late 1993.

I hope I'm making myself clear here because this is something I strongly feel inside; our musicians aren't slaves, we have good relations, and I know that without them there would be no gigs or releases, but they entered **BM** and **BIS** too late so that I could accept them totally in 'my' world. But even if both of us compose most of the **BIS** art, **Belial** always composes the keyboard songs, and in the past two of our ancient guitarists did a few songs and riffs on the demos, and in the near future I'd like our bassist and new guitarist to bring in some riffs too - they're more than session members. But most of the **BIS** music and 100% of the spirit was, is and will stay as the combination of our two souls."

I think **BIS is ideologically far from a clear case. I mean that you don't seem to be at all the kind of preacher-type most others in the underground Black Metal milieu are. Do you have a band-concept as such? What about individually, where do you stand?**

OLNM: "**BIS** is a **BM** band, not a political band. I can just say that I don't want to speak about political subjects in connection with **BIS**, not even as an individual."

BC: "In the past interviews - from 1994 until early 1996 - it was more easy for the public to know our ideology and opinions, and I used to have more extreme words and thoughts, but after that we've had too many problems with the justice. A lot of bad things happen in my life (hopefully some good moments, too) and most of the past dreams are gone. It all was utopia, many people and things disappointed me, so now I live for myself and for the very few close people."

I have evolved throughout the years. I can just say that I'm still an atheist, I am still against the Judeo/

Muslim/Christian sects, and I still don't follow any particular ideology/religion/politic/philosophy."

Your live shows seem to be pretty interesting... What happens there, usually?

OLNM: "We use make-up on stage, and since our last concerts we have also been using some art at the back of the stage, representing Lilith, Lucifer, The Snake and The Emerald. Our concerts mix traditional Black Metal & occult ceremony, most of time. Sometimes I practise a death curse on stage during the song *Veualiab* with the use of magik items as an 'athamée' (ritual knife), dagyde (a human representation made of wax) & of course candles, incense Nowadays the problem is that the trendies are everywhere and they want to impose their ignorance. They are just unable to understand that Black Metal deals with occultism, not nazism!!! If they laugh at our rituals, they are in the wrong place, we don't play **RAC** music. They can join the monkeys in the jungle and eat bananas with them. There's no place for such people in our movement!!!"

BC: "When we played our two first gigs in January 1995 the public was really surprised because we were the 1st **BM** band they heard and saw; the make-up, spikes, swords, incantations... and of course the music. The two vocalists and the keyboards were unusual for the audience who had just discovered **BM**. During our 3rd gig in October 1995 there was a big screen with extracts from horror movies behind us; WW II, true executions, corpses etc. All those things created a special atmosphere and I think even today **Blessed In Sin** on stage is always different from other **BM** bands. My brother is a good front-man who always have ideas for gigs, while I personally concentrate on the music and my own feelings."

After '95 we've played three gigs in 1999 and 2001, but now that everybody knows **BM** and so on, they were less surprised to see a **BM** gig, even though 90% of the people were newcomers and **NS** (**BM** or skinheads), so these kind of people hardly can understand our art. I must say some of those people are interesting, but there are too many stupid insects who know **NOTHING** about **BM**, so they don't care about atmospheres, rituals... they only want to hear brutal music, drink beer and say 'Sieg Heil'. They make no difference between a **BM** gig, **RAC** gig or a football match."





My compliments for founding one of the best names a band can have, I really like it. **Blessed In Sin** - it has that certain obscure twist in it. What sort of visions the name holds inside for you personally?

OLNM: "I found this name by knowing that light is born from darkness. There is no doubt in my mind, knowing the people of the Bible perverted the truth,

that I & everybody will be blessed by the sins. If you want to reach the light, you have to cross through darkness. The soul-purity is in sin, the perversity is to fight our instincts most of the time.

I was fed up with too many stupid things as: this thing is bad, this thing is good - which is all based on hypocrisy. I like the pleasure, especially the pleasures of flesh, and I don't give a fuck about the moralists, like priests or important people, who spread the morals & fuck children at the same time.

Each member of **Blessed In Sin** has to be a Sinner, because sin is the salvation of soul. This kind of a view is a Luciferian point of view, you have to accept the bite of the Snake and his venom, and if you are ready, you will not die, you will enter the light."

What would you like to see happen in the Black Metal scene of today?

OLNM: "I dream of our scene cleaning up of all the moralists & money-suckers, of all the scum as journalists, label-managers, who try to turn our movement into a nice circus for pretty children, and on the other hand, clean of all stupid, drunken, or mister-muscle-without-brains idiots."

BC: "Why not the death of all these people:

- money-makers from all the labels & mags & bands
- the assholes who always speak about BM, thinking they are the elite and the true ones, but spit on BM's roots, as on **Venom**, **Bathory**, and old Heavy and Thrash Metal.
- the cowards who proudly say that they are anti-NS, because for me they are the same sheep as 'normal' people, who believe they're strong and brave when they 'fight' something that is forbidden and that everybody condemns.
- all the people who use BM to become popular, to fuck women (or men?), to have friends...

- the impostors who used to say BM was shit, ridiculous music and a ridiculous attitude, a dangerous ideology etc., but have had interest in it as soon as there was money to win - like **Hard-Rock** mag in France, among others. They condemned BM and laughed at it, but few years later they are licking the asses of the bands they condemned in the past.

- the idiots who think true BM is only NS BM.
- the people who only listen to well-played BM with a good sound & promotion and spit on raw BM with a bad sound.
- the business pigs who try to make BM into something commercial, human and accepted.
- all the scum who spread false rumours, send anonymous threats and insults.
- all the jealous ones who criticise other bands because they aren't capable of making a good band themselves.
- all rip-offs etc.

For me all these imbeciles are BM's pollution and cancer. Without them the BM scene would be the purest, the most honest and the most devoted."

Can you say what's in store for BIS in the future?

BC: "Our next release will be a 7" EP called *Honor the Anus of Mary*, containing one unreleased song in the old BM vein (**Beherit**, **Samael**, **Mayhem**) and a cover of **Morbid's** *My Dark Subconscious*. It was recorded in April 2001 - if I remember well - and *Soulseller* will release it, strictly limited to 500 copies. I think it will be available soon. After that I don't know...

We have a new guitarist, but not a drummer, so it's frustrating to rehearse. Not least because a lot of people have asked us to play live... At the moment we're rehearsing some songs from both our albums, cover songs of **Barathrum** & **Acheron** (and soon also **Heretic**), some demo-songs, too, and we just began to work on my new compositions.

We will certainly record the 3rd CD in the future, but it won't happen until late 2002 or even 2003!!! Who knows, maybe we'll do another reh. demo?"

Thank you for the interview, comrades *Black Christ* and *Overlord Nasty Metalbeos the Hierophant*.

OLNM: "Thank you, man. Never forget that PUSSY is the temple of gods!"

BC: "Thanks to you, comrade *Northwind*. Nothing more to add."

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Wacken Open Air 2001

The 2nd - 4th of August 2001, Wacken, Germany



Tadas

Let me start off by saying that my wish to go back to *Wacken* was extremely big. Just think about it: I was last time there two fuckin' years ago, and that's an unbelievably long time for a diehard Metal freak who has literally fallen in love with the place, the event, and what's the most important – with the atmosphere of the event. Well, that first time in 1999 was rather special as it was something truly new to me, earlier inexperienced with such kind of mass meetings held within the Metal community.

So my hard way there this year was just a fair confirmation of how willing I was to visit the current volume of the event. My trip was not certain until almost the last minute... Alright, I won't describe the adventures how the goddamn place was reached. Let it stay in the memories of those who witnessed it (greetings, *Mikolaj!*). The Heavy Metal boots stepped on the promised land on late Friday evening, and UNFORTUNATELY there were queues all around, for the devil's sake! It was a mistake, I tell you. If you gonna go to *Wacken* this year, make sure to arrive there at least on Thursday in order to relax and properly prepare for the Metal massacre! They mentioned this year's festival brought the largest crews ever, close to 30 000 people, hungry for Metal! Until we reached the place to park the car and pull the tents out, the warm up **W.A.S.P.** show was on its full scale, so it was a terrible pity to check out just the last five or so tunes of this ungodly legend that was absolutely great that night (well, I guess they always are?!), and it doubtlessly was one of the greatest shows on the whole festival. In spite of the short time that I could consume **W.A.S.P.** they left an ultimately wonderful impression. Never to be forgotten. Mind you, I wasn't even in the first rows there.

And now let me utter you about the atmosphere of *WOA*. It is really special. I have felt it like that for the first time. Well, maybe other summerfests are like that. I don't know, but, indeed, it was Metal Nights and Days, Evenings and Mornings. Pure Metal. Something you can feel just Once a Year. And it has nothing to do with whether you are a Black Metalter or just prefer pure Heavy Metal; if you are a plain misanthrope, or a happy to meet people and talk to them all the day long. There is room for everyone. It was great to meet those extreme people from all around the globe, coming from as far as Australia, Brazil and Canada (yes, the **Blasphemy** crew!). Well, like most Black Metal guys, I did not bother to watch that many bands this year, moreover that many of them sincerely did not suit my taste. But the feeling of being with friends was always there: in those talks about Metal, attitudes acting of curse Metal, and last but definitely not least – drinking sessions that were monumentally Metal! Just think about it: who the

fuck could refuse sp fuckin' cheap beer (we have it more expensive even in Lithuania) on a sunny August night? Ah, the weather was so damn brilliant! Only at the very moment of leaving on Sunday, rain it started to pour out of heaven – it was a real sign that the festival was over. But you'd better forget that rain, or the whole end of the festival for that matter, since the festival lives on and invites you again this year, with a much more impressive roster, by the way. Indeed, it has turned out into a monster enterprise, and I guess that the organizers have no rest all year long, and when you think that *Wacken* sleeps in deep winter, there is actually plans being built every evil winter evening! Just keep checking their website (www.wacken-open-air.com) to realize that it is true!

Oh yeah, I stopped at the beer. So, well, we were drinking some cheap *Holsten* that you can consume shitloads, and then it works but not for long. You literally need to buy next 24 pack, and then again, ha ha. Anyway, it was enough to completely lose myself among the numerous tents for two times, once at a daytime.

Goddamn. I am supposed to speak about the music here, right? Hell, there were, indeed, a bunch of great bands, and another bunch that I sadly missed. It's always like that when 70 or 80 teams show up in less than 48 hours. **Krisiun** at a daytime? Fuck, that's weird. Their music is so dark, menacing and... great! Well, the drummer was unbelievable as well as his partners in crime – they have turned their performance to a sort of sportsmen competition who's the most technical out there. And those devoted Brazilian fans everywhere, huh. **Opeth** was a slight disappointment – I guess I was not expecting *that* result as this crew is certainly better on CD, or at least they would do better in a simple show with a couple of other atmospheric bands. *Wacken* is more for the rock and Metal type of loudness-makers. **Nightwish** and especially **Behemoth** were my personal discoveries this year. Well, earlier on I've been ignoring the Finnish crew, but their fuckin' great performance blew me away now, much like the rest of the audience. *Tarja* is absolutely a professional, and on stage she acts like a truly skillful opera singer (not that I could comment on opera singers, though): no loss of voice, not a single mistake. Excellent! And then later in the evening I was passing nearby a wet stage when something really heavy blocked me the way. Like a zombie I turned to that direction to check out what the hell was going on there! Imagine a tent fully packed with berserk metalheads (around 2000) bowing to the four guys that call themselves **Behemoth**. Dear god! To listen to their CDs is one thing, but to witness them live is completely another story!!! They are insane; they

create a feeling of demigods on stage, indeed. Someone could suspect them of using drugs or something to play such an intense show! Well, I guess it comes from mental and psychological preparation. You can definitely feel how strong they spiritually are. And they are able to pass that energy to the audience: freely, passionately and impressively. It creates the success formula. A great, top notch experience.

Next I was glad to hear and see the master of Heavy Metal himself, **Ralf Scheepers**, much like his genius **Primal Fear** on stage. They kicked some major ass, let alone the sound and atmosphere were fuckin' Heavy and pure Metal. That's what I call a splendid, professional attitude! **The Haunted** were a disappointment. Their music was great, like on CD, but the vocalist was even worse than in studio, and it was hard to bear his lousy screams. Fuck that. **Dimmu Borgir** was, well, huge and neat on stage, but their manner of playing was already familiar from earlier experiences to me. Still above 'fine', if you need my opinion. The same kind of a feeling I got out of **Hammerfall**. It is always fun to watch this band perform. This time they made a real Heavy Metal theater on stage, posing as much as they could and bringing much of decorations in there. Well, a bit cheesy, but that's the story about them, if you haven't noticed.

Some culminating bands were playing on Saturday night, including **Therion**, **Motörhead** and those monsters of **Sodom**. Again great and huge shows with something to remember, but **Sodom** were absolutely the best!!! Their performance was in the dead of the night, it gathered an extremely huge crowd, and every single minute of this show was worth it. They were playing fast, hard and passionately. No gimmicks, no stupidity on stage, tonz of old legendary tracks, and just pure Thrashing energy! They even brought Mr. **Frank Blackfire** on stage to perform a tune. And I tell you to get close to the stage was simply impossible, it was! If somebody had fallen down, others wouldn't have been able to stand either – they would have fallen down, too! Not to forget the flying bodies everywhere. A huge show by a huge band, worth of seeing by all means. I certainly will never forget it.

Well, aside from those great performances this year's fest was also a fun discovery to me. Who could stop that immense row of vehicles moving down the Germany autobahns after the festival? The roads got literally filled with leather and the air got thick colours! I could continue, but it is hard to express everything in words, so you'd better take it for real and go to *Wacken* this year, whether it rains or shines.

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

O' dear. Sometimes I miss those chilly mornings of the past when I went to pick up my mail in utter excitement, giving equal attention to every single release I got, analysing everything to the bone. Well, that's what we're still trying to do, but as you can imagine by taking a brief glance at the amount of reviewed products here, it ain't always a joyride to be neck-deep in all these promos and stuff, even if we, deep down, still do love it and wouldn't change it for the world.

Tadas and I have quite different kind of musical tastes and ways of looking at things, but this could be a factor that makes the section a bit more 'multidimensional' than it might have been with just one guy typing down his views about hundreds and hundreds of releases, even if Tadas has done most of the reviews. The albums are scaled from 0 to 13, as in #1, but since our publication is primarily intended for those of you who do not read only logos in magazines, I'd suggest you go through the actual reviews as well to really get the picture.

Northwind

1349

Liberation

Frost was kind enough to mail me 1349's debut full-length on CD-r, a band in which he himself does the drums. I have no idea when or on which label this album will eventually be released, but I hope when the day comes it won't be advertised or sold as a mere side-project of a *Satyricon* member, for that just wouldn't do justice for 1349. There's more to this band.

1349 embrace the classic Black Metal concept with a sound so grim and dark only the people in the land of the fjords can create. It sounds very in-your-face, leaving nothing for hesitation. The Satanic thunder storms onward all the 38 minutes it lasts, and there's just nothing you can do about it. Once you've taken your headphones off, you wonder what the hell just happened. Where were you?

Their furious Black Metal attack is, however, at least partly structured in the 'old-school' vein, which actually makes the material sound a bit more 'human', if you get my drift. But bearing in mind that Frost is the one doing the pounding here, you ought to know that the grimness of this album will still haunt you for all eternity. Just listen to the splendid *I Breathe Spears* or *Pitch Black* to get a clue. Or the fucking brilliant *Riders of the Apocalypse*. Or their version of *Buried by Time and Dust*, which will definitely leave *Roberto Mammarella* bordering on the edge of inescapable madness as he didn't get the chance to feature this version in that official *Mayhem* tribute he released.

Altogether one could say this is a positive surprise from Norway, as far as Black Metal is concerned. Actually I wouldn't mind hearing more Norwegian bands crafting some serious Black Metal Art again, heading towards harsher soundscapes. Should that be the case, I'd be willing to let 1349 lead the way.

Northwind

VII ARCANO

10

Inner Deathscapes

Warlord

If you have heard by accident their old material - it was a 7" EP issued in 1994 - just forget about the music performed there. The return of this long forgotten band is completely different, let alone their line-up has lived noticeable changes ever since. No more depressive, atmospheric, slow Death Metal (or Doom/Death, like everybody describes this kind of music as). No more tears. Now they are fully involved in the modern way of Deaththrash, combining obvious influences of *Slayer* and *At The Gates*, just like many others, but somehow managing to convince us with this debut album much more than many of their rivals all around the world.

The Death Metal side of things is emphasised here, which I consider important when giving this a positive reaction. The production, the intensity and the low growling vocalist are the main ingredients of that. I mean, most bands have just one of those things, but otherwise they stick to 80's Thrash or have got involved in modern Metalcore or industrial sonorities in these recent years. That makes many of these new-wave Thrashers sound the same. So at least in heaviness VII Arcano do differ from the rest of the pack.

Well, if we talk about the songs themselves, they surely are kept in the typical tradition of the style. From time to time one riff or growl gets closer to old-school Death Metal like *Hypocrisy* or some Floridian bands. Anyway, these are just small tiny episodes that can be realised only if you have been listening to Death for

ten or twelve years.

Okay, let's believe that this Italian crew will not jump onto something else and keep proving they have chosen this kind of music once and forever! Next album must be yet stronger, yet faster, yet more crushing!

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Tadas

ABADDON INCARNATE 9

Nadir

Sentinel

Their difference in the thematic approach amuses me the most, as it is more than boring to hear grindcore bands spitting forth cheap socially aware messages that make no sense whatsoever. It's much better to share your perverse ill-natured wisdom with the listeners, that in this case is also highly anti-religious and occult-related in a way! These Irish fellows prove this whole to work out fine with downtuned Death/grindcore, which is a heavy load of music. I tell you - definitely not for the weak.

I missed their debut record (no wonder, having in mind that it was released by *Season Of Mist*, which does not really promote their albums properly - that's also the reason why *Abaddon* have left them now), but at least this one reflects greatly the brutal Metal once introduced by the first *Brutal Truth* record with a modern production that has much in common with *Nasum*'s albums. For those not aware - *Nadir* was recorded at *Mieszko Talarczyk's* own *Soundlab Studio*. It seems to be really suitable for grind music, and I see no reason why it should not become *The Abyss* of grindcore. Dirty bottomless guitar and bass sound (it works fuckin' great on a first-rate stereo!), heavy but clear drum sound and a wicked double vocal attack (this thing couldn't be achieved without reverb, but anyway - the genre is requiring that). Am I hearing a *Fleshcrawl* echo on this album? Might be that downtuned sound, or the bloodless souldemon creeping around this four-piece's plethora of heaviness...

Twenty-four songs are certainly too much of such music to me, as I don't feel that much exceptionality among the tracks, but maybe it was meant to be like that - to grind the fuck down! Caring less about separate episodes, and more about musical extremism in its entirety. Why not... the CD booklet is a bit messy, though.

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Tadas

ABHORRENCE 10

Evoking the Abomination

Listenable

First of all, this could have had a slightly more focused production. Maybe not as clear as the *Morissound* bands come out with, but a production allowing the listener to be a bit more delighted about the riffs and other elements of the music. I wonder that *Eric Rutan* and *Gene Palubicki* mastered it, then... maybe the recorded songs were 'oriented' towards such kind of strapping sound, and there was nothing major the guys wanted to change whilst mastering it. Anyway, I personally find it too stifled. And, secondly, *Abhorrence* are in the third place in the league of ultimate Brazilian Death Metal revelations. Not the first (*Krisiun*), not the best (*Rebaellium*), but the third. Everything depends on how you feel about this 'third thing' - either 'they are so high to be the third', or 'I listen to first-class bands only, and they are only the third'. And it also depends on what is

your position towards sick, massive Death Metal in general.

Respecting *Krisiun's* music and admiring their techniques, as well as totally worshipping *Rebaellium*, I cannot say this one leaves me indifferent, though. There were reasons for *Christophe Szpajdel* to talk big things about *Abhorrence*, indeed. A crushing experience, even if this debut album does not bring anything groundbreaking to the understanding of Death Metal. It is more a confirmation of how great such music can be if you learn how to deal with it. Sort of like a violent force tamed in the hands of remarkably genius musicians. Yeah, they are a three-man band, guitarist/vocalist *Rangel* and drummer *Fernando* being brothers.

Death Metal will never lose its face if bands like this will keep the spirit in their discs. So, judging by the time that this extermination takes to arrive in a dead end - 28 minutes - it is clear that to subjugate the beast is not the easiest task even for the most violent musicians. Check out their ugly, tyrannical three-headed dragon.

Abhorrence, av. Cenobelino B. Serra, 2014, Jd Canaa 15035-000, S.J. Rio Preto - SP, Brazil. abho@zaz.com.br, www.siage.com.br/abhorrence.htm

Tadas

ABOMINATOR 9

Subversives for Lucifer

Osmose

Now, what the hell is it with these Aussies, all pledging allegiance only to the most brutal, violent and unholy forms of Metal? Just think about it, *Sadistik Evolucion*, *Bestial Warlust* (*Damon Bloodstorn's* on vocals here), *Destroyer 666*.

Abominator... Goes beyond my comprehension. I missed *Abominator's* debut CD, *Damnation's Prophecy*, so I have nothing to draw comparisons to, but I don't think that's necessary either. *Subversives for Lucifer* is a prototype of 'Australian Black/Death Metal' - and you should know the things associated with that term quite well by now: brutality, heaviness, insanity, darkness, blast-beats, hell, inhumanity, violence, rawness, Satan. It's uncompromising and unbreakable in all those.

There really is nothing special or revolutionary about *Abominator*, if that's what you were thinking. They are quite unshakable in their faith in violent Metal, and there's not a damn thing you can do about it. Take it or leave it. Love it or hate it. It ain't gonna change the direction of their next album, I'm sure, no matter what people say about them anyway.

Northwind

ABORTED 10

Engineering the Dead

Listenable



More brutality from *Listenable*! This time they present a Flemish band that counts five members and two albums, one of them being a split MCD, in prior. I mention the label as an important matter when it comes to this release, because if it is on

Listenable, you can be certain that no amateurism will be unchained! Just pure professionalism, and needless to utter - harsh Metal attacks!

Death Metal for both. *Laurent* and *Aborted*, has been like a cake for small children for the last five years. I guess, so who dares to think that *Engineering the Dead* might not be another portion of exterminating qualities? You? Wrong, my sweetie! This IS pure Death Metal with grinding trace - music that has this and that to do with their label-mates *Deranged*. And it's not just the guttural necrotic vocalist that makes me say so - their guitar-sound, and most of the structuring, are quite similar to that of the Swedish band's as well. Nonetheless, the current album proves them to be masters of their sick engagement, so I see no reason why grinding Death fans would ignore the band.

On the other hand though, it is 'love it or hate it' thing, and people outside the brutal scene will definitely pass this release without any attention at all. But having in mind that Metal community keeps fragmenting into these small circles of devoted fans, appreciating just this and that, then hardcore albums like this should reach the right people, instead of flowing in search of 'possible' audience. Another band I think of is *Cannibal Corpse*, and I bet such a comparison serves as a right compliment for *Aborted*, because they do not make shame at all, neither for themselves or for Death Metal. To score the highest points they still need something extra though, how ever hard it can be to achieve.

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Tadas

ABORTUS 10

Judge Me Not

Battleleged

Crunchy Death Metal leading the way of all determined music-lovers and awaking the sleepy dreamers, especially in the early morning - I can assure you about that, as I have experienced it myself. Much like *Benediction* used to put their songs together, yet even more straightforward. And sometimes slower, actually. Mid tempo Death Metal that requires minimal amount of imagination to get into, yet maintaining a groove and natural anger inside - check out the low growl of vocalist *Jack* - in other words. In spite of that you may have heard this brand for a couple of times already, there is still space left for new bands and records, as far as they manage to maintain a musical vibe. So, these Aussie butchers actually contribute to Death Metal genre, and if people still speak and live Death Metal, it is not only a favour of all big bands, but also smaller ones, like this. Death in extreme, violent and headbanging-friendly portions.

I think this should be considered as their full-length debut, even if it's not so long, less than 30 minutes. But considering the material recorded, maybe a longer record would be too tedious to listen to. It's more a question of stylistics than of the band's improvement. I am pretty sure that they will continue like this on their next recordings, so this is not bad as well. Maybe some more intensity and speed would add an extra feel to it, though. But, in general, it smells of the early 90's death metal and that's it.

Like with many Australian bands, I have a feeling this album might be left unnoticed. And judging it from a professional side of things, it could sell pretty well in both Old and New Continents.

Abortus, c/o *Stere's Guitar Sales*, 360 Forest Road, Hurstville NSW 2220, Australia. abortus@hotmail.com, http://abortus.cjb.net

Tadas

ABSU 9

Tara

Osmose

Much could be written about *Absu* - mostly due to the never-ending lifespan of the band, true, but quite as rightfully due to their fidelity towards their style and, above all, concept. Black Metal bands that have any cultural - or sub-cultural, any way you want it - relevance can be counted with one hand, but this Texas Blackthrash outfit does have something that will make them be remembered in the history of extreme Metal - yeah, with such persistence and devotion they've spread the Celtic legends upon the unsuspecting world throughout the years.

But I can't leave them there at the

throne, for no matter how I try I just can't help feeling a little bit disappointed listening to *Tara*. That's right. The album is divided in two phases: *Joldinac's Pedagogy & T. Cybraul Klan's Scrutiny*, of which the former consists of rather mediocre Blackthrash bursts while the latter shows a much more multifaceted *Absu*. Nonetheless, I did expect more. Their monotonous, 'professional', blackened Metal just won't do. Too many tracks lay themselves waste by using the overused methods that we've all heard before. No thank you. The actual highlights of the record can be discovered in the energetic *Vortalis* and in the truly monumental *Stone of Destiny*. With a hint of exaggeration I could crystallise that most other tracks pass you by unnoticed.

If this record had been done by some unknown band I'm sure I would have manipulated this review into a more positive direction, but when it's *Absu*... well, let's just say that it's our legal right to expect a little bit more.

Northwind

ACID DEATH 10

Random's Manifest

Black Lotus

This Greek band was experimenting with fusion, industrial and progressive elements on their 1997's first full-length album, thus gaining name as an unpredictable formation. What I have heard up until now was their split LP with *Avulsed*, released back in 1995 - a piece of rather angry Death Metal, aimed at techniques and well-structured music of Death. This comeback album sees them heading back to rougher standpoints, even if it is not American Death Metal by all means, unlike the biography statement that compares *Random's manifest* to US Death.

The Greek syndrome has not gone without taking *Acid Death* into its clutches and - moreover - this disc has familiar caliginous keyboard parts, a typical production and even the vocalist reminds me of the Grands here and there: *Rotting Christ*, *Varathron*. Much like with *Observation*, this does not mean that *Acid Death* have Black Metal influences, but more like a common sense that is so a unifying factor in the Hellenic scene. Yeah, another portion of great time for the connoisseur.

But back to what's proposed here - twelve tracks of aggressive, technical, partly melodic, partly experimental Death Metal. Not a chaotic mess made out of these things, but an experience with ranging profile. I still doubt that this album can gain big commercial success, even if it is pretty catchy and melodious. There are simply just too much 'happenings' in here, and mass-consumers usually don't like that. And the cover art has brought them many troubles, it was censored in a number of countries.

I believe *Acid Death* are used to remain in the back a bit, at least they must realise their position with not-so-well selling music. But being around for 11 years, I am quite sure they know it themselves. My suggestion for you is to check out this neat work of course.

Acid Death, PO. Box 31902, 100 35 Athens, Greece. deathvein@yahoo.com, www.freebox.com/acid-death

Tadas

AEBA 7

Rebellion - Edens Asche

Last Episode

And for the third time I'm absolutely NOT convinced! This is below the average and definitely too one-dimensional music, much like the earlier releases by this band have been. One drastic change is the switch from 'live' to 'dead' drummer - I bet you know what I mean with that. Surprisingly, it has brought more discipline and strength to the band, as (if I remember correctly) their drummer's techniques were close to terrible. But this feeling is simply destroyed by the pretty weak guitar sound, which is of course a disappointing and familiar element within the German 'Black' Metal domain. Then the synth and the progressive parts do their dirty job to diffuse the music to the point of plain boring clichés. If they would sound much smarter, had they cut the screeching vocals and buzzed guitars-off. Just a progressive element involving in Metal would be at least somehow closer to the essence of these songs. The lead guitar parts would be a good first step into this new path I'm suggesting for *Aeba*.

With every album the guys write more and more tunes, resulting in longer albums. Can you believe that this one is destined to be 66 minutes long?! Argh, that's another

reason to never pick it up again after this review is completed and forwarded to the master of spelling and correction, Mr. *Northern!* Well, if you like to spin some generic 'Black' Metal in the background when reading for a very hard exam, or watching even more boring (than this music) programs on TV, or quarrelling with your parents or girl/boyfriend, then this is a good ingredient! Just kidding, of course. A ballast in anybody's mailorder, let alone collection!

gottsmord@acba.de, www.acba.de

Tadas

AETERNUS 10

Ascension of Terror Hammerheart

Aeternus move on with every new album. If you have been sticking to their shadows of old, don't be so sure about this one as *Ascension of Terror* is not predictably another step into the aggression of Death Metal, although it is another move away from Dark Metal. Who the fuck needs those terms anyway, but since many, and then some, do call these guys as the pioneers of Dark Metal and one of the better performers of truly dim music, I suggest you listen to this new album very carefully and think twice before calling it 'Dark'. Of course, Aeternus' vocals were, are and will remain absolutely chilling – I believe 'sombre' is the word I'm fumbling for. Yet musically I hear much more diverse influences within these nine tracks. Only Hell knows if it is absolutely original as an album because, indeed, you need to listen to it for dozens of times to focus your hearing on all the aspects layered within this rich carpet of Metal. So, it seems that their approach is fairly original, but if you listen deeper to it, you will catch yourself on those episodes familiar either from their own or from other artists' repertoire. Hmm, yeah, the Death Metal classics come to mind at first... but also Black Metal and those older Doomy Death releases. At the same time I must admit that *Ascension of Terror* once again manages to avoid the slow Metal effect, even when they do not play at full speed, there is a clever adaptation to the general pace of these compositions. Thinking of later *Morbid Angel* or what? Or maybe I am just wrong here.

Anyway, I feel like hesitating and babbling too much as this is one more confirmation about the exceptionality of the sonic violence created by Aeternus and the crew. It grows with every new listen. A pity that this is the final album with the truly gifted bass player *Morrigan* who has laid down his own musical lines again, but is not in the list of members anymore... You need to experience songs like *The Essence of the Elder*, *Wrath of a Warlord*, and *The Lair of Ambis*, now!

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Tadas

AGMEN 9

Damnation Breath Of Night

This one needs some time until you understand its essential message. At first it sounds like a just another Black Metal recording that hits you literally every day, especially from smaller labels and debuting bands. And one more thing – it sounds very Czechish (not like *Maniac Butcher*, though they have the ex-drummer of this band in the line-up), being comparable to Black Death sounding bands like *Avenger*. The sound, tuning and the way the guitarists handle their playing techniques are strongly inspired by older Death and Thrash recordings. As I usually say about such albums – their power and might is hidden behind the lines. It starts to work on your mind slowly but firmly. Sure, if the listeners think that this music is shit from the only listen they bother to take, then *Damnation* is destined to remain unnoticed. But as it always happens – a few chosen ones will dig it out, and will find those traces of secret venomous messages, masterly finalised by the two-piece entity (no plastic blast-beat here!).

Still I think there is much left to be conquered by *Tom* and *Michal*. They would sound better with a tighter production and maybe a bigger sound. Yes, for some strange reason I think that good, big studios like *Abys* or *Soundville* would fit their music perfectly, huh! Of course they'll never enter there, and it'll remain to be just another smart idea of yours truly. After all, this is a *Breath Of Night* release, so any hints of the commercial attitude are avoided like the darkest plague!

I must admit this is a good choice by

Abnenalen once again – this guy acts like he speaks, and signs quite interesting hordes. So – please try *Agmen*, and be patient with this album. I'm sure it will grow on you like it did on me. A small but pleasant surprise at the end: a cover of the legendary *Tórr*!

Agmen, *Michal Dedeč*, Husitske Man 537, 43601 Zatec, Czech Republic.

Tadas

AKERCOCKE 10

Rape of the Bastard Nazarene Black Lotus

A very controversial band that has got much exposure recently, mainly for their second album *The Goat of Mendes*. *Rape of the Bastard Nazarene* is their debut album re-released in a limited edition of 500 copies, as the first version, pressed by the band itself, is no longer available, and surely to cash in on their current position in the scene is not a bad thing to do. Moreover, this time also the old recordings of two of their band members are included. Back in 1990-1991 they had a band called *Salem Orchard*, which was the cradle of what later became *Akercocke*. So, this might be a unique opportunity to hear that old obscure stuff. I'm sure some newborn fans of this ruthless band will buy this album straight-ahead.

Most importantly – they still sound like it was 1990-1992 outside! And that's not a bad characteristic, since the rough, in-your-face sound is highly missed in these days of plastic glamour. Another sure thing is that musically they have less to do with Black Metal than most bands today, and this sounds like a compliment to them! It means they have originality that many others greatly miss. I think everyone finds his/her own reflections of the musical past – me, I'm surprised to hear much of the *Autopsy* feeling, bits of early European Death Metal (*Gardens of Grief* by *At The Gates* the almighty, minus the vocals?) as well as those experiments that are, well, partly in the *Voivod* vein. It may sound awkward for the first time, but in a while their drastic challenges work out. And then the rough, underproduced, low-tuned recording sounds like it must be like that.

Their imagery and the contents of the lyrics speak for themselves. It's no stupid goatworship, and if *The Magus* himself was fascinated enough by *Akercocke* to re-release this, you can be sure of their serious attitude towards the darkside. They do pay attention to what they growl and sing about.

Well, to sum it up, this might be difficult to listen to at first, but if you learn to enjoy it, it will become your album for sure. It still keeps growing on me.

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Tadas

ALAS 10

Absolute Purity Hammerheart



Who of you knew that this album - or this project - was in works for seven years! No right for the media is given to name it as a 'just another' project band of famous guys.

Well, to make some justice to the main composer behind it, *Alas* is an emotional outlet of *Erik Ratan*, and I think you know who that guy is. The truth is that he has composed and arranged every bit and piece on this album whilst his notorious partners were just a creative support. Nonetheless, with their experience in different kinds of heavy music, it goes without saying that their contribution is very remarkable. And I mean not only the ex-*Dreams Of Sanity* and ex-*Therion* singer, *Martina*, but also both the guys complementing the techno prog Metal inspired rhythm section. Indeed, instrumentally this sounds pretty much like a cooled and slowed down version of *Atheist*! More atmospheric, relaxed and as complex Metal delivery.

Alas create a feeling that there is no need to rush in life – a sense of maturity,

But that singing siren brings most of the hassle here. It is a very controversial performance. I bet. And it's true that everybody expecting just another beautiful female voice combined with Metal will be way surprised. You can trace she is the same girl that did all those famous records, but, on the other hand, she steps in and just sings what you expect the least in the other tunes. It would be challenging to criticise the acclaimed singer, but at times it really sounds as if she is going off the tune. Dunno - maybe my ears have got broken, or maybe that was the intention. It is not usual, however.

I think now is the time to say some words about *Erik* and to make sort of a final statement. Everybody waits an approve remark? Heh, yeah, I cannot say this is crap - *Absolute Purity* is daring and breaking the rules, once again. It is needless to mention the ingeniousness of the guitarist – it's been said countless times in the past, anyway. By the way, check out that *Morbid Angel* lick in *Starmounting the Masses*.

Two things I am sure about, though; 1) this recording will grow in a few months; 2) this band will grow and mature as well, as this is basically like a starting stage for something very complex that the guys are still trying to tame.

www.hateceternal.com/alas

Tadas

ALGOL 6

Gorgun aura The Twelfth Planet

Oh poor... This would be just an average, nothing special, type of record if it wasn't for that oblique lead in the corresponding advert: *Elite American Black Metal*. Ok, it is Metal, but neither Black or elite, for devil's sake. Whether it is typically American or not is a bit hard to say. If this is what comes out from the States nowadays, then I can point a few bands that are miles closer to what this Italian label has desperately been trying to describe. Just think about *Grand Belial's Key*, *Thornsawn* or *Black Witchery* for true US Black Metal. But do not mess with *Algol*. Sincerely, I was of the better opinion when it comes to the taste of *TTP*, and I thought they were more accurate (honest?) in presenting their releases...

Where are the reasons for such a bad opinion? In the music, where else... Here is less Black Metal than in half of those Swedish bands that water brutality with soulless melodies. A wrong term, wrong image, wrong attitude – simply! As if everyone should believe that acoustic guitar with synths for about 20 minutes is Black Metal. Hah, how smart.

Not that this music would be all that bad, though... It is melancholic, yes. It is gloomy, yes. It kind of creates a certain autumnal mood, yes. But when it suddenly turns into not-so-well crafted BM riffing and truly boring drumming, the feeling is gone and their image gets destroyed pretty easily with those bad attempts to be Black



Metal. Actually I've just found one single riff worth checking out in the whole CD – the starter of *Abscond*. If this was just a demo, I would refer to this particular song and suggest the band to move on from that point. Yet this is their debut album, so, basically – *Algol* has not adapted themselves to wear the new boots completely. And the public will easily notice that.

Concerning the booklet, the well-composed pictures of *Sarnath* and *Mitchan* are weakened by the other photos. Once again, if this is elite, then let me be at the lowest class.

Algol, Greg Singer, 120 Susan Drive, Millersburg, PA 17061, USA, algol666@hotmail.com, www.geocities.com/algol9

Tadas

ALIO DIE & NICK PARKIN 9

Aquam Metallicam Musica Maxima Magnetica

Some dark brooding ambient for a change! Sounds good to relax with it from the Heavy Metal overload. At least in my case. Please try yourselves, if rhythmless, unrestricted

typically eclectic Ancient artwork.

www.ancientband.com

Tadas



ANCIENT RITES 12

Dim Carcosa Hammerheart

music ever was of your liking. Beats me, this is a plain experiment between two gurus from the industrial scene who have just gathered for this project, and never rehearsed for it together before. Things that happen during these 53 minutes imply a thought that it was entirely a musical collaboration. I personally can't rely on those sonic arrangements with any concept, although this album has a title and, as far as I understand, it means *Metallic Water*, or something like that. The main-man *Stefano Musso* often uses shells to make sounds with them, so maybe that's the reason to give a title like that. However, the listener needs some imagination to relate those sounds to the metallic nature of water. Well, how should I put it... this is not your verse-bridge-refrain-verse-refrain type of music, so everyone must experience it personally, and then make your own conclusions. I enjoy the ambient part of *Aquam Metallicam* the most, whilst some of the more experimental episodes sort of disturb my focusing on the otherworldly hemispheres that are decorated in the cosmic dwelling spheres.

Diversity also has its limits on these nine tracks, so this is not an eclectic album. The music's pretty focused, it just has some occasional steps aside, as if the performers were curious to try this and that. Sure, it must have a lot to do with the voyager's nature. Many composers of such music have often very abstract understanding of sound, so this is yet a well thought-out sonicscape, a journey into the world of vibrations.

alodie@tamnet.it (Stefano) or xazuu@hotmail.com (Nick)

Tadas

ANCIENT 10

Proxima Centauri Metal Blade

Well, here's the brand new album of *Ancient* – nowadays located in Italy - that is a complete 'shut up' to such self-taught reviewers as myself, who have been complaining about the band's weakness and trendy approach all these years after the *Starfall/beim* era was over. It is absolutely the best possible return for *Ancient*.

I simply cannot recognise their music, at least comparing to those albums released before this, and I keep wondering how they have managed to eliminate all those mediocre and weird elements off their music, keeping a more or less structured Black Metal formula on *Proxima Centauri*. Yep, indeed, *Aphazel* & co. have strengthened their writing skills, sticking to more focused stylistics instead of a cacophony of different approaches that have simply ruined their previous efforts. It is not your fastest or the most extreme BM ever made, yet a much more rougher and in-your-face pack of compositions. Actually, there is a diversity among the tracks again, but this time around the guys have managed to do it without turning too superfluous or unnatural.

In any case, they keep on using a female vocalist and keyboard intrusion, so there is no complete return to the roots. However, taking in consideration the modern trends Black Metal music have got involved in, especially with the help of the artists from the bigger labels, this release sounds fairly good and reasonable. Not so much crap left that would urge the listener to entirely eliminate *Ancient* from the list of respected Black Metal bands.

Indeed, this release is a sign of their improvement and maturity. Let's hope that Black Metal freaks will accept it – at least that's what I suggest you. Even if you despised them in the past, try once more, maybe for the last time. And ignore the

Splendid! With every single album *Günther* and the friends come up with better and better produced music that kinda like slowly opens up for the consumer – and more effectively so this time due to a better production. But with every new release the music itself also literally grows and blossoms brighter! The side-effect of this is the thought that maybe they have gone too far from their Black Dark Metal roots, but nah - with every listen *Dim Carcosa* gets better, and there really are not much sceptic thoughts left to think otherwise about it.

This is a very neatly knot masterpiece of Metal, call it then whatever you want - Black, Dark, Gothic, Thrash or just atmospheric. I am pretty sure that 3 or 4 out of 10 readers now immediately think that *Ancient Rites* have become lighter with this eleven-tracker, as I myself think similar kinda things when I meet descriptions like these in reviews, but... no fuckin' way!!! This is as vastly impressive kind of a Metal record as one can expect from these seasoned musicians that actually come from pretty different schools, since their origins reach even gothic rock and grind/crust. Well, can you imagine that?

I think it goes without saying that with *Günther* they behind the mic and the ideological side of things, *Ancient Rites* will never refuse to pave an individual path based on self-research and historical landscapes... Ah, I cannot stop wondering about the front man - this time around he ends up complementing the booklet with sort of a book, which means that every track is corresponded by a massive background essay about the origin of the lyric. That's very fascinating, and I am proud to feel the same senses as *Günther* in almost every story he writes. Well, it's time for him to start thinking about releasing a book. Seriously.

But, hell, I am here to describe the music. It is fully packed with emotions that each story carries. Sure, it is reflected through Metal sound-scapes, yet the different classical and medieval music excerpts make it much more diverse and majestic. Here and there *Ancient Rites* still burst out some violent chords, and that's a good answer to all the grand, bombastic moments that *Dim Carcosa* is already famous for. Check out the eastern harmonies spiced *Göttenlämmerung* (*Twilight of the Gods*) or the Luciferian hymn *Exile* (*Les Litanies de Satan*).

Yes, people, I can write about this record for ages, so you just better go and grab a copy yourself to feel its ultimate grandeur!!!

Tadas

ANGELCORPSE 8

Iron, Blood & Blasphemy Osmose

I bet you have at least one of the three released *Angelcorpse* albums in your collection as the band has enjoyed considerable success in the Black Metal milieu throughout its existence - mainly due to the obvious link with the never-to-be-forgotten *Order From Chaos* - even though being a mere and pure Death Metal act themselves since day one.

But, well, I don't have any of their CDs. Actually, I've never even heard any of their songs, with the exception of *Gods to Azazel* demo, which they sent me in '96. Still, as strange as it sounds, I always knew exactly what *Angelcorpse* was about: grim and strong Death Metal that has tendencies to play with fire.

Iron, Blood & Blasphemy is a collection album that comprises all the songs the

band recorded outside the official albums; covers, seven inches, live material as well as the mentioned *Goats to Azzazel* debut demo. Kinda like the same thing **Impaled Nazarene** did with *Decade of Decadence*.

So what the hell can I say? It's the album for any **Angelcorpse** fan, but as for me, or any other non-fan, I think we should try some of their actual albums instead. I'd just like to mention that as Death Metal, **Angelcorpse** scores high musically as well as conceptually. We need bands that represent Death Metal the unholy way as there's still an obvious lack of them for reasons untold to me.

In that sense, too bad they quit.

Northwind

ANOREXIA NERVOSA 7 New Obscurantist Order Osmose

Seems to me as if *New Obscurantist Order* would have it all – a cover that's bound to get them in trouble, a production that leaves little to be desired and music that's composed, arranged and performed in a world-class manner.

So, what's wrong? Well, no matter how many times I spin the album, paying full attention to all the details, I still can't remember a thing after the listen. It's all very well done, but it doesn't have the feeling that a Black Metal records cannot live without. That overall feeling of something very dark and sinister. You know what I mean. Besides, I don't fancy **Anorexia Nervosa's** touch of gothic all that much, musically or visually.

Northwind

ANTAIOS / STIGMATIC CHORUS 11/10 God: The Fake Artist / Waters of Styx More Hate

The clash of Norsk and Russian Black Metal has happened, and the result is not bad at all. Still, it's questionable whether the bands fit each other in the musical context, but they are strong enough in their performances, and thus both parts sort of complement each other.

Let's start with the Russian answer to extremely violent but still modern, symphonic massacre. Their attempt deserves respect, even if the recording quality could be better – harder and meaner, and even if the synth has way too much domination over the rest of instrumentation. But they do have a fast as hell drummer, sonorous melodies as well as refrains that simply stick to mind. With a dirtier sound next time – **Stigmatic Chorus** might kick. By the way, up until now they have been known as **Charon**, and even had a tape of this same recording under that moniker.

Antaios is promoted by *Karslen Hamre's* own *Art Vision*, and if you know who this man is, you can be sure of his good taste, too. I mean, there is nothing to regret about **Antaios** – their Black/Death is very strong and powerful. Surprisingly, closer to the Swedish than Norwegian thematic, but it is only the best favour expectable from the Scandinavian milieu. Well, think of **Dawn** and later **Hyperisry** (fast tracks only) melted in one boiling pot, with a Norwegian smell all over it. Not least, it features *Blod* and *E.N. Death of Gehenna* on drums and bass, respectively. It's just a pity that this initial manifestation doesn't include more than three hellishly tight tracks and a misery-filled outro, although yet it marks one more adorable outfit from Norway that will certainly go big.

But then again, you also get a dose of Russian hate here as well, so this split works fine after all. And it costs about 12\$ from *More Hate*, so do not hesitate a second.

Antaios, PO. Box 51, 2836 Biri, Norway.
www.antaios.cjb.net

Tadas

ANTROPOFAGUS 9 Alive Is Good... Dead Is Better! Beyond...

Beyond... has broken their promise and returned with another release of super-brutal Death Metal, again delivered by the Italian butchers with ill-natured intentions. And, yes indeed, this band is worth to be supported, unlike some others that just dwell around. It's just that I cannot get the point why this was destined to be issued on a luxurious CD format with an additional card envelope since it just has three tracks, clocking in less than 15 minutes! There was no additional info from the label explaining this, either. I knew they were thinking of releasing a 7"EP of **Antropofagus** with some unreleased stuff last year, though. Maybe this is a

transformed result?

Anyway, this mini album shows the band as sick and twisted as on their debut album, so it is absolutely nothing to miss for the fans of devastating and meant to exterminate Death Metal. One detail worth mentioning – only **Argento** and **Tohd** are left from their previous line-up, and they're using drum programming this time. I don't know if that's a permanent move, but it could be. However, this has not changed the music much – it is still violent and lively. The drum computer brings in a more mechanical feeling, yet with those rhythmic changes it does not matter so much. Death Metal to the bone it remains to be, and does not disturb the listening pleasure at all. If these songs are leftovers from the previous session, then I have to say they should have been included on the debut album. Well, for someone not entirely drowned in the massing style of this music both the releases might sound identical, and such thing has some sense, indeed.

Huh, a taster for the **Antropofagus** fan waiting for a new endeavour, and a good lesson for someone willing to check out what the hell this edge-running music is about. Investigate.

antropofagus@beyondprod.com

Tadas

ANUBI 9 God's Pantheon Oidium

What a relief to finally hold this dipak - a release that was not to be released, well, at least three years ago, and at times it seemed that it will never come true, but the time has now finally come for the first **Anubi** demo re-release, and it's a great day for all the worshippers of this bizarre but still astonishing musical entity.

Hey, don't throw stones at me! It's no secret that this debuting demo was never really my cup of black coffee, although after so many years from its release (eight, to be precise) I can hear its good sides as well - yes, but I still have no urge to deny that earlier on it really did sound too weird for me. Nobody can deny that a bunch of these tunes were just experiments, just searching for something instead of a result of thoughtful song-writing. These days I find more Metal from these songs than ever before. Maybe because there are too many of those in the Metal scene who make experiments with non-Metal.

The mark written above perfectly reflects my relation to this piece of occult (Black) Metal history. Yet it's not there just for the music, but also for the layout and the general presentation as well, and these things alone make this album worth obtaining. Designed by *Lord Ominous* himself, with numerous pieces of exclusive artwork, it makes everyone and all touching this grotesque experience question what's hidden behind? The Mesopotamian myths have gravely influenced the entire effort, and I wonder about the same feel that the artist has withdrawn painting his works after four or five years after the demo was recorded. I'm talking about *Lord Ominous*, or *Plab*, as he used to call himself back then...

The label still managed to make a few horrible grammar mistakes that do nothing to those who do not understand language, but to us, Lithuanians, it looks terrible. Still, a unique re-release, so hurry up for your copy at the *IFR* address (14\$) - this will sell out soon! I'm just dying to witness the next two demos re-released as well, especially *Mirties Metafora*. Hopefully it will not take the next six years to come true!

Tadas

APRIL ETHEREAL 8 Advent Conquer

Well, they shouldn't have mentioned about **Opeth** being their main influence, as that might play a bad game on some reviewers. Lucky me, I read their bio after a few spins, but of course **Opeth** was the first name that came to my mind when trying to find a band to compare Polish trio (duo at the time of recording of this debut album) to. But these two bands cannot be placed in one row, nonetheless. It goes without saying which one is better, and an another reason is that **April Ethereal** are slightly rawer and more Death Metal in their approach than the Swedish counterpart. The calmer acoustic whispering moments and atmospheric riffing have those similarities whilst this album often bursts into faster playing as well, that smells rather of early 90's mid tempo and slow Death Metal vibe.

Overall I think the vocalist disappointed me the most – he's *Jan*, who also recorded the drums and now also plays the guitar for

the band, by the way. His voice sounds too dry and remarkably forced, and that destroys everything good this music might have there. Vocals mean a lot, especially if you want to make diverse music within a 47 minute album. As said, it reminds me of the early years of the last decade, when everyone wanted to be brutal Death Metal with a low growler, yet who argues that not every guy can growl so characteristically as *John Tardy* or *Barny*?

I think maybe it would have been smarter for **Conquer** to wait and release a brand new album instead of this re-release of a self-financed effort that *Jan* and *Jerzy* themselves prepared last year. They even have a new vocalist now, namely *Adrian*. Let's hope this guy has a better voice that could push this band further. Quite nice layout and design ideas, by the way, but the music is still just on the way of reaching a remarkable status.

April Ethereal, *Jerzy Rajkowski-Krzywicki*, PO. Box 50, 00-920 Warszawa 43, Poland, jrki@interia.pl, http://ae.rockmetal.art.pl

Tadas

ARKHON INFAUSTUS 9 Hell Injection Osmose

If you take the raw Death Metal sound of the early 90's, throw in some elements generally more associated with Black Metal - say, the bestial screaming vocals, which occur occasionally together with the Death Metal grunt, for instance - and build it all upon a concept that leaves little holy, glorify Satan, torture and blasphemy to the greatest possible extent... well, then, welcome to the world of **Arkhn Infaustus** - where extremities are redefined.

And it's exactly this record's extremity that saves it from the trashcan. You know, there's absolutely nothing here you haven't heard before and neither are any of the old ideas churned out in particularly special ways. **Arkhn Infaustus** would therefore be just another bunch of freaks toying with the darkness of our dark world... if it wasn't for this inexplicable sense of extremity that prevails in every single song and second of the album.

The next album will be crucial for this band, so let's see if they'll be able to renovate. If not, then I don't think the extremity of the concept can take them much further.

Northwind

ARKONA 9 Zeta Reticuli Eclipse

Now I see (hear, I mean) why this band has a cult status in the Black Metal underground. Their stultic music of the dark gets deep under your skin, in spite of its traditionalism and what seems like monotony. Bearing in mind this disc was recorded at the crossroad of 1995-1996, the music has a fine twist, confirming the habit to lay down sometimes melancholic, sometimes berserk riffs, fast rhythms as well as a northern atmosphere. No, this is not the fastest shit ever recorded, it is not even as fast as many bands of today, but the rhythms are damn important on *Zeta Reticuli*. It creates an image of mystique in there. You must admit the special feeling they've conjured up. It must have to do with both the music and production. No plastic shit or computer adjustments, just pure organic sound that makes your sleepy soul awake and react adequately.

They create partly Slavonic, partly pagan images on the conceptual side of things – not only on this (unreleased?) album, but on their other recordings as well. The lyrics are written in native Polish, yet I can assure you about the deeper philosophy locked in them. Musically I would call them closer to the Scandinavian school, but there is something of the Eastern European grandeur as well. Indeed, the influence of **Graveland** and **Behemoth** back in 1995 must have been really huge for Polish bands: just think about **North** or **My Infinite Kingdom**, for example. It was there and then when Polish Black Metal got its name. But **Arkona** were there, too.

If we have already uttered enough about their concept, I'm enthused to mention the great black/white layout of this album and the smart corpsepaint of the band-members. A thing or two to learn here for the numerous losers out there.

Arkona, *Tomasz Kubica*, Turkow 58/1, 63-642 Perzow, Poland.

Tadas

ARISE FROM THORNS 9 Before an Audience of Stars

Dark Symphonics

This band has now changed their name to **BraVe**, and this album is their second and last one (from 1998) with the old name. Making themselves name in the American scene of darkly romantic Metal/rock music, they are promptly aiming at the European audience, which, even if flooded with similar kind of releases, can easily recognise a valuable item amongst the bunch, no matter the origin.

Arise From Thorns certainly write amusing and heart-breaking material that must apply to the supporters of acoustic, gloomy (that's sometimes quite bright, nevertheless) rock music. The latest **The Gathering** material pops up in my mind when I try to think of any artists to compare this to, especially those alternative off-key breaks, not the traditional rhythmic side of the Dutch band.

This is not 'avant-garde' music, anyway – most of the time they keep up with the rhythm, leaving just *Michelle's* way of singing and the improvisational (progressive?) guitar-vibes that takes presence to mean a lot. Well, there is still space left to broaden and increase the sound picture actually, and it's certain that borders are far from being crossed yet. Personally, I think they could strive for more, but altogether there is some stuff to check out here for sure.

Those in the Metal milieu enthused by the romantic, atmospheric or lyrical side of things should search this CD. Even it is not particularly 'Metal', I'm sure they won't be disappointed. On the other hand, it must firmly appeal to other than Metal audiences, anyway. We'll see what **BraVe** comes up with in the future.

Tadas

ARMAGEDDA 10 The Final War Approaching Breath of Night

In spite of its uncompromising attitude and warlike emotions, this album sounds to me as very ear-friendly and an easily consumable thing. Anyone who has spent a few years within the Black Metal milieu will recognise the music without any extra effort as it is built in a simple and traditional way.

However, it is really the ease when simplicity is masterly effective we have here. Purely Scandinavian, I'd utter Norwegian style, but the band comes from Sweden. Whatever, this gets as close to *Transylvanian Hunger* as possible. The sound is tuned a la **Darkthrone** as well. Emotionally it is close to that grim feeling that still dwells in the entire **Darkthrone** discography (and I would eternally protest those remarks on the info sheet claiming that the ancient masters wouldn't grasp that spirit any longer!). Yet it is just an attempt, a good attempt to bring back the morbid nature of the already mentioned record. The vocalist is good enough, the guitar riffs could have more imagination at times, and the drums are typical but well arranged.

Back to the topic that *The Final War Approaching* would sound ear-friendly. I think the best way to describe this feeling is to mention **Krieg**, for example, who also play such ferocious Black Metal, yet their music is way more extreme, and more complicated to get into for the listener. I won't call this as a difference of Scandinavian and American bands in general, but it's curious to notice these diversities whilst their messages are very close to each other.

Still they could choose a better cover picture, but at least the inside looks good. Also, I thought it was a one man band, but no – there are three in the team, ready to rip your heart out and serve it for breakfast. A strong record. The vinyl edition was out on **Sombre** last year, that definitely was sold out quickly.

Tadas

ARTHEMESIA 9 Deis - Iratris Native North

People like to divide everything: good/bad, day/night, black/white, true/false, commercial/underground... That happened to (Black) Metal a long time ago, but when it comes to Finnish Black Metal of later years, there really is a certain division into two camps: the melodic synth-oriented music and the hardcore Black Metal underground – the latter denying any relation to the music culture due to the monetary aspect of things.

But what about **Thyranne** then? They are fuckin' good in capturing the dark realms with the help of a synthesiser, and they are a 'potentially selling' band, if you know what I mean. Nonetheless, they have much respect, just like **Thy Serpent**. In other

words, **Arthemisia** are next in that line, combining flawless techniques, a professional performance and still dark spirited music. Needless to say that they will be rejected by the admirers of the necro-sound, yet I think for the old worshippers of **Dissection**, **Dark Funeral**, old **Algaion**, or even old **Arcturus**, this might be a fairly enjoyable release.

Arthemisia's problem comes down to lacking a feeling of originality since the scene is already now over-polluted with similar kind of releases, and I am afraid that *Deis - Iratris* will not receive as attentive response as it could have, had there been some additional characteristics to their music. The dark **Cradle of Filth** inspired narration on *The Breeze of Grief* and *Ancestor of Magick* makes no good at all. Too melodic riffs here and there make nothing awe-inspiring either. And the typical 'Swedish' shriek makes the listener yawn, indeed.

As a final conclusion, it seems that **Arthemisia** are way too much inspired by the Swedish scene, and that has limited them a bit. I wish they would follow **Thyranne's** example, in the sense that performing popular music, they could at least bring an attitude and more persuasive standpoints of their own.

Tadas

ASSOCIATION AREA 6 Loathsome Deco Lunasonnd

Certainly not my cup of black coffee, this has more to do with experimental heavy music – that I believe is cultivated in the larger areas of United States, and now – as the Swedish label suggests us – Canada as well. Yeah, the band in question has been around for more than five years, so that's right – this thing is not so new over there. Their first full-length is all in their fourth release, after a few EPs and a live album pressed by Canadian **Impaler Records** some years back.

Well, what my undeveloped taste suggests are two names: **The Dillinger Escape Plan** (without the grind parts, though) and **Thought Industry** (not as cheerful atmosphere). These can be a reference point, but have in mind that those are just two bands I have experienced more seriously myself.

Anyway, I miss the insanity here – it is not as twisted and groundbreaking a record. One composition interrupts their weird interplay, that one being a short live track with a raw sound and low recording quality. It serves more like a break, indeed, which is quite innovative. I dare to say.

Well, way too fucked up soundscapes for me here, difficult to follow the line, unless you have been sitting on such kind of stuff for a while now. Music to get high with? Maybe... but it hardly moves if you are not familiar with it from before. Specific, in other words. Too much of disharmony, directed in the wrong way (ha, what is disharmony in the right way, check in the Black Metal reviews...). I know that the admirers would suggest me to stop writing about a subject I am not good at, but my suggestion still is: there are better things in (musical) life.

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association_area@hotmail.com

Tadas

AUTUMN TEARS 11 Promotional sampler compilation Dark Symphonics

This promo CD is being sent out to introduce the band to those who have heard of them but never HEARD them! Wow, exactly for me. I had even read quite a few interviews with the lady *Erika* and kept wondering if her and *Ted's* music would suit my taste.

This sampler proves it does, hell yeah! To those unacquainted, **Autumn Tears** have three full-length releases and one mini-album under their belts, and all of them significantly manifest what the label name suggests: dark, symphonic music (you see, both the founding members are running this label, and their band has been lately the cause of its prosperity so...). Well, not so dark after all, but beautiful and ethereal for sure. Like for **Arcana**, **Dead Can Dance** is a huge influence, but this American trio have moved a bit into their own, personal realm with it all, combining the dramatic orchestrations with the haunting female voice. I would dare to say that the earlier experience is less profound and has maybe more typical sequences common for dark music. The trouble is that this sampler - which is not for sale - is compiled of

shuffling tracks of different releases in there. Don't get me wrong: **Autumn Tears** have not drastically changed over few years, they have just gone more *involved*, perhaps. What pleases me the most – the compositions are not too crowded with different kind of arrangements. That's the main difference with this and all the wannabe synth-projects and the intros that Metal bands love doing and using these days. You will get just *Erika* singing in a few tracks. There is a feel anyway that something is present, behind it all – a ghost invoked by those love poems? However, I'm looking forward to hear some 'normal' albums, whether they are already released or coming in the future...

Tadas

AVERSE SEFIRA 8 *Battle's Clarion* Lost Disciple

One of those cases of a long wait, high expectations, and a disappointment when the actual album arrives. At the end of the day my speakers happened to 'download' just some usual, extreme, straightforward Black Metal with a Deathrash tinge, which failed to impress me in the long run, though.

I can quickly come with a few bands that play similarly – **Aurora Borealis**, and to some extent **God Dethroned** (the Death and Thrash influences come from the latter). Cannot deny that to be candid is rather typical to American Black Metal bands, so this might be just a matter of taste, but I'm not necessarily voicing the opinion of all people, after all. Even though I am, as a matter of fact, wordless and unable to point out what it is exactly that makes me feel displeased about this CD, their kind of song-structures certainly do not seem all that great. And I guess the vocalist has the kind of scream that starts to annoy if you listen to it for longer. He is not the only one to sing in the same style through all the nine tunes, but there is a kind of an ingredient there that makes me wanna look for other albums to share my blackest feelings with. Yes, sir, this release will not find its way to the homes of the majority of European Black Metal listeners, because public here needs something a little bit more convincing.

It's a trouble trying to pick any better or worse songs as they all sound quite similar – which is one of the things that deviate this band from **Immortal**, one of **Averse Sefira's** early inspirations, who continue to write memorable tunes on every single album, even if their early stuff was better, ha.

This American trio has yet a lot to do. It's not my wish to slag them down, they are able to make some decent Black Metal, but with *Battle's Clarion* their time isn't here yet.

Tadas

AZAGHAL 9 *Mustamaa* ISO666

Azaghal arrived with the rest of the new Finnish Black Metal hordes in recent years, and they have been very active lately, but still I think they could write better tunes to match the top of the pops... errrr, I mean the unhottest tastes of the Black Metal kids. The band writes so much music, but the stuff could be more focused. Less in quantity, but more focused tracks. This release is like two sessions brought together, and they don't even call it a 'normal' album. So, what is it? Just a few recordings between the serious sessions?

Don't get me wrong, **Mordor** is an ok Black Metal experience. It must suit those who don't give a shit about polished sound, completed structures of the material or the precise techniques. The raw sound is what you will get here. By the way, sometimes it is not okay with too predictable riffs or simply not-so-powerful composing.

Yeah, it is a suitable continuation after their latest demo – it wasn't so full-rounded either. Sort of like **Azaghal's** trademark? They want to be the next **Ildjarn** or what? Well, not so drastic... the Finnish dudes do incorporate a certain melodic aspect as well – I would call it a 'fatal harmonisation' or something like that. A good feeling of losing a ground behind it is, Aye, this is more related to the first four tracks, whilst the next four-songer brings a much more straightforward, even Thrashy, character. In my opinion, the sick twist of *Kosto* makes it the best song on this CD. And the hymn-like attempts are gone in there.

So, drawing a conclusion – this album, intentionally or not, shows two sides of this band. Experience it and see if this variety appeals to you. One thing is sure, though.

Azaghal will not stop here, they will continue their primitive crusade against the light.

Azaghal, c/o T. Kalliola, Kaskentie 3 as 1, 05840 Hivinkää, Finland.

Tadas

BALTAK 8 *Kral Na Dra Svetoj* Battelgod

Gorgoroth continues to spread a very special ideological message through his violent acts of music, thus distancing Black Metal from its initial purpose – the spreading of death, violence and hate. This is more like a historical lesson wrapped in raw, aggressive music. Yet, which is it that usually hits the brain first – the music or the message? In this case it's the message, by all means.

Well, **Baltak** is not the first – or the last – band to collide the two different things, namely Black Metal music and historical/ideological ideas. I just wonder how big an impact can be done in such a way? At least this project has caused quite much discussion already, or to put it better – death threats and leaflets from the Hellenic BM underground. I cannot claim that I support either side without questioning as, in my opinion, both the parts are partly right and partly wrong, and it cannot be anyhow different. Historical processes are not just about the present or the past, it's more about us treating them in one way or another.

Back to music. Like on the previous albums, **Gorgoroth** and the crew keep delivering a very chaotic violent attack that can be partly compared even to old **Beherit** and **Blasphemy**. Yet this incarnation of the old style has its alternate moments, like the not so dark a tuning, the high-pitched, exterminating, echoing screams, and the bludgeoning melody that appears here and there. So, the old school is sort of kept on a subconscious level.

To tell you the truth, the album gets pretty predictable and not so interesting around the 4th or the 5th track. Somehow the music loses its magic – which they've partly tried to keep with the use of the charismatic narration in their native tongue (almost all the lyrics are written in Macedonian as well).

A more firm composing effort is required on the next release! The last tune is rearranged from the debut CD.

<http://mujweb.cz/www.baltak>

Tadas

BELFEGOR 11 *The Kingdom of Glacial Palaces* World War III



We Go Through the Snow, The Kingdom of Glacial Palaces, In the Ravengate of Winter... No, you cannot guess wrong with these titles – **Immortal** will never abandon their once chosen path. But have they really turned back to 1994? Have they signed with an American label? Changed the logo? Wait, wait, wait... it's not **Immortal**! Polish? Ah, Polish **Immortal** – that's right! Just a pure lack-ass answer to something everyone expected from the raven-brothers after *Battles in the North* masterpiece. Had it been a band coming up with a totally new genre of Metal, I would worship this beyond belief. Truly. But even if **Belfegor** are just devoted followers of that particularly majestic musical line, this is one hell of a Black Metal record – very powerful, cold and flickering monolith at the same time.

And I dare say more. Comparing to the recent position of **Immortal**, I would think quite hard before saying which is better – this album or, let's say, *At the Heart of Winter*. Of course *Abbat* is superior in delivering his firm screaming insanity, of which this Polish dude can just dream about. But on the other hand, he should not blindly try copying the Norwegian startler – I wish **Belfegor's** screamer would find his own way of shouting out their mean wintry propaganda.

One peculiarity, though – these dudes do not stop at any point, so there are no refreshing epics like *Blasphem* or so. It's

good for the lovers of intensity, but quite unpleasant for those preferring moments of majesty in the whirlwinds of ferocity.

You cannot imagine anything to be similar to **Immortal** without that characteristic sound, can you? Cool down – this album has an identical recording! Even that same overproduced drum sound. I just wonder how this quality was accomplished in Poland... You really can't wish for a better one! Those 'frozen' titles ought to be replaced, though.

Tadas

BETHLEHEM 12 *Schatten aus der Alexander Welt* Prophecy

WONDERFUL! The feeling of awaiting for something special to happen always dwells in the air with this unique entity. This time around the intrigue was doubled by the statement that **Bethlehem** would not be so Metal anymore, rather giving priority to more sensitive music. Holy fuck! The emotions and intensity are, without any doubts, still there, and the listener can easily adapt the Metal term in some context, so these labels are not a trouble to get into in this ultimate collection of suicidal ethics, because this type of flowing music is above categorisation. It surpasses the typical reaction people might have on it. Many artists try to blend various influences and express them through their own prism of understanding, but rarely someone delivers it the way you just have to sit with jaws dropped and tap or nod the head, following every note. Personally I couldn't care less about their line-up changes either. Well, to tell you the truth, I was surprised to see that only *fürgen* is left from the past, but who the fuck cares? The music remains.

If you want to check out all the links with the *S.U.I.Z.I.D.* album are still there, well – better forget it. I mean, both the albums are great on their own, and it is noticeable that the music is performed by the same band, but there are miles separating the two experiences. Long miles through desolate labyrinths of self-expression. This time around the suicidal interpretations are so eclectic that a profane one would never get the point of what's going on. They are not playing and singing just about a natural, human suicide, the whole is brought to an emotional level. The music suggests that suicide is both positive and negative, and *Schatten...* acts as an extremely personal experience to be lived – that is, if you make friends with the music. It can help a great deal to live a certain state of mind, but at other times your joyful aura may end up in tears and despair after a course in *Alexander's* world.

Recommended to be listened to with an intimate friend, alcohol and drugs.

www.alexanderwelt.org

Tadas

BETO VAZQUEZ 10 *Infinity* Drakkar

At first a critical arrow towards the promoters of this album. They're emphasising the guest performers so much that the main composer and the founder of the project, an Argentinean musician **Beto Vazquez**, seems just like a bonus figure to the whole international crew. In reality it's him who thought out and came up with such an unusual project, whilst the other musicians (even if their names weight hundreds more and their art shines really bright) are just additional celebrities.

Who knows **Beto**, anyone? I had not a single info source about him before, so now at least I can share with you that this guy was playing bass in a band called **Nepal**, and then decided to make something outstanding on his own with a hope of involving a bunch of very well-known musicians in the project. Of course the most surprising thing is that he succeeded, and this without doubt means his music was of interest to all those respected musicians. If it were **Beto's** arrangements alone (like the demo version everybody got must have been), it would be very progressive music, staying away from Metal and sometimes even rock music. It has that South-American feel behind the emotional acoustic guitar and the rhythmic touch. And then there are plenty of synth solutions here that make it rounded up, in a way.

Well, the singers do influence the final result and how it acts on the listeners. *Empyu* from **Nightwish** was right about commenting this album as sounding like a compilation of these bands whose singers take part in here. In some songs *Tarja* brings to mind the operatic **Nightwish** style, then *Candice* lets in the medieval

emotions into the picture (from still unfamiliar to me at this time **Blackmore's Night**), whilst *Fabio* brings dominating 'male singing Metal' attitude of **Rhapsody**. Only *Sabine* from **Edenbridge** is a completely new thing for me, but she is not falling out of the picture with her atmospheric singing style.

As a whole, *Infinity* might lack unity, but the concept and the idea behind it is just about that – music that is moving, changing and transforming. Indeed, a rare album of such kind.

Tadas

BEWITCHED 9 *Rise of the Antichrist* Osmost

The funny thing is that even though I've read dozens of **Bewitched** interviews, and somewhat followed their moves from afar, throughout the years, I have never actually heard any of their music. Kinda reminds me of my relationship to **Enslaved**, in that sense.

According to **Osmost**, *Rise of the Antichrist* is – and I quote – *the most Satanic and Evil album ever* and **Bewitched** themselves are *the Devil's all time favourite band*. Erm... statements like these do make me wonder about the reliability of **Osmost's** promotional department, have to say.

They're not completely lost in the woods with those statements, though. *Rise of the Antichrist* is quite a furious fucker that has its musical structures based on the best of 80's Black Metal, even if the sharp and fantastic production brings the album more up-to-date than they might have originally intended. What you get is 33 minutes of old Black Metal that, however, owes quite much of its power to the contemporary sound-quality. Some of the tracks – like the title one or *Bewitched by Evil* – have really fetching sing-along choruses, and I can just sit here and try to imagine how well such pieces could work live. Heads rolling.

Well, it's a fine record. Not *the most Satanic and Evil album ever*, or the best either, but **Bewitched** do deliver their archaic Metal of Blackness with strength and class.

Northwind

BEWITCHED 10 *Somewhere Beyond the Mist* Conquistador

This outfit can easily be called legendary, simply because it has been in the scene for such a long time, and because they have never failed in writing good, memorable tunes, devoted to Satan! It's a good reaction to all those Doom bands that appear on the promo shots with massive crosses on their necks, or even worse – promoting Xian dogmas through doom inducing music! **Bewitched** always were more than a mere Doom band, though, always blending Black and Heavy Metal together. Seems like they will keep on playing that quite complex blend till they meet their maker, and this would be a worthy decision, indeed, as they know pretty well how to do it! Yeah, this time the Black Metal influence is pushed back, giving more way to Heavy Doom! The dynamics of modern life somehow tend to force me to listen to faster and more straightforward music, so I feel their previous album was more of my liking, but please don't take it as saying that this one would be bad. No! It is just different, more traditional and old-school. The **Merciful Fate** influences are almost gone as well, or at least they do not shine so bright.

But this 70 minutes long album is not so predictable, not at all! Ain't it a surprise to hear a crystal clear voice of a maiden, singing in French, accompanied by an acoustic guitar in the introductory and outro parts of *Crossing the Veil of Mist*? Yes it is! In spite of their devotion to the Metal of the past (one member even manages to send a fuck off to Thrash music! Well, maybe he meant 'trash'... whatever), this is highly progressive stuff. I tell you. Such details make **Bewitched** an exclusive crew in the Southern Metal scene, let alone – a very interesting experience to anyone who respects Satanic Metal. Long live **Bewitched**!

Bewitched, c/o **Doomcrist**, San Buenaventura 310b, Villa Pray Camilo Henríquez, Santiago 24, Chile. www.satantrip.cjb.net

Tadas

BLACK DAWN 9 *Blood for Satan* Necropolis

All the titles and pictures included with this album say more than any reviewer possibly

could, and the fact that **Black Dawn** is nine years old (with a few remarkable hiatuses and no albums so far, as usual), coming from Finland, and have been featured on **Woodcut Records'** compilation last year, says even more.

I was truly charmed by that blood-gushing image on the cover – who said that it's not original even for a Black Metal band?! And it works, effortlessly! There is no point to add that with *Blood for Satan* they represent evil and torturous nihilism to the very depth. A pure christening attack, directed straight ahead. However, this strong and accomplished visual and ideological fundament requires also very strong music! Conversely, I cannot trace here much of exceptionalism – indeed, we all have heard this kind of Black Metal more than a thousand times. Nobody claims that **Black Dawn** are bad performers, or that their music would be cheap, or that they wouldn't try hard, but Black Metal's a genre that has been fully explored now. At least in the realms this Finnish band wanders in. To imagine what they're like, think of **Marduk** with some typical but not highlighting tracks, and **Enochian Crescent** for the vocalist part of the black mass (he is not even close to **Legion**).

I know, this must be a genuine revelation for those into fast blasting Nordic BM, but please stop for a while and ask yourself: is this as good as the first records that the new generation of Black Metallers made in the early 90's? Opinions should split. This average mark leaves me still hesitating, whether the album might grow or not with further listens. Let's wait and see... More originality would push the band further, in any case!

hoath.wrath@netikka.fi

Tadas

BLACK WITCHERY / CONQUEROR 11/8 *Hellstorm of Evil Vengeance* Dark Horizon

German speaking Metallers would tag this release as 'kompromisslos'. This split was mostly anticipated because of **Black Witchery** – a Floridian three-piece that has made some stir with their previous demo and 7" EP releases, both as underground-sounding Black Metal as you can imagine to come from the darkest depths of Polish, French or Finnish scenes. And it has a Nordic touch when it comes to riffing. That's really a compliment, as far as this particular way of manifesting war is concerned. If you missed their glorious demo, two tracks of those tracks re-released here – and they *are* superior to the rest. But the guys haven't gone to a wrong direction as they continue to glorify filth and pure feelings. The stream of advanced messages bursting out of these blasphemies are much more worthy of accepting than the products the massive, friendlier culture – be it another kind of metal music or whatever – mistakenly offer you. As a conclusion to their side, *Demoniac*, a **Blasphemy** cover is violently exposed, as if building a path of what to expect from **Black Witchery** in the future.

Curiously, their mates from **Conqueror** play stuff that's much closer to the Canadian legend, so that cover-track also acts as a good bridge from one hand to another. With **Blasphemy** through blasphemy. However, they deliver a much weaker effort. And no wonder, if it's their demo *Anti-christ Superiority* re-released. Pretty bad sound and mediocre performance. I presume the vocalist's attempts are too weak, at least he doesn't fit the music that demands power and brutality very well.

Anyway, the hammer of war was risen, and even **Conqueror** have made an important contribution by declaring what the chaos is all about. Let's hope they will work out this and that better. When it comes to **Black Witchery** – dare not to miss this or any other release of theirs, old or new.

Black Witchery, P.O. Box 195416, Winter Springs, FL 32719-5416, USA.

Tadas

BLESSED IN SIN 10 *Par le Sang du Christ* Nihil Voces

Do you have **Blessed In Sin's** debut album, *Melancholia*, in your collection by any chance? Well, you should, for if you ever were laughing in your sleeve at French Black Metal – that's one of the records to quickly turn that laughter of yours into grave-serious silence. No bullshit. The band's **Rotting Christ**ish delivery on that album made quite a few promises, actually.

Here we have the follow-up, *Par le Sang du Christ*, and I can tell you right here and

now that it's no disappointment. The music's still very atmospheric, multidimensional and, yeah, very **Rotting Christ** - which, of course, means that this album panders to me just as successfully as *Melancolibol* did.

But there are a couple of things I'd like to point out... two things, actually. One is that these sinners really should decide once and for all do they write the lyrics in French or English as now it's a bit chaotic and uncomfortable with some songs in each language. And, personally, I also happen to think that French doesn't really fit to be pronounced the way Black Metal as music would require. It sounds fine in the spoken parts, no arguments there, but the actual singing... Well, I don't like it.

The other thing is that although the tracks do sound very enjoyable already now, some of the actual arrangements, however, seem to be a bit on the loose and, as a result, the overall feeling ends up sounding somewhat amateurish and untidy - which is a shame, given that the tracks themselves, as said, really do work astoundingly well.

Nevertheless, **Blessed In Sin** is one of the best underground Black Metal acts there are.

Blessed In Sin, B.P. 109, MBE 5508, 83097 Toulon cedex, France, <http://sigillumdiaboli.qib.net>

Norbwinid

**BLOOD RED THRONE 10
Monument of Death
Hammerheart**

After noticeable promotion campaign before their first official recording was finished and presented, I expected a little bit more from **Blood Red Throne** - the Death Metal baby of *Tehort*, *Dod* and three more guys in the mood for a brutal and terrifying freak-show. First thing to hit the eye is the average execution of the front-cover. The idea's similar to the **Diabolicum** album, yet the impression is simply weak. The inside pictures and stuff look far better. Why the hell they decided to hide the original logo by *C. Szejdel* inside the pages and to print that crap on the front beats me.

Then we have *Mr. Hustler* and his dark growl, which repeats on and on, on every tune, turning into a pretty monotonous experience. If you know bands such as **Adramelech** or **Exmortem**, that's the case. I wish it would vary a bit more, as the music requires a better imagination when using dark and brutal voice. Such as the once adorned **Vomitory** (*Redemption* era) or the **Crematory** (Swedish) compositions did. Yes, yet again the music is worth it, as the instrumental exercises just cannot leave the listener indifferent, in spite of the typical Death Metal standard, well studied from the glorious 1990 era. Don't let *Tehort*'s shirt (at moment of his death, heh...) mislead you - there is as much Swedish Death Metal as there is American one. As the guys state, they're just playing stuff they themselves would like to listen to. That's good, especially when I hear the drummer blasting his kit in a manner not everybody would enjoy. Just intense straightforward playing, letting all the evil spirits out. Well, the guitarists sort of follows the drummer, even if *Freddy* is not the main composer of these nine songs.

Ok, to tell you the truth, I still enjoy this release quite a lot, so take my critics as a wish to like their album #2 even better! Investigate.

Tadas

**BLOODSHED 11
Skullcrusher
Code 666**

What a feeling to write a review out of your own release, ha! At least I'm totally sure to support this release with all my lungs and more than that, as I really like the music! I fully stand behind this mini-album, and please don't blame me that it's just a corrupted advertisement of my own release - no, it's not, because I have got this promo CD, whilst my own vinyl version is not released yet when I write these lines down. It's actually the first time I hear the finalised mastered version, so the impact is even more convincing than in the previous version I had of this four-tracker.

To the depths of the hellish realm it hits! Purely insane Swedish Death Metal of a new generation. That means they have those Black Metal influences and vigorous melodies in there, but it does not make the material an inch softer! Not at all, sucker! It's even no shame to admit that **Bloodshed** have those reminiscences of **Dawn**, **Marduk** and **Dissection** in there, but they can proudly wear the Swedish

sound tag, as *Skullcrusher* as well as their earlier stuff lives the very best riffs and atmospheres this kind of Metal has ever witnessed. So, if a suspicious listener has made the wrong decision of not bothering to try this, (s)he is entirely wrong!

Why not the highest mark? Well, then it would have been a real corruption, ha. But actually I think this is yet the next step on the road for **Bloodshed**, and their following albums must prove them grow further, thus climbing higher and truly making me as well as the countless supporters of Swedish Death to look for their dropped jaws. It is a kind of an encouragement for them not to stop at where they are now, and keep striving to perfection with their music.

Comes in a lavish digipak edition, and when you read this - as a bone white vinyl 7"EP limited to 666 copies of course, as well!

Bloodshed, c/o *Augustsson*, Oxeby 5, 138 31 Alta, Sweden, bloodshed@post.com, www.skullcrushers.com

Tadas

**BLUDGEON 10
Crucify the Priest
Magic Circle / Metal Blade**

Wow, what a push from the label! Not every **Metal Blade** artist receives such support, so this seems to be a very important debut for the whole team down there. And you wonder why? Simply because this is the first release of their sub-label, *Magic Circle*, run by none other than *Joy DeMaio*! That's why! And I am certain this name and this push will add quite a few accolades to this album. It is already noticeable from the reviews and reactions worldwide.

Do I sound like slugging them down, trying to deny the myth about the superiority of this absolutely new name in the Deaththrash scene? Not at all! With these twelve songs they simply prove that all those stories weren't exaggerating at all, and all the epithets uttered by *DeMaio* and the *Metal Blade*'s promotional machine were much of a truth. Except for a few 'jump metal' hints in a few songs... Hate that. Without those parts the album would have been truly huge, as it basically is settled in the older, 90's Metal surroundings. I am forced to mention one aspect they truly stand out with: this album was recorded live in studio, minus the vocals and guitar solos. That's quite an achievement, because it does not sound like a shitty demo from the south-east! The production is great, the sound is clear, modern and heavy, and it does not sound like they have used any manipulations or effects afterwards either.

Concerning the musical aspects, it seems as if *Malevolent Creation* has acted as their main inspiration. So, if you like or hate that hard working Floridian crew, you know what to expect from **Bludgeon** as well. It's really in the same league, they could even compete in a football field, I guess. Not that much to add - this is firm and angry Metal.

www.bludgeon.tv

Tadas

**BOLT THROWER 11
Honour - Valour - Pride
Metal Blade**



I've been waiting this follow-up to the highly evocative and well put together *Mercenary* a long time. It is three years since that release, and now there's a new vocalist in the band who's name is *Dave Ingram*. Well, you can't fit *Benediction* standards in the war-machine called **Bolt Thrower**, even if both bands come from the same 90's Death Metal era. Moreover, and most importantly - the mark of *Karl Willetts* is deeply pressed in history and in the character of **Bolt Thrower**, and I do not see any singer who could replace his grunt, amazingly focused on music. It was an era that cannot be wiped out with just one blow. That's why his name does not disappear either from the biography, and that's good. Well, must admit that the newly recruited *Dave* is trying hard, singing in lower range,

yet I cannot hear the maximum of his efforts put in, and neither feel the maximum satisfaction of how it sounds altogether.

And this is slightly upsetting to notice as otherwise **Bolt Thrower** have once again thrown a bunch of splendid tracks in their own vein, making all the old supporters of the band jiggling from satisfaction, and making critics mock the 'stagnated' Death Metal genre. This is a strong manifestation of the most extreme Metal bracing! As long as these kind of bands keep demanding free time (and more) to it, the style will live and prosper. Seemingly familiar techniques that require not that much technical preparation, yet from those mid-tempo riffs our winning team creates amazing patterns that are enriched by the bludgeoning sound and massive rhythm section.

There is a concept behind this CD I believe, still swirling around war and armoury - and it's actually possible to imagine the whole story from the titles and the temperament of certain songs. Some slower tribute-like tunes in the middle of this album are followed by more extreme pieces in the ending phase.

I still prefer *Mercenary*, in all honesty, but this one is a killer as well.

Tadas

**BRAINDANCE 10
Redemption**

Progressive Darkwave Memorable music always reminds me of some special events that have happened while listened to the music, or heard it for the first time. It is always a pleasure to return to those memories, especially if they are good.

Experiencing this record for the first time I got the news about the New York and Washington bombings... and it entered my mind as if it was the music that brought these exterminating news. On the one hand there might be no connection at all - it could have been just any other record, and *Braindance*'s music or message have even nothing to do with war or terror (unlike some Black Metal bands, huh). Yet there is the other side of a coin: a few days later I noticed that their label comes from NYC and I bet both *Sebastian* and *Vora* reside somewhere not far from there. So, if you look deeper, and if you want to, you will certainly find some bonds between things, the terror act and *Redemption* in this case.

This release has been in the making for a very long time, and the label has been promoting it for maybe about two years already, long before the actual release-date. The duo consists of a girl and a guy. The music seems to be perceived more by the girl, or at least by both equally. She is handling the guitars and programming, as a matter of fact.

Well, time to say what kind of an experience it is. They call it 'progressive darkwave'. To explain the term - imagine *Type O Negative* crossing the bridges with dark, emotional, electronic music, and there you are. Indeed, *Braindance* do stand on their own, trying to avoid any evident comparisons, but it still is music of the same direction. No doubt about their innovative touch, combining heaviness with ambience, involving non-musical moods (huh, anyone know what those are?) with the music.

A completely melancholic and 'trippy' experience, and even if I can't call it the beginning of any new era in music, please go and check it out. At least it's different. Ignore the crappy comic-book layout concept, though.

Tadas

**BRAINSTORM 10
Metus Mortis
Metal Blade**

Hmm, seems that I made a mistake not checking them out this year in *Wacken*... In time when traditional Power Metal is high on trendy wave, *Metus Mortis* is yet a positive experience that ought not to be missed. I guess *Grave Digger* didn't chose them as a support band of their recent tour accidentally either, even if *Brainstorm* hit harder with their Thrashing approach. Indeed, if these songs had a traditionally harsh Thrash Metal screamer, nobody would argue about their main direction. Just listen to that intensity delivered by a double bass drum of *Dieter*! It deserves the attention of people into more violent sonorities of Metal. Sort of like the *Ritual* era of *Testament*? Umm, maybe not exactly that, but that does not matter so much. Reality is that *Andy* (the umpteenth vocalist of the band) paves the Power Metal way, keeping the whole band in the realm of the traditional way when it comes to the

style. They faster, more to the point, aggressive compositions have certain resemblance to *Primal Fear*, yet there is a vast difference between *Ruf*'s voice, so emotionally expressive and very immense, and *Andy*'s attempt - he fails to lay that temper on top of the music's intensity. In other words, this guy sounds better with mid-tempo, traditional Power numbers, or calmer Heavy Metal hymns. I'm slightly fed up with the typical conformist composing - it sounds predictable, whilst the anger put in this music is always much more refreshing (take *Into the Nether*, for example).

Brainstorm have gained a name in the last five years, and this is their fourth album to date. Prior to this, they have been struggling for quite a while in the depths of the underground, and I truly believe that the current status is gained through their hard and sincere work. No doubt that the first album of a new deal will bring yet more attention to this outfit. The music's worth it.

<http://truemetal.org/brainstorm>

Tadas

**BRODEQUIN 10
Festival of Death
Unmatched Brutality**

Indeed, hard to match this brutality which flows from the speakers as the ultimate monolith of wall-like distorted Metal. Guitarist *Michael*, who is also the owner of the label, has got a point coming up with such a moniker for his label. And I guess other releases he is gonna put out won't differ much from what a Death Metal fan could expect from the American shores. But when it comes to this instrument of torture (that's the definition of **Brodequin** if you wonder what this strange word might mean - and no, it's not the name of the serial killer from Ukraine), I can just wonder how their music somehow kicks major ass in comparison of all these NY slamming Death Metal clones. Well, I still question myself that maybe I just haven't heard many albums of this kind recently to really judge the guys, yet I certainly dig **Brodequin**! Of course this enthusiasm has much to do with the massive production and a few kilotons worth heaviness of the sound. This goes like hand in a glove with the music. Hard to imagine how else the guitar could sound than that jumping exterminating your stereo whirlwind somewhere down the room. In a time when many pretenders to the brutal Death Metal throne simply rearrange already existing songs, a good production happens to be a very important matter to gain a personal grip for bands. I dare to say that **Brodequin** are one of better groups in doing that.

This is their second album, and the guys play as fast as they probably can, both the drummer and the aforementioned guitarist. They are just a three-piece crew but sound like a four or even five piece team. I wonder if they are able to create that feeling live. Only the bass player *Jamie*, who also sings, would better drop one of his duties. His voice is deep and horrific, yet buried in the wall of the instrument machine gummery. More characteristic type of vocals would bring **Brodequin** to the elite of American Death Metal.

tuned2puke@aol.com

Tadas

**BUJO OMEGA 10
Thy Dark Conquest
Battlegod**

This is pretty good for a quickly scraped up project-band - featuring members of the Italian **Mortifier** and vocal contribution by **Baltak's Gorgoroth** - which was invented during the latter's stay in the Old Continent a few years ago. I guess the music was prepared earlier, though. It couldn't have been written in a week, could it?

Well, it is about raw primordial Black Metal, which determinedly rejects any possible allusions to progress or precision. You may say it's traditionally rough, avoiding any compromises, though yet the recording and the performance are good enough to get *Thy Dark Conquest* accepted to a collection of anyone seriously into Black Metal. Only the *Black Harvester of Hate* has a very familiar opening synth-line, probably stolen from **Dimmu Borgir** circa 1997, but that's all about the synth-invasion. Naturally this was a strange and wrong thing to do, at least they could have come up with some other way of handling it. The use of hymn-like singing in the same track is much better, though.

When someone describes something as 'rough Black Metal', my mind usually draws parallels with the northern scene,

and that's what I am trying to imply you about **Bujo Omega** - you must be deaf if missing the traces of **Darkthrone** and **Gorgoroth**. The music has a mutual co-ordination of both faster and slower riffs, thus keeping the record dynamic enough to stick to it for longer period of time. This has been an element missing in *Gorgoroth's* main band, by the way. It does not oblige to long and thorough deciphering of what's going on, but acts as a good source to release one's energy through. Bleak and palpable.

I think if these guys meet each other again, they might get out another album with even stronger impact. Try it out.

Tadas

**BURNT BY THE SUN 8
Soundtrack to the Personal
Revolution
Relapse**

Features the entire rhythm section of **Human Remains**, once one of the most technical Death Metal crews that shamefully, however, disbanded hundreds of years ago in order to play different music, which is of course bound to that so popular these days in the States blend of Metal and hardcore. It is possible to recognise the spirit of their technical Death Metal past (some double bass drumming, a few really heavy riffs), but it has evolved to a wrong direction: towards disharmonic rhythmic masturbation, topped with the hardcore screams of vocalist *Michael*. Unfortunately, it has nothing to do with the brutality of Death Metal, it rather hooks on Metalcoreish grooves. It's no necessity to introduce the music in details - you know it pretty well if you have been checking out the latest releases from *Relapse Records* as well as releases from a few other labels following the same steps. Sure, **Burnt By The Sun** is heavier than a handful of others, yet they never leave the hardcore area for too long, and sooner or later the boomerang strikes back to begin it all from the start.

The more I listen to such records, the more I feel belonging to the traditional Metal school, at least understanding it way better. Or, well, let's put it like this: bands like **Burnt By The Sun** show Metal departing from its roots and becoming more non-metal than Metal, confusing the styles and moving towards a point where all heavy music is just one melting pot of influences with no characteristic stylistics. Sort of like musical globalization, if you will. Surely I might be wrong, and (a few years later) someone might outburst of laugh reading this. If Metal music (de)generates even more into directions yet unknown, but well - I am free to say what I think on the music of once Death Metal oriented musicians.

www.burntbythesun.com

Tadas

**CABAL 9
Midian
Red Stream**

I remember *Killjoy* wasn't very talkative about his projects, that have been going on since the early 90's, after *Necrophagia's* demise - and then after that it's slightly strange to see an album of **Cabal** in the streets. This resurrected stuff will sell for one single reason: because it features the mean vocalist.

Besides certain cash-in politics, it is not so difficult to perceive the other side of the coin: this is a tribute to **Cabal**, a way not to let this band get buried by time. It is obviously hard to judge nowadays *'cabal would have been if'*, but let's rather stick to the music.

It is technically performed, violent and very fast Thrash with minor Death Metal influences. I remember an American band that was called **Morbid Saint** by listening to this, also the first record of **Epidemic** comes to mind, and surely - early **Dark Angel**. That's about the frames of this Metal.

To tell you the truth, *Midian* is not as close to **Slayer** and **Sepultura** as the press-sheet tries to convince. Their Thrash is more violent and does not have those highlighting hooks that the classic records have always carried. That might also be the reason why they lost a battle for the throne back in 1990 when it was recorded.

Otherwise, the seven tracks here are full of energy, giant solos, some keyboards (!) and a very different from *Necrophagia* singing of *Killjoy* that is purely in the Thrash Metal way. A pity that there is no background info on the other members.

Aye, this album was produced in *Morrisound*, but since then the Thrash wave has been setting down, and Death

Metal has taken a firm leadership. ... Could that be the reason why **Cabal** has quickly called it quits? Anyway, in 2001, when it's no more a competition but sort of a present for the fans, I am sure that this digipak CD will find its place in some collections.

Though **Necrophagia** is better, no doubt.

Tadas

CADAVER INC.
Discipline
Earache

11



Surely one of the greatest surprises for this spring. Man, have you ever heard that Norway had their Death Metal representatives in one UK's premiere Death Metal label, in as old times as 1992? No? That was before the Black Metal boom, and another Death Metal crew that was getting praises back then were **Darkthrone**. ... Yet **Cadaver** were followers, not leaders. It took just a few months for **Feriz & Co.** to switch to black scenarios, whilst their old colleagues have taken nine years to return to the picture. This time as **Cadaver Inc.**

The promo copy is designed in a modern way with all those fonts and emphasis on blurred pictures. What do you think, is it really a modern reflection of a once glorious band? Yes. But it is no modern industrial or Metal or other crap. Exterminating **Black Death** in the best traditions of **Satyricon**, **Dødheimgard** (*Satanic Art* era) and **Myrkskog**. A stunning speed, wonderful drumming, totally extreme attitude and industrialised screaming vocals. Ain't it the surprise of the year? Well, for me it is, or at least was when checking out **Discipline** for the first time. Sticking to the record for a longer period of time I started to notice more things, like that this album actually confirms what was achieved by the bands mentioned above. No, not a carbon copy, but to surpass them wouldn't be the easiest task, anyway. Instead, **Cadaver Inc.** offer a few breaks with groovy mid-tempo riffing that also sticks to mind. Maybe that's the route, which could lead them to perfection.

By all means, this is of a very high quality, and to miss it, especially if you are a worshipper of ultimate Black Death, would be a grave mistake. A record to stand on one shelf with the **Moonfog** highlights. I hope this specific kind of very complex Black Death will not turn into another trend, though.

www.cadaverinc.com

Tadas

CalLENISH CIRCLE 9
Graceful... Yet Forbidding
Edgerunner

This re-release is very handy for a reviewer because it features the entire previous MLP of the Dutch band in question, so it is quite easy to compare those releases, and become aware of the differences.

And the differences are more than noticeable, indeed. So much more energy, vitality and in a word – punch, is brought to their Thrashy Death Metal. Yeah, the same popular nowadays' hybrid, mostly melodic yet maintaining a level of aggression in there as well. Still I would love to hear more rigorous and deadly contributions, to fit things into places, I believe that at least the vocalist, **Patrick**, would not mind to see things grow rougher – it's his voice that suggests so. The guy is much better and to the point when it comes to the Death Metal growl, rather than the Thrashy scream.

One characteristic thing about **Callenish Circle** besides that many-times-heard approach is the occasional involvement in more traditional yet melodic Metal. **Sentenced** could be a good comparison. But it is just my observation, I doubt it is so distinct, anyway.

However, this album gets a bit too one-sided in the long run, so those four additional tunes after the actual album end up being too much – at least for me, as I'm not so fond of these Thrashing melodies. ... But I see no reason why **Graceful... yet Forbidding** would not score the attention of the fans and the media as this music spreads well across the countries. The

record is made with precision, both to song-structure and production, which is hard and thick. This issue saves such melodic records, in my humble opinion, as primarily they are not exceptionally bludgeoning as such.

Yeah, a very cool idea of the band picture that has much to do with their lyrical message – you must at least check out that image.

Callenish Circle, P.O. Box 21, 6120 AA Born (L), The Netherlands, tel. fax (+31) 464853715, info@callenish-circle.com, www.callenish-circle.com

Tadas

CALES 11
The Pass in Time
Redblack

One of those interesting records where purely sincere ideas collide with a similar musical attitude, but nonetheless meet ear-friendly musicianship. On one hand I hear epic Heathen Metal undertones, on the other – a rocky feeling throughout it all that, well, reminds me of **Slyclad** and **Anathema** in a way. But it is neither energetic or very sleepy music. It has its highly evocative moments, yet most of the time – this is an hour long experience – the music leads the listener into dreamy realms, accurately corresponding the ideological path chosen.

Petr Hošek, a.k.a. **Blackie**, moves on within his ancient tradition concept, as it was started on their debut record, **Bonds of Togetherness**, released in 1997. I believe that record has mistakenly been unnoticed.

The Pass in Time is a very harmless, relaxing experience that leads anybody into a trance-like experience. Sure, if you stick exceptionally to **Mortician** and **Internal Bleeding** all the time, this is not a good option, but I respect **Blackie's** efforts for the guts put in. Yes, you will spot even **Type O Negative** hints here and there, for the sake of discrepancy. Sure, sure, the **Root** guitarist is not the only one responsible for the recordings of his own music – quite a few well-known names from the Czech Metal scene have assisted him. Hell, it's not so important, after all.

I know this sounds a bit too good, so let me say that at times the aforementioned collision between the grandeur of the older times and pretty modern emotional (Metal) music layers sound unusual, a bit 'tongued'. Anyway, let's consider it as a try-out to find the transcendental point between the epochs. Huh, I like this thought.

Ok, a very good release, indeed. And 'the face of the sun' symbol in a black tray cover seems very alike to the face of **Big Boss** from **Root**, hah.

Cales, **Petr Hošek**, P.O. Box 279, 601 00 Brno 1, Czech Republic, calesclan@seznam.cz

Tadas

CARPATHIAN FOREST 12
Morbid Fascination of Death
Avantgarde



Well, who doesn't know the story? Hands up, please... there is not much to be written. The Carpathians are The Gods of Dirty Slit Killing, Extermination Worshiping, Headbanger-friendly, Trend-breaking Black Fuckin' Metal that must be worshipped to the fullest. That's what I've been doing for ages, and seems like the kids have been following these sons of gruesome fantasies recently quite well, too.

What a splendid booklet they have compiled this time! Can't believe my eyes! It's sick for the sake of sickness, it's provocative for the sake of provocation, and it's as straightforward as it can be. I am sure this booklet will clearly divide the crowds into those worshipping and those hating these guys. Anyway, it is a masterpiece of grim, Satanic manifestations through the visual side. Can't wait to touch the vinyl edition of it!!!

Ah, you want some comments on the music then? Stop it. This album was recorded at the same time as the **Strange**... material, so it does not bring anything new, unless those peculiar

atmospheres that each song carries count. Why not the highest mark? Well, let's leave it for **Darkthrone** this time around, he he... no, seriously, maybe **Morbid Fascination of Death** does not have those amazing extras like **Theme from Nebromantikk**, and even if this is a much harder album, it does not outrun the previous effort: I have a strange feeling that their next release will be different from anything they've done so far, and well, let's believe it will be the most stunning achievement in the history of rock'n'rollish Black Metal. Yet I never get tired repeating myself. OBTAIN THE ENTIRE CATALOGUE OF THIS BRILLIANT BAND.

Tadas

CENTURIAN 11
Liber Zar Zax
Listenable

A new label to rule the **Centurian** ship, but more importantly – a new bassist/vocalist, **Jerry Brouwer**, to direct the blasphemies into the world, who is initiated through this record to the public for the first time. Mind you, earlier they have been working with a separate vocalist and bass player. So no significant changes affect the music on this endeavour, or the progress that these relentless creators have achieved since their acceptable debut album. Indeed, I hear the band moving along their own direction, however painful it is in the dark, extreme Death Metal genre. Generally I think it's hardly possible to invent anything new – well, this statement does not suit **Nile**. I presume – even for a creative outfit. But I do not hear that evident hints of **Decide** anymore, as met on their previous release.

A new level of creativity is achieved thanks to the yet intensified performance, and that goes for the writing process as well. The drummer, **Wim**, has some additional pleasure to add in the vigour department, but, overall, it turned out great and was worth the sacrifice that rehearsals must have been looking like. Here lies the main difference from the first CD. Couple last **Decide** albums lose massively in extremity to this. I know it is not always for the better, but in case of these Dutch maniacs it is.

Liber Zar Zax firmly combines the technical data of the performers with a raw approach, where the concept, deeply rooted in Satanism, yet intensifies the lethal atmosphere. This is not for the new kids on the block, but for those with advanced knowledge about extreme music.

It is absolutely exciting to know that brutal sounds are not dying in Netherlands. **Pestilence** have ceased. **Asphyx** followed them, let alone **Gorefest**... But here we go with new bands – well, not new, but bands which certainly keep growing – and it is no pain to check them out to realize I am talking the truth here! Hail Dutch brutality! **Centurian**, c/o **Wim**, Wallenbergstraat 27, 3882 HA Putten, Netherlands, www.centurianchaos.com

Tadas

CHAMBER 8
You and What Army

When I am told that some certain band plays Heavy Metal I usually think of the traditional 80's sound, and the typical leather-and-steel kind of lyrics as well as approach. This is absolutely not the case here, and now it seems to me that this American four-piece just wanted to emphasise their 'heaviness' with such description, because what they perform really is heavy, and Metal for sure. The vocalist and some of the slower riffs make me think of the American school like **Pantera**, **Machine Head** or **Crowbar**. Well, not the type of sound I am most pleased with, and nor do I actually meet lots of such bands in my way. Well, **Tin's** voice is not of my liking, he simply pisses me off in certain songs, and generally could add more power in there in order to be able to compete with the **Crowbar** or **Pantera** guys. Instrumentation is also not as heavy-packed as **Pantera's**, so the overall picture is not as breathtaking, and mostly hook the listener up on grooves.

They are typical for the American scene, yet not *that* bad, as far as I am concerned. Well, at least they're a good competitor for the bigger bands mentioned above. I do suppose this kind of sound is sort of hype there, as much as **Death** and **Black** are in Europe now, so that's the other side of the coin. Thus 'to get signed, tour the world and become famous' is not the easiest task when you face that many guys are doing similar kind of music all around. But it's also a matter of luck, actually – if they end up in the right hands, the band could grow rapidly. Well, that's business rules, none the

less.

Yes, this record was recorded and self-produced three years ago, so it seems as if **Chamber** haven't got their contract yet, which is a bit strange as the music is pretty 'label-suitable' and they have managed to achieve a good chunky sound on this nine-track album. Heavy metal, huh...

Chamber, c/o **Arjan Kloet**, 7 Fulkerson Street Apt. 3, Cambridge, MA 02141, USA, tel. (1) 2672531426, chamberarmy@hotmail.com, www.chamberarmy.com

Tadas

CHINCHILLA 8
The Last Millennium
Metal Blade

The stream of Power Metal never ends, especially in our times when the revivalist traditional Metal wave has the leading positions. **Chinchilla** is not a new name, though, but they do appear in my stereo for the first time. This crew has issued a few albums earlier on, constantly building their name in the scene, crowded with similar formations. However, I can't accept them as an outstanding outfit. This record just rather confirms that the style is on the rise now, but does not present the band itself as a real force. To create something out of this world is not easy, that's clear for anyone, yet such bands as **Hammerfall** and a few others still manage to shine through the masses. This German crew take the Heavy Metal side of **Primal Fear**, add some hard licks from **Judas Priest** and melodies from **Stratovarius**, and there they go. But **Chinchilla** have even more happy-go-lucky kind of attitude than the others, so a few things in the repertoire sound too hard-rock, even too poppy, if you know what I mean. The cover of **Thin Lizzy** tops it off. I certainly expected more Metal from this record and less traditional rock influences.

Also, their positive (pro-Xian?) lyrics (*show me the way to heaven... father forgive me... get it!!*) do not really impress me. If it is just an outlook to the world, it's certainly not the type for all of us, dark and sinister human beings. But if it is the swindler's worship, then I have no more words left. An angel-like creature with demon wings on the cover implies another kind of thoughts, though, but why the hell they have taken the same horse-riding motif as on the **Emperor** MLP I cannot explain...

Tadas

CIRITH GORGOR 7
Unveiling the Essence
Osmose

Erm... **Cirith Gorgor** is one of these new Black Metal bands that actually do deliver some solid, acceptable tracks and moments every now and then, but the overall feeling of something 'dark' that should be ever-present in each and every product released as 'Black Metal' gets lost somewhere along the lines. And, as a result, your mind starts to wander and you begin to lose your concentration. **Unveiling the Essence** doesn't bind you up to darkness the way it should, and that's exactly why it fails.

When you do **Black Metal** in the year 2001, you just can't settle for anything that is 'decent' or 'acceptable'. Besides, ripping off **Marduk** won't get you anywhere near the adjectives you wish to hear.

Northbird

COMPLEX 7 8
Water

You can't say it better than the promo-sheet does: *even though the music includes ambitious technical phrases and complex structures it is far more heavy than so called progressive Metal*. Sometimes I regret not using short reviews as this would be a simple and effective description of **Water**, the first self-released album by this German four-piece band. But then again, those weren't my words, so I'd better think over my own interpretation of this piece of highly skilled – really complex Metal.

The vocalist **Norbert** is the most progressive of the pack. He is obliged to lead the orchestra pretty often, but his efforts are not always very effective. I think a vocalist means a lot in the progressive bands, yet in this case listeners will catch themselves bored from time to time. He is sort of varying his voice and is taking peculiar notes to strengthen the individuality of his performance, but somehow it does not make me tapping the rhythm or nodding the head. The instrumental fundament consists of three-seasoned musicians that have been playing together since 1990. I would consider their performance as really professional, yet the

technical abilities are not enough to make an album the latest hit.

The Florida's technicians **Atheist** (later material) and **Cynic** have influenced **Complex 7** a bit, that goes without saying as well. But otherwise you will be able to find prog-rock elements taking over. In a way this can be compared to the Australian **Allegiance**, once a band with a good reputation, yet they were Thrashing more violently whilst our champions intensify the music up just occasionally.

To draw the final line – a bunch of progressive Heavy Metal songs that have it all except maybe more of highlighting moments and a better vocalist than this. Available for 12\$ from the band – for connoisseurs only!

Complex 7, c/o **Björn Müller**, Im Paradies 6, 35041 Marburg, Germany, tel. (+49) 6421982998, complex7@complex7.de, www.complex7.de

Tadas

CORONA BOREALIS 9
Corona Borealis
Well of Urd

A hit an unusual project as **Corona Borealis** consists of a one Norwegian guy, namely **Kristian Nordide**, who is the main engine behind it, and who jams with his friends and guest musicians to reveal medieval, acoustic motives using exclusively natural, and a few even self-crafted instruments. An another significant contributor is **Ronny Horland**, ex-session member of **Aeternus** and **Immortal**. No, this album has nothing to do with Black or Heavy Metal. It is a collection of reasonable, classical music from the medieval European heritage, predominantly of a French origin. Every tune is historically described in the booklet, so I doubt that there is any composition entirely written by the authors themselves. Anyway, you must be well trained in medieval music to know these songs. In other words, I am sure that this album will act as a great introductory story to those ancient times. An entire plea of instruments were used for that matter: lute, harp, bagpipes, flute, violin, lyre...

Well, for my taste, it sounds a bit too positive and ear-friendly. I believe that this is not the darkest music ever reincarnated from the 14th century. Yet there is no doubt about the authenticity of this album. If you are looking for music with spirit inside, the direction leads to **Corona Borealis**. What surprised me were the Russian names of the guest musicians. I wonder if it was any ensemble visiting Norway at that time, or could these guys be emigrants of the last decade from Russia... In any case, the album sounds great – it was none other than **Pytten** to engineer this at his native **Griegballen**. For all breeding heathen souls,

utricularicon@hotmail.com

Tadas

COUNT DE NOCTE 8
Carpe Noctum
Mad Lion

This band's about melodic Metal that is leaning firmly towards the Dark in all imaginable ways. **Black Metal**? Well... no. It's more like, **Dark Metal**. Do you know the difference between the two? Neither do I, anymore, but as a matter of fact bands of this sort are not as uncommon as you might think here in Finland. This 'almost **Black Metal**' tag could very well be put on dozens of young Finnish bands that for some reason just won't go all the way with their 'Black Metal', but rather have it 'just' as the main element in their music.

Carpe Noctum (how many beers did you drink to come up with something that original?) is **Count De Nocte's** debut full-length offering and I'm sorry to say that it sounds accordingly. No, the music's not downright amateurish, on the contrary, it's all very well thought-out and done. But still just about everything in their music is as if on the loose.

More to the point, I wonder do they know themselves that those nice melodies cannot and will not manage to hide the obvious lack of soul the music's suffering from? I'd go as far as saying that the lyrics are the best thing here. Just too bad for the band that their lyricist is dead now. My most 'constructive' viewpoint would be to move along the direction portrayed by **Tairaani Pimeenys** (*Se Eismänninen Yö*) as that's probably the only song on this album that has what it takes.

countdenocte@hotmail.com

Northwind

Cancer
Metal Blade

It's always a new and nice experience when a band that has existed for many years, a band you've heard this and that about, finally ends up in your stereo.

This album actually has a video section in it where they have managed to put five videos (can you imagine?), two of them are from the current album, and the others are songs from the past. It helps you to understand their evolution and make some initial comparisons between the earlier and newer material.

Criminal had name as a band that stylistically was too close to **Sepultura** in the past, and now **Metal Blade**

propaganda machine bursts in screaming that it is just the past of this Chilean team. Say what you will, but this brand new disc is full enough of quite typical post-*Trise* era structures. For your information, I despise that era of the once excellent Brazilians, but luckily the compositions of **Criminal** appeal to me much more. Indeed, they are not just blindly cloned copies, and the guys characteristically demonstrate intense thrashing skills instead of groovy riffing all the time.

By all means - this is modern Thrash, so do not expect anything close to **Destruction** or **Testament**. You'd better think of old **Machine Head** or **Fear Factory** instead. **Anton Reisenegger** (once the front-man of the legendary **Pentagram**) does remember his old days, but I think I'm not the only one who wants to see this current band go in a yet Thrasher direction.

It's not necessary to beat up **Sepultura** to be the most respected to come from South America, it's enough just to drive the listener's engines properly, and that **Cancer** does pretty smoothly. Go ahead, Chile. www.criminal.cl

Tadas

CROMLECH 9
The Vulture Tones
Beyond...

Once again Swedish Death Metal and once again mixed feelings about it. Needless to say I've heard this kinda music painfully many times, so no press-statement hinting that it's a sensational revelation, a masterpiece, can cheat me - no fuckin' way! This four-track mini album is certainly not what **Beyond...** claim it to be! C'mon, who the fuck can believe that it is possible to make another masterpiece of a new wave of Swedish Death? Only fools... After **At The Gates**, the progress of this Swedish Death Metal chapter is over, and if there appears a good record, it usually hears simply emulated music, which I could never call as a 'masterpiece'.

In **Cromlech's** case, I respect their tight performance and the necessary feeling in the music - everything is fine and in place. I do agree that they will gain few good responses amongst those addicted to the style, too. But how to crase this feeling that I'm listening to the same record throughout the years, over and over again, even if bands' names actually change? Yup, **Eucharist** and **At The Gates** are probably the closest bands they can be related to, although I'm sure each listener can find much more parallels with another dozen of *Sverige* Deathers.

I personally enjoy their oldest tune the most, *Garden of Sin* (written in 1996), that ended up on this release. Maybe it has more of the older Death Metal capacity there? Or maybe not - it might be about the much more convincing chorus that quickly sticks to mind as well.

Well, had this mini album been delivered to my table in 1993, I would have swallowed it without any chewing and had probably asked for more! But you cannot stop the time.

Tadas

THE CROWN 12
Crowned in Terror
Metal Blade



It's incredible how one single person can absolutely change a whole musical entity. To change the reaction to the music. The nature of music in general. Metal music. Devastating Fuckin' Death Metal! This person must be a genius. You all think I'm exclusively talking about vocalists? Nope... but in this case - YES! **The Crown** was not your average team all these years, and not much respect for them for that, but when **The God of Shrieking a.k.a. Tomas Lindberg** has entered the dominions of death, **The Crown** has turned into a super group! I still question myself *C'mon, maybe it is just a delusious impression, don't be so easily affected by just one single aspect of this album...* But think again: in fact **Tomas** has not made **Lock Up** better than they actually were, that's one reason. And the instrumental part of **Crowned in Terror** seems way more attractive to me than the groovy stuff of **Deathbruce King**. That's another and a very important factor it is. Still quite a few traces of rock 'n' roll in here, yet it's much deeper engraved in the classic Deaththrash sound, and you won't find a single song of entirely rock 'n' roll nature on the new album. The tracks even have some grinding parts in the middle or massive riffage (say, *The Speed of Darkness*). Then some melodic (no gay new school Death Metal here!!!) passages make me wonder, indeed, *I have Out for Blood* and *Death Is the Hunter* in my mind. Haven't I heard it somewhere? Could anyone help me here, chh? What? At The Ga... what?!!!!!! Holy fuck, man, I can't believe it.

Well, it would be possible to speak about **Tomas'** voice for ages, but let's leave it for others, and just say that he was a genius, remained as one and will continue to be like that as long as he keeps his incredible feel for violent, distorted music. Period. I'm also impressed by the cool manipulation of their pictures in the booklet as well as the straight-to-the-point lyrical approach. Part of those were written by **Tomas**, and it's not any social message for you from the times of *Slaughter of the Sun*. Pure Death Fuckin' Metal lyrics!

An absolute must. www.thecrownonline.com

Tadas

CRUACHAN 8
Ride on Hammerheart

A new single here, following their last year's *The Middle Kingdom* album, and once again this Irish band fails to make a major stir in the Metal music scene, even if folk-like elements in Heavy Metal is one of the most fashionable things currently.

Maybe this release does sound better than their previous effort, but we shouldn't talk about it as a new sensation of any sort. It is a single, mainly released for the Irish market, and all the marketing is based upon the title-track, that is actually a remake of a very famous Irish song, originally performed by **Jimmy McCarthy**. In addition, it features **Shane MacGowan (of The Pogues)** singing a few lines for them. Well, that should draw **Cruachan** towards a bigger audience. I actually remember **Alan of Primordial** talking few years ago that his country-mates were looking for the mainstream success... So, seems like the time has come, or at least they are making an attempt.

Well, I couldn't care less about that pop-smelling gospel-alike tune, it causes no vibration inside my heart. I am not Irish, but, on the other hand, I am ready to burn in hell - if necessary - for **Primordial's** music. The direction **Cruachan** has taken has little, if anything, to do with heart-chilling Metal.

The other three songs on this mini album are few hundred times better, maybe even surpassing *The Middle Kingdom* material. **Sauron** and the instrumental **Maeres March 2001** are exclusive for this release, and *To Hell or Connaught* is a remixed song. I like them better as there are less non-Metal variations and atmospheres. Still not heavy enough for a serious metalhead, although it can be pretty good for relaxation.

Anyway, since the emphasis is on the title-track, I cannot recommend this - better wait till the new full-length.

Tadas

CRUACHAN 8
Folk-Lore Hammerheart

Once again - nothing groundbreaking, nothing heart-breaking. Next album in the series of 'not heavy enough' in my system of comprehension, with primal intentions to be heavy but in reality not heavy at all. When material has nothing to do with heavy

music, and it is not heavy (naturally), then it might be ok and even great. But when music toesses around heavy arrangements and in fact is just a Metal/rock version of folk and party music, then it certainly comes to a dead end, at least on this side of the Metal empire. Speaking about separate songs, they have their own character in most cases, and it's possible to speak about strong variety in there, but at the same time this diversity creates a shallow feeling. Some songs are destined to correspond with loud Irish ale parties, some other material is calmer and darker, and some hippie-like ballads are sung again by that old retard **Shane**. Well, to me he sounds like an old Irishman the morning after... when you need rest and some medicine, not Metal, ha ha.

Judging the music alone I would be even more merciless, but luckily **Cruachan** have also their myths and stories foretold in lyrics. It is amusing to read them. As mentioned, parts of the texts are based on mythology (the best part), and then you also have traditional narratives that formed in the early XXth century, and also historical topics, as well taken from the previous century. Well, a rare case of a band that has their historical concept based on relatively present times. But this selection has much to do with the Irish history, so a way to understand their choice is to read the lyrics and their explanations! I wish the music were at least a bit as interesting as their approach... it is just too lame.

Cruachan, 283 Killinarden Estate, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Ireland. cruachan.ie/ireland.com, www.cruachan.cjb.net

Tadas

CRUEVO / BRAINOIL 5/6
split
Unknown Controller / Berserker / Boredom Noise / Shifty

Again in trouble. Never heard of any of those labels. I wonder why they decide to send me their promo packs, as most probably they have never read *Ad Armat!*. But it is not the first or the last case, anyway. You know something about **Cruevo** or **Brainoil**? What about **Medication Time**, **El Dapino**, **Grampic**, **Lana Dagales**? Unfamiliar? Me too. These were the bands guys have been playing in earlier on, if that clears the picture a bit.

Well, at least the music is recognisable to some extent. Yet it is not what I usually play for myself and even not the stuff I review all the time. **Sludge/Doom** might be a good alternative for the never-ending flow of Metal, but when it gets on your nerves, then it's no good either. Those guys look like modern hippies with their weeded out faces and crappy dressing. The music is as drug-influenced *first year in school* type of cover artwork.

Cruevo sound like a heavier version of **Cathedral**, minus the happy melodies and plus the hysteria that swirls around the vocalist's throat. Yeah, this hardcore-ish element is what I hate about all sludge bands, so all of you - better check out the latest **Cathedral** instead of this modern crap. Well, the first band on the split has three long tracks, whilst the next one - **Brainoil**, are presented with thirteen short tunes. And that's about the only difference between them. Well, **Brainoil's** music is more dynamic and less Doomy, yet many of the tracks sound to me like just sketches of what could develop into proper songs with a few more riffs. At times **Brainoil** enjoy tossing with instrumental interludes, stepping aside from guitar oriented music and experimenting a bit with sound and noise in addition. However, there is just too much dove involved, in the lyrics too.

My copy is a CD-r with pro-pressed inlays, but it must be just a promo.

Tadas

CYBELE 11
Interactive Playground
Voices of Wonder

Two years after *Songs of Soil* MCD, and four years after their debut *Brightly Blackhearted* full-length, the Norsk girl-team strikes back with a male bass player this time - introducing a close-to-perfect album of moody, melancholic Metal/rock with dark ambience and ear-friendly composing, not to forget structures and refrains that really do stick to your mind. Fuck, I can't force myself to say that this wouldn't appeal to me a big deal!

The biography tries to stick a 'pop/rock' label to this new epos, but the album's far from being that bad. I associate such a combination of stylistics (pop/rock) with much different things, as at least here in Lithuania all kind of crap is described like

that, whilst **Cybele** execute fuckin' excellent, relaxing music that everyone into atmospheric female-singing and rocky accompaniments must swallow without any hesitation. The guitar distortion is the point that adds a Metallic feel to it, otherwise this CD has plenty of acoustic and singer-oriented episodes. At some point I traced an early **The 3rd** and **The Mortal** lick there, or maybe it's just their origin that makes me say this?

The singer **Hilde Wahl** has finally took the leading role in the band, she's improved her techniques so much from the earlier releases. Well, it might be that the new face of their music also gives her better opportunities to express herself.

Yep, the programmed drums wipe another portion of heaviness off, although in **Cybele's** case I have nothing against this modern trend. At least the programming is well-executed and does not offend the ear. Indeed, such songs as *Living Satellites*, *Nevereverland* (also featured as a soundtrack of animation of the same kind) and *Lazy* are flawless in composition - they simply rush me to scream out to the world that **Cybele** must be checked ASAP in order to be discovered by a wider audience!

Cybele, cybelemusic@hotmail.com, <http://cybele.musicpage.com>

Tadas

DAMNABLE 10
Completely Devoted
Cudgel

Another DAMNED crew from Poland on the ever-growing German label, which has managed to present really strong acts of brutal Death Metal lately. The check that I at first misinterpreted the programmed drums for a real drummer speaks for itself. I think this deceptive element is mastered so fuckin' tightly that it creates a feeling of a live drummer who's really technical, ha ha. Alright, for all the purists - they've got a real drummer now for real, so next actions like live shows must be performed in full force! Let alone this grinding Death Metal music demands very technical approach and good skills.

To tell you the truth, the live tracks that are burned as bonus for the CD, featuring **Damnabale** at last year's *Fuck the Commerce* festival, do not impress me as much as the studio material, but it does not make me look upon this debut album with less care or enthusiasm. I think it's exactly the drum-sound that adds the extra punch to this album, bringing the band from the usual Death to exterminating grinding Metal ranks. They have done a good job in the studio, something that is necessary for this type of music. Surely, without the deep growling voice of **Bajn** and the two guitars and the bass wall, this would still mean nothing, so let's face it - **Damnabale** were able to work this exceptional disc this good only as a team effort.

Well, they certainly have been listening to **Kataklysm**, **Cryptopsy** and maybe **Broken Hope** quite much, but they have learned all lessons well! Quite a surprise was to learn about the philosophically tinged lyrics that would hardly mean anything for most grinding fucks listening to such music, though. At last something different: reincarnation, mountains inside, mental chaos... and last but not least - great artwork and design, reminding the *Wes Bercotter* style a bit. Check out that monster, man!

Damnabale, c/o *Andrzej Pakus*, ul/ Armii Krajowej 20, 26-400 Przasnyska, Poland, damnaband@wp.pl

Tadas

DARK DOMINION / SECRETAIN 7/8
Bound in Blasphemy
Indomitus

Sleepless nights... sleepless niiiights. I have to review this one after one almost entirely sleepless night, and the problem is that this album in general lulls me to sleep, as much as I listened to it, so I am afraid my thoughts may end during the third or fourth track. It would be unfair to **Secretain**, as their part of this split starts from the middle, so if I lose track with **Dark Dominion**, please wake me up for their colleagues.

The problem with this Black Metal delivery is that it is shamefully anonymous, both when it comes to the actual songs and the production. It is not the type of sharp underground Black Metal production, but rather just a sloppy version of it. Seemingly every instrument is heard fine, but the sound is very unimpressive - an odious kind.

Surely the poor effect is caused by the mediocre music itself as well. And as it usually happens to be - there lays the main

factors of a so-so album. Split album, in this case. Yet I see no reason to describe each band separately, as both of them are pretty much the same. Curious to mention that neither one paves the traditionally rough Aussie Black Metal, but rather stick to much more melodious way of churning out Black Metal. **Secretain** just use rawer - more chaotic production, which makes their music more dramatic, but yet is not convincing enough, anyway. On the contrary - if these instruments were more distinguishable, maybe the guys would have got more credits for their live compositions. The **Emperor** demo comes to mind if we speak about the smell in their sound, to some extent.

Well, let me put it like this - it would have been a good demo tape, released without any extra band in it, but for a CD it sounds too early now. This album is distributed by **Battlegod Productions**.

Dark Dominion, dark_dominion@angelfire.com, <http://members.tripod.com/dark-dominion>

Tadas

DARK FUNERAL 12
Diabolis Interium
No Fashion

Another revelation!!! *An Apprentice of Satan* was a good hint of what to expect from the third full **Dark Funeral** album, and all the expectations have been fuckin' proved right! This is another groundbreaking masterpiece, and please be so kind to worship it to death. At least those are the feelings I have so far for this album.

Before writing this review I checked how many times this outfit is being referred to in my other reviews that are already completed for this brand new issue of *Ad Armat!* I counted the DF name five times, and please bear in mind that I generally try to avoid any direct comparisons when writing reviews. Well, it simply means that here we have one of those generators of a style, in this case - of infernal symphonic Black Metal. I believe it is not so easy to keep waving that heavy, steel-made, huge flag for them all the time, so - once again, my sincere hails to the mighty Swedish quartet!

This time around they finally have a stable line-up, presenting you the addition of a new drummer who manages to maintain all the qualities his predecessors had, if not even overstepping them. Yeah, a true connoisseur of this particular kind of music must certainly feel new vibes in their set, even if they are hard to notice. I mean *Caligula's* voice that has turned out more in-your-face, sort of like piercing straight into the listener's stomach, as well as few rawer songs in general, the best examples of which are the title-track and *Goddess of Sadomy*, also mentioned as 'exceptional' in their biography. But it also goes without saying that an old worshipper of this entity will be as pleased as with all their previous releases as well because **Dark Funeral** is not a band that enjoy changing their formula of success. By the way, my favourite is *Armaggeddon Finally Comes*, if you were wondering about that.

I know it is cliché to say, and I practically never do that - without a good reason - but *Diabolis Interium* must be their best release to date, really!!!

Tadas

DARK LEGION 9
Bloodshed
Deadrun

Are these guys brutal or what? Yes, the music presented by this Polish band, with rather a Black Metalish name, includes absolutely exterminating velocities and chilling abilities to play extreme kind of sounds. Not easy to swallow even for the diehard fans of grinding Death. They know the deal, anyway, so my advise is to check out this album as soon as possible. As an expert, I would yet question at least the moments here that make me feel not so comfortable. The quite a few rhythmical breaks certainly confuse the listener, but that must be the new fashion, to disturb any conformist grind music experience. Beats me it comes from the States, and from the **Relapse** crew in particular. Well, **Dark Legion** are much more structured at this point, they do have many Death Metal elements, so the record flows rather safely if one is familiar with the US extreme Metal scene. But instead of those weird tempo changes I would surely prefer if the guys had stuck to that combination of ultimately brutal riffs and fast blasting drumming.

Indeed, the band pays heaps of attention to their playing techniques, something you can't say about the production, though,

which is but of average quality (or slightly above average at its best). Power and persuasion are there, but they do not have the crunchy feel that for example the **Cannibal Corpse** records have. It is said that this debut album consists of two promo recordings accomplished in 1999 and 2000, so these sessions actually took place without any label back-up. Well, then the result is fine, indeed... I can hardly figure out where one session ends and another starts. Aye, it's pretty rare to witness a grinding record with considerable length (45 minutes), so for those unfamiliar with grind it might be too long. Others should check out the band.

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Tadas

DARKTHRONE *Deres Første Vinter*

Fatal
Nothing new, nothing official, just a bootleg CD-r with photocopied covers, hand-numbered to 150 copies. But what a bootleg! You have never heard these tracks with such a good quality, having in mind that many of these tunes are just rehearsal recordings. Yet who has a right to complain about the **Darkthrone** sound, after all I would if I received a bootleg where it is impossible to distinct the guitar, the voice, and the drums. This compilation is way different. I don't know - maybe the guys behind it all have mastered it themselves, or maybe they had these recordings well preserved or something, but you can hear everything clearly, even the first **Darkthrone** demo *Land of Frost*. I also like a lot the way it is presented in the booklet - short and clear chronological order, that is actually a useful source of information for anyone willing to know about the demo-tapes of the band. What a pleasure when such information is supplemented with actual music!

So, here the listener will find the aforementioned debut demo, then songs from a promo-tape, *Thalccandra* and *Cromlech* demos, as well as two live tracks from the same year 1989. Needless to say, all the material is either raw or close to the *Soulside Journey* era. It's a wonder to feel the Black Metal ting behind the oldest tunes, but the initial Thrashy Death Doom is much more noticeable. It goes without saying that some of the riffs are a bit funny now, and *Fenriz*' co-ordination sucks big time here and there.

But neither listening or reviewing material like this is meant to focus on a bad performance - it is a collectors' item, and it will remain to be a totem for the Black Metal world because of the cult name. Inquire about this release at: lord_pestn@hotmail.com

Tadas

DARKTHRONE 13 *Plaguevielfer* *Moonfog*



What a stupid whim to be unsatisfied with most of the new releases, and to think that it is impossible to make a stir these days. In other words, to get the highest score in *Ad Arma!* I thought such an album would never come this year, but here it is finally with me, and it means that Metal lives on. Black Metal, to be correct. Yep, *Plaguevielfer* is the best Metal album I've heard in 2001, and it fuckin' makes my adrenaline rush to consume more of this music, even if the next release of such hammering merit appear not until after the next 9-10 months!

As usual, **Darkthrone** are still the same, but so much different than on any of their previous albums. I agree with the promo-sheet only partially: yes, there is a link between *Ravishing Grimness* and this one, but it is not an unusual album of any kind! It is **DARKTHRONE!!!** And that must say it all. Besides, they've certainly chosen a different approach to production and the playing techniques, that actually

take us back to *Under a Funeral Moon* (or is it *A Blaze...*?) times. Yes, they are back to watchful precision and intricate structures once again - *Fenriz* uses double bass and more diverse rhythms than before, and *Nocturno Callo* holds a wider spectre of riffs as well. Sounds like the guys have been preparing their homework with awareness, and, using new ideas, they have chosen another kind of production, too. It makes this disk stand closer to Black Metal of the new age (well, can you imagine **Darkthrone** turning their backs to that necro-feeling? They will never cut it off for sure!!!).

Indeed, I lose a ground when trying to decide whether this is a call from the past, or a new way for the band. There is some special strength dwelling on this album, but it certainly proves them just getting the music better with years. Oh yeah, it does not have that overwhelming spontaneity as, say, *Nattasha*... once had. It is sort of a matured **Darkthrone**. As *Fenriz* once put it - in his life ahead he wants to be a cruel old man, scaring people away (hah). So, *Plaguevielfer* sort of has that feeling. Music, which is meant to frighten the fake creatures of mankind.

Commund is one of the best tunes these guys have ever written. And they have totally mind-blowing lyrical set in addition.

Tadas

DEATH SS 9 *Panic* *Lucifer Rising / Self*

Must warn you that I am not an expert of the rich discography of this long-time-run Metal combo, and this is a brand new recording with much new people around, cutting Metal in a modern way. Here is your charismatic vocalist *Stere Sylvester*, leading the perverted crew at least.

The album is pretty capturing, and it grows on the listener with every new listen. Or is that myself who just was not expecting something modern from *Panic*? To dig deeper, these songs actually pave the traditional Heavy/Speed Metal way, with a look or two into softer hard 'n heavy (glam?) direction. But it is styled out in a new decade vogue, so you get electronic effects all over the tracks alongside Metal. I think it's good in a sense that the industrial spice add in a dark feeling for them, so the listener is not feeling so safe anymore, unlike he could be with a usual hard 'n heavy Metal record. Low-end bass sound contributes a lot to the term "modern" in this case. In a way *Panic* may seem a bit too much crammed with fx, even (courtesy *Oleg Smirnoff*), but it depends what kind of sequel it provides, so I rather see kids accepting than rejecting innovations. But it might be different with the admirers of older **Death SS** material.

An another important thing to say is that all compositions basically take their individual paths, so there cannot be a certain definition for the whole album, as there are traces of atmospheric and gothic Metal, too. I think if promoted well, this album would make quite a stir in the industrial music circles. Of course this release requires a special approach and it will not apply to anyone who just occasionally gets closer to it.

Check out the complex cover artwork manipulations (with a remarkably high shock-value) and the overall neat manufacturing of the CD.

Tadas

DEATH SS 9 *Let the Sabbath Begin* *Lucifer Rising / Self*

Having in mind those ecstatic reactions of people heard on these live recordings - if they're not edited in the studio - this band really has a cult following in Italy. Another reason might be the matter of live album itself - I think that lame bands do not even try to release something like that, or it ends up as a total financial disaster for such upstarts.

So, this live from 2000 most naturally features most of the highlights from the latest **Death SS** album, as well as a bunch of older tracks that act as a good opportunity to get familiar with the band for those listeners who have never heard them before. Well, from what I hear on my stereo, it is about Heavy Metal that **Death SS** has always been into, in a dark or emotional way. Even with **Iron Maiden** and **Rage** influences (*Babomet*). The new cuts work a bit differently in a live situation, maybe they do not sound that modern, but close enough to its original form. That means the recording quality is pretty good, indeed.

Live recordings are not all you will find on this luxurious double digipak album -

the first, and maybe main, disk contains previously unpublished songs, and remixes from the latest *Panic* album. Well, to get it straight - just another corner of modern way Heavy Metal that **Death SS** has been paving. Another angle this music might be looked from.

For anyone who is not familiar with the older material of **Death SS** this might work as a nice contribution to where the Metal music heads in this new age. *Hymn of the Satanic Empire*... is a special track as it features speaking by A.S. La Vey. I am just not sure if this is a re-worked track of *Anton* himself (remember his musical career?), or just their own composition with *Anton*'s voice filled in.

To put it simply - their fans must own this record by all means.

Tadas

DECAYED 9 *Nockthurnaual* *Drakkar*

Whenever the talk's been about Portuguese Black Metal, there are these three names that inevitably come to my mind;

Moonspell, **Fili Nigrarium Infernalium**, and **Decayed**. Surely a fine dozen more Lusitanian Black Metalters could as well be mentioned, but somehow this trinity always comes to the fore. Same thing with **Rotting Christ**, **Necromantia** and **Varathron** in Greece, but that's another story. I'm here to talk about **Decayed**'s latest, extremely lengthy album, *Nockthurnaual*, and that's what I shall do.

Now, to be honest, I have not heard many of **Decayed**'s previous releases, but I didn't really expect them to deliver as straightforward, old-school Black Metal as they actually do on this album. Almost **Venomous** stuff, if you get my drift. And all in the name of Satan, of course.

But... hmmm, I don't know. Whereas I do respect their long career and loyalty to Black Metal, I have to wonder whether anyone else except their die-hard fans really need this kind of stuff. Just how many times have you already heard these riffs and read these lyrics? Déjà vu, anyone? But I have a feeling both the band as well as their fans would be quite quick to give the finger to all those who are not into this "Black Metal Onslaught" anyway, so maybe I shouldn't even bother with my humble attempts of "constructive criticism". Just kneel down and worship, or leave the room.

Norbwind

DEMENTOR 7 *Enslave the Weak* *Osmose*

As much as my heart goes for a band like this Slovakian **Dementor**, who've determinedly conjured up their Death Metal just for the sole purpose of spreading hate towards Christianity since 1988, I can't help falling asleep while listening to *Enslave the Weak*.

Death Metal can be interesting, I'm not saying that, but the way **Dementor** churn out their heavy tones, bringing us nothing new or innovative... well, it's just a bore. Every song sounds the same without any specialities thrown in, and you just know how the next track is gonna sound like without even hearing it, and that is simply not acceptable anymore as there are hundreds and hundreds of records with the same quality - or lack of it - released every day.

So hail you, **Dementor**, for spreading the word - their other two CDs are called *Kill the Thought on Christ & The Art of Blasphemy*, just to mention that - but to impress *Ad Arma!*, you need a whole lot more.

Norbwind

DEMIMONDE 10 *Mutant Star* *Epidemic*

So, they have moved forward towards the universal thought, both conceptually and musically. Comparing to the previous tape, released three years ago, this album sounds more "Czech" than before. You know - atmospheric Metal with male and female vocals interchanging, and the mysterious feeling put into music. I mean, rough Metal is still around, but not as much emphasised as before. It is delivered in short, strict outbursts, as if guys want to keep it in the music, but at the same time they use many different experiments and even tekno beats to set against that used Metal formula.

To cut the crap, think of **Forgotten Silence**, yet harder hitting and more concentrated. Their sound is fuller and they bring more pictures into the screen per minute, if we compare the music to

cinema. "Progressive" is a very good word to use, it fits many cases (heh), but this time I really mean it. Have in mind not only avantgarde feeling in Metal, but also **Cynic** and **Atheist** shadow in the rougher Death Metal fragments. Other than that, it would be embarrassing to stick any used cliché to **Demimonde**.

People who cannot swallow an album like this at once may have troubles with it. Too much of everything for them can easily destroy the listening pleasure. So - you need a special approach to it, and do not try to spin single tracks out of this album. Basically that's about the progress since *The Warriors Poets*, which was more like a compilation of separate tunes. *Advocatus Diaboli* is the best, though - the most dramatic and pompous composition.

The CD comes with an interactive data including a video section of a live show; their previous tape in mp3 form, all the info and huge photogallery (check *Tannya*'s pictures, guys), and even some dark beat music (also in mp3) of artists I failed to identify. Certainly a modern CD to the collection.

Demimonde, *Pavel Pavlík*, Habova 10, 155 00 Praha 5, Czech Republic. tel. (+420) 604118537, bizzaro@atlas.cz

Tadas

DEMONS OF DIRT 7 *Killer Engine* *Hammerheart*

It tends to be fashionable to sign and release teenage bands, don't you think? But the fact that **Decapitated** are a unique team does not mean that every kid can write as good music as older, more mature musicians do. In other words, this record is simply too early for the band, especially for the level **Hammerheart** tries to bring them to. I'm sure **Demons Of Dirt** won't be unnoticed, but as a young and inexperienced band as they are, they will not receive the attention the label thinks. Let's admit that the guys know how to play their instruments in the right way, but they are still too weak to bring music with a firm trademark in there. I would say the same even if it was my favourite style of Metal, I really would.

If you still think this might fascinate you, be ready to hear modern Thrash/Death with clear allusions to **Pantera** (the vocalist would just die to be the next 'big' *Anselmo*), **The Haunted** (that in fact is just a good old **At The Gates** influence), bits and pieces of melodic Death and groovy Thrashcore Metal. In a word - boring and uninteresting, predictable and trendy. Too much gimmicking of their heroes, and that's another thing they must pass through and grow out of. Those grooves might sound cool for a track or two, but when the same repeats over and over again, then, sorry - it's a pain in the ass. This Swedish band is not the first, or the last, there will be tons more of those trying to be the next **ATG**, the next **Pantera**, the next **In Flames**... but a few years will pass and only couple of those bands will remain in the scene, even less of them will play the same groovy Metal. We will see what happens with **Demons Of Dirt**, yet as for now I would suggest them to close the doors of their rehearsal studio for at least the next two years before delivering any new releases.

Tadas

DEPRAVED 8 *Decadence & Lust* *Warpath*

This one is a disappointment to me. I knew **Depraved** from the old times; when my magazine had just started, they were already passing their flyers through mail. I naturally thought that throughout the years this French band have improved, and that current second full-length album of theirs would be a piece of really addictive brutal Death - well, maybe grinding Death, but still good enough Metal music. In reality, dozens of musicians from the younger generation do this type of extremity these days better. This disk has a feeling that **Depraved** sort of have been stuck in what they achieved in their early years, or is this a manifestation of being loyal to their roots? Anyway, I think that the hot names of grinding Death scene come with both better music and production.

This twelve-tracker does not hit you in the face, because one of its engines does not work properly - they lack some petrol down there! Some parts of the songs do remind me of earlier **Brutal Truth** or **Napalm Death**, yet there is also a punk feel to them (just a feel, not music itself). I cannot say they are strictly Death Metal - it, indeed, turns out to be pretty grinding at

times - and also Thrashing machinery gets an opportunity to be turned on, here and there. The English **Infestation** comes to my mind as an opposite force to be compared to the French crew. It is also an old hand that recently came to the spotlight with their debut album, and they also make their **Death Metal** with a grinding taste, but the performance and the ideas are so much stronger, even if their music is also heard for many times before.

When it comes to **Depraved** again, they enjoy singing about serial-killers yet do not print lyrics, but then feature as sick as possible artwork. I'm not convinced by the final product though, are you?

Depraved, c/o Gilles Pincet, 3, clos des Blanchés Vignes, 5-820 Marbach, France. depraved.sexual@wanadoo.fr

Tadas

DEPRESSION / HAEMORRHAGE 8/7 *Zur Stille finden / Live in the Morgue* *Cudgel*

This split is a bit unfair for **Haemorrhage**, as they can't compete in quality of the recorded material, for their stuff is a live set. The worst thing is that both parts of this album's sound are not leveled, so when you switch from one crew to another it's always a feel that **Haemorrhage** are weaker. In reality they are not: both bands do sick and twisted grinding Death Metal, and the Spaniards are more intense on their studio albums. So, if you meet those bands for the first time, don't be mistaken of who is who. In general, I bet that not so many non-grinddeath freaks appreciate this, since the music is absolutely traditional and conformist. Just a good chance to confirm what's inside the musicians' hearts.

Depression go quite groovy stuff, and by doing this they bring back those old times of German grind bands as **Blood** or **Gut**, but it's not so gruesome or provoking. If you allow this expression - they just aren't as spooky. Actually their music is pretty linear, and without the **Agathocles** cover even these 20 minutes would have been too monotonous to bear. One thing in which they outrun the other band of the split is the vocals, simply because **Haemorrhage** have done it live, once again. It is hard to do the same kind of ugly and frightening grindcore growl in live situation, it seems. Once again some covers help them to remain interesting - the covers of **Carcass**, **Impetigo** and **Regurgitate** clearly show where this band is coming from. In fact, I'd still rather listen to their normal studio album.

So, this is a release solely for the grind and Death Metal freaks, and if you don't feel like that, better stay away.

Depression, c/o Kai Satteltkan, Westricher Str. 62, 44388 Dortmund, Germany. depression@gmx.li
Haemorrhage, *Ramon Checa*, Apdo 27106, 28044 Madrid, Spain. haemorgue@hotmail.com, http://come.to/haemorrhage

Tadas

DERANGED 10 *Deranged* *Listenable*



Bearing in mind the very notorious *III* album, expectations for this follower were certainly high. I think they have intuitively chosen to title it after the project name, but this is sort of new life for **Deranged** that started with the previous disk, and continues here through the self-titled supporter of it. Both of them sound similar - they could have made one long double album at once. By this I want to emphasise that there is nothing new under the sun of brutal grinding Death Metal a la Americans here, but on the other hand it truly marks **Deranged**'s path that everybody should be familiar with. And who is not yet - they show it in details with the help of these eleven compositions. A band and a style that leave you either indifferent or make you totally berzerk.

Even a Death Metal admirer can make a

mistake if (s)he does not have their line-up listed down: *Johan Andenborg*, the vocalist/bassist that I personally praised last time is unfortunately gone, after just one album, and his place is filled with two guys doing their thing separately. So, the new vocalist sounds almost identical, he even gets a bit uniform, much like *Johan*, closer to the album's end. There really are lots of similar Death Metal vocalists around that are not the worst or the best; they just fit in that brutal chunky Death milieu pretty well, so that the music keeps on with a dirty, flat, bulldozing drive. And when it comes to these Swedes - **Deranged** are born to play that kind of Death Metal. Well, if you ask me, there are better albums of course, and better-expressed ideas of this genre, but, nonetheless - this is high quality and this is meant to be checked out for the sake of brutality.

Beware of the sick cover art, wrapped in initially available slipcase CD format, for a limited time for sale.

Deranged, R. Werm, Angvagen 2, 245 62, Sweden.
brutalmotherfuck@gamma.telenordia.se,
http://start.at.your.death

Tadas

DESTINY 3 *Supreme Domination's Art Psychic Scream*

What a hell is 'destiny'?! I have been trying to identify this word in each and every of my dictionaries, but there was nothing else besides 'destiny'... The music by this French six-piece outfit is as lame excuse as this unfortunate band-name. Really, to stand it all for 37 minutes is a nice torture, so if they wanted to make their listeners feel hatred and disgust, they have completed a right record! My disgust for **Destiny** music is really huge. It is just a parody on Black Metal, or at least on music that in other cases might be named as Black Metal. In other words - this is so poor travesty of **COF** that I am in lack of strong words to show my embarrassment. Stupid screaming, plastic ideas and a silly synth-based sound. This actually reminds me of the debut album by Portuguese **Firstborn Evil** that has moved forward ever since. I mean, for how long this crap can continue? For how long bad bands will be easily getting record-deals? For how long their albums will be polluting the scene? For how long good and original musicians will stay in oblivion just because some shit sells better, no matter that it's just a very bad copy of the original idea?

When such records arrive at my editorial board, it's very easy to lose inspiration to continue with the magazine, it simply pushes you to cut all bonds to a scene where such bands unfortunately make the majority. It inspires to burn all bridges and close oneself deep in the woods. No, people, just stop your motherfuckin' band and please save me from this bunch of bad music, or I will go berzerk. With AK-47 at hand, Ad Arma!, motherfucker, Ad Arma!!!! (the three points go for the synth intermezzo in the middle of *From the Bonels of the Abyss*).

Destiny, c/o Rignanesse Mick,
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France. destiny66@hotmail.com

Tadas

DEVISION 8 *Two E-Wave / Drakkar*

Those underground labels oriented in a bit more commercial direction than the rest always try to describe some of their artists as pop or easy-listening musicians. This album is not an exception, but an unbelievable thing this time to me - I really have witnessed pop music! So, ladies and gentlemen - is the first ever pop music review in *Ad Arma!* history.

The first remark must be that it is not so stupid or one-sided, as well as pretty emotional and spiritual, like what you might observe on music TV channels. I am quite sure they have been spinning **De/Vision** at least on VIVA, because it is said that the guys have entered German charts in the past. Well, if you see them on TV, compare the song to the other crap that is down there. Crucify myself, but I trace synth gothic influences besides obvious **Depeche Mode** hints here and there. They incorporate distorted guitars in a couple of tracks, too. Seems like in the past this band has been using more raw means of expression, according to the bio. By the way, they are playing music since 1988 or so.

Ok, it is still pop after all! If so, then a bigger part of synth gothic bands are also pop music. And such performers as **Theatre Of Tragedy & Nightingale** as

well. No, I'm not trying to persuade everyone to go and get this. I'm sure that for most part of the readers it would be as nonsense to do as to pray saviour early in the morning. I wouldn't buy it myself. Yet for the sake of open-mindedness I must admit that for modern 'goth' kids this can be another revelation. And then, for melancholic nights of loneliness (for those who really can't drive gloomy thoughts off) this can be pretty ok. Some tunes are 'too much' for me personally, but it is very hard to stay ignorant to such sticking-to-mind, potential hits as *Heart-Shaped Tumor* or *Escape the World*.

www.devision.de

Tadas

DIABOLICAL 10 *Subterranean Magnitude Hammerheart*

The guitarist *Bryan Hipp* is a part of this album, and everybody who knows the Florida Death Metal history by heart should remember him from the legendary and one of the best bands there - **Brutality!** I've got a bit confused now though, since the CD booklet has his name all over, whilst the press-release states there's another guy instead of him! Well, at least *Bryan* must have recorded this. Yeah, the second album of **Diabolic** was recorded back in summer 2000, so it might be that he has left them after that...

Even though his previous band remains to be a charismatic group in the minds of many metalheads, **Diabolic** has nothing to lose, actually. Yeah, their main drawback is that this is not kind of Death Metal, which does not have analogues. The closest comparisons are the *Covenant* and *Domination* eras of **Morbid Angel**, and if I'm actually compare someone to the Death Metal Gods, that means additional sympathy. This disk, as well as their earlier material, has strong bonds to that strict guitar and drum bombing all over the listeners. The album starts unusually calm with piano and guitar instrumentals, but then all the hell breaks loose! And it keeps on rolling until the very end of the title-track, which slows down a bit and finalises the liberation of evil spells.

Only the production is somehow darker, not so polished as on **Morbid Angel** records. I think it is done on purpose as the technique of the four guys is not questioned, anyway. They must have simply been striving for a dark sound to coincide with not so grandmas' friendly music. The album carries another demonic artwork by never-surrendering *Pelagio*, and comes in a massive digipak edition, as well as LP version.

Great, I think fans of Florida's Death Metal know what to do, just that **Brutality** was a phenomenon, in any case...

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Tadas

DIABOLICAL 9 *Deserts of Desolation Cadla*

Imagine a blackened version of **Carccas**. Certainly, a Swedish band would not be Swedish without the Swedish flavour. But at least it is not another melodick shit in the countless army of trends. This has bigger impact on that Deathrash, which was forming the face of current extreme music in late 80's and early 90's. I know this is not the style of Metal that everybody loves these days, but on the other hand - who says that everybody around just blindly follows what comes from the Gothenburg fashion? Find out your own favourites!

The **Carccas** mood is especially evident with the vocalist *M. Odling*. It might be the manner of recording this vocal - with some kind of an eerie-echoed feel, but, anyway, I can't stop thinking about this association with *Jeff Walker*. It's a bit unfair to label them as 'Swedish sounding', though - everything they heritage from their countrymen are just a few **At The Gates** melodies here and there. Otherwise I even feel some techno Death Metal hints (**Attheist?**) masked within this dirty DM sound.

Their best tune so far undoubtedly is *The Dreaming Dead* that was recorded earlier than the rest of this MCD, by the way. It's Thrasher and more energetic song, but it actually corresponds more with what we should think about Metal in general. This was just three songs - intro debut for the guys, but I think they have released a full-length as well now. Hell knows where **Diabolical** have moved on there, and whether they have kept such an impact

with 40 or 50 minutes long album, but *Deserts of Desolation* was not a bad presentation for them. I think certain individuals into the older school of Deathrash will dig it. Available from **ITR** for only 10\$.

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Tadas

DIABOLICUM 10 *The Dark Blood Rising Code 666*

Every time I listen to this ill-mannered album, I get a different reaction. One day it sounds too mechanical to me, another day I feel great about its industrial, and even dark techno gimmicks. Then again, I find the album 'too Swedish' to say that this would blow up some speakers worldwide, but few other releases that bumped into my box this week, being total crap, still prove that **Diabolical** is a force to be reckoned with, in spite of their characteristically modern approach to Black Metal - or maybe Black Death, as a matter of fact.

To out it roughly, this is **Limbonic Art** minus the symphonic surroundings. Yeah, then it's risky to compare these bands, but I mean the dark sound that is similar. I do not enjoy programmed drums in here anyway, except that brutal techno beat on *The War Tide*. If the entire effort was so straightforwardly modern, and would incorporate more of dark industrial, then I guess computer would be the smartest decision. But quite a few songs on *The Dark Blood Rising* - those that most evidently prove them to be Swedish, passing through the 90's Black Death era - demand a live drummer!

I can explain for those with slow brains that **Diabolical** write diverse enough music, so even the power electronics induced *Sound the Horns of Reprisal* is no wonder. I am just surprised that their lyrical - or should I utter ideological - background is heavily inspired by **Puissance's** visions of planet Earth's doom. Not that it is boring or superficial, but certainly familiar already. Plagiarised? Or simply shared thinking?

Stunningly designed digipak and layout realisation by *Canaan's Mauro* is blowing this drawback away, though. I tell you, this is a very important selling point - it should draw people's attention! I cannot say the same about their name - how many 'diabolic' bands do you know? I know tons of them, and always lose my mind who is who: **Diabolic, Diabolique, Diabolical, Masquerade, Diabolium**... So stick it to your nose: this project is from Sweden, it has few ex-Setherial members, and features a guest performance by *Martin Sibirne (Pungent Stench)*, and lyrical contribution by *Jon Nordvick*. Not bad, after all. A pity that the supposed video track is missing, due to it being banned by their 'big brother' distributor.

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Tadas

DOMINE 9 *Stormbringer Ruler - The Legend of The Power Supreme Dragonheart*

Hmm, they are playing with fire, uttering the word *Jihad* in the introductory narration of this album. However, the following set of epic Power Metal wipes out any negative feelings. Much like their two previous efforts, this one tells you an optimistic story expressed through heavy energetic music, known as epic Power Heavy Metal.

Well, either **Domine's** promo has jumped on my stereo at wrong time, or they truly sound as just another one of those numerous Italian Power Metal bands. Just think about the amount of such bands that have emerged in the last six years or so, after the notable success of **Labyrinth** and especially **Rhapsody**. Unfortunately, most of them sound identical, and even their concepts are usually heard a thousand times... **Domine** continue introducing the world their fiction about the *Eternal Champion* 'who is doomed to reincarnate in many heroes and fight forever'. How romantic. Well, I would leave this for the admirers of heroic tales, and would better focus on music.

It is alright for those who like speed and majesty united in one album - here you get it in full range, a few songs being pure manifestations of aggression, others simply tearing your heart, yet I have really heard all of that before. **Domine** reminds me of

Drakkar, another Italian band, and mostly it has to do with the similar vocalstyles and melodies. The biography describes these guys as one of the most talented players, and one of the longest running bands in Italian Metal history, yet this hardly changes anything.

Well, maybe I'm just getting fed up a bit by Power Metal, so feel free to enjoy this more than me. I wouldn't mind a more personal approach to this type of Metal.

Tadas

THE DREAMSIDE 9 *Mirror Moon Serenades*

My first serious acquaintance with a Dutch singer *Kemi Vita* and her touchy vocal delivery. But I think it's no necessity to present it to poppy gothic music fans, anyway. This album clearly shows that they are no newcomers in here and appear in a somewhat balanced handling of things: if one chapter of their music smells of light-heartedness, free creative mind, then there will always be a proper answer to that, mostly in Metallic guitar contribution (remember *Dan Svarano's Nightingale*). Surely, this kind of 'gothic Metal rock' is on the wave right now, especially in Germany. I think what remains as the best criteria to judge upon the new albums of the style that is 'in', is the album-context and the music's presentation through charismatic leaders, or front-(wo)man in this very case.

I think it was kind of risky to present those modern voice distortions (I am not sure how to describe them... mildly robotic? You know, a kind of effect presented in pop culture few years back by *Ober*, I think) as I am not sure that's the most brilliant thing you can find in modern gothic rock, but, anyway - that remains to be a sort of experiment, which, in my opinion, failed through. Otherwise, it's not about pop as we understand it - just listen and hear all those minor notes that slice through your heart like a knife through room-temperature butter. *Kemi's* voice is not a standard that should apply to anyone who hears her. It is more like a specific way of singing - I am sure some people will enjoy her and some not. At least it's good she is not one-dimensional.

So, concluding - this is not just another gothic Metal experience, but something your skin will recognise as 'new'. Well, it depends then what the reaction is, but if melancholic, sometimes energetic, sometimes very lonesome music touches you, there is no way to miss this outfit.

Tadas

DUNKELGRAFEN 8 *Triumph des Fleisches Last Episode*

Well, reviewing can sometimes be a rigid thing to do. When you evidently hear that something is not appealing to you, or that something is missing in a band's musical delivery, but have no right words to describe it accordingly.

This is the third album of these Deutsch purveyors of raw Black Metal, and yet once again I doubt this album will be in my rotation after the review is finished. Just not the way I imagined it as really powerful, dark or forcing listener to go nuts. It's not necessarily the opposite of all that is good in Black Metal, that's why I scaled it around the middle. But as the third full-length album of the band, I think such a result is disappointing. There's nothing better to expect - it turns into a natural state of mind for them to be just average. Well, I start to repeat myself, as this was stated in the review of the previous **Dunkelgrafen** album.

Maybe it's just their individual way of performance that gives me a bad feeling? The two vocalists are still rough but hardly fit the music, the symphonic keyboard arrangements are as typically predictable as on your average BM recording, and the drummer is either mediocre or his drums are recorded in such a way that all the untidy episodes get on the surface. The guitar-ribs include many Thrash particles, just like earlier, yet they're not a retro band at all. We should rather speak about the German way of incorporating these hints into crude Black Metal stylistics.

It's bad that this kind of albums shape the youth's outlook on what is represented inside the CD case. If the cover artwork is worked out relatively interesting, then the music does not live up the expectations and may cause an overall disappointment to this genre.

To conclude, I still hope that **Dunkelgrafen** do this to fulfill their inner strengths, and not to show that they are part of the music business.

Tadas

THE ELYSIAN FIELDS 8 *12 aBLAZE Black Lotus*

Their previous album for **Wicked World** seemed better structure-wise. Or maybe it's just that this kind of symphonic and melodic Death Black Metal has recently been sounding all alike, and one more album of the same calibre may have affected badly my distorted taste. This Hellenic team has never paved a path close to Black Metal, their focus is clearly on guitar and keyboard harmonies, and it results in very symphonic music. I wonder if they also consider Metal to be the closest musical genre to classical music, but everything on this album sounds as if it was composed for a small compact orchestra. Of course they keep the fast rhythms and the, more or less, Death Metal way of playing the music, so that's why this term (Death/Black) is used.

Great to hear string instruments accompanying the heavy shit again - it was a very important detail on *We...the Enlightened*, but from time to time this element makes the band sound almost too ear-friendly, I think. There is a certain lack of power, especially in the production of *12 aBLAZE*. I believe the previous album was better put together in mixing and mastering. And once again the programmed drums do not add in any heaviness, but at least it still creates rather a live feel as a whole, unlike the plastic productions other artists have got with programmed drums.

In general, The **Elysian Fields** failed to write as good an album as their previous effort was, and that's a shame. Maybe they are too focused on the same stuff. Yet the better parts on this album are quite similar to their old songs. This does not let them create incorporating new ideas, and a real challenge is simply missing.

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Tadas

EM SINFONIA 9 *Intimate Portrait Hammerheart*

Yes, it has a crispy sound that is fuller comparing to the last year's debut mini album, which was too anonymous and focused on quite limited area of Metal diversity: Doom/Death. Nothing extraterrestrial though - it is said it was recorded just for fun, initially as a demo. Four members have departed from **Em Sinfonia** ever since, but if you consider that they were eight-piece crew at that time, then it is nothing sensational. Seems like for *Brian Griffin (Broken Hope)* and the rest it is not fun anymore, in spite of that the music itself has got more colours and appears in an 'easily devouring' context at times. It has turned into a dead serious competitor in the atmospheric Metal field, especially for the American market. To judge whether they are able to act as an equal artist for the enormous plead of European bands, I leave that to every one of you to decide. Indeed, it is not an easy task, but I doubt if **My Dying Bride** admirers would argue that *Intimate Portrait* has some Albion feel in there. As mentioned, the music gets pretty optimistic at times. It is the new female vocalist *Bunny* to blame - she must have learned from *Anneke (The Gathering)* or even more mainstream female singers. If you want my subjectivity to be manifested - I would skip all those 'bright' fragments. This album would work better in a purely gloomy way.

I was not very much excited about the *Rerelations* cover either. It is said it was performed in an **Em Sinfonia** way, and I fully agree with that, but it has not the feeling the original version had. Simply the wrong stylistics to cover it in.

The band is growing, but their time has not come yet. More feeling, more contents are necessary! More passion to the atmosphere you try to create, and more anger you want to balance it with!

Tadas

ENSLAVED 11 *Moments Osmose*

Man, it has been a while since **Enslaved** last were on my player. Must be nearly a decade soon... You know, I still refer to *Fratt* as their new material when someone makes the deadly mistake of asking me about **Enslaved**. Well, okay, I haven't been TOTALLY unaware of the phrases they've gone through on their more recent albums. Actually it says in the bio here that: *This is the continuation of the elder Enslaved as well as the great leap*

... further, 'so I'm afraid I'll have to go along with that.

Musically, this is nowhere near the **Enslaved** I listened to in my youth, and, frankly, I don't think that's negative at all. Had they continued writing albums like *Frost*, I'm quite sure their Viking ship would have run around ages ago. This is far more interesting and demanding material in pretty much every way you can think of.

The first word that comes to my mind while listening to *Monumentum* is 'hybrid'. This is a hybrid, born out of a nice blend of Viking mythology, eerie sounds, atmospheric melodies, powerful vocals and Heavy Metal. Yeah, that's pretty much it. Should I pick another word to describe *Monumentum*'s splendour, that would be 'obscurity', for the material on this record really does have that obscure touch to it - which is kinda weird as I never had this image of **Enslaved** as an 'obscure' act in my head, in any sense of the word.

Monumentum is a huge album. It takes time to listen to, time to get into and time to comprehend. You know, you just can't put this on and start writing letters, as is the sad case with most other 'extreme' Metal albums put out these days. This album will not work without headphones, and that's about the best compliment I can give to a band.

Well, no matter what I say here, trust me that this review is not going to outdo this album in greatness, so why don't you just open yourself up to the Bergen boys one more time and take this to your heart.

Northbound

ENSLAVEMENT OF BEAUTY 5

Megalomania
Head Not Found

Holy fuck! Is this a joke or what?!! Is this REALLY a *Head Not Found* release. I mean? Then how can *Metalion* sign such crap? Can't believe it... Yup, surely it is not that easy to find good, quality performers to sign, but to go as far as signing such a mediocre, melodick (Death?) Metal band is beyond my imagination. Let's lay them bare: **Enslavement Of Beauty**'s music is purely commercial, oriented to the current vogue.

Among journalists there is a certain unwritten rule: to keep the masses interested, you must write articles at the level of an eighth grade schoolboy (imagine that?!). Then everyone will understand the article, and your magazine, newspaper, or whatever, will sell pretty well. So, I would like to compare the music of **Enslavement Of Beauty** to such articles and magazines. Musicians certainly are in a need to reach the masses, and write their tunes as understandable as just possible, but the outcome is that all of them sound exceptionally boring, superfluous and typical - sweet life metal, untouched by extremity and aggression. Fuck that, man...

Morcover - this album, second in **Enslavement Of Beauty**'s history, is simply too long with fourteen tracks that are all too similar each to other. Particularly disgusting is the track *Comme Il Faut* is due to its saccharine-like character. Too bad that the drum-tracks are done by **Borknagar** and **Spiral Architect** fame *Asgeir Mickelson*.

And dare they not misuse the Black Metal term. I am not so radical about its interpretations, and in some cases when they're interpreting it as laughing at bands that are mistakenly the term, I can actually find some Black Metal touches, but in this band's case it is absolutely impossible. Fake attitude, fake approach, fake music and fake feelings, left inside my heart... at least now I can throw this promo out and never return to it again.

Tadas

ENSOPH 9

Bleeding Womb of Ananke
Beyond...

To get rid of that female singer *Patrizia* was a damn right thing to do, but why the hell feature two bonuses from the last year's promo then with her singing? To put it politely, she sounds, well, terrible! Imagine your typical Metal band with a yet more typical singer. Enough is enough, really. What the hell's going with all those Italian bands? Can't this band realise that without these two songs their new album would have sounded so much better??

The material on this brand new release is kept in a hardly definable yet smooth blend of Metal, dark ambient and some bits of industrial. Must admit that the created atmospheres do impress, although not entirely. It is mainly the bass and synth extra-aganza that sticks to mind, even

though neither one of those instruments belong to the tools with which to define a band's worthiness. Let's presume then that **Ensof** is for the open-minded people, exclusively!

Yeah, they are a heavy band, but not necessarily Metal. I cannot totally accept the typical Black Metal shriek - another *Danny Filib* clone here, namely *Nicola*. Luckily he uses also a variety of other voices, so it helps to avoid the complete disaster. This album would have done much better without any Black Metal vocals at all!

In general, this Italian band sounds as if the musicians wanted to put there everything they thought were cool, but the result has got slightly too messy, and all the separate details do not occasionally work at all. Or am I the only one who loses a grip on what's spinning in the stereo every now and then? Yes, the length of a CD is very important at times, so I predict that if this had been a few songs shorter (and the ones to be cut off would have been those two at the end, most naturally!), it might have worked much differently. But the listener has a right to skip them, simply, and it's an advantage of modern technologies.

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Tadas

EN VELOURS NOIR 9

Else
Beyond...

En Velours Noir is a project of an Italian artist *Luigi M. Mennella*, who has been involved in a number of other projects as well, all of which tend to lean towards darkness in one way or another.

Else is but an appetiser conjured up to let the public taste the coming, or so it's said - obviously referring to the *Thanaterosis Symphonis* debut full-length, which has been under construction since the very beginning of the project, and will be released on *Beyond...* later on.

I think *Else* does work as an appetiser rather well. Comprising a nice blend of influences from classical, ambient as well as gothic rock, the music displays the intended images fairly effectively, still leaving plenty of free rein for personal interpretation as well. And I believe that's exactly how art is supposed to work, regardless of form.

So, thumbs up for this project. May *Thanaterosis Symphonis* be a grand monument of grief and depression!

Northbound

EPOCH OF UNLIGHT 8

Caught in the Unlight!
The End

Well, I've got caught in a spider's web once again. It's tough to review music you are personally fed up with and cannot listen to anymore. This is my attitude towards the new, melodic Death Metal wave. Actually it is not so new anymore, but as the Metal of Death has not witnessed anything new since 1994 or so - only a noticeable return back to its roots - it is still considered as a 'new' wave.

Ok, all second-rate babbling aside... I am introduced to the second full-length of an American answer to a number of Swedish bands. They sound as in the middle league, if we talk about the heaviness and the impact that's given on the listener. They perform just like you can expect from a band adopting a once invented Metal sound. They use almost all the clichés you can think of: the screaming voice, the melodious Thrashy riffing, the few heavier - but not heavy enough for Death Metal - parts, and the focus is on as technical performance as possible. Yes, you cannot take the latter thing from them, but if you ask me, I do not see the technical issue in this particular style as the main ingredient. I think the feeling in music (and in the vocals, especially) is much more important - **Epoch Of Unlight** does not have that.

To make them some justice, though, I recollect the initial MCD of **Epoch Of Unlight** that was in my hands some years ago (was it 1995 or 1997?)... that really was much weaker than this new material. But it is no such wonder if you consider that quite a few years have passed since then. Yeah, they have not moved to new trends either, still doing the same thing they have started with.

If they only would use more hooky refrain melodies, as in *Hounds of Tindalos*, then this might work... but not on *Caught in the Unlight!* yet.

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Tadas

ERBEN DER SCHÖPFUNG 10

Twilight
M.O.S.



A winning team gathered under a new name, yet unfamiliar for the darkwave/industrial/Metal scene. They come from Liechtenstein, and this can mean only one thing - that there is a connection with the only crew of creative people working in that small country - *M.O.S. Records*. Yep, indeed, the line-up of **Erben der Schöpfung** features the mastermind of **Welterbrand**, *Oliver Falk*, together with a classy, good-looking *Sabine Dienser*, and you bet - she sings none worse than she looks like! I sort of had to get used to her voice during the couple first listens, but then everything fell into places, and now I have started to enjoy this poppy blend of electronic and heavy music. It is, indeed, a popular crossover these days, which at one hand might seem pretty trendy and disappointing, but try to look at it from another angle: just as a piece of music meant for entertainment.

As a mass-product, it is rather spiritual and tasteful. I can mention the design and the lyrics as very successful elements involved in the arty picture. Yep, the booklet images look typical (nature & trees), but it's done with taste, nevertheless. It is said to be released as a digipak - sadly I just have a promo copy with the booklet thus far.

This project was initially thought-out to be entirely electronic, so those distorted guitars and heavy rhythms should be considered as surprising elements. *Alexander Krull of Atrocity* has done all the recording and production, as well as some drum programming on this release. Good job in the modern tradition, even if the high tone female singing in general is not the motto of modernism in music.

It is always questionable if side-projects are worth promoting that much, but in the case of this trio my thumbs are up. Highlights: *Sleep and Death*, *Niemand kennt den Tod* and *Ade*.

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Tadas

EVEN VAST 10

Dawning Gloom
Painkiller

If I recollect it right, this band has some connections to *Lacuna Coil*, probably the most successful Italian import of melodic, atmospheric Metal. Well, even if I am wrong here (as the bio supplied by *Painkiller* says no word about this liaison), the music is certainly of that same special nature. The promo-sheet talks much more about the hard road they've been through thus far, with a lot of the recorded music being unreleased or released with a big delay. Whatever their history is - this is my first meeting with **Even Vast**, who re-start it all with this two-song single.

After a few spins it gets clear where the hell their inspiration comes from. Think of *Mandylion* and *Nighttime Birds*, and you are safe about making the decision whether to buy this record or not. Of course it is good that music is created and put together in a very professional way, but they certainly can't escape this huge inclination - **The Gathering**, which is naturally hard to avoid when you play Metal that is atmospheric and bombastic. Fans of the band will either appreciate this a lot, or will remain tricked by the close similarity. **The Gathering** have moved away from what they were doing in 1995-1997, so this might be a good discovery for those supporters who were disappointed by the more recent albums of the Dutch team. Everything here (like production) is done in a pretty impressive way, so this package is more than professionally prepared, be sure of that.

Anyway, the smartest idea would be to wait for the full-length album that is coming very soon, and then check out if it creates purely the same emotions as this single. The mark I give them is a bit in advance, anyway, but let's see & hear what's next. By the way, *Dawning Gloom* is also released

on a limited edition vinyl.

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evenvast@libero.it, www.even-vast.com

Tadas

EVEREVE 11

E-Mania
Massacre



To beat such a milestone as *Regret* is darn difficult, actually close to impossible. Even for **EverEve**. Even for any other gothic metal band that you can think of. Not 'gothic metal', but Gothic Metal.

The brand new opus is not like their previous album was. Well, saying this can mean that it is not as impressive, or that it is not the same music anymore. There is truth in both the ways of thinking, yet I'm sure that not everyone would necessarily agree. Well, I think I enjoyed *Regret*'s hard-hitting beats more than the *E-Mania*'s electronically richer approach. That's it. But these are minor details, because **EverEve** still bang hard, it's just that there was more Heavy Metal power earlier, and not so much effects. Hah, I catch myself hesitating once again because my favourite track *Someday* starts with a pure techno dance rhythm that later evolves into a fucking catchy chorus - something you can expect from masters like **EverEve**.

They claim to develop and reach a cyber gothic Metal level with *E-Mania*, yet this 'cyber' aspect does not dominate their music, or at least I don't think it does. Basically they still do Metal, maybe including more of **Rammstein** influences, minus the vocals.

Yep, time to mention that the keyboard player *MZ Fire 51* took over the microphone - not forgetting his synth, though - and he does the job well enough. He has something of his own, together with certain influences from *Benjamin Richter*, the session singer in *Regret*. Why-to-fit-it-when-it's-not-broken formula has worked out fine once again. It is for the better, no doubt about that.

Altogether this new album is again close to a masterpiece, and **EverEve** must receive the recognition they deserve. A certain must for all true Gothic Metal fans.

www.evereve.net

Tadas

EVIL BARDS 7

Prelude to Sadness

Nein, das ist not Black Metal, the only thing that reminds of Black Metal a bit is that screamy voice of *Bolbörn* - actually I would go without it, to avoid the trend. Look, almost everyone from Black Metal to Heavy Metal screams these days. People, leave it for the trends.

Yep, this Italian band seem to search for their own direction in music - and they mention it themselves quite massively in that solid press kit that arrived together with the album. Oh yeah, when it comes to promotion, **Evil Bards** have professionally pressed this album, all on their own. A good way to push your music these days. But if the music happens to be breathless, even CDs do not help.

The material on this album suggests some more rehearsals for the band, no doubt about it, but as the first real statement of the band, it is fairly ok. They try to be diverse, to alter the songs, yet this does not work every time they make a new turn. One general description would be 'melodic Metal with acoustic and atmospheric passages'. From time to time the guys suddenly stop acting violent and heavy, and show their dreamy side, incorporating violin, keyboards, clean and female voices. Yeah, that sounds cliché, but what doesn't these days? Ok, my mind suggests that they could be more focused with those ideas and could push the heaviness button up, because their presentation on this material is simply too weak. Or, an another option could be a total refusal of all things Metal, paving some kind

of an atmospheric way. The biography mentions that their start was in the Thrash/Death realms... yeah, then they have to do something to avoid repeating the old composing mistakes.

I wouldn't actually be in the first row to buy this album, but if anyone out there seeks for more melodic/atmospheric Metal bands, then your choice can fall unto this album, that is on sale for the cheap fee of

8\$.

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Tadas

EVOL 10

Dies Irae
Beyond...

A nice present for all the **Evolution** fans who, in this modern age, want to have everything released by this band on laser disc. Yet I bet many of the admirers of this Italian occult formation have got their copies of both the demos at time when they were circling in the underground on full scale. It was 1993 and 1994, marking their start of possessing perverse souls... would be curious to know how many of those people would buy this re-release now? Well, listening to these tunes once again, I keep wandering about the esoteric thought involved in quite a few Italian bands' music of those times. There was (is?) something special dwelling in the catacombs, that's for sure.

Evolution were one of the pioneers to relate occult and mysterious matters, primarily materialised through Satanic images, with heavy music. Neither back then or nowadays, these particular recordings shouldn't be tagged as mere Metal, or Black Metal for that matter, even if the ideas behind it might be close to what everybody imagined belonging to the genre. Anyway, **Evolution** is appreciated and even worshipped because of the melodic atmospheres created with synthetic means, first and foremost.

A serious drawback is that most, if not all, of these songs have been already featured on the first two albums, so it's nothing new under the moonlight. Yes, indeed, these are the initial recordings of those songs, and there are live versions of the two debut demo tracks, as well, if it saves the whole. I personally cannot complain, even if **Evolution** were not my favourite band back in the last decade.

A great execution of all things visual - the booklet features many rare pictures from those times, and is well put together. You can get this release from the **Black Tears Of Death** label.

Evolution, *Cdo Giordano B. Folin*, c.p. 456, 35100 Padova, Italy, giordano.bruno@inwind.it

Tadas

EXMORTEM 9

Berzerker Legions
Hammerheart

I know, I know... their 1998's album was better than the 1995's debut, and this brand new baby is obviously better than the previous release. I still would not obtain this tight-as-a-Swiss-clock release, though, but rather save the money for the some more imposing Death Metal records - basically because of the saturated market that just gets bigger and bigger for Death Metal again. Well, if Death Metal is the ultimate must for you and all more or less good records must end up in your collection, then this is certainly recommended.

Berzerker Legions does create a feeling similar to some early **Malevolent Creation** and **Atar** records - where everything runs very cool, and seemingly nothing is missing to make all the Death Metal freaks go nuts, but then the listener realises that the other bands succeeded to make it better because they have fedling in-between the brutal slamming rhythms and pounding rhythms. **Exmortem** are more Death Metal than both the aforementioned

bands, even grinding at times. There is no hesitation about their very precise studio-work: the rhythm section leads the whole crew (the drummer was changed after this session, by the way), and then the double guitar forces complete the sound. The vocalist falls out of the picture a bit as his deadened growls have a smack of something forced, and when it repeatedly continues through all the eleven songs, the listener automatically gets a bit 'limited' to the whole effort.

The bio states: *without any doubt, this is definitely the fastest Death Metal band on this planet!* Sorry, it's way too bold a statement. First of all, I am almost sure these Danish fellas do not feel like competing with other bands in who's the fastest. Secondly, think a decade back, please – **Terrorizer**, **Brutal Truth**, **Morbid Angel** etc. – all of them were almost fast enough. Can you still believe **Exmortem** can outrun them all? They most certainly can't. They do fast Death Metal, and that must be considered instead of the best, the most, the very thing.

Exmortem, Martin 'Sigtur' Thim, Sønderingegade 10 2.tv, 8000 Århus C., Denmark, tel. (+45) 86134124, martin.thim@xmsyndrome.dk, www.exmortem.com

Tadas

FALCONER 8 Chapters from a Vale Forlorn Metal Blade



So melodious and ear-friendly... it could easily be played on radio, if the right people worked on those cheap, crappy, commercial stations. It is almost like rock music, with a few double bass drum parts and a Heavy Metal guitar sound. Sort of modern hard 'n' heavy? But for a die-hard Metal freak this effort sounds way too weak. Mostly I'm disappointed by their vocalist who sounds to me too... eh, what's the word... gay? No, I wouldn't use this boring cliché terminology, that's too cheap a comparison. But his voice is too sweet for the music, let alone Heavy Metal. He reminds me in a way of some 70's progressive rock music. It surely sounds original in combination with the harder riffs and the heavy pounding rhythmic, but I have just one problem. I can't enjoy the final result. Even when trying to get into this, the music sounds like background music to other things. Where's the spark, the thirst, the burning? Sounds as if they do not live this music. Only a couple of songs (at the end of this album, like **The Clarion Call**, **Stand in Veneration**, and the Hammond organ enriched **Busted to the Floor**) show them pushing the 'on' button with full force.

Falconer incorporate a certain traditional element into their Heavy Metal sound. They do not use ethnic instruments to emphasise it, but manage to have that feel in the guitar riffs and the hymn-like vocals. So maybe an appropriate tag for this band would be 'traditional, melodic Heavy Metal'? Whatever... a few of the guys were running **Mithotyn** in the past, so that should explain why they enjoy historical references. Yet neither of the bands are anything I would go berserk about. Any idea why? Maybe because it really lacks the Heaviness of Metal!

Tadas

FIRST HUMAN FERRO 10 The Halo Over Pontiff's Hearse Eldritch

This one is a new experience for the **Eldritch** label - no Metal inside, but dark droning ambient of rather a dark ominous nature that acts very mind-numbingly and actually drags the listener to unpredictable thought-provoking excursions or even actions, to some extent. Yes, this might be said about many dark industrial projects as well as that it is a trippy experience, a kind of running down the vast corridors where walls are vaguely seen, and behind, at the end of a tunnel is not light but darkness... Ok, so what I want to write down is that basically these hallucinogenic expeditions

are provided by well thought-out projects that have name in this specific scene. So it is twice as pleasant to notify that an Ukrainian guru, namely **Kostolomo**, stands out the test of quality and has that specific indicator that allows me to value his debut album high. In this age of techniques it's not so difficult to reach a certain level of industrial in these countries that earlier were normally considered as dead for such kind of sonic drugs, though. As special features I can mention the sampled church-bells that sound impressively somber, in this case, as well as the requiem kind of human choirs appearing here and there.

A small drawback might be that this one is just a CD-r edition, but it has an original cardboard case, and this creativity proves it to be not your next demo-level CD-r release. Moreover, it has two bonus tracks (that are missing on the tape version of *The Halo...* if I'm right) and is limited to 200 copies only, and I think the price should be quite reasonable (you must ask for details and availability from the label). So, after all, it must be an item not to be missed by the dark ambient freaks, I believe.

Ukrainian Dark Syndicate, c/o Sergey Stetschnik, Tolstoy str. 14-144, 10002 Zhitomir, Ukraine, sss@zhitomir.ua, http://clicktooms

Tadas

FLESHCRAWL 11 Soulscinner Metal Blade



They have become real death-machines these days! Look: the band has released a previous album last year, and then they have been touring quite a bit throughout 2000 and 2001, up until August. Then a new recording session started in September (of course in Sweden again, this time in *Underground Studio*), early October the record got mastered, and early November I hold the promo copy of it in my hands! Quite dynamic their actions are!

And the music requires such vibrations, indeed. Well, to tell you the truth, there is not much news to utter about **Fleshcrawl**, it is a 'love it or hate it' thing. I doubt there is anyone not familiar yet with their brand of Swedish Death Metal the 90's way... erm, if you have no clue what the fuck **Fleshcrawl's** about, ask your older brother or cousin who has been into the Metal of Death for a while. The numerous albums and the massive live shows that the guys have been participating in (especially in last 4-5 years) yet deepened their faith in the Swedish school, and with every album they seem to confirm that devotion. Who could think now that originally **Fleshcrawl** were inspired by **Autopsy**, as far as my memory and their name recalls...

These ten new tracks just reek of the **Dismember** sound, with the typical **Fleshcrawl** growling that could be comparable with Swedish **Crematory**, **God Macabre** or early **Grave**, if it were calmer in the mix. Anyway, I have no complaints about the production - this is the definition of furious European Death Metal, the way it was meant to be played. It is possible to compare this band with another Death Metal icon that has released numerous CDs, still maintaining the same qualities; that's **Cannibal Corpse**. Maybe they convince the listeners better, but the German crew is close to reaching their rhythm to attract the sick addressesses of music.

Check out the brutalised version of *Metal Gods* - it needs no any reminder! **Fleshcrawl**, Stefan Ilamus, Finkenweg 17, D-89257 Illertissen, Germany, fax (+49) 73037359, kill@fleshcrawl.de, www.fleshcrawl.de

Tadas

FOG 10
Through the Eyes of Night... Winged They Come
World War III
Quality Hate Metal from the United States. That's a positive development lately, not just with the **Fog** here. Let me propose a thesis

that the right generation has grown down there, or rather mutated, for brutal **Black/Death** that smells of blood and burning meat. Because that's what these songs associate with, if you ask me.

Basically this is Swedish **Black Metal**, yet with a minimal amount of not predictable melodies, and much more impact done on the rough **Death Metal** edge in both riffing and structuring of the songs. More straightforward composing, in the vein of **Dawn I** think, although **Fog** do not make another mistake (unlike many Swedish bands) and keep a solid distance away from being too similar to the music already created. Mind you, their **Death Metal** influences should come from the previous band of some of the members, namely **Morpheus Descends**. Another factor for those who seek sensations or stuff like that - a few guys in this band are related to the American cult label **Dark Horizon Records**.

But back to music. **Fog**, **Fog**? Hmm, let's think if the name truly corresponds with what they play in this debut album. Not much of mysticism is reserved in this straightforward bombardment, stormy intense performance, or maybe I understand the foggy picture in a wrong way? Nope, at least it makes me think about much calmer and ethereal moments of life... But there is another - figurative meaning, and by the fiery thunders kicking in speakers I think I know what they mean both with **Fog** and with the album-title. I just cannot figure out what those two additional songs mean, as the press release says this album only has seven tracks. They are just like the rest, anyway, except for the final mysterious nine-minute ambient outro.

To conclude, this is not overall an exceptional sensation, but a strong and hateful hour of the darkest Metal madness. Hands up!

Tadas

FORGIVE-ME-NOT 9 Spaceapple Metal Agen

Not a new album by the next harmonious Russian Heavy/dance Metal sensation, but a CD re-release of their 1998's album that was already reviewed in the last **Ledo Takas** issue back in 2000. Indeed, it was weeks of the laser disc format, especially if you consider the worldwide success of another Russian team with similar music, **Mental Home**. **Forgive-Me-Not** is hardly any worse. I was only slightly disappointed that they have not progressed as much as the debut album promised. Like if there has not been any real move forward, but repetition of what was already done.

It comes delivered on a plate - simple as that. A bit too boring as it needs no chewing, no sauce, no peppers, no cream, nothing. Depends whether you like it or not - sweet pudding with cherries on the top, err... melodic heavy rock, or should I call it Metal for the Devil's sake? I doubt it. If their music is tuned commercial on purpose, then it is done with patience and care. The sing-along choruses sound especially tight. Though that ballad-type *Then Comes the Light* is pretty waffled. Well, if you are sick of **Lake of Tears** or other crappy **Paradise Lost** wannabes, check out **Forgive-Me-Not** once again. You can easily play this for your mainstream girl (boy?) friend, and if you turn the stereo really loud, you might even scare nearly a dozen deaf neighbors.

Just imagine if our heroes here had a hell of a more aggressive and - in general - better vocalist. I am not talking of *Irina*, who has sung some lines again (could be more of her, actually). I just feel a bit uncomfortable with the male voice, that is - Vic's dry yelling. *Udo!* Yes, *Udo Dirkschneider* should fit here quite well, at least kicking some ass of **Spaceapple** Metal heritage.

Forgive-Me-Not, c/o Andrey Subhanov, P.O. Box 2507, 300000 Tula, Russia, forgive-me-not@yandex.ru, www.forgivemenot.nesmail.ru

Tadas

THE FORGOTTEN 6 Laldila Paragon

A great CD for those who like to slug American **Black Metal** down. This is what you can have as an example to show for everyone how this musical form should NOT be played. Unfortunately, **The Forgotten** is not the first band that has troubles with creativity. I actually think it is not a kind of American **Black Metal**, it is a kind of musical poverty and lack of good composing skills. They kind of try to get through it as 'the most chaotic band to

come from New York since **Profanatica**, yet it goes without saying that this chaos is messy, lazy and badly structured. These bands just cannot be compared. It would be the same thing trying to claim that early **Beherit** chaos was harmonious music for the dance floors. **The Forgotten** have obviously forgotten that it is not just about the underground recording and average performance of songs, but also about the composition of them. Yeah, there is nothing fancy in their style of playing - darkness rules supreme, even if the synth is audible somewhere far in background, and at this point they do belong to the violent Metal category. Yet there is more riffs of slow **Death Metal** (nothing to do with **Doom Metal**, though!) or underground Thrash here than truly **Black arrangements**. Only the vocalist *M* is always in command with that shriek, desperate voice.

Yes, I know that to feel uncomfortable with this kind of a record is normal, but there is yet much to be explored for them, to become an impact on the **Black Metal** milieu as those legendary bands once were. The price is truly ridiculous (\$8 for a CD), yet this is not an album I would recommend.

The Forgotten, Mike Z., 1337 Saxon Ave., Bayshore, NY 11706, USA, theforgotten666@aol.com, www.angelfire.com/nf/theforgotten

Tadas

FORGOTTEN SILENCE 10 KaBaAcb Redblack

One more absolutely unpredictable album by one of the weirdest Metal hands in the world that keeps on presenting more and more unusual ideas whilst others make just one or two albums before calling it quits or switching onto something else. You may say that **Forgotten Silence** have moved from what they have been doing in the past, but no question about their specific spirit that continues to go hand in hand with their records from the very start in 1994.

This brand new release is the shortest one they have ever released I think ('only' 57 minutes), but that does not mean that their ideas have got more generic, usual. It is thicker - and it's the **Death Metal** influences to blame. Thanks to that, the music has turned faster, more to the Metal point. Less atmospheric, maybe. But it would be stupid to stick any label for this Czech formation - I think they will never limit themselves to something in particular! On the other hand, I hear more exact stuff which is usually called as progressive, jazz-influenced-Metal (think of **Cynic**, **Atheist**, **Aghora**). It's simply better revealed element of that complex sound.

Although this material does not prove my expectations that were very high after the split 7"EP with **Notre Dame**. I think **KaBaAcb** is not as striking as **Halho's Place** was. Well, it was one single track, and we all know that to write the whole album is much harder than just one single tune, but I write down what I hear. Don't get me wrong, though - the music on this new album, as well as the another extraordinary story they have invented (this time **NOT** winter-based; now Egypt is involved, as a matter of fact!) are worth checking, especially for their old fans that always wanted to hear a heavier and rougher edge of the band. Check out this CD.

Forgotten Silence, Machova 487, 665 01 Rosice u Brna, Czech Republic

Tadas

FUNEBRIS 7 Triumph of the Everlasting Fire Last Episode

Well, at first sight this release seems to be another sequence of the German label's improving assortment since it features one more uncompromising band tossing around with merciless **Black/Death** and avoiding any flirtation with sweet melodies or pseudo orchestral arrangements. Just a bunch of raw, traditional, old-school rippers with a spirit of **Order From Chaos** diffused with the Nordic tradition.

But the execution of them is far from enjoyable. I'm sure that this was supposed to be a raw recording with neither enough care for the production or the performing techniques. Yet you cannot hide the average capacity of these players, and it clearly hits the ear. Moreover, the drummer's imagination ought to be developed. He cannot keep an even pace even in the most primitive episodes. And it does not convince - simply badly organised work during rehearsals, I believe. Just think for a minute whether you ever hesitated about the abilities of the **OFC** guys? No, you

didn't! They had recordings produced in a purely underground way, but the execution was always ok. That is not the case with this German band, which has been in the scene with a few demo CDs already. Oh yeah, one more comparison just came to me - **Martyrium**. Never heard of them? Well, this German band had an album out on **Merciless** in 1995 or so, but it was so chaotic you couldn't believe it was composed to be listened to. So, there is a kind of similitude, though **Funebris** are easier to get into, by all means.

One thing I cannot get a clue about are the **Michael's Lyrics**. The guy supposedly writes about familiar dark, Anti-Christian topics, but here and there he uses a term 'christastanic', seemingly mocking both two symbols. Some other lyrics then contradict this questionable attitude, and inverted crosses on their necks speak for itself. **Mish-mash?** Hell yeah, youthful mistakes.

www.funebris.de

Tadas

GIRNU GIESMÉS 9 S:S:S's Dangus

The unrecognized forefather of Lithuanian dark industrial strikes back with his new album, for the first time released on CD. Well, on CD-r, as a matter of fact, but it must not stop anyone interested in harsh electronic music from obtaining a copy, as this CD-r has professionally manufactured CD-print and pro-printed covers - I must admit the latter looks really good in relation to the music; always mysterious and ominous, but on the other hand so artistic and still unpredictable. Let's give credits for creativity to the **Dangus** crew.

This eight-part concept starts in a strictly relentless way - short introductory attack named **Regiu Menulio Pjautura** (**Sickle Moon I See**) deals with the Armageddon theme. I fuckin' enjoy the annihilating shouting and the overall extremity in there, not portrayed by **GG** on earlier releases. Yet the following instrumental transition into electronic underwater is much different as it brings music entirely to an experimental field. In the course of every listen I feel the ambience constantly changing, and even characteristically so in certain episodes. I mean, the album is well enough structured to maintain the musical codes that must represent the thoughts of the composer. Yes, already a trademark of **GG** - samples of poets reading their poems from radio broadcasts - is present once again, sickly working in this album stronger than ever. Otherwise I think those synthetic oppositions wouldn't act as effective on the listener as they work now. **Litaukas** (or **La Girna**, as he is calling himself on this album) has incorporated folk singers in the action as well, creating one more opposition between the traditional charismatic and the new.

This is certainly provocative and mind-fluttering, and as such a worthy addition to your dark industrial collection. We would be yet more pleased with some more of that ultimate terrorism that the opener of this release has.

girmu@takas.lt

Tadas

GODLESS NORTH 10 Summon the Age of Supremacy Breath Of Night / Merciless

A quotation from *Ad Armat* #1: *If this was released on CD, I would give it a decent mark, because tape dubbing slightly lessens the listening pleasure, whilst pro-printed black/white cover could be better looking too.* Yes, it concerns exactly the same recording I'm now spinning in my set once again. The only correction is that **Ancestral Research Records** does not stand behind this CD release, giving all rights to the reborn cult of **Breath Of Night!** Anyway, the most important thing is that it can now be obtained, and a worthy item this is, indeed! Let alone the better sound and inlay layout quality that features different cover art and the band members' pictures.

At first I had to re-discover what this sort of eliminating **Black Metal** was all about, as the sound is much different from the tape: cleaner, much more freezing and getting deeper into the bones. So deep actually that the listener can't recover in a long while. It's that guitar-sound and of course the intense primordial riffs walking on the edge of melody and aural devastation. Hellish, berserk, dirty, almost necro **Black Metal** is the name of the game, once again! **Godless North** have managed to capture

the blasting essence of sick and raw performance. And I hail them for that! Think of **Darkthrone** or **Gorgoroth** in their fastest and most nihilistic moments! But someone who misses the good old perversity in music ought to get it, too. This feeling is incorporated in the melodies – and at this point I find similarities to **Otinomos**, at least to some extent. The drummer has no time to rest as the entire album keeps the fastest paces with the accentuated blast-beat, slowing down just twice or three throughout the entire set. But it's the guitar-rits that rule as the most supreme element – it is a nice end of life for hilocious people; torturing, asphyxiating, hataust.

A pity it is a 'CD only' release, as a LP version would have been great. . . .

Tadas

GODLESS TRUTH 9 **SelfRealization** **Shindy**

A four-piece crew from Czech have built a name and strong following for themselves. If we talk about the new rise of brutal Death Metal in Central Europe, then it is obligatory to mention their name as well. They are at such a pleasant stage right now as a band, when a lot of people are anxiously expecting their new stuff. Well, even if I'm not impressed by their haircuts or the overall outlook (modern kids, can they understand anything about leather and spikes?), this brand of angry, torturous variation on pleasures of death is worth checking, at least for those into modern Death Metal. This Yankee-style uniform they promote (baseball caps, trousers and shirts of any colour imaginable, and some band shirts here and there) perfectly fits the music itself: American Death Metal to the core! No wonder that **Godless Truth** has got fairly much attention from the States then. Yet it is certainly too dry music for my taste, and those slumming rhythmic are too pretentious at times. Well, they do not mix rap with Metal, but I wouldn't mind hearing more aggression, intensity and straightforward Death Metal instead of tons of rhythmic changes and 'stop & go' riffs. The snare-drum sounds like an average hardcore band – loud and out of place. I would never say it fits real Death Metal. But I do not divide music to true and false either; if somebody wants to see it that way.

So, as you might see, I have tried to emphasise the modern touch of this album – it is very important element here, indeed. So the final result might be enjoyed or not. But once again, they have nothing to prove – this is their third album, so those who like them know what to do. And those who've never got close to the modern milieu of guttural death will seek for some stuff smelling of raw power. . . .

Godless Truth, *Zdenek Simacek*, PO. Box 53, 771 11 Olomouc 1, Czech Republic. katopetia@volny.cz, www.go.to/godlesstruth

Tadas

GOREROTTED 10 **Mutilated in Minutes...** **Dead Again**

The new, purely underground label from UK continues where some other Death Metal enthusiasts have left off, with very sick and twisted music, which actually has less gore than all their titles might imply. A cute surprise this disc was, in other words! Imagine something in between **Cannibal Corpse** and **Deranged**, with an American flavor. As for my taste, well, I am glad this album has just a minimal amount of gore or grind (**Meatshits**, anyone?) elements, as usually this latter Metal sub-genre only means weak sounding noise.

Gorerotted appeared from nowhere, and start their march pretty firmly! I mean, the underground witnessed a demo of theirs three years ago – and it is claimed to have sold over 1500 times, but, anyway – it is this debut album that must finally establish their name in the scene. What makes them so attractive and mean, then? A smart production, that stands up to the requirements of insulting but technically ok Death Metal slab. The thick guitar sound is at the bottom, and the rhythm section supports it with a clockwork quality engine-like work. The vocal duties are shared between two guys, one of which screams in a desperately insane way, whilst another lad grows from the depths of his lungs. Cannot say that I have ever heard such a combination before, but it is bringing supposed variation that a one single (brutal) voice would ever achieve. You are literally mutilated in 26 minutes – probably the optimal length for intense cudgeling albums like this one is.

The cover art by a comic book artist looks cheap, but according to the track titles (*Serene, Saun and Sold as Porn*), their lyrics must be something funny to read – rhythmic poems of gore! Sickos – don't forget to get this CD from their label for 15\$.

Tadas

GOTMOOR 8 **Vlaemsche Premitiesen** **ISO666**

Primitive, that's right. . . It goes more for the recording, as the music itself is not so austere or rude. And it is not as charismatic as **Ildjarn**, let's just say that. And not as irritating, as a matter of fact. **Gotmoor** do it with more variety, they deliver their Black Metal in a straightforward way, but yet manage to maintain some variable ideas. There could be more emphasis on the heaviness in there, though. Otherwise records like this end up having too thin effect on ears.

By the way, these are the two demo tapes of the band, mastered onto one album. Mind you – their data is different. I mean, a fresher recording (though both the tapes are quite old now – from 1997 and 1998) sounds better. The new vocalist, *Clauwaert*, is much more convincing than his predecessor, and the overall impact of the music is stronger. Their first demo is too much worth talking about, but the second demo is their proud presentation for the freaks. These tracks are no shame to play for the sickos, moreover that the sound is thicker, not so dry. This material is rougher as well, forcing me to say they have got an exterminating Black Metal sound. Only the keyboard and a few harmonious guitar riffs still prevent them from going purely necro. I wonder if their future recordings will be even more extreme and raping? At least they must push the heaviness button on, in that case! Then it might really work.

Flemish? Hell yeah, if they come from Belgium. I think the scene is waking up down there, I mean the hellish Metal scene. It was too silent for a long time, with **Enthroned** only bombarding the international market and stages. But to fully accept **Gotmoor** they need to prepare and release a full-length with all new and improved stuff.

Gotmoor, Pelkemstraat 86, 9250 Waasmunster, Belgium, tel. (+32) 052460504, gotmoor@dma.be, http://bewoner.dma.be/gotmoor

Tadas

GRABNEBELFÜRSTEN 9 **Von Schermen und Trugbildern** **Ketzer / Beverina**

I am seriously irritated by the 'hyper-germanism' of this release. The entire booklet is written in their native language without a single English word, let alone translation of the lyrics or at least anything understandable for a non-German speaker! To conclude that the music and the production is then typically German should go without saying. Yes, the whole thing is quite monotonous with a twin-guitar buzz and an insane vocalist who's voice is ranging through growling, shouting, yelling and singing. I guess he was the person to force their producers to stick the 'chaotic avantgarde' label on this release, which is the debut album of the band, by the way. Think about **Die Apokalyptischen Reiter**, **Bethlehem** in their violent moments of the past, as well as **Dornenreich**, if you want to get a clue of what can happen when **Grabnebelfürsten** reaches your stereo.

Ok, let's cut off with the Teutonic domination of these nine compositions, and see what happens in addition. Basically, this album is too long for my pleasure. I mean, some things certainly happen during the first three or four songs – the guys do show what they are capable of, but later on everything starts to repeat itself all over again, the same riffs and the same rhythmic patterns. I miss some more individualistic songs that would stand on their own. The musicians are ok, they are strong as individual players, but their joint effort is quite one-sided. I'd say. It is a trouble for quite a few other German bands, too. What they try to create are various emotions in each song. That's also why these tracks are not the shortest in the world, and their character can be very adventurous: from a purely energetic, Blackish wall of sound to melancholic and weird (yep?) breaks, still remaining orthodox to Metal.

I think there is a handful of those into German Metal – this is for them.

www.grabebelfuersten.de

Tadas

THE GREENHORNES 8

Y600

Yelstar

It's crazy how modern technologies can mislead. Imagine this: some guys from an American label have suddenly found my address, and decided to drop a few promos. They thought: 'what the hell, if this guy runs some kind of a music journal, it might fit us'. Huh, the trouble is that I know what rock 'n roll is, yet it was lots of fun to put music like this in (mind you – what kind of an experience is to review it?). My stereo has miraculously swallowed the thing, yet what prompted from my speakers was a good surprise. I am not talking about **Entombed**, or **Hellacopters**, or even about **Motörhead**. This is pure splendid rock 'n roll from the 70's, got it? **The Beatles**, **The Rolling Stones**, **The Doors** in a way – my knowledge ends up there. But ain't it enough? I hope so. This music does not pretend to be something that nobody has heard before, which is after all quite understandable, bearing in mind that after more than 30 years since its establishment you cannot be just a pretender, but a pure fan. I believe these young guys are, indeed, fans. Yet again it is slightly strange for me that they care less about more modern things in music, much like hard core **Black Metal**, hah.

I am not familiar if this is an attitude or not, but this twelve-tracker features five cover songs that sound really traditional and so charismatic. Feels like you are gliding back in time, experiencing what your ancestors have been going nuts about. Especially that Hammond organ grabs the ear. Aye, I find here one more familiar name: **The Animals**. These guys have interpreted a song called *Inside Looking Out*. No, your mamas and papas, if they like recollecting their youth, will definitely dig this record (yes, it's also pressed on vinyl!) for sure. Let's dive back in time.

greenhornes@fuse.net

Tadas

GROG 9 **Odes to the Carnivorous** **Shock Wave**

What's going on in the Metal milieu? The entire beginning of the summertime my mailbox has been bombed by brutal Death and grinding Death releases! That kind of people activate in the warm period, or what? Anyway, bad luck persecutes **Grog** as my mood this week is not oriented to the sickest Metal ever, and I cannot do anything to claim that *Odes...* is an exceptional record. Indeed, I've got few of such extreme assaults on CD these days, yet there is no singularity in this Portuguese version of the style. Only your similar formula to **Broken Hope** – a technical Death Metal delivery that usually suffers from too dry and precise sound but gains a few points with an accordingly insane twist, both musically and lyrically.

When it comes to the stories behind these tunes... it is easy to follow them as they usually bear a characteristic charisma that brutal Death is most naturally bound to. Simply curious tales about perversions and sick fantasies that certainly gain attention amongst the freaked Metal mongers. Too many clichés used there, just in an other - more straightforward - manner. Good to see pretty skilled grammar, though as it is not that usual tendency in the southern parts of Europe, as far as I know. Yet it must have to do with natural development, as this is the second album of **Grog**, already.

The music is intense - no doubt about it. It has more things going on than the latest **Broken Hope** record, and so it's more interesting, indeed. Yet nothing screams out here that this might be the groundbreaking release of the style they cultivate. Just a confirmed - devoted to grinding madness - release. Well, at least it doesn't lose to many of the American bands who think they are the best in this side of perversity.

Grog, Apartado 21, St. Antonio, 2780 Oeiras, Portugal. grog@portugalmail.pt

Tadas

HALO 8 **Guattari (From the West Flours Grey Ash and Pestilence)** **Relapse**

Aye, Australia is not only about Satanic War Metal. I actually thought this to be another bunch of American terrorists from the **Relapse** crew, but it occurred to be a duo from the Aussie land, delivering hardly describable mixture of dark industrial noise and Metal. Well, when it comes to the Metal part of that, they have bass and drums, as well as an extremely violent use of a human voice, that can be compared to some grind

or modern (dirge?) Metal bands. Another term you might adapt yourselves is **Doom**, but absolutely another understanding of **Doom**. Or better said – slow motion with a Metallic edge. The press-release names **Disembowelment** and **Godflesh** as references. Hmm, I see what they mean. Yet there is more of modern mechanic feel to it, and I bet that machine-related side of **Halo** reflects their intentions better, in any case. You see, those samples and the industrial background that the rest of the music stands on is very fundamental and addictive. It's like a parasite invading the body. That's why I predict the industrial music fans to enjoy it more than the Metal people. But, once again, it is almost impossible to draw the line between the musical directions as the guys have blended them into one pretty firm, not that it could be my fav style, though. I wonder what's the audience they have during the shows like? Yeah, there are no guitars at all, but who said this does not have a Metallic aftertaste in there?

The cover design perfectly suits that gray mood they have in the music. It is just an abstraction in bleak colours, and I bet I wouldn't be attracted by that in a shop. But **Halo** is certainly one of those bands who find the ways to their supporters through other means than music shops. Aye, the album is pretty experimental, much like other **Relapse** titles, so I have warned you. Maybe there could have been one or two additional tracks, as when music is this slow you need some more than 35 minutes.

Halo, PO. Box 340, Clifton Hill, VIC 3068, Australia. halo@antisound.net, http://halo.antisound.net

Tadas

HARVIST 8 **A Glean in the Night** **Dark Horizon**

A Glean in the Night's one of those albums you just don't know how to review. It is. And you don't. On the one hand you have this young one-man band taking its first steps in the cruel world of today's **Black Metal**, and from that perspective, **Harvist** ain't that bad at all. The tracks are grim yet surprisingly melodic and well-structured. But then on the other hand, to make it in the scene of today, where everything has been said and done more than ten thousand times, a band just needs to have so much more ideas and power than **Harvist** has on *A Glean in the Night*. So, what the hell am I supposed to tell you? Buy or die? Give it a fair try? Order it if you want to lose your money on a second-rate American copy of a **Black Metal** band? Here's what we do: you pick one of those and I'll just go along with that as I myself have pretty mixed up feelings about this album, anyhow. Don't tell anyone about this, though. It might ruin my reputation as a know-it-all reviewer. Thanks.

Harvist, PO. Box 2505, Weirton, West Virginia 26062-1705, USA.

Northwind

HATE 11 **Holy Dead Trinity** **World War III**

Cannot believe that this is just the debut recording of this Polish unity with the most straightforward moniker you are supposed to think for a Death Metal band. At least I have been tracking their flyers for a long time now, and I believe they also had one or two professionally recorded tapes done prior to this stunning record.

Holy Dead Trinity is everything you want to hear on a really massive, extremist, groovy, dark and totally technical Death Metal record, performed the American (Floridian, better said) way. Yeah, **Hate** might be called as an European - or Polish - answer to the present-day **Decide**, and their vocalist really can be mistaken for **Glen Benton**, as a matter of fact. Born with the devil's mark - such is the feeling hearing his blasphemous voice. I mean, **Decide** has gone down with their latest albums, and in a way *Holy Dead Trinity* has more aggression and intensity down there, so I would recommend this instead of *Incerateblymn*. But there is no argument to prove that this would be better than the 'golden' **Decide** years were. . .

Useless to say that ideologically these Polish dudes are very also very close, and they basically praise the lord with horns in their hymns. But what is left to do when you come from a very christianized country, and get inspiration from the **Bentons**' company?

You cannot deny that the good production is half the success of music like this. Bearing in mind the complexity and

precision of these fourteen tunes, it is an integrated part of the album's solid presentation. Curious to recognize song number five as it is a somber version of an early **Napalm Death** classic *The Kill*. Seems like it has nothing to do with Satanism or extreme Death Metal, but yet that track sounds refreshing. The same can be uttered about the whole effort. It's true that the Polish scene is delivering more and more artists of a very high capacity. Check them!

Tadas

HATE FOREST 11 **Blood and Fire Ritual** **Red Stream**



This is just two re-released seven inches that are coming out around the same time, and maybe a few weeks later I will have them at hand as well. But let's keep the vinyl section smaller and review the whole pack together, as I was kindly sent this mini album first.

So, please greet the return of **Hate Forest** into the same direction they were heading on their first demo tape *Scythia! Blood and Fire* EP is their best material to date, no fuckin' doubt about it! Plain and straightforward **Black Metal** with a twist and a characteristic feeling, familiar from the aforementioned debut.

The vocalist sounds very dark, his growling has got thicker and more brutal, whilst another, more shriek-like voice (I wonder if it's the same guy at the mic?) adds in some dramatic variety to the whole. Well, expect another reminiscence to **Wallachia**, but the music is again much more brutal and less atmospheric. **Hate Forest** have certainly found the direction that must be developed further on!

The *Ritual* material opens up another side of the band – much more experimental and intriguing stuff. There is an obvious hesitation whether it is appropriate to release it under the same banner, but, well, it's up to them - but in that case I am sure the band will create material like that. **Black God** is a ritualistic 'rhythmless' ambient tune with spoken words put backwards, creating a scary and dusky feeling, whilst the closing *Burning Churches* has a distorted guitar involved in the picture as well as a sample of burning (wood?), bringing the whole idea as close to the title as possible. In fact, it heavily reminds me of the *Filosofem* era of **Burzum**.

Those unfamiliar with the band might be misled to buy only the *Ritual* EP but I'd suggest this MCD version that also has incredible **Black Metal** tracks! 12\$ from **LeDO Tabas**.

Tadas

HAVOC 9 **Hate**

I'm not gonna even enter the whole debate about NS **Black Metal**, or its credibility. I'm just gonna say that things aren't always to be seen from just one angle, and there *are* aspects bonding the **Black Metal** movement to NS ideology, whether you like it or not. And, no, this isn't one of those German or Polish NS **Black Metal** outfits with next to nothing playing skills. **Havoc** is actually a burden created by some of the more established Swedish **Black Metal** personalities. I will kindly leave their names unmentioned here as they kindly asked me to do so.

Havoc is NS **Black Metal**, and there's not a damn thing you can do while facing their 15 minute storm of fire. Violent and hateful **Black Metal** tracks accompanied by in-your-face lyrical concept. I think the atmosphere the tracks give came out exactly as meant. . . You know, straight to the point!

Nothing you should absolutely have in your collection, but definitely a nice item that will not let you forget the hate and the vision, carved in your soul.

Northwind

Believe me. You just don't necessarily and automatically think about anything positive when you are handed another CD of a new Polish Black Metal band. You don't. But what do you know? **Heliveto** is fucking excellent, and **Medieval Scream** fucking reigns! The scene's been overabundant for ages, but there's always room for those who still have that amazing ability to capture the very sound of our delightful darkness on notes, and the way **Heliveto** does just that is beyond me, for tracks, say, *Kniel of Darkness* or *In Forsotten*... truly are something to be proud of in all their majestic darkness.

Unlike most other records released today, **Medieval Scream** isn't really exhausting itself by being too fast for it's own good. Instead, the tracks are fairly mid-paced. The synths are used in such a multifaceted and enormous way that I have no problems to admit that it's been a good while since I last heard something this impressive done with synths on a Black Metal album. I mean that.

Though the tracks do bear some resemblance to each other, I think it doesn't really matter as a strong sense of unity is nevertheless created, emphasized by the demonic vocal-work. The drum-machine does pester the listening experience slightly, but all is forgiven as this album still is something you just do not come across with every godforsaken day.

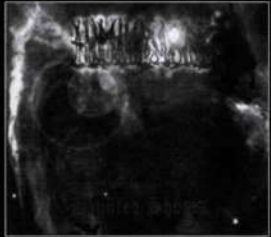
Another band to keep an eye on.
 Northwind

congratulations! It was a long time the scene was waiting for a challenge out of the potential they always had hidden inside. It finally broke through.

This is quite a different approach to the melodic and majestic atmospheres from what they used to do. It involves much more influences from Heavy Metal, and even from atmospheric Death, but **Himinbjorg** have got the chemistry working right for them! The vocalist has improved his efforts very much. Nowadays his voice varies from angry growling (the *Darren White* era of **Anathema**), and much more concentrated and not-so-annoying as earlier on screaming, to a hymn-like voice here and there to intensify the power of refrains. The narration that follows the melancholic music is also a part of this release that sets the French team apart of typical Pagan Metal. One could see the band creating a completely atmospheric musical background. They are not about extremity or speed, so when it is clearly seen in music, the effect is certainly positive. The *Hammerbeart* era **Bathory** and **Primordial** are still great sources of inspiration, though. The music flows from one episode into another pretty smoothly – and that's one of the main factors of its listenability.

There is still a feeling that **Himinbjorg** record just about everything they compose, and try to produce as many albums as they possibly can (whilst sometimes to sit back and overview what material you have would do no harm). But the masterful quality has come to them. Check out *The Voices of Revenge* and *War*.
 Tadas

HIMINBJORG 9
Third
Red Stream



However seemingly intelligent Pagan Metal slab this might be, it cannot entirely convince me. No way. Maybe due to the evident **Primordial** shadow, which breeds around these six tracks. What the Irish precursors deliver is beyond description, it is sort of a divine experience, and when somebody gets too close with a similar expression, it is natural to have a 'falseness' detector inside the listener's mind. This detector is fully plugged in during the 26 minutes that *Third* spins in the player, unfortunately. Go on, contradict me, that it is hardly possible to invent a bicycle within the Pagan Metal streams. I will admit it. But who can think of a better solution than to stick to *In Rama* or *Spirit the Earth Aflame* instead? The scene is suffocated by the same music going on and on, repeating itself for the second hundredth time.

True, I missed the second album of this French band, that was said to be fast and extreme. But if we return to the debut record, there is not much to be excited about, as far as their progression goes. Well, on *Where Ravens Fly* the guys have been paving faster, and then there were too many filled in elements, just for the sake of keeping them in there. This brand new MCD has a more packed feeling, but not genuinely composed music yet. Hell, what happened with their minds? Have they been smoking too much weed or what? This release is crammed with titles as *The Great Time with the Grass*, and *Under the Spell of the Grass*, but the lyrics are still missing... beats me how exactly should they have to do with the pagan spirit. And the vocalist's way of grunting could be more persuading.

Ahem, after all **Himinbjorg** are an ok Heathen Metal experience, and this is not a crappy record, it's just that they have not hit the point yet.

Himinbjorg, Mathrien D. (Ludovic Tournier), Sous la Vellaz, 01510 Artemale, France. tel. (+33) 612341363
 Tadas

HIMINBJORG 10
Haunted Shores
Red Stream

I listen and can't believe my ears! This is literally another band, comparing to the entire back catalogue of the French paganhearts! These musicians have definitely stepped in new heights! Sincere

HIN ONDE 10
Songs of Battle
Aftermath / Frontier

I have a tape version of this album, licensed by a Romanian label, so maybe that is the reason for the quite bad sound quality. Even worse than that, I feel that the dub is not properly done, the tape is dragging too slowly at times. I hate this when listening to a tape. Anyway, it is not **Hin Onde** to blame, and I do not claim that all **Frontier** tapes are like this – maybe it's just my promo copy to have this fuck-up. So, the CD version was released by the Norwegian **Aftermath** label, the same one that has pressed the well-acclaimed 7"EP of this Finnish project. If you remember from my earlier review, that four-tracker had just one memorable song, and in general the EP was rather various in approaches. So, it is absolutely great to notice that the guys have worked out a much better album, that has both matured and still remained pretty much oriented in that heavy Metalsque ambience of *2P of September 1155*. Yeah, this infamous song is also included here, this time re-recorded with a different vocal and some synth arrangements. As a surprise, one particular vocal tone comes, in the vein of **Anathema**'s later records – you know, this desperate clear and loud singing. Never thought it could fit the folksy and quite shallow music of **Hin Onde**.

To draw a line, *Songs of Battle* is good at balancing between energetic raw humpia folk soundscapes and darker, even melancholic breaks. It could go one without the other, but then none of the halves would make it as effective as it actually is. Sure, the Heavy Metal robe is present all the time, but it has almost nothing to do with the traditional understanding of the term Heavy Metal.

Only that I do not see a reason important enough to add three alternate versions of the same songs at the end of the tape. Otherwise, be ready – they kill kill kill kill kill. The tape is available for 6\$ (Europe) / 7\$.

Hin Onde, Tomi Kalliola, Kaskentie 3 as 1, 05840 Hyvinkää, Finland, tomi.kalliola@pp.inet.fi, http://hinonde.cjb.net
 Tadas

HOUWITSER 10
Embrace Damnation
Displeased

A rough lesson in aggressive Death Metal the American way with an European production! That's my short description of **Houwitser**. However, to say this is merely an European answer to **Cannibal Corpse** would be to underrate their abilities. These guys need a wider presentation – they are becoming another Dutch band to play the style hard and convincing, once again continuing the tradition once started by **Pestilence** and **Asphyx**.

Intro + twelve tracks are presumably short but to the point, which makes this

debut album a really dynamic experience. It is enriched by samples from some horror, and maybe gore, movies that say it all about their concept – to praise serial murders and related philosophy, or actually to lead the listeners into that madness they already feel a part of. Whether it is a welcomed or a disgusting thing I leave that upon each one listening to brutal Death Metal music to decide.

Since this same week I received the debut album of Norwegian **Blood Red Throne**, let me compare these two bands. **Houwitser** are more various when it comes to rhythmic dynamics and the drummer's imagination (well, it's none other than **Sinister's Aad**, bringing up his skills and some tricks as well), and they also win over with commanding straightforward growling of **Arjaan**. Yet the music of this Dutch team is not manifesting itself as a dichord supporter of the previous Death Metal decade, rather implicating a feeling of the recent rise of brutality in Metal music. Yeah, the American tradition penetrates through the production, and at times it seems that your system will explode of that sheer heaviness. Since this album was released, the band has kicked off their vocalist and got themselves a new growler, and their new album is soon to be released on **Osmose**. Sick music.

Houwitser, Theo van Eekelen, Valkseweg 225, NL-3771 SE Barneveld, Netherlands, tel. (+31) 342413203, fax (+31) 342422225, howitser@hotmail.com, http://houwitser.tripod.com
 Tadas

HOUWITSER 8
Rage Inside the Womb
Osmose

This is 'brutal Death Metal', if you go and ask **Osmose**'s promotional department to categorise it. But if you ask me, and I believe you do, well, then, I can tell you that *Rage Inside the Womb* doesn't coincide at all with my idea of 'brutal Death Metal'. My god. **Mayhem** used to be brutal Death Metal. **Houwitser** may verge on Death Metal's musical conventions here and there, but most of the time 'Deathgrind', as a term, suits their music much better. Because of the vocals. Because of the structures. Because of the lyrical content.

Is it just me or have people really started digging all these styles that used to be popular in the early 90's from their graves? **Houwitser** here have even some lines taken from films to work as an introduction to the songs... Fucking hell, now how cult is that? Do you remember? Well, I remember. It's just too bad for **Houwitser** that *Deathgrind* wasn't one of the styles I lost my heart to in '92, if you know what I mean. But I guess they're quite good at what they do. They somewhat are the ex-**Sinister**, after all.
 Northwind

HYPNOS 12
The Revenge Ride
Morbid



A good development from the last year's debuting *In Blood We Trust* to the new air-raid like attack! Knowing the potential of this three-piece outfit, their first full album was sounding a bit forced, and even if some songs were good enough, there still was a feeling of a rush in there. As if they (or **Bruno**, first and foremost) were aiming to prove the world as soon as possible that the split from **Krabathor** was just nothing special, if not even a long-awaited thing. In fact, it has taken time to recover from those changes. You cannot say the same about the new work – it is an absolutely great album of Czech and Floridian death metal blend, and only **Orbodax** comes to my mind, if anyone asks what's the best. But **Hypnos** have also moved a bit further from the common styling of **Bruno**'s ex-band. Listeners must catch the characteristic guitar riffs and the straightforward rhythmic assaults themselves – that's about the same line that goes with their

Death Metal for a decade now. **Hypnos** involve melodic twin guitar parts on this record, maintaining the sound as brutal as their fans expect it to be. **Bruno**'s voice is darker this time around, though – it sounds as if he would try to give the music an extra punch of darkness and evil. The titles say it all: *Eril Ataken*, *Endorsed by Satan*, *Journey into Doom*. It was never the case with **Krabathor** that stuck with socio-aware topics. Returning to growling, it might be the clever echo effect used on this recording (masterfully memorized by **Harris Johns**) that helps to darken the atmosphere. In a way he got closer to what **David Vincent** was once doing...

I have been criticizing **Hypnos** for too much alterations in their previous album – something was really wrong there. Now they have delivered a tighter, more extreme release, but there are a few slower tunes again, and what do you know – this time they fit the picture as a glove fits the hand! There is no filler tracks on *The Revenge Ride!* And there is no **Mika Luttinen** anymore – I guess it was just a promotional trick with the previous release. **Hypnos** are stronger than ever – do buy their new masterpiece!

Hypnos, c/o Bruno, Kopanky 1726, 686 03 Stare Mesto, Czech Republic, tel. (+420) 632543727, bruno.hypnos@post.cz
 Tadas

IMMERSED IN BLOOD 10
Relentless Retaliation (adv.)
Downfall

Hey, this is way more brutal than any **Inverted** track ever was, and even if I once was quite impressed by the debut record of that 90's Swedish Death Metal band, this new reinforced incarnation sounds certainly better. The new band features three members of what once was **Inverted**, but they seem to have forgot what music they wrote in the past, as the listener is not able to find any traces of typical Swedish Death here, neither in music or in sound.

The music sounds truly good when played loud, thanks to the chunky production with a characteristic guitar distortion and overall balance. Do I smell **Deranged** somewhere near? Might be... But to claim having traces of **Hate Eternal** and **Cryptopsy** in this record is a bit too much. They still need to write more intense and tight shit to stand in that league! What they play now is basically tagged as American Death Metal, but I also think that term has lost its sense as the scene has got filled now with many bands of this kind in Europe as well. Just look around what is going in Czech and Slovak Republic, Germany, Poland, Italy, and Sweden, of course... the list goes on. Brutal Death Metal is doing well, thanks to hands like **Immersed in Blood**. They do not lack in techniques or imagination how to build those tracks up. There is a catchy feeling behind the riffs. Still I predict their material might turn a bit linear, but on the other hand the guys introduce the band with a five track mini album as for now, so it's ok.

I'm provided with just a three-song sampler, clocking in nine minutes. Do investigate this bloody machine, as this MCD costs you only the miserable 7\$!
 Tadas

IMPALED NAZARENE 12
Decade of Decadence
Osmose

I was glad to receive this CD as it gives me the perfect reason to say a few words about a band I've equally much hated and loved at different times. As you probably know by now, the material for this CD is collected throughout the years, including **Impaled Nazarene**'s early demonstration tapes, seven inches and some later studio sessions. And bearing in mind the success the group has achieved, I think this kind of a release is perfectly justified for the band – unlike for many others, who've re-released their old material over and over again, just to cash in.

Starting off with their debut demo – although I recall it was called merely a studio session back in the days – *Spenbamforasb*, we face an early version of **Impaled Nazarene** with strong Death Metal and grind influences. Nothing to cheer about, but it's interesting to hear classics like *Condemned to Hell* and *The Crucified* in such unpolished versions.

Taag Eht Fo Hlao Eht is the demo I always considered as the beginning of the band. I still like it. The songs bring forth violence and Satan with might. It was at this time that the band really started to get some attention here in Finland, mostly due

to their extreme image. Their live-shows back then were a concept of its own, and the underground would always talk about Mika's extremity for days afterwards. And this was *the Impaled Nazarene* I liked the best. No doubt about it.

Goat Perverision and *Sadogoa!* seven inches blew me away as well in all their harshness, although back then I really had to stretch my sense of black humour when hearing the Tom Jones cover for the first time. But I liked it. Everything fit very well the unhealthy image of the **Luttinen** bros. and co.

But after *Ugra-Karma* was released, I really started to lose my interest to the band that I had enjoyed so very much in the beginning. It wasn't really the Norway vs. Finland Black Metal war that troubled me. Even though I was more fond of the Norwegian concept of Black Metal back then, I have to say Mika had some guts to make all those statements, knowing that shit would hit the fan sooner or later. It was more of a musical matter to me. I simply couldn't allow one of my fav bands to throw in some punk or whatever influences. I hated it. What had happened to the band that once recorded tracks like *In the Name of Satan* or *Damnation (Rapping the Angels)?* I couldn't understand it. And as unbelievable as it sounds, I haven't even heard any of the **IN** albums released after *Ugra-Karma*. Yeah, it was that bad. But considering what I've heard people say about them, I might just as well check those albums out today. Who knows?

Decade of Decadence is anyhow a great investment for people who missed these underground relics back in the days. Also the sound quality is way better than the originals, so that's another reason. This belongs to any serious and complete Black Metal collection, could be this.
 Northwind

INDIAN FALL 8
Pathfinder
Promusic

A pity that the band's biography and the label's info do not tell anything about the curious name of this band that hails from Romania. They must be fascinated by the Indians. India is not the case, since there are no images or musical allusions to that country.

Pathfinder, huh... Sort of like infantile dreams brought to music – another stage of childhood life for these guys? The dreamy atmospheric music that they have produced on this album confirms my presumption, but not completely. There are anger and violence on *Pathfinder* as well, yet it is precisely wrapped in the tight clothes of emotions and even lyricism. Of course the rougher Metal moments are in contrast to those calm episodes, which makes **Indian Fall** a pretty dynamic band, in spite of the originally slower and mid-tempo character of songs. One chapter of the nine-step-walk through the Indian realms is completely atmospheric, taking the listener away from heavy music. It is rather an amusing (or annoying) lyrical intermezzo *Late October*. This is one of those cases when an album has a certain culmination moment where a single composition divides the whole in two parts. With such structure, the music turns even less dynamic, relying solely on emotions.

To tell you the truth, it is hard to tell **Indian Fall** apart from the rest of the atmospheric Metal bands. If they happen to come up with some outstanding riff or keyboard-pattern, then it is something we've already heard. And there are too many moments where the music sounds just like some nice background music, nothing heart-touching. They are trying to use as much emotional patterns as **Moonspell** though yet it is hard to compare these bands.

The *Ticin Peaks* soundtrack is so much more atmospheric, monumental, scary and triumphant.
 indian_fall@yahoo.com, www.indian-fall.ro
 Tadas

INFERNO 10
Duch slovenske sily
Eclipse

This is a good sounding piece for those who like Eastern European, or Slavonic, Black Metal. Their ideological base is the pagan past of Czechia, but the music and images are of pure Black Metal kind. The tracks themselves leave yet less space for deep thinking, as the guys play it plainly and simply the way cold, sharp-biting Black Metal is supposed to be played, or was imagined a few years ago. **Maniac Butcher**

must have started this style, and then a few bands (including *Inferno*) have not felt ashamed to follow their steps. They shouldn't feel uneasy, indeed, because it is the emotion of music that counts, and not the fact that it might be similar to other bands. As a matter of fact, all this Black Metal (circus?) derives from the Norwegian explosion in the 90's, so if anybody wants to blame these guys copying others, then a few hundred thousand other bands are mere copycats, too.

But what the fuck I'm talking about here?! *Inferno* have not moved far from the latest demo and the split 7" stuff that they did a few years ago, unless maybe with the sound, which is more focused now and the production is also tighter this time, or it might be just this CD's sound that fools myself a bit. I like that old-school touch on their songs, the thundering atmosphere and the vocalist who does not appear as an unique screamer, yet fits the whole quite well. Not to forget that the Czech language sounds quite special. I don't know why but when bands sing in Czech it automatically reminds me of the glorious era of *Master's Hammer*. There is an occult feel in that language, if used properly. If only *Adramelech* would use more dark topics in his lyrics... The intro and outro are not too convincing, but this is a good album for those interested.

Inferno, Tomas Adramelech Trombik, Nedbalova 1713, 735 06 Karvina, Czech Republic. infernohorde@atlas.cz

Tadas

INSANIA 11 *Sunrise in Riverland* No Fashion

Truly, this one deserves attention, in spite of its typical contents for a *Helloween* follower. Plainly in the vein of reborn Power Metal, but done with class and care. They say it is *Insania*'s sophomore effort, so yeah – why don't I go and check their debut album then... Yes, I see the grimace on the faces of those who despise Power and Heavy Metal manifesting again in the scene due to the high-pitched vocals, the bright atmosphere, 'positive' attitude and the cheesy album covers. This Swedish outfit certainly goes this way – nothing is missing! But, after all, it is a huge power that rules albums like these, so I see no point in slagging it down just because it is popular right now.

Quality-wise, *Insania* has nothing to regret, so for a true admirer *Sunrise in Riverland* will be a great record to spend time with, I am sure. Okay, the cover artwork is not the most original one around, and not the best for sure – there are simply too many details crammed in there that are separately strong, but they cannot make one good picture. The same feeling if you take a mug of beer, then a cup of vodka and another one of whiskey right after that, and a few glasses of wine to make it more effective. I mean – the taste is missing.

The gloomy lyrical ballad is not forgotten either – on *Angels in the Sky* they (the vocalist most of all) remind me of *HammerFall* (*Glory to the Brave!*). Otherwise the disk is a real head-rolling ride through fantasies and stories that deal with timeless subjects. Expect unexpectedly vast exploration of lead guitars and familiarly energetic double bass drumming, refreshing atmosphere, and huge production. I just wonder if any new Swedish Power Metal bands can make it big after *HammerFall*'s success? By music they are worth that fame.

Tadas

IZAKARON 8 *Chaoschrift* Eternal Art / Metal Agen

Oh my bloody Valentine! We are witnessing Russian *Dimmu Borgir*. And I really mean it – not a pathetically amateurish tryout to be like idols, but a well crafted and executed copy of the Norwegian monsters' music. No wonder about their abilities because some guys of *Izakaron* are professional musicians. Surely they are nothing in the worldwide Metal context, but they will definitely make a stir in our Russia, where everyone that has western standard and similarity to internationally acclaimed stars is welcomed. Greet your sons, mother Russia!

I would rather talk about matters that diminish their achievement big time. First of all, that common typically modern arranged accents: the keyboards ultimately deaden the guitar sound, and *Chaoschrift* gets even more trends than *Entwine*. *Darkness Triumphant* ever was. *DB* have moved far from that synth domination

since then, but these Russian colleagues still toy with that. Fuck, where is the Metal in here?! If the guitar were sharper, more emphasized, who knows... maybe this debut would have made a greater impact. Needless to say, two or three tracks and the album gets boring.

The vocalist *Morkb* is absolutely impressive. His typical shrieking does not support this sort of symphonic music. A vocalist must be a personality with his outstanding voice, just take *Simen, Garm* or *Shagrath*. Not acknowledged with lyrics, I doubt about any deeper Black Metal message available on this record. The music itself is enough to call *Izakaron* idologically 'not-very-deep'. And then to put *Symphonic Black Metal influenced by Dimmu Borgir* on a press advert is one of the worst things a record label can make. However, even if they sell a few hundred thousands of records there in Russia, *Izakaron* will never make it big with copycat music like this.

Tadas

JOYLESS 12 *Wisdom & Arrogance* Selbstmord

Forget whatever it is the name *Forgotten Woods* makes you want to think of. Just forget. *Wisdom & Arrogance* is nowhere near any sort of Metal music. This is 'misanthropic pop for unpopular people', and just damn enjoyable solely as such, whatever it is.

The thing that usually takes me away from this sort of releases is the too obvious search for originality and art, leaving the actual music sounding artificial, pretentious, or 'done' – if you will. You know, 'art for art's sake', and the rest of that bullshit. But what do you know? That's not the case with *Joyless*. Not a one damn bit. *Wisdom & Arrogance* has a genuine feel written all over it and these 40 minutes will surely make you wanna think twice about all the pain that occupy our human destinies. Just too bad the booklet doesn't include all the lyrics as at least the included two were real fine pieces of down-to-earth poetry, soaked in the dark imagery of death and despair.

Special attention must be given to the brilliant sound quality on this product that fits *Joyless* like pain for a poet. It's not really all that clean or clinic, it's more like thin and oppressive, or somber and mad. Take your pick. But no less significant factor in the overall atmosphere is the brilliant vocal-work by *Ida Hellebo*, who truly gives an edge for the whole band. It's especially delightfully disturbing when she goes off the tune, creating a very dark and insane feeling.

Just for the hell of it, I would urge you to check out their whole misanthropic back catalogue as well in order to dive deeper into these vast wastelands of human agony.

Northwind

JUDAS ISCARIOT 11 *To Embrace the Corpses* Bleeding Red Stream

This is the plague in its aural manifestation! Easily the hardest hitting *Iscariot* album ever released. When it comes to *Absenaten* and his music, I always have a feeling that he releases new stuff very often, yet in fact it's been more than a year and a half since the previous mini album. That is not to say that I would not want to listen to this new work, on the contrary.

It hits to the heart from the very start: if the old school of Black Metal is what you prefer, then *To Embrace the Corpses Bleeding* is a perfect choice. I am close to praise this warrior for a very fitting sound he has got within this recording. It reminds me of the glorious days of *Darkthrone*, indeed. The bass drum sounds dead and buried, but it goes so well with the guitar riffs and the snare drum. Ugly Black Metal needs exactly this kind of a combination. And when the music is as conceptual (and fast!), you can't demand for anything extra. Hell, at times I feel like listening here to unpublished classics from *Transilvanian Hunger*'s leftover material! Not every Necro Black Metal band is able to conceive such feelings, I tell you. Ah, and another comparison (quite a surprise to me personally) – *Nattens Madrigal* of you-know-whom, simply because *To Embrace the Corpses Bleeding* has quite much of the same sinister, negative harmony in there.

There is a special concept on this disc that carries such a macabre title. It describes the pain and horror once witnessed on the night of St. Bartholomew's. That was 600+ years ago, if you wonder. Very disappointing to miss

the lyrics that are not included in the booklet. That must have been an exclusive experience, as *Absenaten* spent quite some time at those places in Romania where the bloodshed took place, and wrote the whole lyrical side of the album there. But instead of the lyrics, he has placed another statement on the rotting Black Metal scene in the booklet that I've personally heard more than enough already. A topic to discuss in the interview for *Ad Armat!* #3? Let's hope so. This is a must have, anyway.

Tadas

KHANATE 9 *Khanate* Southern Lord



With a well expressed preservation and a careful reaction towards the sludge Doom style of heavy music in general, I must admit this album has invoked a certain chemical reaction inside my body. And I truly hope it was not caused by the big names on this album (which I won't mention to prove my honesty anyway), but by the sick and torturing nature of the music itself. Yeah, I was ready for one more obligatory audio session and one more standard review like 'sorry, this is not my music, this won't be put on after I finish these lines'. Well, this surely won't become my long-player of the month, but *Khanate* are at least an interesting sludge Doom band, worth a damn listen! Those heavy hammering tracks literally drive the listener crazy. Music that is not recommended to listen to with an unstable state of mind.

What's the difference between this and other sludge Doom bands? The feeling. Much darker and ultimately minor. There is no light here, not even a blink of daylight. Only a dim wall of sound. In a way it has much to do with *Esoteric* and *Thergothon*, those two coryphaeuses of slow torturous Doom Metal, minus the vocal style. The full blown insane screams are probably the strongest, and the most exceptional point in *Khanate*. That's about the sludge side of things, too. Yet there are no hardcore influences here, like all those modern bands tend to have. The high screaming phrases and the downtuned minor distortion create a special blend, indeed. What could you feel when a guy is yelling that there is no joy at all? Just plain misanthropy, I tell you!

Well, to sum it up, this Metal is highly experimental, but it is listenable at the same time, due to the thoughtful structures and less jumps from one extremity to another... and the *Black Sabbath* Doom Cult lives on!

Khanate, c/o O Malley, POB 2339, New York, NY 10009, USA. khan8@ideologic.org

Tadas

KHERT-NETER 10 *Arrival of the Funeral Dogs* ISO666

These Lappeenranta freaks move the Death Metal way, and I tell you - this move is justified, as far as their inspiration is concerned. Well, here we have a few members of *Horna* and *Pest*, and I think people inside the Black Metal circle know them perfectly well as the purveyors of unholy spells of destruction and war. To say it is a huge surprise would be an overstatement, but curious this new band certainly is!

The music brings back some good memories from the early 90's, when a new music style of yet unheard brutality was discovered and presented to Metal freaks. That was the time to terrorize all unbelievers! I cannot find the name *Demigod* among the rest in the list of their inspirations on the press-release (besides *Entombed*, *Morbid Angel*, *Incantation*), and it is a huge influence - it cannot be denied! Probably without the melodic aspects of that dark sound, but yet *Khert-Neter* certainly have a sullen portion of old Finnish Death Metal energy down here. Please play for yourself their best tune so far, *Uuen-Neter*, to realize that I am right! At

the same time it shows that the three-piece is still on the ride to their best form when it comes to composing. The music is still not fully worked out on this seven-tracker, here and there a feel of empty spaces appear that must be filled with good riffs or simply a more rhythmic intensity. I don't know how to explain it better, but there should be more integrity amongst the instrumental department. *Tommi*'s dark deep growl is fairly remarkable, and the unexpected clean echoed voice in the aforementioned 'best track' (as I see it) acts immensely refreshing together with the down-tuned guitar sound.

This CD serves more as the first presentation of this band to the public, as

recordings were made during two sessions, with the initial thought maybe to demo them. So far *Avulsed* do this style of music better, whilst *Demigod* remain as the gods of it all, but if dear Black Metallers take it seriously enough, I am sure their next release will make quite a stir in true Death Metal underground.

Khert-Neter, c/o T. Haro, Juvankankatu 65 b5, 53100 Lappeenranta, Finland

Tadas

KHOLD 8 *Masterpiss of Pain* Moonfog

I don't know. Somehow it's incredibly hard not to take a biased stance when it comes to new, recently formed, Norwegian Black Metal bands – and even more so if a certain *Darkthrone* is mentioned in the given band's bio. 'Please!' tends to be the initial reaction. Can't help it. Not that all new Norwegian Black Metal purists suck, it's just that I think we have all been 'traumatized' to some undeniable extent by those innumerable blackened troubadours that appeared out of the blue after the big bang in '92.

Well, whatever. For *Khold*'s defense; though being a brand new band, the members do have background in *Old Man's Child*, *Tulus* and likes – so they weren't really born yesterday, if that was what you were thinking about. The fact that they ended up inking a deal with *Moonfog* could, in itself, be looked upon as a merit as well, bearing in mind how strict the label is concerning those who get signed and those who get not.

But what about the album itself? I hear you sigh. Well... erm... well... it is not bad, really. Let's just say that mentioning *Darkthrone* in the bio wasn't such a bad move after all. A bad move would have been to let the obvious influence *Khold* has taken from *Feariz* and *N. Cullo* go unmentioned, making the reviewer think that the guys have ripped off that sound without realizing it themselves.

But, yeah, I admit there's more to *Khold* than mere *Darkthrone* admiration. However, *Masterpiss of Pain* still isn't the aural embodiment of unique artistic creativity – not today, anyway – even if it can create momentarily a feeling of something great with some real impressive riffs. All in all, no, this still won't do. When you are from Norway and you release your debut Black Metal album in 2001 – even on *Moonfog* – you have to be pretty fucking special to justify your record. Sorry, but that's the reality.

Northwind

KING'S X 9 *Manic Movement* Metal Blade

Just partly Metal, this old band is actually a new experience for yours truly. Well, must admit that all the time I thought I could simply not stand their kind of expression. So, this ninth studio album is upon my morgue table – let's dissect the patient! Actually, it is not dead yet, because the sonic-escape of these three veteran musicians is, indeed, very much alive and listener-friendly. Oh yeah, there is nothing extreme on this record, and I am sure that your mummies will dig it rather easily as

well. Mellow, really relaxed ambience flows through the speakers, thus it is indeed not a record for the die-hard Metallers. According to the biography, *King's X* have always been sticking to this kind of a sound. I remember some magazines naming them as an innovative Metal band that involves a funky element in the music. That's actually the reason why I was really sceptic about this outfit in the first place. But going through these songs I would not name this spice as 'funk', not 'soul' either. Let's just say that it is an alternative (rock) music detail, at least I detect it. Especially *Red Hot Chili Peppers* kind of grooves, only that *King's X* are even less dramatic and prefer to deliver very easy-going, almost background filling songs. Though it could be a question which band was the first to introduce such a style, huh?

I see no reason why such memory-sticking compositions as *Believe*, *Manic Moonlight*, *Vegetable* and especially *Static* could not make it to alternative Metal charts, and they will for sure. Listeners are caught with characteristic hooks like impressive lines of bass guitar and alteration of clean and distorted guitar parts. The only trouble for me is that they are still too laid-back for my taste. Professional alternative heavy music.

Tadas

KOROVAKILL 11 *WaterHells* Red Stream



I still cannot understand how a cow can kill, but these Austrian purveyors of sophisticated and truly dark Metal have resurrected after the demise of the archaic *Korova*, in spite of the rumours that said they have gone off the Metal map forever. Change of their moniker is right in time, because this trio does not experiment for the sake of being different anymore, but combining more listenable and catchy Metal with a nonetheless unique avantgarde feel. Hell yes, these twelve compositions are easier to get into, comparing to their early stuff or to other albums you might consider as 'avantgarde' these days. Maybe it is due to the 'traditional' Metal fragments that must certainly find an audience, as it is of the same sort used by neo-Black Metal bands. Not so much to do with any certain band – there's just one single fast blast-beat ridden vocal in *The Shadowbordes* - but the yelling localism, the orchestrated keyboard background, and the majestic feel created by guitar riffing give birth to such an image as if *Korovakill* would be a postmodern Black Metal team that got bored playing the same speed riffs again and again.

On the other hand, this release goes beyond the opposing understanding of dark and light, of good and evil. There is a chthonic feeling transcending through it all, entirely jumping off the scale of your usual Metal record. This, together with the concept of this album presented in a press sheet, goes hand in hand to frustrate the listener's mind. A great attempt to mentally disturb your understanding of what music should be about. Let me cite several main points of this concept: "... a man awakes drifting in the nowhere of the sea... all horizons are crammed with water, but not a drop to drink... no ships or islands are touching the edge of the sea... there are just endless waves and skies and this heavy pulling downwards..." A full-coloured nightmare, isn't it? But that's about the concept; the musical nightmare turns into a smart experience. Great record.

Tadas

KRIEG 8 *The Church* Cleatrix

Too much disharmony on this release. Mostly it's a harsh recording, but too weird and violent mix, if you ask me: the vocals prevail over the guitar-sound, and the fast blast-beat drum almost overshadows the rest. So, from time to time everything you are able to hear is just the scream and the snare. Only a fool would say this is guitar-

oriented Black Metal. *To Wander the Stars* includes some melody, if you can say that about this band, but the guitar sound is as buried. This is Black Metal, though – no doubt about it. *Imperial* follows the most uncompromising direction, and does not care about sharp quality of performance, fancy promotion, let alone the commercial aspect that even this album by all means is involved in.

So, as far as I understand, this is the second release of **Krieg** on CD. After a debut album this one is a five track mini offer, seems like recorded in one breath or so. There is a session drummer involved who suits the chaos pretty fine, yet as mentioned – too a loud snare drum fucks it up a bit. It is easy to trace a link to **Order From Chaos** here, but we talk about the new generation of havoc makers who do not really share their sympathy for Thrash or Death Metal. Harsh and rude Black Metal remains, and there is also a few moments when the music turns so violent that it loses control and enters a total mayhem stage with the help of these inhuman screams.

No wonder that the CD comes with a classic black/white packaging with the minimalist attitude and menacing statements. This attitude must certainly be supported. I still need to check out their debut album, though.

Tadas

KRIEG 9 Destruction Ritual Red Stream

This time *Imperial* delivers us a full-length record, and for some mysterious reason it sounds more solid to me now, even though the music is close to the same as on the previous mini album, reviewed right above. I'd bet it is exactly the same stuff (what would you expect from an uncompromising performer as **Krieg** or is, anyway?), but, well, that would be unfair towards those who recognise all the tiny details in Black Metal. Sometimes it is, indeed, just the feeling that makes a song (or an entire album) worth it, whilst the riffs themselves might be very close to each other. So, in my opinion, the unholy Black Metal has got the feeling (back?) on this album, the feeling that was missing on *The Church*, and all hails to him for that!

It is not easy to get used to the massacring wall of noise that is settled with help from an exterminating, yelling voice and a holocaustic guitar-sound. I would call it the American Black Metal sound that has nothing to do with the more easily recognisable and consumable Scandinavian sound. But this is pretty different from the albums that are called **Necro Black Metal**, too. **Krieg** is quite unique, indeed, but it is a 'love it or hate it' thing above all, and I am sure not so many of those who enjoy their daily Black Metal doze will stay friends with *Destruction Ritual*. It's still too much of buzz in the guitarsound to me there, too.

Ah, now I know what made me change my mind about **Krieg**! It's the fucking great intro on this album, taken from a stunning movie called *Delamorte*. *Delamorte*. If you don't know the film, some extract was also used by the Swedish **Delamorte** on their debut album. Actually *Imperial*'s concept and music are quite far from those psychedelic images drawn in that movie, but it's great to find those allusions, anyway. It's all about a sick attitude, and, well – Satanic experience. Anybody willing to argue? Cursed be!

Tadas

KRISTALLNACHT, BLESSED IN SIN & SEIGNEUR VOLAND 10 split

Warspirit / Samen & Blood
I like this. Here we have three unholy French hordes introducing their material, and although I do think a band like **Blessed In Sin** has already gained certain name in the underground, none of these bands have ever been 'exposed' to any greater public. Not that this three-way split CD would be meant to do that either, as I'm sure it'll be rather limited pressing, but...

Well, **Kristallnacht** opens up the gathering with an atmospheric, dark intro, and continues with a song that's typical Black Metal but yet melodic enough to awake an interest towards the band's work. **Blessed In Sin** enters the scene with a song called *Himmelfahrtskommando* – impressively – and I dare to say no B.I.S. fan will leave the room unsatisfied. The cult of **Seigneur Voland** closes the gates with their three tracks of bestial, raw Black Metal. The gathering culminates, however, on the last piece where *Xapham* of

Seigneur Voland joins **Blessed In Sin**, and they together do the more-than-legendary **Beherit** classic *The Gate of Nanna*. Nothing to add there.

Northwind

KRONOS 8 Titan's Awakening Warpath

I've been here thinking all the time what music style they remind me of the most, and I've finally got to a conclusion that it must be similar to the Czech and Slovakian Death grind wave, as well as French bands like **Inhymate** or **Depraved**. No wonder that it got released through **Warpath** then, who specialise in such underground brutality of Metal. Yet this record does not move anywhere else from that limited underground circuit. It is destined to remain as a listening pleasure of a few hundred individuals, who are entirely dedicated to the genre. This album does not promise much of a challenge either. The musicians simply repeat what was done many times before by hundreds of their associates worldwide. I understand that they play it just because they love to play it, but... I doubt that a Black or Heavy Metal fan would dig *Titan's Awakening*. It appears as a fine example of a pure style. Death grind, in this case.

Let's pinpoint the average things. The guitar-sound is very poor on this album. Emphasis is made on the not-so-perfect growling voice of *Kristof* as well as on the loud drums, but with such low end guitar riffs they should have mixed it differently. Then the recording would have got much more power and a chunky feeling that it lacks of now. This turns to be more a grindcore production than Death Metal, so if their intention was to sound like a grind band, they have succeeded. But why the hell to include those Death Metalish guitar riffs then?

This material still remains pretty raw and needs improvement, let alone better song-writing. Otherwise it is hard to compete with those killing Czech and Slovak teams!

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Tadas

LEGION 8 Conqueror Dark Horizon

This one is presented as an alternative to the gore generation of American Death Metal, sort of like 'True Yankee Death Metal', but it does not move me a bit. If I am allowed to compare them to someone in a positive way, then it must only be **Morta Skuld**. By 'only' I refer to the first two albums of that band, once signed to **Dead Records** (*Peaceville* sub-label). Even back then, 1993-1994, I remember them being of limited interest because all the songs were kind of similar, with just a few exceptions in over 50 minutes long albums. To cut it with **Morta Skuld**, I must add that their latest effort, *Surface*, was really good and could be used as a good tip for the **Legion** guys how to make this mid-tempo choppy Death Metal sound interesting enough.

I am quite indifferent to their way of handling things with Death Metal. Sounds like the guys want it to be very very technical, but it does not pay off with just too many mid-tempo bridges. You can clearly hear everything what each member plays: the double bass drums, the growls, the rhythmic guitar riffs, but after all it is empty music. Not dark at all, as **Legion** would like it to sound, I'm sure. The tuning and production might be dark, but then the vocalist's voice is too low. The music has no ultimately dim shades, the kind of shades **Immolation**, **Morbid Angel** or **Incantation** enrich their music with. Here and there they speed up, yet the faster implements do not make one whole with precisely tight handling of standard speeds.

So, unfortunately, **Conqueror** is just another disk in a pile of average American Death Metal releases. The music is certainly distanced from modern fancies and kept in the early 90's tradition, but even the admirers of that epoch have as equal right to demand something more exceptional than the today's kids of Metal do, preferring quality.

Tadas

LORD WIND 10 Rites of the Walkyries No Colours

Seems like the promo leaflet for this album has been made in complete rush as it just describes the previous album of **Lord**



Wind, *Heralds of Fight*, the one I have never heard. Comparing the early material with these brand new tracks I could say I hardly recognise the same band here. They are proud to admit that the old attempts to combine ancient folk music with Heavy Metal and scream-like vocals was poor in execution, hails to **Darken** for that. I wonder how some people can enjoy it up to this day. But I am here to utter some good words about this new material that does not have any vocal intrusions at all. Plain synth music, in other words. I am not an expert in what kind of equipment is used on such albums, but the final result at least sounds good. The music is well balanced, thoughtfully structured to create a mist in the air. No childish crap melodies, no boring clichés. This is keyboard music with old, they say, medieval atmosphere that inspires for a ride back in time, to recollect what once was. For **Rob Darken** it was a time of glory, pride, honour and dignity. I personally don't care about his national socialistic invocations – this is music, first and foremost, and it's the music that should charm, not the message behind it. In case someone would get this album with no additional info, there is a big chance that the message won't reach the listener, anyway.

Ok, what am I talking here. This disk has a special mood, so it is the most enjoyable just in special moments, in special places, at a special time. If you are able to find its essential key, you are lucky winners like myself.

Tadas

LOVE HISTORY 10 Anasazi The End

There was a promotional e-mail *Radim* spread where some reviewers were infinitely excited about this brand new record of Czech progressive Death Metal. It definitely was just the most positive reviews, but they mean a lot, actually, as it proves the musicians to be exceptional artists in any case. After experiencing it myself I can simply confirm that nothing is sacred for **Love History** when it comes to Metal. They are ready to water it down with unimaginably wide range of progressive music influences, even with some kind of mainstream pop rock at times, harmonious avantgarde in other fragments, uniting everything with a vast collection of singers. *Richard*'s voice is better to describe as growling, whilst the guest soprano, *Lada*, does mean a lot for the band as well. Without her, this would not be as diverse as it is on *Anasazi*. Then please witness the whispering, screaming and heroic singers, who appear in one stage or another. The band-name obligates them to deal with human feelings and relations, which is not that common amongst Metal bands, as a matter of fact. In a way they must prove marching on with innovative and brave ideas, destroying clichés and conformist attitude around. I know that it is not a type of record a die-hard Metal freak would give a ride, but on the other hand Czech atmospheric/progressive scene has made name through all these years, and **Love History** was one of the main bands in mid '95.

So, the choice is upon everyone. If this sounds too suspicious for the first time but you still look for something uncommon, give it a try. The record is independent, but still heavy and hooky. Comes with an additional video of the starting track *Lost*. Interesting screenplay and acting, by the way.

Love History, *Radim Chrobok*, Na klasternim 13, 162 00 Praha 6, Czech Republic. chrobok@iiprg.cz

Tadas

LUCIFUGUM 9 Instinct Prevalence Dark Horizon

In spite of the neat package and smart layout ideas, this recording certainly loses the battle against the forthcoming **Lucifugum** records, simply because these

are two of their early demos, marking the rise of Ukrainian Black Metal. I believe this band was next to **Nokturnal Mortum** back then (actually it is not mentioned when these recordings originally were summoned on tape). Musically the listener can easily find straight analogues between the bands. Raw, primitive Black Metal produced with minimal effort to keep the feeding is the keyword here. Not the most ugly muzak as the label promoters suggest, though – depressing melodies can be traced as well, sort of bleak but orchestral. I think the raw recording makes this release dirtier than it might have otherwise been if produced in a proper way.

To choose from these two demos which one to bring to a deserted island for the rest of one's life. I would pick the second one – *Fire of Hatred* for *Slay*, or *Slavor*: *Ravnodushmoje Nebo*, as it was originally titled. It sees the band in a progression, comparing to *Path of Wolf*. It has slightly mellower character, more melodic touches and a better sound (guitars are buzzing more the Black Metalish way), but this does not mean that it is worse. No – the composing ideas are pushed forward down there. And it is the most important thing. Aye, if you wonder how come they can sound like **Nokturnal Mortum**, then I can respond – both **Vargoth** and **Saturious** have participated in recording both the **Lucifugum** demos.

For the underground Black Metal humanoids this is a certain must, especially those adoring the Ukrainian, or Slavonic for that matter, school. For others I think this can evoke quite diverse thoughts, and for them it would be smarter to wait until a new official album is out.

Lucifugum, P.O. Box 80, 262024
Zhitomir, Ukraine

Tadas

LUNAR AURORA 10 Ars Moriendi Ars Metalli

My first acquaintance with this German band that is said to be one of the country's better Black Metal bands. As far as the image and sound chosen are concerned, yes, they seem to be devoted people, and even more – they have been doing this on a more or less underground level for more than six years now. What I mean is the truly haunting front-cover artwork – a great idea of a symbolic image of death. If we talk about the layout then, it is simple but effective, especially those pictures of the band-members. It was surprising to learn that they used *Hoernix* Studio in Vienna, notable by **Abigor** and **Summoning** records. I bet the result speaks for itself as the sound has much to do with **Abigor**. I still hesitate about claiming that the music would have a similar attitude and direction, but something is really in this air. Not that I am huge **Abigor** fan, though, yet **Ars Moriendi** has got its dues with this specific orientation.

Yes, it sounds, speaks, breathes, eats and drinks Black Metal, except for the rather original synth explosions appearing here and there, as if slicing the whole wall of thick sound in halves. In fact, I would not say that the synth orchestration would actually ruin your typical understanding of how this instrument (or effect if you want) can be used with raw exterminating Black Metal. But **Abigor** have presented this idea earlier, I presume. And when it comes to this album, it also has a specific dry feel to it, as if an aftertaste you do not necessary need of your Black Metal session. It signifies once again that **Lunar Aurora** is a die-hard crew of freaks that do whatever they want to, and they care only about those who really like what they do. No idea what was going on in their earlier albums, but they've got a session drummer on this. Just feel free to decide for yourselves, but if you are indifferent to the Austrian scene, this might be a plain disappointment.

Lunar Aurora, Weichingstr. 6, 83104 Ostemünchen, Germany

Tadas

LUNATIC GODS 9 The Wilderness Shindy

Faithful supporters of Slovakian atmospheric Death Metal have had to wait quite a while since the previous album of their heroes was unleashed, back in 1998. Then, after that, they also did quite an average 7"EP with a **Metallica** cover version in it, had a few line-up changes, which naturally slowed them down a bit. My stereo is, however, transmitting new songs by **Lunatic Gods** now, and it's a good thing to still hear them in good shape. Once they surprised the Metal world a bit with their

diverse Death Metal and all those influences involved. Yet on the third album in a row it does not sound as a surprise anymore, much rather as a natural thing you could expect from such a crew. I don't know why they add the Black and Doom tags to describe the experience, as to me it is purely atmospheric (melodic) Death Metal, and it should remain like that. Does it mean the band has progressed to write more focused songs and leave the various influences just as a bonus? In a way, yes... The best example to prove me right is the three tracks that end this album: two of the pieces are just instrumentals with some eastern flavour (they have sitar guest performance by some famous musician) and the title track of the album, that is quite like the others. I mean, such separation from the rest of the album emphasises their focus on certain things as well as tells the listeners that the ending part is some kind of a special thing to experience.

A new vocalist does not bring many novelties here, and that's good as I believe their formula of scream vs. melodic singing suits this particular music quite well. The main drawback on this album is that once you are aware of the previous albums by **Lunatic Gods**, there is a feeling that this material is already familiar to you. They ask 15\$ for CD and 9\$ for MC. A vinyl version must be out when you read this, too.

Lunatic Gods, c/o Pavel 'Hlax' Baricak, Jana Martakova 33, 036 08 Martin 8, Slovakia. hlax@stonline.sk, www.lunaticgods.sk

Tadas

MACBETH 7 Vanitas Dragonheart

Three years after the debut *Romantic Tragedy's Crescendo*, the Italian team returns on the melodic 'Gothic' Metal map, yet once again they deliver only an average product of a genre that's been so hyped the last five years or so. Thus it is just another typical experience, and absolutely not anything outstanding in the realms of sweet, poppy Metal music. Rhythmically this album reminds me of **Crematory** and a bit of **Lake Of Tears**, but vocally it is just another band in the never-ending stream. I would not bother mentioning any names to compare them to. There is a wide range of singing and grunting used, both male and female, yet it does not make the album any better. Even worse – I feel an eclectic touch here and there. When something is used in too huge amounts, the result gets worse than imagined. The girl is typically Italian: not very firm with the mic, having a noticeable accent and a familiar voice (à la early **Evol** and the rest of the Italian atmospheric Metal releases). I would not claim the singers as complete amateurs, but this attempt to be as diverse as possible is a thing I do not support at all.

If we look at how their music is structured, we will notice a much more intense approach, comparing to the first album. At this point I must admit their improvement, as that slow atmospheric performance with weak skills, is no longer appealing in the world. If we talk about our *Ad Arma!* crew, it never was, actually. This time around **Macbeth** at least deliver energetic rocky tempos to let a ray of variety in there. It works fine as background music. But that's it. In a scene with so many artists struggling for audience and glory, I see no reason to support such average releases as this is.

Tadas

MACH KUNG-FU 8 Teach a Chick to Dance Telstar

Rock 'n roll invasion initiated by **Telstar Records** into *Ad Arma!* pages continues. If their monitor says nothing to you, I can tell you this one hails from Japanese rock scene, adopting traditional American music with oriental interpretation. I think their country of origin is the cause of rather twisted and psyched out rock 'n roll that the listener finds on this record. It is based on tradition, and has quite a few cover tracks (yeah, this must be the trademark of that scene), but after all **Mach Kung-Fu** have a personal flavour that urges you to question: *where the hell do these guys come from?*

The vocalist screams like crazy, or sings with an exotic seasoning, most of the time, and they also have a specific echoed drum background, which I think comes from the aim to create a laid-back feeling. Then all those weird extras keep the groove moving. So, for a listener unfamiliar or bored with the 70's twist and blues, these guys can

offer a bit more alternative stuff, sort of like a 'modern' version of it. Nothing speaks of the 21st century over here, though, at least for me who rarely gets hold of something like this. I guess that's clear without saying, anyway.

Still, it's hard to understand which criteria should be considered as the main behind doing music that has been around for nearly 40 years, except for having some truly retro fun. But then I presume there should not be any competition at all, as most of rock 'n' roll bands do identically similar music, which was first performed in the world a long time ago. Still, if there are labels releasing it, there should be people interested in it.

Tadas

MALEDICTIVE PIGS 9

Bloodshed Cudgel

One of THOSE outfits – true purveyors of the style which they represent. In this particular case we're talking about plain traditional 90's Death Metal the US way. Nothing superfly technical or miraculous in its ideas, yet an ok slab, looking at it from a distance. If someone has not been a diehard deathster for ten years, he will probably consider *Bloodshed* as a good Death Metal release, and will go: *but it's not my cup of tea after all!* Well, I wouldn't dare to say this since the Metal of Death is one of the most important styles of music I've ever got involved in, so I do enjoy the third full album by these German butchers to some extent. The deep grunting vocalist, the massive guitar lines and the generally angry riffs (do I hear an early *Fleshcrawl* lick in there?) give it the necessary weight that reasonable Death Metal records must have. Yet on the other hand, after a few intensive listens to these nine compositions, I start to feel a kind of repetitiveness throughout their set. Maybe it happens due to the tons of other bands that write this music in the same or similar vein? Anyway, if a band is able to present itself as an outfit to be reckoned with, it must also try to write completely exceptional songs. That's something to think about before delivering a bunch of new tracks for the next album. Wouldn't it be smarter to sit longer with them and present a truly breathtaking record rather than to rewrap the same riffs again and again?

Maledictive Pigs is a band with a nine years history, but until now their albums have been issued under the banners of truly insignificant labels, so I'd consider this as the real start in wider realms of the Death Metal underground. At least that strength exposed by *Cudgel* leaves a hope that their bands will get what they deserve. Rather a fine record, but a bit one-sided, at the end of the day.

Maledictive Pigs, Romny Andrlich, PSF 110123, 14937 Luckenwalde 2, Germany. tel, fax (+49) 3371615771

Tadas

MANGLED 10

Most Painful Ways The Plague

What premonitions there could be after a very average - well, bad - debut album of this Dutch five-piece? Well, the recent appearing on the *Morbid Angel* tribute has risen up their actions a bit, but it was certainly not enough to drastically change opinion about their unimpressive music.

So, three years have passed and I cannot recognise their Death Metal anymore! But all the five guys still practise what they preach – they must have cemented as a team and brought in their true face with much heavier, tighter, and to-the-point form of Death Metal. The *Gorefest* influences are still with them (*Revelation of Soulside Pain*), but only those brutal and ominous (*Mindlöss + False era*), and not the mellow or badly imitated. The Doomy slowness has vanished from *Mangled's* music, which is for the better all 115%! Everything they greet thy ears with is speed, heaviness, double bass-drumming and sick, expressive riffing. The deep, guttural voice of *Pepijn* fits the rest of the heavy punch very well (a fairly good studio job was good assistance to that). Hardly recognisable music, indeed.

Another evident influence is the later *Cannibal Corpse*. Every now and then I catch myself wondering whether this or that is not just stolen from the Americans? But, indeed, my promo copy does not include *A Skull Full of Maggots* – a cover tune that *Mangled* has recorded as a bonus for the vinyl version of *Most Painful Ways*. Long live the vinyl, once again.

The only thing I'm not totally pleased

with are the lyrical themes. The texts deal with both gore and social issues, as well as dark stories. I would focus on the latter or at least stop questioning government indoctrination... Otherwise – a strong Death Metal album to obtain.

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Tadas

MANIPULATED SLAVES 10

The Legendary Black Jade Worldchaos

Surprisingly fresh blow of Metal wind from the Land of the Rising Sun! Deeply rooted in the primeval chaos of the 80's Thrash, this band manages to fit the modern league of artists with certain links to Swedish school of modern Deathrash, yet masterfully avoiding to become just another band in the bunch of one-faced outfits. It is questionable whether their origin has something to do with it, or the studio and the people behind the mixing table that have done a proper job, but I dare to state that with this sophomore effort *Manipulated Slaves* surpass many of their colleagues from Sweden. I think they cleverly made the sound much Thrasher than many modern kids that just tune down the guitars and lose any identity they might have had. And the same goes for the music itself that has just hints of the Death Metal era. It is necessary to speak about SWOBHM instead: I'm sure that the composers are huge fans of *Iron Maiden* and the likes. For instance, the instrumental *Man from the Horizon* sounds like a pure tribute to the Heavy Metal heroes – I even wonder whether it's a cover? Their basis is yet focused on *Slayer*, that's certain. The industrially tinged vocalist is not my cup of green tea, though, and it's a real shame as otherwise this band is very good. Well, he is supported by *Yoko* (from *Fatima Hill*) and another girl, a bit operatic vocals in Thrash Metal does not sound so bad after all!

The bio tells about the long path *Manipulated Slaves* have had to pave until their current level was achieved. It is, indeed, a band that has followed the underground way and finally came to the level of becoming a real force. Imagine – they have made a name with four demos in the last six years! So, this second album of the band must receive great response and interest, especially from those into modern Deathrash the Swedish way.

Tadas

MARCO FRANCINI 8

Echos Musica Maxima Magnetica

Uhh, this is so different from what you usually get under the tag of 'ambient'. They call it *real ambient*, and maybe they are right. This has nothing to do with the trend, this album creates a very individualistic feeling and it also means a special experience for the listener. I am sure 'love it or hate it' attitude towards such a sonic journey is quite common. I have caught a weird eastern touch in what they do, but is it just a way to express themselves better or a thought-out concept, remains unknown, at least to your reviewer. However, *Marco* and friends have nothing in common with modern kids, they like to be free from any frames.

The band-name would imply that it's a one man project, but no – there are five musicians involved in this experiment, and it could not be any more different as the entire album is recorded live at special, historical, sacred places of Italy that are also said to have incredible acoustics down there. They have used just their personal voices, recording them on several distances from the source, as well as lots of percussion, using it in various contexts. It is said they have also used shells and some material found on these places, but I still wonder what those materials could be. In spite of the minimal amount of instruments ('or instruments') used, the music is not empty or superfluous, and it is not too minimalist either. I guess these avant-garde elements or their improvisations make the material join together and fill the listener's room with various Mediterranean scents from the past. These guys could easily décor your avant-garde festival, so remember their name. Still it is a very special musical experience, meant for open minds exclusively.

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Tadas

MASTODON

Lifeflood Relapse

This command includes several ex-*Today Is The Day* members, the guitarist and the drummer, but luckily their new music is not as awfully painful (should I say painfully awful instead, huh?) anymore. There is much more dynamism and action in these songs, even if they still make circles around psychotic, torture-like rhythmic whirlwinds.

Yeah, *Mastodon* is another one of those modern grind bands that *Relapse* is so proud to introduce to the ever-changing extreme music world. Indeed, if you pick any new album of theirs, in most cases expect something around grinding schizophonia. Yet *Mastodon* is completed with plainly rock/Metal line-up – they do not have anyone working with samples or electronic instruments in the band. Maybe that's why these songs maintain a much more intense Metal spirit than anything else. A friendship with the groovy stuff occurs to be an additional spice in here.

What is close to the term 'modern' is the vocalist *Troy*. His voice is not human, it is packed with industrial effects and adds very well that alien feeling to this music. Later *Brutal Truth* can be a good reference, indeed, especially taking the non-Metal breaks here and there into consideration. I personally do not find this very appealing to my soul, and I wonder why such music is so popular in the States now, and does not have enough attention in Europe. America has always been pleased with sick and extreme art, so maybe it's a natural development from those old hardcore/grind days?

Lifeflood is an introductory release of the band, presenting five tracks clocking 15 minutes in total. The debut full-length should follow soon after this. By the way, none of these five tunes are re-recorded for it, so this material is absolutely exclusive, no waste of money.

Tadas

MAUDLIN OF THE WELL 9

Bath Dark Symphonies

Something absolutely spiritual comes this way. I have no means to foretell the core of this album, because it requires listening, not just talking about it. Plain, honest, consumption of music. That might be regarded as worshipping, but actually it is not. I am just trying to say that *Bath* has taken a hard and long way to be accomplished, and it has the same kind of effect on its listeners. It requires thoughtful and maybe sober (?) contact with the music.

The free, unrestricted manner of performing it is the main force that makes nerve cells revolutionarily explode, because in order to really get into the sonic-scape of *motW* you need at least a dozen of attentive listeners. And yet it is still that of an album will not appear in all of its magic colours – you never know. Well, I'm not sure, maybe those progressive arrangements within Doomy Death Metal realm require additional hallucinogenic means, but to understand what's happening on this one hour long album you need to have heaps of spirituality yourself.

Well, speaking from a personal experience, I mostly enjoy the dreamy, Metallesque progressions in here, but when it comes to the hippie-induced art rock – it is naturally not my cup of the well water. I know that the best thing is to perceive this kind of albums as a whole, but with their diversity it is really hard to make do that; if some moments are alien to you, you start to divide such works into separate parts, and eventually it might turn into another CD that just gathers dust on the shelf.

One of the weirdest experiences recently that must be experienced to be believed. For the lovers of the magic of numbers: the mark given above in this case is very relative.

Tadas

MAUDLIN OF THE WELL 10

Leaving Your Body Map Dark Symphonies

I reviewed both albums of these guys separately but by accident. I mean, many reviewers will certainly put them both in one review, because *motW* have issued two discs at once. But it is not a double album, these discs are separate efforts where each one sounds really special. Please take them individually and don't believe those who say that it is the same kind of an experience.

At least in my case listening to *Bath* I feel different than listening to *Leaving Your*

Body Map. As the mark above suggests, this effort sounds better to me, and yeah, it is not difficult to find out why: it's not too experimental. The tracks more or less keep the Metal way of delivering music. Useful also to mention what hides behind this wall of sound: dark Doomy Death Metal licks (alike old *My Dying Bride*), emotional trips near the *Opeth* region, and even slow *Morbid Angel* hints (*The Curve That to an Angle Turn'd*). Don't get me wrong, though – this has not diminished the range of emotions appearing in the music of this crew, and there still is room for melancholy as well as tragedy or innocence. But pieces in this album are put in a way that it creates a Metal feeling. I dare to predict it will have more attention among those into Metal, whilst *Bath* might be seen as a more experimental offering.

Yeah, must admit that the number of additional instruments used (on both releases) impresses me – who knows if all of them are able to enrich their musical data, though? But they have their cello, trumpet and flute trademark moments, too. That's what I'd call an interesting progression, even if it might be too much for some of you. Indeed, these American artists are only for the open-minded, so be careful about this astral Metal thing.

Tadas

THE MEADS OF ASPHODEL 9

The Excommunication of Christ Supernal Music

I can't get a clear point about this strange formation. They have a certain fascination towards medieval (and maybe even older) times, but the image portrayed inside the booklet of this album cannot but make me smile. Their armoury looks very modern, polished window-dressing, nothing authentic there (Ask me for more *Obtest* pictures, if you want to feel the difference, anyone)! Let alone those stupid pictures taking a piss and stuff.

Their music originates from Black Metal, yet they bring it to a level where it is neither dark or sinister. The quite a few dreamy steps, the vast Heavy Metal inspiration and the general thirst to include weird things in music make *The Meads* a special experience. They write thoughtful Anti-Christian lyrics that deal with old historical times, and to find there a joke is a hard task, I tell you. It all ends up at that your reviewer is fucked up about what to do with this record! Anyway, had they tried harder behind the mic, I think the result would have been more impressive. Now *Metatron* sings the way as if he was drunk in a pub shouting at the waiter to bring more beer! Those medieval atmospheres require another kind of vocal approach, I believe.

Comparing this record to their demo that I reviewed way back in 1999, the guys are about the same method to stick music together, but this time around they have added the keyboards in. However, all the demo songs (except the cover) are featured, and the exceptional *Pale Dread Hunger* among them. In spite of the fact that this is an interesting experience, with their next recording I expect a move forward from them.

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Tadas

MELECHESH 9

Djinn Osmose

Well, *Melechesh* isn't really a new acquaintance to me - or you, I reckon - for I have a feeling we all remember quite well their *As Jerusalem Burns* debut demo from '95. Not that the demo itself had been any particularly outstanding musical sensation, it wasn't, but *Melechesh* still were pretty much the first Black Metal oriented group to appear from the dust of the holy cities - a fact which did gain them some more unusual attention.

Having not heard their *Siege of Lachish* EP or the *As Jerusalem Burns... Al Intisar* CD, which comprises the demo-tracks in re-recorded versions, *Djinn* represents *Melechesh* to me as rather a fresh new band, although the very history of the band dates back to 1993.

Okay, so, the thing I really like about this band is the way they churn out their aggressive Metal, loaded with extremely strong connotations to Mesopotamian past glory. The ancient spirit shines through in every single melody and drum-pattern to such an unbelievably high extent that I think it's quite safe to say it's been a good while since there's been a Metal album with

this kind of cultural stress. If *Storm* ever were Norwegian Metal, then *Melechesh* is Mesopotamia's answer. Choose just about any of these tracks and push 'play', and you'll be able to track down the country of origin in 10 seconds. That's just a fucking remarkable achievement if you ask me. Moreover, a respectable one.

Latest news would be that their debut CD *As Jerusalem Burns... Al Intisar*, which was a re-release in itself, will be re-released again with a new layout, 2 bonus tracks, an old CD-R video clip and lots of other stuff by Spanish *War Is Imminent*, so do check that one out as well while you're at it.

Northwind

MEPHISTOPHELES 10

Modern Instinct's Purity Last Episode

Less of *Dimmu* influence and this German outfit would turn into a force to be reckoned with, I'm sure. Their third album and the first time I experience them.

As far as the biography is concerned, seems like they were heading towards the symphonic and bombastic direction earlier on, but then dropped it a bit in favour of rougher Metal arrangements. The majesty is still there, as the haunting keyboards rip through the sound picture every now and then, but it doesn't sound irritating, unlike all the average bands polluting the market. The Death and Thrash riffs bring forth some variety and heaviness, indeed.

Well, I can't escape comparing them to *Dimmu Borgir* again, since the Norwegians also use those straightforward riffs, but the music of the Germans is more chunky with unexpected breaks and fill-ins. They are a bit unlucky to have a hairless vocalist, though, joined in after the previous album was released. Well, I'm partly kidding, as his voice is ok (yet not genius), but he looks bizarre on stage as if irritating to bang his lacking-long-hair head. How do I know that? Yeah, the album contains a CD-ROM video for the track *Solarium*. It is damn well built live footage with some effects – looks great! Except for the vocalist's headbanging, that is, ha ha. And he also acts a bit like the band I've compared them to.

If the scene were smaller, no doubt that *Mephistopheles* would gain much more praise and attention. At least they should sell well among kids who have just discovered this cool thing called Black Metal. Whether it's really as Black as some people want it to be, I leave it for each and every one to decide. Anyway, the attempt is not bad at all, especially as far as tunes like *My Enemy Divine* go.

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www.mephistopheles666.com

Tadas

MERCENARY 7

Everblack Hammerheart

I ask you – how is it possible to review this positively, when there are plenty of excellent albums around, which all deserve to be accepted from the rest? What streams from the speakers again is a modern smell of Metal, and again it finds only my disappointment. No, it's not worth your attention, true warriors. Period. It's worth the attention of those who pretend to be Metalheads, after a few years turning their backs to this great artistic expression. No offence to the band, but their music is simply momentary. There is no doubt that a few years from now it won't be considered as progressive or challenging anymore, but maybe even outdated, huh. In the most horrible sense of this word.

On the one hand, *Mercenary* have stepped with one foot into extreme downtuned Metal of Death (drawing inspiration not least from *Hypocrisy* and their younger generation Swedish Deathrash kids), whilst in reality there is no Death Metal as such here. The reason is that these tracks are so much more modernised with alternative like shouting, screezing and high-pitched vocals, atmospheric or progressive elements and Heavy Metal ingredients that it's hard to call them brutal or deadly. Or to swallow them at once. Let alone those influences ruin the Death Metal line of *Everblack*. After a few spins several chunks of their music sort of stay in memory, but not a single song in its entirety. Maybe they suffer of the *too many ideas in one place* syndrome – it's not that easy to transform them all into songs.

Who knows, maybe this Danish team will learn to write better stuff in the next years, but I personally do not see any brightness in the future of this music. You'd better check the real Death Metal of *Immolation* or the old good *At The Gates*, man.

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Tadas

MERESSIN 9
Alkis
Dangus

Already the third album of the darkened Heavy Metal veterans, and finally it is out on an independent label, instead of being on major local companies that have been killing the band throughout the years by doing no promotion abroad, not to mention they failed to distribute **Meressin** albums properly in Lithuania as well. Hail and honour for the guys who have kept their faith in music and who have returned now with another album, another line-up, another music and another concept. No, they are not your next electronic, alternative Metal band now. On the contrary, **Alkis** is a conscious step back to the times when rock 'n' roll was evolving into hard 'n Heavy Metal. By all means, this is music for the old timers. New kids on the block, and even Metal followers from the 90's might have troubles with this album, unless they are ok with listening to 80's stuff at times.

Aside from the too dry and really archaic production, as well as a few ballad-like compositions that are not Metal enough in my opinion, this sounds pretty good.

***Jurbias** has been a good composer all these years, and when it comes to the more rockish - traditional way of handling Heavy Metal, he feels like a fish in water. Their earlier stuff was probably a bit influenced by the floating trends back in the days; **Meressin** tried to sound more Black and Thrash, yet now their stuff sounds so much more honest (not that they ever tried to follow any fashionable thing, though).

One more strange thing - the guys have moved closer to the traditional Heathen themes in their lyrics, and now that there are some chances for a worldwide distribution, they started singing in the native tongue. I think that clearly shows their relation to this dark Heavy Metal - only the feelings are the law, not the hunt for fame or money. The album's released on tape and CD - with pro-printed covers. Ask **Dangus** for the prices.

Meressin. c/o **Pydrinis Augulis**, P. Genio 15, 5610 Telšiai, Lithuania.
www.meressin.boom.ru

Tadas

MESMERIZE 8
Off the Beaten Path
Dragonheart

All these Italian bands sound very similar to each other. **Mesmerize** is one of them, sharing the same musical tastes as their colleagues. The riffs are typically Heavy/Power Metalish, the vocals are traditionally high and they sound indeed too loud, so it's easy to get bored during these 56 minutes of just another traditional Metal experience. In its entirety, the album's just next in line of the new wave of Heavy Metal, still on the wave. They remind me most their label mates **Drakkar**: so much enthusiasm, sweet (well, sometimes epic and dreamy) melodies and fantasy involved. Look, **Mesmerize** have existed since 1988, but their debut record was released ten years later - that is, when Heavy Metal has already returned, after the triumphant **Hammerfall** debut. I mean, their dedication might be a thing to respect, but if there was no hype with it, they wouldn't have released those albums, including this, or at least would have attracted smaller amount of people.

I can also argue such a sceptic position by the sound, which is too light for my taste. It sounds in the 80's way, and maybe that was their intention - to sound as close to the tradition as possible, but anyway... check out the new **Iron Maiden**, **W.A.S.P** with their heaviness... it sounds real good. And **Mesmerize** are falling apart from those bands, which can charm only by using a hard-hitting production. On the other hand, I can't speak for the whole Metal community - maybe someone will like this record more than the latest **Helloween**, for example.

One thing is certain, though - there are plenty of Heavy Metal bands and even more albums released recently, so to pick the best from them is not easy. Too bad that many bands use the same clichés, so it's easy to get bored to the entire movement.
www.mesmerize.it

Tadas

MIND SNARE 8
Hateful Attitude
Psychic Scream

Would you keep trying to break through

after releasing demos for ten years? It still happens, no matter what people talk about the musicians who keep doing it for the sake of Metal. With **Mind Snare**, I think they have not realised yet that the 1999's **Hegemony** MCD and this full-length are the new era for them, after seven (!) demo tapes, even if their label is located far away and cannot compete with the major underground corporations established in Europe and the States. This is like the next sequel after so many years, but the main idea is still underground music and the ways of expression.

With their grinding, brutal Death Metal **Mind Snare** fits in 30 minutes, and a longer CD would sound a bit too monotonous, I'm afraid. Their trouble is to write music that has a personal touch and a few more highlights. In general it sounds ok, yet the listener cannot basically distinct one composition from another. It's good that the guitar-sound is massive enough, creating a solid wall of sonic terror, otherwise **Gig's** voice would simply dominate, and the front-man should work harder on this feature. I remember several Death Metal bands that had a weak sound whereas the vocalist was ruling the sound-picture. How poor the final result was...

I certainly understand that **Mind Snare** aim at sounding dark, intense and extreme, but to reach the **Inmolation** or **Vader** level they still need to pass a few circles of hell. To reach another state of mind. Another thing they should think about is the actual recording, or rather the mixing - I think some more catchiness in between the instrumental carpet would add more charm to this low-tuned sickness. Yet it's not the final hour for them, though.

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Tadas

MISTELTEIN 10
Divine. Desecrate. Complete
No Fashion

A moniker that says nothing. Or it gives a wrong picture about the artist. I wouldn't believe it's anything different than your traditional Heavy/Power Metal band. No reasonable logo on the front-cover, and the artwork looks terrible. Either I am too demanding this night, or this kind of visual expression is dealing with modern art - I am not sure whether it's post-modern then. The story is that this album will certainly not sell in shops due to its outlook. But there is another angle in here - the music. Some people are already familiar with this band, after checking out their last year's debut, others - like myself - experience the Swedish killing machine for the first time. Yet sooner or later everyone must admit the ambitions of these guys as they are enormously huge, surpassing your ordinary new-kid-on-the-block situation easily.

Misteltein are about much more extreme pack of Metal than I had first thought. The six people working with it are responsible for their untamable brainchild, roughly identified as Black Death Metal with strong and dramatically advanced symphonic approach. Yes, **Dimmu Borgir** is the first name that comes to mind, but wait a bit with your straightforward comparisons and sighs of despair. **Misteltein** keep a certain distance from these stars. I do believe they are trying to write tracks within the given genre on their own, yet it's not always that successful. The production of **Berno Studios** is also to blame for the similar type of sound-scape of extreme Metal. Less impressive are the vocal abilities, as the screaming tones on this disc are too typical for a Scandinavian Black Metal singer. Though, yet the majestic composing of the tunes does satisfy enough.

I would give this Satanic symphony even a higher grade, if it wasn't for those drawbacks... anyone willing to help the guys with the next album's artwork? Contact **No Fashion**...
www.misteltein.cjb.net

Tadas

MOONSORROW 11
Suden Uni
Plasmatica

Rather an unexpected turn of **Moonsorrow**. They have left the raw Black Metal influences behind and now fully explore the epic regions of dark Heathen Metal. And by this I also mean that their old **Enslaved** comparisons are out of the question, too. It took me just a few spins to realise that this new direction suits them pretty fine, and if you calculate in mind that

from now on **Moonsorrow** is a real band (I mean, they have got a drummer), it equals to a truly vast experience - the wolf's dream. I still have in mind one example of this kind of artists, though - the Norwegian **Windir**. Yeah, accordion and mouth-harp strengthen the feeling that both bands have something in common. Hard to say if the Finnish or the Norwegian guys do it better, but I think those who like one band will without doubts enjoy the other, too.

Don't get me wrong, though. **Suden Uni** has its own intense parts, yet both the production and composing relies on huge didactic proportions that bring the raw feeling of Metal in the background. This might have played a trick on me when I stated they have left intensity once and for all, but not a big trick, though. Let's face it, **Moonsorrow** are more conceptual with what they do now, so it's obviously better than their last demo. I think if certain people (especially from the hardcore BM milieu) slag down all Pagan Metal, they are certainly wrong stating that this Metal sub-style would be worthless. Just listen to such northern bands as this, and dare not to argue that it has no folk and historical feeling in there. Another question then is that the music of **Moonsorrow** is not as dark or evil, in fact, it is even positively amusing at times (**Paganajubla**, handclaps by **Thyrane** members exclusively!), but that's ok by all means.

Ok, not to make them feel as stars, there is room for improvement, but this album is good enough!

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Tadas

MORTEM 10
Filicide
Musickness / Metal Agen

Russian people keep surprising me (check out the **Izakaron** review). You will never comprehend the Russian soul. They simply refuse to be the masters of their own destiny, and plainly refuse to improvise. As if there was a fear to be original pre-ailing in all these releases. Or is it the label that has something to do with this copycat campaign?

However, **Mortem** is the tightest and the best shaped plagiarising band from Russia I have heard recently. Should I mention the band and the album they pay a vast tribute to? Of course, here you are: ladies and gentlemen, **Tomb of the Mutilated, pt. II!** Heh, **Mortem** have got as close a sound to the original as possible - I have never heard anything like it! Well, without close to identical music it would not work anyway, but the production means a lot on this album; the same choppy guitar-sound, the low guttural barking and the always straightforward Death Metal feel. The guys only incorporated a few more melodic riffs that were common on **The Bleeding**, but that's as far as their 'variations' go.

Well, I am not trying to assure anyone how bad this is, am I? Because this is not bad! **Mortem** would make a name in the States, I am sure. Or if their label would push them hard, they could wildly break in the brutal Death Metal market. That's why I give this album a high rating, and I would have evaluated it even higher if there was a real drummer, not so terribly childish cover art and a poor CD design. One or two highlights instead of all tracks sounding ok, and a more intelligent effort with the lyrics. The programmed drum-sound is close to excellent, that's true, yet I think a real drummer would easily perform his parts, and with a live feeling. Those qualities draw them back a bit, but do check them out, anyway.

Tadas

MOURNING BELOVETH 10
Dust

A tragedian experience? Smells like **My Dying Bride**? Want to taste it? Why not! In spite of the certain influence, this is pretty good music and certainly an album worth hearing. Yeah, it is self-released, but I believe the guys simply do not want to be buried by some careless label, and do think that it's no trouble to lay the path to success ahead of themselves on their own.

When **Darven** told me that they play Doom Metal, I thought I'd hear some traditional Metal in here, and was partly right. But on the other hand, **Mourning Beloveth** incorporate deep, growing vocals that are a pure proof of their modern approach as well. Well, for some younger people the early 90's might not be modern anymore... whatever. This five-piece merges the 80's and 90's, but keep preaching the message of Doom. Dare not

to trace Death Metal influences, though - it is just the vocal-style, and it works out great in their case. If we return to the clean chanting, I found a clear parallel with the British Doomsters **Solstice** in here, because the vocalists of both bands have a similar pitch.

You don't have to worry about an average recording quality, by the way, as this recording was done in **Academy with Mags** producing. It is probably the most appropriate place to record music like this, and there is nothing to be disappointed with the spirit caught inside the studio's walls.

As a drawback I would mention a bit too similar structure of their long songs that in 61 minutes turn monotonous at times. But it's their Doom, so why should anyone bother? I would have not mind more mid-tempo breaks, though, like for instance the closing riff of **In Mourning My Days**. Well, it's like **MDB** again, but it sounds fuckin' cool.

I presume that there are not many bands left exploring this genre, so if you seek for more music like this, you can't go wrong with **Dust**.

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Tadas

MURDER RAPE 9
Evil Shall Burn Inside Me Forever
Evil Horde

My previous experience of their stuff was **Celebration of Supreme Evil**, the debut album, dating back to 1994. To miss the noticeable progress of the band would be but underestimation of the musicians and incompetence of yours truly. Seven additional years of composing and performing mean a lot, especially when there are no forced shifts from one musical extremity to another. **Murder Rape** have always been stalwart to the darkest of Black Metal, and this CD is no exception, naturally.

They were one of the pioneers of the Southern American sound that is always so dim and thick, leaving the listener with no choice but to find out what hides behind these shadowed veils through numerous spins, or otherwise he or she must simply guess. I mean, the band-members do open their personalities through the images and lyrics, but they also create an aura around their musical work. Generally, I feel a strong connection to their way of thinking, musical expression, visual and aesthetic manifestations and the progress achieved through years.

Oh yes, they are faster and more diverse these days. Comparing to **Marduk** or **Dark Funeral**, it is still mid-tempo Black Metal, but yet it is so much more vital if we compare the new songs to the material on the debut. **Murder Rape** have made an attempt to create compositions that differ from each other, and well - from that angle, this full-length sounds more completed, it has a blood-running feeling. Yeah, have you heard this team go so dramatically melodic as exposed in **Black Hatful Melody**? On the other hand, the effort as a whole is too short for me - 29 minutes with such diversity would require a few extra songs. But, in general, I am voting for this Brazilian horde, not against. Let the message of Satan fall down the earth!

Murder Rape. PO. Box 4490, Curitiba - PR 82.501-970, Brazil.
murderrape@evilhorde.com

Tadas

MUTILATION 9
Black Millennium (Grimly Reborn)
Drakkar

I don't like this 'resurrection' policy. On the previous **Mutilation** album it was clearly stated that the main composer had dies, and that disk was like a tribute to him. Well, in reality it happens that the guy is alive and well - grimly reborn, that is. It was a temporal death on just the creative level. And he is so proud to return now, to fight again, spending in prior four years of total inactivity in the Black Metal field. Well, if you ask me - a rebel soul should never ever think about stopping or fall into contemplative oblivion. The essence of our beloved music is endless upheaval. So I wish he'll spread the plague firmly and continuously from now on.

Most obviously, **Mutilation** haven't turned away from the music they have been playing all the time, and the feeling of perversion is still there. Different from other French extremists, they include more harmonious riffs into this dirty pool of blood, but these are of rather a melancholic and misanthropic kind. I think **Celestia** is

doing the same type of atmosphere, more or less. Well, at times it sounds a bit unbalanced together with the faster and more aggressive approach which is also present here. But I guess sick and distorted presentation of reality has universal basis within this music.

It is, indeed, not the most common record. Even the most dedicated people might have trouble to catch the idea behind a few of these compositions. It depends on what is the listener's relation to this horde, or what is the first reaction he has about this. I personally have mixed feelings about this album, but I really was waiting for something more special.

Tadas

MUTILATION 8
Black Millennium (Grimly Reborn)
Drakkar

And here's my view. The French cult Black Metal purist **Mutilation** has survived 'time and death to meet you' - as they put it - which might be true, but does nevertheless not justify the weakness of this CD.

That's right, I'm not saying the band don't have a clue, they do, but if you consider their reputation and relatively long journey in the scene, I think they ought to be well able to create something that would at least stand out. And that's not happening on this CD. They do have some fine ideas musically as well as lyrically that could really startle you - somehow making me think about **Dead & Mayhem** - but these ideas are carried out so amateurishly that simply too much of the potential magic gets lost along the lines, which is a shame. I believe 'unprofessional' is the word fumbling for.

Bare imagination just isn't enough these days, so **Mutilation** has to survive even more time and death to bring us next time a product where at least some universal laws concerning song-structure are followed. As for now, the spirit's there but the music's half-finished.

Northwind

MYRDDRAAL 9
Blood on the Mountain
Deicus

This is not a usual Black Metal record. I tell you why - it has plenty of acoustic intermezzos together with the raw, traditional Metal of Blackness all the way through its 52 minutes. This kind of a blend is not an easy to get used to. It might sound rather awkward, depending on what you expect from a Black Metal record. If cudgelling sonic carnage is all you crave for, then forget about **Myrddraal**. If notable variety within the frames of Black Metal, then you better knock their doorbell at the earliest convenience. The acoustic guitar is not the only 'weird' ingredient, though - this band uses hymnal clean voice choruses here and there, perturbing the initial idea of being rude, nasty and primitively simple. Yes, there are a few primordial, aggressive tunes as well. Although, when it comes to the faster blast-beat oriented playing, **Myrddraal** still need more practising. I mean, their ideas are fine but easily predictable (a kind of northern flavour reflects upon the album). The performance is just ok, nothing hyperstunning here.

I would not agree with the label's opinion that it is the most extreme and rawest thing an Aussie band has ever come up with. There have been so many truly sick bands down there the last couple of years that those acoustic things simply do not manifest for myself as 'the rawest' or 'the most extreme'. Indeed, this is Black Metal of another, not so widespread, kind in that land.

Oh yeah, one intriguing track is **What Once Was**, which is a tribute to early **Burzum**, as the title might imply. I think it is a cool contribution, even though the main theme is so close to **Det Som Engang Var**... All in all, an ok debut by this four-piece, but not the groundbreaking album, yet.

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Tadas

MYSTICA 9
Blinded by My Blood
Painkiller

Well, you should certainly be aware of the fact that this band has a female guitarist, namely **Cathy**, and that the music is nothing like **Esoteric**, or even **Amorphis** for that matter. **Mystica** means energy, ferocity and full blasting speed, where

guitar-lines are very, if not the most, important factor. Or have you ever heard such intense Black/Death Metal riffing from a girl? I personally haven't. A natural wonder: how do they look in a live situation? Too reasons to go to their show: to see her in full rage banging and stuff, and to check out how she manages to get hold of the energetic vibe as there is no other guitarist in their line-up. But enough about *Cully*, really.

This album is sort of a mix between those charismatic extreme Metal sub-styles, including Thrash, and Death Metal with melody. Otherwise, the eight songs here have a much more straightforward character than all the melodic Death bands have altogether, and yet it is not purely Black Metal either, at least not the way I understand it. *Blinded by My Blood* can be taken as the next effort to combine all that Metal buzz in order to create some kind of a new, modern sound within the context. But, in fact, the fans of pure Black or Thrash may let it go without deeper interest, and I think this can be very important for their recognition. If you care about aggression as well as fiery melodies, then stop at this album.

Like their sound, where the rhythm-section is given a certain driving force, pounding behind the rest. The screaming voice of *X-Noise* sometimes does not fit the Thrashy episodes, and the low Death growl then acts as a useful alternative, but it is not properly accented.

To sum it up, I would enjoy them much better with less jumps from Thrash to Black to Death and vice versa. But this record is rather fine, anyway.

Mystica, c/o *X-Noise*, Rue Wauters 54, 7160 Chapelle, Belgium, tel. (+32) 476228213, enxnoise_be@hotmail.com, www.multimania.com/mystica

Tadas

NAGELFAR 10

Virus West *Ars Metallii*

Another *Kettenbund* band that has moved to *Ars Metallii's* roster together with *Lunar Aurora*, and much like their colleagues they keep on waving high the Teutonic Black Metal flag, not moving an inch from the original idea to keep it as German as possible. I mean both, the lyrical delivery and that definite sound that has been worked through the six years and three albums. Comparing to the previous *Srongorrb* material, this effort sounds more natural and surely much more matured. I remember that earlier *Nagelfar* was a band with good ideas but not always knowing how to use the ideas. An album must be knit into a whole, only then it manifests as a powerful act of black art. I think *Nagelfar* were earlier lacking of the united power that the *Virus West* songs truly gained in.

The songs are again kept lengthy, so before each of them draws to a close, the artists usually put a handful of riffs there. Even if they musically have nothing in common with *Dawn*, this ability to keep the interest with long tracks is common for both of them, as well as for many other bands. The guys use blast-beats very often, creating a feeling of a strong and uncompromising act, but as a balance they present quite a few clean, epic singing parts, not falling down into the cheap Pagan trend or into having too a soft approach to Heavy Metal. The dramatic atmospheres are worked out here and there as well. It is different from the previous album's industrial tinge that was just an experiment, which has been abandoned on *Virus West*. And maybe for the better, as far as such hardcore Black Metal is concerned.

You may ask then if *Nagelfar* are able to pretend to the Black Metal elite? Well, maybe not yet, as to achieve that status the band needs to jump above its abilities, or break the once invented rules. The Germans are just good composers now. Nothing to speak shit about, though.

Tadas

NARCOTIC GREED 9

Twice of Fate *World Chaos*

I've occasionally bumped into their debut album recently, which was released more than six years ago, so it was a nice surprise to realise that the Japanese Thrashers are back after this long hiatus. Consider it strange if you will, but the music has not changed drastically, which forces me to conclude that the guys are doing *Narcotic Greed* simply because they could die for Metal. Well, a few songs here do have a calmer Heavy Metallesque pace, and their clothing in the promo-shots is not so

convincing, but that's as far as the surprises go.

There is always the 'why' question – so, what happened after 1994? But like with every band, it just might happen. One thing is clear from the booklet: only two members are left from the *Fatal* line-up, and the band has a new bassplayer and a drummer. Briefly, just welcome *Narcotic Greed* back again, and enjoy their simple but effective Heavy/Thrash record, which actually does not have any big pretensions, but stands fairly proud on its own.

Why the hell *Twice of Fate* is still not the breakthrough album, then? Simple: it does not have the feeling when you put it on your CD player and say to yourself – yes, *this is what I was looking for a long time!* *This hits a dumb ass!* It basically requires a complex reasoning: the Heavy Metal parts are not as strong that they could alternate the fast Bay Area Thrashing. The Thrash parts would be great if it wasn't for the vocalist that goes too high, and if they had a harder-hitting production. In a way this is too a sophisticated Metal record to be like an engine, especially for a Thrash fan. I know I claimed that this is simple, but I didn't say genuine. Maybe *Narcotic Greed* would have made a tighter record with less variation as well. Hell, then again, such suppositions are way too subjective. Just imagine this with *Chuck Billy* on the vocals... I think the result would have been quite different.

Narcotic Greed, c/o *Hiroshi Yamashita*, 6-19-6, Yotosato, Higashi – Yodogawa, Osaka 533-0013, Japan, tel./fax (81) 663290912, scn6666@ao.com, <http://members.aol.com/scn6666/berhtml>

Tadas

NARGAROTH 8

Rasluka Part II *No Colours*

Finally our paths have crossed, after all the controversy I found in other publications that have reviewed the previous releases of this unholy German team. This is their mini album – the fourth official release as far as I know. No special reason is given why this has ended up as a mini album, and why it bears such a title. For those who know Russian language, it may evoke some idea, *Rasluka* means *parting*, and I see some thought behind it, as well as behind the cover picture and the music; both corresponding to the idea of parting ways with something warm or family friends-related.

So, the music. Yeah, it is depressive and certainly not happy-go-lucky Black Metal. Recorded with lots of distortion and reverb, yet performed in a good studio it seems. Still I have been searching for stronger emotions related to those moods of parting, and couldn't find them really well expressed. Some moments here and there do keep the nihilistic life-hating origin of Black Metal, but I guess it can still be improved, the feeling. Well, everything depends on how you put those riffs together, and what drum parts and vocal tone you manage to add. *Nargaroth* is hard to be judged by individual instrumentalists, as the guys are quite ok. But the band as a whole makes me think about just slightly better than average team that struggles among the rest of the groups, fighting for Black Metal.

The closing... *Vom freien Willen eines schwarzen Einborns* (don't ask me what this means) must be the best track, because it has a strong main riff and the vocalist suits the music the best there... Still I have to wonder about their previous stuff, and look forward for more tight songs in the future.

Tadas

NEBRON 7

The Message *Dark Horizon*

When it comes to Black Metal Hungary, I think there hasn't been a one single band throwing even a least bit of challenge to *Tormentor*, who clearly dominate their territory, even today.

Nebtron here throws that challenge with their technical yet melodic Black Metal, but like others, they fail. This 70 minutes long Black Metal journey is altogether rather boring and will definitely lose its listeners after a couple of tracks.

Nebtron, c/o *Levul Balazs*, Somogyi b.u. 62, H-6800 Hodmezovasathely, Hungary.

Northwind

NECROMANTIA 10

Covering Evil (12 Years Doing the Devil's Work) *Black Lotus*

So they've been with us twelve years now. Sure, you and me have noticed that there is such a phenomenon as *Necromantia* much later than 1989, but that's just the aim of this CD – to let everybody know when the band was actually started! In my interview I tried to make *Magnus* explain why they decided to make this kind of a compilation at the band's age of twelve, but maybe it's not so important. At this stage *Necromantia* is a well established band, which has achieved quite a bit but remained loyal to their way of feeling music. I consider *Malice* as their miniature rebirth, even if it might be just a superfluous opinion. And this compilation as if marks the connection between that first huge chapter and the new era, which has just started for the band.

Well, why do I look at this double album as a compilation first and foremost? There is another – maybe the most important part in there. That's the cover tunes of *Demon*, *Iron Maiden*, *Manowar* and *Running Wild*, respectively. If it's *Necromantia*, it's clear that the music's gonna be special. What would you expect when they cover those giants of Heavy Metal? Right – a plain individual approach to the tracks. I guess they just can't make it average with those two bass guitars, huh. Every tune sounds special. *Magnus* tries his best to alter the Black Metal scream or the dark grunting poetry. What's left for him with *Number of the Beast* or *Demon's Whip*, huh? Sure, it can't be as genius, but it is special, indeed. I am sure all *Necromantia* fans will appreciate these attempts. Not to forget either that there is a brand new song *My world*. *Your hell* as well, kept mainly in the *Malice* vein: hateful, furious and obscure! Returning back to the compilation tracks, it's hard to make a list of favourite *Necromantia* tracks, at least for me, so it's hard to have some and not other tracks included. I still think the best way is to listen to their whole albums. But for a younger kid this can be a great opportunity to learn how Hellenic Black Metal sounds. Can't wait for the next full-length album!!! Can you?

Tadas

NECROSCHIZMA 9

Erupted Evil *From Beyond*



Unholy hell! This is ultimate Metal history! I've picked again the debut issue of *Deathmare* in my hands... who would believe it was released 12 years ago? Well, for all of you who don't know, *Deathmare* was the very first Death/Thrash Metal fanzine in Lithuania, which inspired so many young guys to pay attention to heavy music, and start writing their own fanzines over here, including yours truly the servant... so, #1 of *Deathmare* had a short article and some lyrics of the band called *Necroschizma*. ... that was the first time I heard of them. The editor was going to interview them for #2, but they had already split up by then. Who could have thought it would take twelve fuckin' years until their music starts to stream from my speakers, ah? Today I feel like discovering Metal again. Yes, of course it has taken me a few spins to realise this album can NOT have a proper production and technique of playing; it was recorded by a completely underground band! And also it is hard to believe they could have lots of supporters, due to the unusually heavy and morbid music. A la *Hellhammer* circa 1983! But this re-release justifies the effort. The Dutch team was and still remains a cult.

Hellhammer was dead a long time by then, Thrash and Death Metal were changing places in Metal charts, while *Necroschizma* explored their highly distorted Blackened Doom! Barbaric music, gruesome growling and morbid messages. Nothing else to say, except maybe that this tribute like CD contains of *Erupted Evil* demo from 1989 and their live performance with a few tracks that were going to be recorded for the second demo, but that was never completed. Sure, here you go with *Triumph of Death* as well.

Recommendable for *Necroschizma* (and maybe slow torturing Doom/Black) fans only! Others will get bored, and it's their right.

Tadas

NEMESIS AETERNA 8

In Misery Born *Optic Data*

Very dark sound on this CD. I think it's a cause of both: the limited abilities whilst recording *In Misery Born*, as well as their attitude that is like to have a feeling of sullen death crawling in when listening to or playing this music. They call it Dark Death Metal, but I am sure many distros and promoters around will put a Black Metal tag on it. But let's face it – the band knows better how to treat their music. Besides, I feel fine with Dark Death Metal as well.

It's easy to describe the whole effort with just one word – Brazilian. Think about those obscure Southern American bands that usually have or had so a dim sound and close to an identical feeling that cannot be mistaken to European or US Dark Metal. So, it is a surprise to hear a Spanish band paving this direction. It's more about that feeling than the techniques in music. And I have to say that the atmosphere does present itself here, especially in a few distinguishable compositions, like... *From These Depths*. Seemingly the vocalist *Regius* has much to do with this identification I have made, at least he makes me think about *Mystifier* without any hesitation.

This is their first recording after an inception three years ago. No idea if they look upon it as a full-length CD (it has 7 tunes and 27 minutes), but everything is professionally manufactured, and the music is worth at least to bear the name of a mini album. And even if this is just the initial demonstration of their abilities, it still receives my respect to some extent. I would like it to be more technical, and the production could shine better, but this is still a good promise, if you are ok with the obscure Metal category.

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Tadas

NENIA 10

La Casa del Dolore *Beyond...*

This world is a pretty dark and hopeless place. That's what *Nenia*, a psychic ritual project from Italy, basically tries to get inside your head.

I have to say *Nenia* is extraordinarily extravagant at creating these very dark, dim images of no hope, and *La Casa del Dolore* unquestionably does surpass most *Cold Meat* stuff - as indirectly indicated also by their label.

What strikes my fancy most is the utterly haunting atmosphere that will leave you bordering on the edge of dream and reality for quite a while after the 40 minutes are well behind. I really can't remember having underwent a dark ambient album of such intensity and magnitude recently. The use of Italian language disturbs me a little bit as I don't understand a word, but, on the other hand, it also contributes to the mystical edge of the album.

Give *Nenia* a fair shot if you wanna dream about your funeral and the way the chilling winds will whip your forgotten and lonely grave.

Northwind

NOCTERNITY 9

En Orla *ISO666*

This album needs no press-sheet, because the music and the CD booklet speak better than any additional information source for the journalistic legion ever could. This aspect really surprised myself, this complete concept that explains all why's and what for's.

Ok, let me share bits and pieces of what *En Orla* represents. Basically, this is a story of an undersea kingdom with a certain mythological aspect to it, and darkened fate involved none the less. It would be trivial to say that it's about a sea that steals people's lives, but you can hear the plain truth in this! Of course, the concept is completely poetic and inspires to make some relative comparisons - much like reading a good literature story does. I hear you screaming now that Austrian *Korovakill* also returned with water crux on their latest album, so seems like this is not so unique, after all. But then let me utter that water as well as other elements are unique in general, and when Metal musicians mostly deal with fire, it's always a challenge to check such a dark

concept about water.

Here we arrive to music. First thing to say is that *Korovakill* delivers it much more convincingly - avant-gardish, whilst this Greek band paves the more traditional Black Metal way. A curious thing is that the album is distanced from the typically Hellenic school of sound, and resembles the more universal melodic/symphonic sub-genre. Still harsh and uncompromising enough, although it's not necessarily a better solution. *Nocternity* must look deeper to earn an own niche for themselves in darkness, to rise up from the sonic depths of this primitive yet heart-filled creation. It may be the production of this album that levels them with other bands as well.

Anyway, a courageous attempt that must be followed by another, yet more comfortable, album. Let's wait!

Nocternity, Alkinoou 21, 10443 Athens, Greece.

Tadas

NOKTURNAL MORTUM 11

Lunar Poetry *The End*

Yeah, always cool to get a re-release you personally have been waiting for. And it's certain that I am not the only one to consider this debut album, recorded and released for the first time on tape back in 1996, better than let's say the worldwide acclaimed *Goat Horns*. In other words – this re-release on CD is fully approved here. You know *Lunar Poetry* has witnessed many tape re-releases, again and again, some of them even being bootlegs, but I am pretty sure that the sales for this latter CD edition are none the less good, if not even beating up certain albums the band had done before, because this album has marked a name of *Nocturnal Mortum* that appeared with an own face in the scene. Today it may sound a bit more usual, but this album still sounds refreshingly good, and it is hard to ignore it. Some slight *Emporer* influences are already there, like on a few of their next releases as well, but this time around the guys have been not so intense. I would use the term 'atmospheric', if it wasn't for its trendy meaning nowadays. The folk touch is also more noticeable.

I hope those who have never heard *Lunar Poetry* before will use this chance, and realize that I am talking about a great experience here, in spite of the fact that it may be different from *NeChrist*. Yes, as a matter of fact, the latest studio effort of this Ukrainian horde remains the best, but those early recordings are good on their own. You may be slightly surprised by the whispering *Tiamat*-like voice on *Autodafé / Barbarian Dreams*, or *Sorrow of the Moon* track. Yes, my dear, the absolutely punishing cover of the... *Randemonium* era *Celtic Frost*! Actually, this is one of this album's highlights. There is also an exclusive bonus, never published before track *Return of the Vampire Lord*.

To put it briefly – this album has already an honourable place in my collection. And it's nothing to miss for you either!!!

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Tadas

NO RETURN 9

Self Mutilation *Listenable*

One certain feeling for the start – I cannot help myself drawing parallels between this French band and the Brazilian *The Mist*. Do you remember? That band was vastly promoted a few years ago by *Repulse*, as if it was the new big thing coming from Brazil, even with an original *Sepultura* member, and bla, and more bla bla. It was the fourth or something album by the band, but nobody had heard them before on a wider scale. And after all, it happened to be quite an average and typical Thrash release. *No Return* are no newcomers either, for they have been around since 1989, releasing four albums until now, making huge things in the past, like recording with *Tom Morris*, *Marquis Mark*, touring with *Motorhead*, *Edge of Sanity*, *Sacred Reich*... But who the hell has heard about this band in Europe and/or elsewhere in the world? Just a few. That's about home-oriented promotion. It's always surprising to discover another old band for the first time. Ok, now they are in the right channel (*Listenable*) to spread their name worldwide.

They have another thing in common with *The Mist* – the music, which is at some point similar to earlier *Sepultura*.

But it's here where the similarities end—**No Return** are a head better and actually a more intense Thrash commando than **The Mist** ever was. Yeah, you'll get a dose of Deathly Thrash, so to say—straight in the face, as the adrenaline spurts out of the speakers, playing album aloud. What disappoints me is the vocal style of the newly recruited **Steve**—he is way too modern and balances on the hardcore edge too much. Common Thrashers, what's so attractive in that ugly hardcore? **No Return** contribute to a new way of Thrash with their samples and horror-invoking synth (check the closing *Sect*) as well, and I have nothing against that (well, maybe just a remark that it will never beat up the 80's class). Their instrumental sonority is solid and sticking to headbanging quality, but those vocals make it just half as good.
www.noreturn-web.com

Tadas

NOTANGA 9
Lauki Liko Nebedang
Dangus

After a few years of playing live, creating new stuff and rehearsing, the all-star line-up (can it be possible in Lithuania, you may ask, huh, but yeah, there are musicians from **Obtest**, **Anubi**, **Girnu Giesmės**, **Caduceus**, **Donis**, involved here, to name but a few) spews forth this experimental project, memorising it all digitally!

The first disappointment is that it includes no tracks from those performed live, the tracks that have made a name for **Notanga**. It's one of their points to move on and to think as progressively as possible, but *Alyraai*, *Lietuva* and others were, indeed, fuckin' great numbers! A pity. Maybe next time then? Another remark would be that I can't hear enough heaviness here! The guitar is buried in the mix. Emphasis is put on heavy techno beats and the hard loaded programming. The guys have told that it's difficult to decide what kind of a mix to make as this kind of music is way too new, unexplored. But the techno beat and distorted guitars are not the whole picture: you will hear ethnic instruments in action, like bagpipe and sax, and then you'll hear a wide range of vocals, from shouting to more calm disco-like singing. Aye, I can certainly swallow the entire album, in spite of it's very progressive nature (if we talk about music as a long-standing thing), except the track *Kosmogromas*. That is utter disco crap! Hate it! And the feeling it brings, too. I see no relation with it and the rest of the material, based on the 'revive Prussian values' campaign. It must be based on personal experience, but well...

Anyway, I swear you haven't heard anything like this album, so better rush and see for yourselves if this is of interest for thy taste, and if that call to learn about Prusa finds the answer in thy heart. Ask the price from the label. A CD-r edition with pro-printed booklets.
mckarui@ dangus.net

Tadas

OBSIDIUM OBLIVION 8
Obscurum Oblivion
In Vision Muzik!

Underground archivists should remember them for rather an average album some five years ago (being one of the first *Hammerheart Records* albums). Then **Obscurum** has fallen into oblivion. It might seem that the mediocre response to their starter has caused a loss of interest to prepare the next sequel. Right, the Dutch label fired them as soon as the album sold badly. Seemingly labels were the reason for this hiatus, but as the credit notes of the new album show, this stuff was recorded back in 1997! So, in fact, the Hellenic outfit is on the track again, finally offering what they have composed a long time ago. Strange, isn't it?

Well, after a few intense listens I cannot claim it made me jump in excitement. Musically it's not that bad at times. I would dare say it's traditionally Greek, but the album sounds quite disappointing execution- and production-wise.

Intentionally this would be dark sounding, mysterious enough Death Metal, yet with the emphasised importance of the vocalist, bass and drums. The guitar sound turned out weak, and even the synth is far from taking a leading position, which is so common for a Greek band. Musically, in a way their Black Metal country-mates have done this all before. **Obscurum** do not sound Black, but they have several ideas that could fit it there pretty fine. After all, the Greek gods from the early 90's were not so typically Black, were they? For me personally that cabalistic touch of

Obscurum Oblivion imposes the most. But this disk has tons of typical Deathrash riffs, too...

To summarize, absolute hail to the band that has not given it up after the mediocre start. This should act as their rebirth, and must cause new material to be sprouted, now! If they give it more depth, fuller composing and certainly a better recording, then let's expect also better Greek Metal then.

Obscuration, Vasilakakis Costas, Adrianopoulos Str. 10-14, Kesariani, Athens, Greece

Tadas

OBSDIAN GATE 12
Colossal Christhumb
Skaidic Art



Damn. Why have they mentioned in the press sheet that this is the next grandiose thing in the symphonic Black Metal lair, after **Limbonic Art** and **Sirius**? I've read this only after some four or five spins of their brand new CD in my player, and my thoughts then have been swirling around this kind of comparison, and then, boom—I realised it was already mentioned in there.

Anyway, that says two basic things: that I am not blindly lulled by the haunting music on *Colossal Christhumb*, and that the label heads truly know what they promote and offer to this over saturated market. Yes, people, if you happen to be misled in the modern Black Metal path, then take my word for real and go buy this excellent album!!! So far I have just heard of **Obsidian Gate**, read some interviews, and my expectations then were pretty high. No idea if their debut album was SO good, but this successor is beyond my critical level—I am stuck without my usual sharp stings to criticize it! Let alone this band does use a drum-computer, and it indeed is not what I massively appreciate in (Black) Metal, generally speaking! Well, to put in other words, if there really are people that masterfully incorporate synthetic drums in their concept, then it's this German trio, next to the almighty **Mysticum**, of course.

Yet you cannot draw so plain parallels with neither **Limbonic Art**, who are maybe more sombre and probably have less of that triumphant emotion than **Obsidian Gate**, or with **Sirius**, as those guys play more on intensities and traditional Black Metal tricks today. Once again—we have here a unique experience, however deceptive this thought might seem if you consider the situation with the symphonic metal trend. Nevertheless—they have already proved that good music can gain fame in any case; the main thing is to fight for it! A must. Dux Bellorum!

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Tadas

OBTEST 10
Auka Seniems Dierams
Ledo Takas

Being attentive to your thoughts and his own 'editorial' morality, *Tadas* felt that reviewing stuff he himself has released through **Ledo Takas** is a definite no-no, and that's why I got the dirty job. Lucky me that this new album by the Lithuanian Heathen War Metal masters doesn't suck too bad, so I won't have to trash it and lose my job here at the *Ad Arma!* HQ either...

I was positively amazed by the impeccable way these ancient sons have attired their compositions in the Pagan atmosphere. Listening to *Auka Seniems Dierams* really does enable you to enjoy the glide back in time, to the heydays of battles and steel, and I believe that was also the intention of the band. Actually it puzzles me a little how on earth they've managed to conjure up such an authentic Pagan feeling with just the usual Metal instruments, but I guess it primarily must have something to do with the overwhelmingly melodic guitar-lines that tinge the whole sound of the band, although I'm equally sure that certain drum-patterns and the shall-thish-shall-that lyrics, typical for a band that's

carrying the burden of the ancient existence inside, have something to do with it as well. Oh, not to forget either that the vocalist's shouting is also reminiscent of a battlecry, heard millenniums ago, and I'm sure it'll inflame and drive wild the hearts that dwell in the past, just slumbering of the justified war and vengeance.

If there's a word that captures **Obtest**'s musical implementation on *Auka Seniems Dierams*, the best, it's undoubtedly the word 'fresh'. This is first and foremost a fresh musical achievement that won't bore you to death after a couple of tracks, as most other 'Heathen War Metal' unleashed these days. And it is precisely this very aspect of freshness that makes this album worth a try. Trust me.

I do not rate this record higher than I have because as enjoyable and fresh as **Obtest** are in delivering their quality-tinged Metal, I personally miss the 'darkness' that's completely absent in this recording. It might be a natural or intentional decision from a Heathen band, but I still would not have mind at least some more dark and sinister traces. Now it's just all jolly and happy into-the-battle-we-go Metal that works, but it does leave the darker hearts somewhat standing in the sidelines, if you get my drift.

www.obtest.lt

Northwind

OCULT 9
Violence & Hatred
Painkiller

This is one of those bands that will keep grinding the shit out of their instruments forever, performing just what they feel is right for them. Well, several of such bands suddenly collapse in a day, as there is not so much interest in their music among the general audience, but then again it reminds me of a kind of survival—who is the strongest to stand for his or her beliefs. I wondered a bit when **Occult** has been picked by **Massacre** a few years back, but it's no surprise now that their contract ended sooner than the issued album was even properly distributed. It is not the music to sell heaps of: it is about the underground that is there for this kind of Deathrash. I think they made a good decision moving down the way to a young and fresh label that happens to celebrate the contract with the band none the less than releasing this single CD! That's an honour, I believe! I wish **Painkiller** have had lots of interest with this affair.

This delivery has only two tracks, which are a different mix of the title track and *Killing for Recreation*, both of which are to be featured on their next CD. Comparing to what was exposed on the band's 1999's record, I hear much more intense attitude in these compositions. There is a bigger leaning towards Death Metal rather than Thrash this time. But the **Occult** character is certainly there, so if you have been following their previous achievements, this one shouldn't be of any appalling surprise. It is difficult to judge from two tracks, though. What seems fine to listen to for eight minutes, might get a bit one-sided if there would be ten more songs of a similar kind. So, the main thing must come with their next full-length *Rage to Revenge*, the fourth in the history of this veteran Dutch band. I think it's not long left to wait.

Tadas

OCULT 10
Rage to Revenge
Painkiller

Yeah, that's right. The new album is in my hands already, and since it is released in early January, so far it is certainly one of the better things in bludgeoning Deathrash in 2002, ha ha... indeed, the album is straightforwardly attractive, or attractively straightforward! The main difference from their previous stuff is catchiness that grabs the listener here in every step! There is a certain move towards the old school of performing Metal. This goes as far back in time as **Possessed** and **Dark Angel**!

Needless to say, such an attitude and devotion finds warm support in my heart. And unlike that sceptic hesitation that the full-length might be a bit one-sided (see the review above), this is completely the opposite: the music is much more diverse than the two initial tracks suggested. Of course this is an unambiguous album, but the guys manage to build a musical spectrum through their own distorted passages and especially vocal duality of the scream-like thrasher and the grunting deather. *Rachel has left for **Sinister**, so *Maurice* had to take over both the styles. It sort of made him focus more on each of the methods to scare people, so if I hear correctly, there is*

more input from the vocalist into the whole now.

Occult have scored choosing an organic production for their new record. This is a sound which stays away from modern tricks and plastic effects, because it does not need any of that bullshit! The closer you get to the original Deathrash bands the better your record sticks to mind! Once again I am pretty sure *Rage to Revenge* will receive a limited but loyal following, as this is not any new hot thing for kids, but if someone has been following what **Painkiller** offers recently, it is a natural addition to their list of releases.

Tadas

ODES OF ECSTASY 9
Deceitful Melody
The End

Uh, so many melodic albums these days. Is it a coincidence, or have they decided to bomb us with easy-going Metal this spring? Well, this Greek band has been released with this sophomore album in late 2000, so it has nothing to do with the wakening up of nature. It is more like a spring in their hearts that determines a cheerful temper throughout these eight compositions. It is hardly a dismal experience, indeed. Progressive, wandering, rocking Heavy Metal music would be a better label. Traditional Metal is mixed here with symphonic allusions and a characteristic female soprano. With an average vocalist it would lose half the power, I'm sure. So *Christina* suits the project really fine. In fact, I am trying to recollect with all my memory extensions which band they remind me of as an entity, as there certainly have been several attempts to combine this kind of emotional Heavy Metal before. But I fail to remember all of them right now. Well, imagine **Nightwish**, but with less majesty and sort of a warm Greek sense in there. Laugh at me, but I trace some old good flavour from the early 90's in here, even if **Odes Of Ecstasy** have nothing to do with Black Metal as such, and it is far from being truly an aggressive experience either. The **OOF** guys do not even look like charismatic Metalheads, ha.

In spite of all that, *Deceitful Melody* demands a longer sticking and it grows on you in a while. Well, after some time it will very likely lose some charm, but that happens with 85% of the songs that include groove and a catchy chorus. Aye, they could use all their refrains fewer times, this model verse-bridge-refrain-verse-bridge-refrain-bridge-refrain-verse-bridge-refrain is sort of too simple to swallow. But for a party or, let's say, some leisure environment, this music should work, even if it is nothing new under the sun.

Odes Of Ecstasy, Dimitris Bikos, Patriarhou Fotiou B'19, Ano Nca Smirni, 17124 Athens, Greece, shirider@compulink.gr

Tadas

OF THE WAND & THE MOON: 10
emptiness:emptiness:emptiness:
Euphonius

After a few limited edition 7" and 10" vinyl releases, as a pre-taste of his new material, **Kim Larsen** returns with an honestly full-length new album that continues where it ended on his debut *Nighttime Nightrhythms* record, released a few years ago. I think many critics and fans would predict further development within dark serene acoustic neo-atmospheres like this: much inspired by the classic works of this genre. Well, it's useless to mention the performers' names, as the readers must know them all by heart, I'm sure.

Indeed, mostly there is a tighter approach, except maybe in the last tune that is too long but nevertheless drops off the context a bit. Co-worked with another guy (*Brian Hansen*), who also plays bass in this record, it is certainly just a closing dwelling off the line. But in my opinion the whole effort would be more effective without *Recifal*. Well, to tell you the truth I am staying for too long around this particular composition... The truth is that this 'empty' record is crammed with lots of darkly inspired tribal drumming and acoustic miniatures, but also involving symphonic touch to it as well as the usually mysterious whispering, but this time also stronger melancholic singing of *Mr. Larsen*. That's a good point comparing with the debut album—it is not enough just to whisper somewhere down the line. That voice creates a feeling of stability and unifies the music. Maybe it brought the music closer to the other performances within the apocalyptic folk scene, but, anyway—a new release stands as a firm move forward of the **Wand & Moon** mastermind. I just

wonder if this solo project would ever appeal to me as much as **Saturnus** once did?

Ah, and cover has a great idea, only that *Kim*'s face is too modern, hah.

Tadas

OGMIAS 6
Keltsky hner
Eclipse

This is crap. Grinding Black Metal performed by three skinheads or at least guys that seem very much like that, it no claim that people without the Metal haircut cannot do good music, but this band does not convince me. Moreover, they don't have a drummer. A machine, the fucking symbol of Metal music mutation, is used once again—and in the most boring and awful way. It does not make the sound grimmer or more violent. It simply creates a feeling of being cheated: dead mechanical substance which cannot replace the human feeling released while playing drums.

Ogmias operate with fast blast-beat rhythms—that's why I call them 'grinding'. There is no other description that could fit. The band comes up with some guitar riffs that sound quite ok, and vocally there are moments of bearable music, but *Celtic Rage* is far from an ok album category, as it is still full of mediocre and had attempts to make Black Metal. The only cure for the band would be to hire a good drummer of flesh and blood, to compose more personal music, to find an appropriate sound to memorise their compositions with, and to sit back and consider every time they finish recording whether it is worth to be released for the public, or not. Why the hell all new bands want to release as many recordings as possible? Where did they leave the quality factor?

The booklet features a few lyrics from their repertoire, and yeah—there is less politics down there than I presumed. Mostly it's the same old pagan past attitude, with a certain message to rise up all forces alike, to fight for the new era. But are they able to inspire a single modern warrior with this mediocre music?

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Tadas

ONTARIO BLUE 11
Waiting for Rain
Displeased

A pleasant surprise this side project of **Stephen Penick** turned out to be. I thought this wouldn't outrun **Endura**, but this is actually better than some of their CDs! Well, the music's completely different, and this is another wonder for your reviewer. Don't expect any rhythmic industrial or hard-to-swallow ambient—the music here (at least on this album that is actually his second one, if I am correct) is very ear-friendly, and could act to you as a perfect lullaby full of meaning and wisdom put between the lines and notes. I could swear it must be mostly based on the composer's own experience and certain moments of life, sort of like an absolutely personal story turned into music.

But hell—I am here to say first and foremost that this is atmospheric ambient synth music, enriched with evocative and damn great sounding narrative, and sometimes singing vocals. And here comes the third surprise—I have heard something similar only on the **Penitent** debut! I mean this great alliance of music and the spoken word. Maybe for some tastes this combination can seem naive and monotonous, but enjoyed *Melancholia* very much, and not much is different on this (I dare to say) follow-up album of that masterpiece! I don't care that the artist is different—in this case it's the emotions that count! Well, **Ontario** is still **Blue** with its own direction. This album's been in process for three years, and this means a relaxed state of mind, when deadlines are left for others...

The visual side of the album's booklet also inspires some thoughts—I enjoyed the central picture quite a bit. It is a nice contradictory opposition to urban views also damaged by time or maybe this music? Who knows what the composer had in his mind by that.

Tadas

ON THORNS I LAY 8
Angeldust
Black Lotus

Hmm, the first and last time I heard of them was *Sounds of Beautiful Experience*, the debuting record of this Greek team. Beforehand I knew their 7", still under the **Plebotomy** banner. Well, those (atmospheric) Death Metal times are left

far behind, but it is still surprising to hear the band paving around emotional Metal/rock territories. They have made a vast journey, releasing altogether five albums in those six years, but still this melancholic album comes to me as a disappointment, as it is simply too influenced by the pioneering band which has successfully introduced gloomy feelings to rocking Metal. The one and only: **Katatonía** – and to be more precise, the gothic era of the Swedish team. **OTIL** is not the first band trying to play that card, which is nothing but an attempt to copy what is on the wave, what sells.

A pure copycat record: the guitar sound, the arrangements, the vocals, the rocky feeling... literally everything! Only a few individual ideas behind the music appear here and there, including the rougher vocal line or rhythmic accents like in *Deep Thoughts*. Yeah, probably this tune is the best one, due to one great arrangement which gives the music completely another look. And less **Katatonía** influence.

Otherwise the sound picture is simply poor on this album. It's more than enough to have one **Katatonía**, and I guess many of you agree on that. Moreover, they haven't discovered anything new after *Discouraged Ones*. This Greek-Romanian team (I'm completely lost trying to understand where the hell they base the band these days, again in Hellas?) still hopes to have better luck, yet their prime is definitely not on this record.

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Tadas

ORDO DRACONIS 8 *The Wing & the Burden* Skaldic Art

You know, I am personally in touch with their guitarist *Rahab*, and he would be really pleased to get a good review from me, but... second in a row recording of **Ordo Draconis** fails to impress me. Naturally I am not the biggest fan of melodic/symphonic Black Metal, yet sometimes new records of this calibre can very well impress me as well. Here that is not the case.

If you are familiar with their previous self-released mini album *In Speculis Noctis*, this is exactly the same kind of muzak. On one hand it's certainly good to see the band stable and moving forward the direction they have chosen, but on the other hand my taste would require some drastic changes, if you know how I reacted to that debut MCD. It sounds to me as if too watered and polished, almost vacant of the qualities that I value in Black Metal: ferocity, energy and sickness. These 50 minutes of music are like the exact opposite. The blend of the beauty and the beast is not equally emphasized, so the beauty prevails throughout it all, whilst the beast tries to create a balance but simply fails and disturbs that attractive lady. I mean mostly the vocalist *Moloch* who shrieks all the time and the buzzing guitar sound. Altering those two components, **Ordo Draconis** would really sound as if just another Heavy Metal band. I think. Well, an orchestral Heavy Metal band.

The music has plenty of those arrangements that must grab some hearts. I believe. The synth prevails of course, but they have also incorporated female vocals in the picture. Ah, a good lyric is that of *The Rite of Caliberina de Medicis*. In general, they use many images of dark water, appearing as another band together with **Korovikill** and **Nocternity** that recently have been dealing with those subjects. Interesting coincidences, huh. I wish there was more roughness in their sound...

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Tadas

PAOLO DI CIOCCIO 8 *Logos*

Musica Maxima Magnetica
Electronic ambient/industrial music usually takes its time to become better envisioned for a Metal fan, so I'm not an exception. At the initial stage I noticed just the traditional poppy structures and the light character of the album. It turned out to be not so light after some moments, though. So, after some fragments basic rhythm is replaced by experimentation, which is hard to put into frames. Rhythm is just a portion of the complex structuring. The composer uses various electronic devices, as well as his beloved oboe (*Paolo* has been studying it at Rome Conserva-

tory). I guess the term esoteric suits this album very well, but only in those weird parts of it. Sincerely, I would throw all those traditional moments and leave just the music which provokes, which searches for something original. By the way, I hear some *Jarre* influences down there in those calm, I'd say, romantic episodes. But, nonetheless, I would really like to hear more mystique and charm of darkness in such music. It could work as alternative to the weirdness that is captured on *Logos*.

This album, released in digipak format, is far from being the beginning of a career – *Paolo* has been working with many various artists and played in famous orchestras. I bet this is his challenge to something special, as he has been doing this as a solo project for five years now. Okay, let's believe this album will appeal to the electronic and ambient music admirers.

Tadas

PARAGON OF BEAUTY 8 *Comfort Me, Infitly* Prophecy

I respect **Paragon of Beauty** 8. I respect **Pentacle**. I do. The respect has actually nothing to do with their music as such, it's more a matter of the attitude they have for Death Metal in general. The way they see the Metal of Death as the ultimate forum of brutal art corresponds very closely to my own depiction of how Death Metal ought to be approached. You know; brutality & aggression the ancient way. Ha!! Not that their music would suck either, though. On the contrary, the 6 pieces delivered here are hardly gonna leave your twisted soul untouched. Their own tracks work flawlessly, but the covers of *Mantas*' 'Legion of Doom' and *Death*'s 'Witch of Hell' work astonishingly well in all their forgotten glory.

There's never enough Death Metal if it's done with the right attitude. Therefore, given this evidence, I'd be quick to propose **Pentacle** a place in True Death Metal hall of fame, right beside *Sadistic Intent*, *Luciferion*, *Order From Chaos*, *Merciless*, *Vital Remains* and a very few others. Raise the flag of Ancient Death Metal and bow deep down for Mother Death!

Nordtwind

One thing is definitely characteristic, though (and it was evident on the *Seraphine*... album, too): this five-piece crew deliver their melancholic alternative Metal/rock in much more fragmented and not so poppy way, thus attiring the more sophisticated listener, and keeping the masses slightly in the back. Most people (including myself, heh) expect just the smooth, easy going & very darkly arranged verse-chorus-verse-chorus thing, just like *A Drowning Day* is – yeah, it's a good experience, much like most **Katatonía** songs, but on the other hand it is typically standard and requires raw critics. A slight paradox also happens in there: they must be respected for stepping away here and there, but these moments of *Comfort Me, Infitly* are the least attractive.

Well, my conclusion might be unexpected for some people – I am way too subjective within the realm of this review, and then, **Paragon of Beauty** must find their listeners that will admit their vast development from the past to this new record. So, check it and decide yourselves who's right, who's creative, and who's the winner in the melancholic (hard) music milieu.

Tadas

PENITENT 10 *Songs of Despair* (adv.) Ars Metallii

The press release of the artist himself screams out about the second chapter of **Penitent**'s career. It must be something truly groundbreaking, then? Mind you – the statement is very correct, as you will not hear the usual tear-shedding symphonies anymore. The music of the new chapter of **Penitent** has turned out to be much more complex and hard-to-define. The best thing to say would be – 'modern'. Ok, in my opinion, it is about blending dark symphonic ambient with (Doomy) Metal/rock music structures, and as the biography kindly suggests – theatrical elements in addition. It's not a theatre made out of the mournful **Penitent** past, though, but rather the kind of atmosphere that the viewer might be caught in whilst watching a good theatre play. Not the least – it is usually the music that strengthens the performance's impact down there.

From the Metal sound of things, this album might seem a bit too synthetically sepulchral – there is a lack of live feel to it. But it might be that my taste is a bit damaged by all those amateurish 'Synth Metal' bands, that this Norwegian duo is surely not a part of. Aye, it's good time and place to introduce another colleague of *Karsten* – it is *Berit Sunde* these days who does the singing these days, using various techniques, including a screaming Black-Metal-alike voice. Both of them complete **Penitent** in 2001, and all I can wish for

them is to keep it stable for at least a few more records.

So, *Songs of Despair* is as unusual as it is involving, because certain **Penitent** tinge is still there, and it is about enhanced sound of the old records I believe that both scares and entangles. This record certainly grows on you with every new listen, so don't be afraid of its initial oddities. Metalheads who do not spit at the symphonic stuff, keep your eyebrows opened.

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www.penitentmusic.com

Tadas

PENTACLE 11 *Ancient Death* Damnation

I respect **Pentacle**. I do. The respect has actually nothing to do with their music as such, it's more a matter of the attitude they have for Death Metal in general. The way they see the Metal of Death as the ultimate forum of brutal art corresponds very closely to my own depiction of how Death Metal ought to be approached. You know; brutality & aggression the ancient way. Ha!! Not that their music would suck either, though. On the contrary, the 6 pieces delivered here are hardly gonna leave your twisted soul untouched. Their own tracks work flawlessly, but the covers of *Mantas*' 'Legion of Doom' and *Death*'s 'Witch of Hell' work astonishingly well in all their forgotten glory.

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Nordtwind

PERISHED 11 *Grim* Apocalyptic Empire



Nordtwind has reviewed this in the vinyl section, but here's one on the CD version. **Perished** are still devoted to Norsk Black Metal. Minus the accordion intro of minor kind. This well used idea sounds special. As you might guess this instrument is supposed to be used for playing cheerful melodies and tunes for older people. At least that's what we are used to here in Lithuania. However, **Perished** take it further and use it for the dirty deed much grimmer than, say, our beloved

countryman *Windir* once did. Well, otherwise this is pure straight-ahead Black Metal – the one **Perished** have been playing for ages, only that their releases were not so a constant thing, at least not until now. Well, the demo tape of 1994 was brilliant, the follow-up '77' was classic in its special charm as well, but the full-length debut, *Kark*, that appeared in 1997 was a slight disappointment, since it was sounding too common. This new mini album carries only three new songs (+ intro and one old demo remake), but I dare to utter about a revelation. This Black Metal sounds harsh, well put together and damn serious. In spite of a few harmonies here and there, it barks louder and kick ass smarter! It's a pleasure to listen to for anybody who respects that sounds and that era and cares less about the innovations of **Mayhem**, so to say. I personally can't find much difference from that old demo song and the rest of the material – does that mean the band has turned back to mid 90's? Hmm, as far as I'm concerned, it suits them fine.

So, this recording is also pressed on limited 500 units' edition MLP watch out for that and grab a copy once you have that chance!! This way you will also support *Apocalyptic Empire* – a label which won't die as long as its owner has strength in his veins! No jail-borders can stop the Black Metal!

Tadas

PERUNWIT / KRAINA BEZ WIATRU 9/8 *Lzy i Krew / Niechaj przemowia runy* Ciacatrix

These recordings date back to times when Black Metal fanatics were for the first time introduced to dark ambient music, started by **Pazuzu**, and hyped after the famous trilogy of **Mortis**. None the less, these Polish knights of medieval wisdom were also influenced by mister-creepy-face, a.k.a. *Håvard Ellefsen*, a.k.a. **Mortis**, on their early demo stage.

This split CD features music from those old times. **Perunwit** is presented with recordings dating back to 1994, whilst **Kraina Bez Wiatru** had their session two years later – the music is entirely familiar, anyway. I would question the aim of such a re-release even if my knowledge about the follow-up recordings of both bands was rich. I've just heard they had a few tapes and maybe some compact disks later, but never experienced them myself. However, there is nothing here the average listener reading this magazine could discover, despite the fact that the music really is not comparable with all those pathetic clones who discovered that keyboard might be a good instrument to toss around with and spread some crap synth music later on.

Perunwit usually approaches with a few layers of melody and top it off with various clattering sounds and menacing cauldron to keep the rhythm, as well as a dark (dungeon) voice to shed some mystery. Unfortunately, it sounds too predictable and familiar. In general, this music is not so dark, there is more 'majesty' instead.

Their colleagues from **Kraina Bez Wiatru** are not much different, though there is less of **Mortis**, more of **Wongraven**, in their side. The impression is still weaker, though. The music's a bit clumsy, closed from within – as if it cannot break through into free wastelands. They use an acoustic guitar, so there is a kind of art rock feel there as well. But the emphasis on rhythmic is very occasional so I still call it ambient. If you have a passion for folksy and dreamy ambient – go ahead, make thy day.

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Kraina Bez Wiatru, *Piotr Alankiewicz*, Os. Przemysłowa 16A/2, 61-064 Poznan, Poland.

Tadas

PHOBIA 8 *Serenity Through Pain* Deathvomit

Wooloo... Do we really deal here with a product released by the once 'only Black Metal' label? Well, the record is presented by their Death/grind imprint, but, anyway, I guess I'm not the only one missing the spirit *Necropolis* used to have (in fact not that many – six) years ago... I still can't believe they can go as far signing this highly 'nazi-phobic' band: their socially correct or incorrect (I couldn't care less!) lyrics disappointed me a big deal! In addition, what's the point to print those *Hitler* mocking sketches all over the booklet? Is it music or politics?! Isn't there more interesting things to promote with the help of heavy sounds?! I think the guys have been thinking so much about others' problems that they haven't noticed they have one for themselves too.

Whatever, here we have a case with a band that in their early years were flirting with Death Metal (of course I enjoyed *Return to Desolation* quite a bit back then!), then jumped into the grind/hardcore/crust scene, and now return back to Metal with help from *Deathvomit*.

Grind/crust freaks must enjoy this album quite much. In spite of the sickening message they are trying to spread, the music is what counts to me, basically bringing to mind the good old **Terrorizer** record! A cool, fast and massive wall of guitar-riffs and a low deep growl to top it off! Amazing! Yet it is not the only way they amuse themselves, so the album is full of much a wider set of other elements, including some slow Thrashing breaks and a boring hardcore scream. Yeah, people call that usually as grind/crust, but in **Phobia** there are beats and pieces of Death Metal involved as well. And this results into a much more varied record than your usual grind album is. But yet I believe most readers of this magazine would do without (nazi) **Phobia**, anyway.

Phobia, P.O. Box 4233, Orange, CA 92863-4233, USA. phobia@jellobung.com, www.jellobung.com/ phobia

Tadas

POWERS COURT 10 *Nine Kinds of Hell* Dragonheart



I thought this band is from Italy due to their label's residence and the mostly Italian roster, as well as due to their actual music that happens to be traditional Heavy/Power Metal with some Thrashy links in there. It's been especially popular in the Apennines in recent years.

However, **Powers Court** hail from the States. This team is run since 1990 by their enthusiastic female guitarist/vocalist *Danie*, and seems that the trio finally gets recognition as this is their first official album, aside from a self-financed release in 1996. Surely her voice hits the ear as a primal thing: this Metal lady bursts with passion and precision, her performance is absolutely worth checking out, in contradiction to most of those weeping girls that have invaded Metal music during the last decade. Check her tight singing technique in *Darbened Paradise*, *House of Sorrote* or *Agnostica*, it creates a special parallel with the instrumentation. She takes a high note quite often, and is pretty melancholic when it is necessary! Actually, it is her very voice that makes me hesitate whether to call this **Power** or **Heavy** or **Thrash** metal. When it comes to the latter description, I hear an obvious early **Skylad** influence, which is both welcome and confusing, as otherwise I could not imagine those Thrashing riffs in different company than theirs. It has been recognized with *Martin Walkyier*'s singing so far, but now here we have a woman who also suits those aggressive Metal shoes very well, and what's surprising – with her own means. Last but not least her voice sometimes really reminds of a male **Power** Metal singer. What could that mean?

Well, as a whole *Nine Kinds of Hell* is not as intense, though. There is some room left for atmosphere and emotions. Yet for everyone into old school of quality traditional Metal – try not to miss this record! Aye, the two guys in the band, the bass player and the drummer, are good team players as well.

www.powers-court.com

Tadas

PRIMAL DAWN 7 *Primal Dawn*

What's going on? Everybody is able to self-release their music professionally, even the beginners. Well, I have no idea how long these guys have been practising, but taking a wild guess I think they have not been in the scene for longer than 4-5 years, and I have their debut MCD behind my eyes, or better said – in CD player. That's basically why I decided to review this release in the CD section, even if this self-titled debut is their demonstrative presentation to the public.

The front-cover deserves to be more imaginative as that combination of (primal?) dawn and skull says nothing. Or maybe it has something to do with the lyrical themes that mostly deal with the social stuff? I am not a fan of neither of them, anyway.

So, the music they perform is straightforward Thrashy Death Metal, the way it was common to play in the early years of the last decade. I am not sure whether it is the recording or these riffs that remind me of the old Death Metal demos we were fed up with in 1992-1994. Probably both, as the guitar-sound is way too deadened in the mixing, and the overall mix could have been arranged better. Then again, the guys must turn on their creative potential next time around if they strive for some more memorable music. With this kind of Death Metal they hardly go anywhere these days. Alright, there are some twin guitar arrangements here and there, kind of lifting this recording up a bit from the down-tuned Death Metal pit, but then the vocalist *Jahn* falls out of the picture, completely. Again, there is inclusive progression in *Blood of the Land*, where

the whole band including the vocalist suddenly turns more emotional, introducing another element of their music. Maybe that's the key?! At least that's what captures attention for a while.

In the meanwhile, as the band develops, you can inquire this MCD for 5 Irish pounds from:

Primal Dawn, c/o Pat Kennedy, 7 Glenville Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Ireland, primaldawn@hotmail.com, www.primaldawn.irefree.org

Tadas

PRIMITIVE SYMPHONY / BLUTTAUFE 9/8
split
Psychic Scream

Two pretty typical bands if you bear in mind their countries of origin - Sweden and Germany. Well, **Primitive Symphony**. At first listen they sound so familiar to all that hype coming from Sweden. No, not the melodic Death thing, but its Blacker version - still melodic and fiery Metal at the same time. Anyway, once in a while they have a 'true' Death Metal feel to it, too - check out *Christian Hypocrisy* for example. But the most evident is the **Dawn** school of building those songs, or was it **Dissection**, that have been standing behind this whole Swedish movement? Well, you never know as all these bands have been developing one from the other. Then it's a question of progression: how much every new band is able to move away from their inspirations. When it comes to **Primitive Symphony**, they are slightly stuck to what everyone has heard many times before, indeed, yet they deliver hateful music with much conviction and some hope for the future. I think their next release, if it is a full-length album, must prove them heading the right way, or falling down into the mass of Swedish Black Death bands. One characteristic - they like mid-tempo the most.

Now **Bluttaufe**. A two-piece band, representing the German branch of this split with session drumming of **Agathodaimon**'s skin basher. It's everything you can expect from a Teutonic horde - a straightforward approach, some kind of Thrashy feeling and rather a tiny sound. They call it Thrashing War Metal. Whatever, I think it gets on nerves a bit with the same kind of buzz, you listen to it and discover that it is just a typical matter all over. In a way it sounds ok, but then again, you will never pull it out after the CD takes its honourable place in the collection. I have heard many worse bands from Germania, but quite a few better ones as well. Let's wish them to grow a bit as musicians... composers, I mean.

Primitive Symphony, Box 3050, 59303 Westervik, Sweden, p-symphony@hotmail.com, http://ikome-to/primitive

Bluttaufe, Wieshadener str. 199, 61462 Koenigstein, Germany, azazel@kettenhund.de, www.kettenhund.de/horde

Tadas

PROPHET 11
Broken Promise

What would be the right word? Impressed? No. Overwhelmed? Yeah. I am overwhelmed by this release! I'm in lack of words to express my wonder about how far some modern bands have stepped concerning their presentation: this is the band's fifth self-produced release in four years, a demonstration for the scene.

Demonstration?! I couldn't place this four-tracker in our *Demonstratus* section, simply because it is released so damn professionally and mind-blowingly! Can you imagine a demo in three-fold digipak CD version, and a special CD print that most of the labels would just dream about having? It is definitely far above the average CD-release, production-wise. Though, I think that **Prophet** have been moving a step by step towards this perfection: before this they had three demos and one MCD.

Ok, then I thought, let's see what music they have in this sweet package, and was almost sure to find pretty poor execution of untight metal. Oh, how terribly wrong I was! It is an exceptionally professional performance of melodic Metal, and the sound-quality is definitely top-notch. Must admit that the quantity of sugar in those vocals and riffs could be diminished, and I am not the most devoted fan of melodic 'Gothic' Metal after all, but I am helplessly losing against their totally skilled way of acting. Yeah, besides suiting with what's popular in the Finnish music market, the guys also incorporate a few double bass-drum parts and background growls (courtesy of **Henri Vilberg** from

Diablerie), sort of paying tribute to the earlier **Amorphis**. I can feel those similarities, indeed. But yet I presume they will drift away from heavier Metal and stick to what's in hype right now - that is melody in rocky Metal music.

Anyway, they are very close to big success, and if this is not their final self-release before signing to a major label (well, not necessarily *Sony*, but something of that kind), then I'm a total profane in reviewing music. A fucking must by all means.

Prophet, c/o Aleksi Ahokas, Viljatie 7c 56, 00700 Helsinki, Finland, aleksi@ahokas.com, www.brokenpromise.cjb.net

Tadas

RAKOTH 9
Jabberworks
Code 666

The dramatic violin string arrangement intertwined with sullen Metal armour at around the 52nd second of *Story of the Nameless* is a fantastic - divine or hellish - experience that makes the listener's spine shiver! What a pity its length is only about four seconds! No, it cannot be true. The theme is repeated again one minute later, but that's it. Yet for me personally it is the only single moment when I'm ready to get down on my knees and pray for more **Rakoth**.

Other than that, I think I have problems to accept such emotionally ridden material, when my heart strives for crude Metal. The times of *La Musquerade Infernale* by **Arcturus** are long gone, and I personally think that album wiped away everything what this kind of extreme music was able to give to anyone wishing to hear symphony and Metal collide. I do not claim that **Rakoth** and other artists are far from being creative, but a certain vibe is missing - I cannot feel that extra aureole surrounding their music! Or is that my own problem, after all? Everything seems to be arranged with attention and care, yet it must be the truly progressive feel that makes this release what it stands for. Metal is just a spice, or a shell to cover everything else here.

Indeed, **Rakoth** was very successful with their debut album, selling it more than 7000 times, which really is an almost incredible result. I see no reason why they shouldn't surpass that number with *Jabberworks*. As a matter of fact, it mostly consists of older tracks from 1996 on, just two songs are truly new. Needless to say, they are re-arranged big time to go hand in hand with the band's progress.

If you noticed, this review is actually that rare attempt of your editor to be as objective as possible. That's the reason for this fairly good mark too, which does not necessarily reflect my personal attitude to this particular work. I wish **Rakoth** to go on, most naturally!

Rakoth, orlangur@meteo.ru, www.rakoth.cjb.net

Tadas

RAVAGER 7
Storm of Sin
Osmose

'Evil Death Fucking Metal'. My god. Not again. I'm sure all these bands and labels think they're doing something remarkably special, for I have a feeling the musicians and the label-owners never bother to listen to what the other bands and the labels have been up to. And that's the problem. That's exactly the problem. You know, we journalists do listen to and examine practically every single Back & Death Metal release that's been unleashed, and we fuckin' know what's going on.

Storm of Sin may sound inconceivably uncompromising, brutal and evil kind of Death Metal at **Ravager**'s rehearsal place in Mexico, but in reality there are some 80 bands in the scene on different labels as we speak doing and thinking precisely the same as **Ravager**. I hate to break it to you, but that's just a FACT and there's nothing you can do about it - except to quit or evolve.

Northwind

REBAELLIUM 12
Annihilation
Hammerheart

When there was *Burn the Promised Land*, it seemed there would be no way to make it any more perfect. Now with *Annihilation* they have easily overstepped that record.

Amazing. I am out of words, really. What could push me make such a statement? Is it that amazing production, courtesy of **Andy Classen's Stage One Studio**? Yeah, ... in a way it helps a lot to in reaching another state of mind, but much



more important is the growth of their abilities in writing blasting Death Metal numbers. And the so much more personal material.

The first album has been pushing reviewers every now and then to compare **Rebaellium** with this and that, so much of the amazement was first and foremost based on their strength and unheard extremity, yet broadening the Death Metal category. Now on this album, you can easily count on their very own trademarked manner of delivering the remains of mankind for breakfast. Or was it for dinner, eh? My surprise was to hear the new bassist/vocalist **Loby** sing almost identically to **Marcello** - do they hold teaching courses - how to sing to become a **Rebaellium** member? over there or what? Beats me... Hell yes, such a hollow growing style suits this madness perfectly!

A small flashback to the first issue of *Ad Arma!*... If you remember, our contributor **Tim** reviewed the *Bringer of War* MCD there, giving a plain naked zero to that mini-album, and I didn't write a comment of any sort simply out of respect to his opinion... Well, the point is that here I am to oppose him!!! I do agree, to some extent, that the mini-album in between the two amazing records was less impressive, but I would personally blame it on the average recording quality as well as on the short length of it. As a proof of that, here we go again with a new version of *Bringer of War* and it sounds great! In other words, there was no reason to slag them down, it was just a MCD, and their return is more than convincing!!! Death metal that leads the world into annihilation!

To my pleasure, they have raised some hair on their heads, hah! That's Metal.

www.rebaellium.com

Tadas

RECLUSION 8
Shell of Pain
Listenable

Not the type of Swedish Deathrash I'd enjoy. This album is a reflection of the modern day and is very far from the 80's way of performing the violence. There is not much to talk about if you are familiar with a bunch of other bands coming from the same country and playing the same kind of thing. Take **Gardenian**, **Soilwork** or countless others - all of them have the same groovy sound and characteristically downtuned guitars. The more they sink into such depths, the more they get closer to the boring use of a shouting hardcore vocalist, and that sucks entirely. Then there is a bottom lined bass terror that truly adds in the weight department. But this element is so widespread among those 'modern Metal' (do they call it 'nu Metal', ah?) bands that it turns into another conformist attempt.

Indeed, **Reclusion** do not differ from them at all and this is their main drawback. The nine songs on this debut disc just contribute to the trend. Well, I wouldn't argue about the *Los Angered Studio* production adopted for their music - power and energy are the two keywords. Without the remarkable skills of the engineers the result of these songs would have been much worse, maybe even pathetic. Or then it would have sounded like just another hardcore CD. There's one riff that does fascinate me, though: the fast, ripping, Thrashy theme with a fresh melody in *The Quest*. Yeah, it's much more old-school, yet apparently it is not what **Reclusion** would be willing to stick to.

Okay, there is another one in *Sacred Ground*, but why the hell those good moments end so fast and then the music prompts to give all its dues to the modern, crappy riffs? That's about being fashionable, indeed.

Pass this through, as the music's way too trendy.

Reclusion, Box 10041, S-400 70 Gothenburg, Sweden, reclusion@dsinfo.net

Tadas

RED HARVEST 8
New World Rage Music
Nocturnal Art

I had this CD already in '98 when it was first released by *Voices of Wonder* as a MCD. But after the success the band achieved with *Cold Dark Matter* CD, **Nocturnal Art** thought about re-releasing the old MCD with some new & previously unreleased material as bonus. And there we go.

Just too bad that I don't like this - never did. Industrial Metal is not my choice of blood, and most probably never will be, no matter how subjective or narrow-minded that might sound. I hate this modern feeling that **Red Harvest** seem to cultivate.

I admit that **Red Harvest** do sound convincing and fully serious, but this sort of music still leaves me so awfully cold. There's nothing in here for me. The opening riff of *Ad Nocturn* - which is, thank Devil, repeated throughout the track - as well as a new track called *Final Scorn* could be mentioned as some of the better moments in all their harshness, but still... Why?

Northwind

REVENANT 6
Chaos Paradox
Beyond...

No, this isn't the return of that old Deathrash band we all remember with the same name. This **Revenant** is a fairly new Italian outfit that has chosen to alter its blackened dose of Metal with some avant-garde influences. Successfully? Well, I don't know about that.

You see, the thing with **Revenant** is a little bit connected with what I said about the too obvious search for originality and art in the **Joyless** review. Being original is perfectly okay by me, and so is being artistic. Nothing wrong with that. But listening to *Chaos Paradox* with all its tempo changes, vocal & sound variations, the 'different' lyrics... I don't know, it sounds phoney. Like it's all there just to impress you.

Well, I wasn't impressed, and it isn't a matter of me being the old-fashioned & narrow-minded fool trying to hold on to the concept of pure Black Metal that got raped almost a decade ago, anyway. I think it's more a matter of the **Revenant** boys needing slightly more insight in what they're doing and why they are doing it.

Northwind

REVENGE 7
Attack. Blood. Revenge
Dark Horizon

How many times can you re-do or rip-off **Blasphemy**'s music and ideas without ending up sounding totally ridiculous? I draw the line right here. Sorry.

Northwind

REVEREND KRIS HADES 10
The Wind of Orion
Decius

More **Sadistik Exekution** psychos going solo. As if **Rok** wasn't enough, here comes **Mr. Hades** with his odd, and for a reviewer nearly inoperable, album, which attempts to bewilder thy fragile mind with sounds so macabre and out-of-this-world that it'll surely leave you, at least, wounded.

There's only one band in this world to which **Mr. Hades'** music could be compared to, and that is **Abruptum**. The music looms over you, as dark and torturous as only music from a fucked-up mind can. It truly sounds as if not of this world in all of its weird, unstructured madness, but who's to know, it's usually exactly albums like this that can drive you wild and make you commit unspeakable acts in the best of wee-wee hours.

I'm not so sure, though, who or what *The Wind of Orion* is supposed to serve material-wise as it consists of a few new tracks taken from another release of his, a few older ones and two **Sadistik Exekution** re-mixes from songs that can be found on the band's recent *Fuuk* album. Who cares, though, for as a whole all these tracks create a very disturbing and unhealthy listening experience. Oh, and you mustn't miss the artwork included in the booklet, created by the mastermind himself. A few of those I wouldn't mind hanging on my walls.

In general I could say this album's not for the ones light at heart.

Northwind

RISING MOON 9
European Aliens
Metal Fortress

This mini-album had been spinning in my stereo for quite a while until I finally got the point where it aims at - **Hypocrisy!** Either

I was not a very attentive listener at first, or their brand of Swedish Death Metal isn't entirely worked out. I mean, it sounds Swedish, but it's not convincing enough to follow the steps of *Täktgen* and the company.

A precise examination of both the music and the sound, as well as their message, has clearly showed what these Italians are all about. At some extent it does disappoint me - there are too much **Hypocrisy** to be found. And do let me question whether a Metal fan of today can treat it fine and enjoy to the max then? I doubt it - normal people usually look for original artists, and not the followers who cannot come up with anything that would be their own. Titles: *Roswell file*, *Division abductions*, *Alien coil*. Familiar? Must be. The alteration of deep growling and screaming vocals, fast ripping and more progressive guitar riffs, dark but heavy pounding sound. Familiar? Must be.

This duo from the Appenines has been around for a while now as *European Aliens* is already their third release, a MCD after two full-length albums, but too bad that they still can't come up with anything original. The same old story here - it is not enough to be good just technically. If you do something really close to what other bands have already done, please be so kind to manifest your own traces of creativity as well, and for devil's sake - keep your titles and concept away from your idols!

The only thing **Rising Moon** avoids are those epic ballads, so those of you who think that **Hypocrisy** has stepped too much away from their origin may find a fine substitute in this band. Their musical skills and composing abilities are nothing to be ashamed, that's what justifies the mark above. Otherwise, I expect more personality!

Rising Moon, risingmoon@tin.it, www.risingmoon.it

Tadas

RITES OF THY DEGRINGOLADE 3
The Caryatid

Let all hell break loose, but I simply cannot get into this stuff. The guy behind this project has been jamming with *Sacramentary Abolishment* earlier, which isn't really the most typical extreme Metal band either, but when it comes to his solo-experience here, I have to say this goes far beyond any typical expression of Metal known to man. It might be better to call it just experimental music.

Even if it is very difficult to describe this experience in a few words, it can be looked upon as an eclectic mix of styles, where Death, Black, Doom and grind end up blending into a one violent chaotic mix, yet invoking some kind of a nervous feeling in the music, and not so rarely transcending behind the typical rhythmic rock clichés. Still, I cannot find the vibe in here. Maybe it must be looked for in that disgusting massacre that the whole instrumentation creates? Or maybe in the vocal attempts that are purely improvised.

The sound on this release is close to a rehearsal recording, but I think it was done intentionally. And it goes without saying that this album is meant only for the deepest underground - those who listen to the old demo-tapes of some obscure bands, which have never made it any further. At least *Rites of Thy Degringolade* makes me think about them.

Maybe the biggest mistake was to release this on CD, as the listener automatically expects something traditional, especially these days. Such an obscure recording would have really found its public had it been just on a tape... or better - on a vinyl. Ha, maybe I would have looked upon it a bit differently then.

Well, some people will find their ways to this, but I would certainly not recommend it myself. A self-release. **Rites of Thy Degringolade**, *Paulus*, 5118 Birch Ave, Vegreville, AB, T9C 1K1, Canada, thypaulus@usa.net, www.angelofire.com/music3/degringolade

Tadas

SACRED SIN 9
Transcend Dream Mirror
Demolition

This is not the first time **Sacred Sin**'s lineup has changed, but it must be quite an extreme ordeal anyway to witness the entire personnel departing after the previous album, leaving *Jose Costa* alone to build it all up again from the ashes, so to say.

Considering that he managed to keep the band as dark and jamming - basically offering the same old, good Death/Thrash-as before. I must take my hat off and admit that we have a case of a firm bandleader in

his person, who knows how to move forward in spite of disturbances.

I just wonder, and want to correct, the press-sheet that claims there are only two Sacred Sin albums. The previous *Anghus... Harvest* has been forgotten!!! It was a darn good album. Better than this one, as far as I am concerned.

No, the Portuguese fellas are good with this, but not too good, and not as good as before. It might be my problem to stay modest to all things modern - that this release is not, by the way, massively crammed with - but the 'update' feeling is surely present here. Well, I might be wrong with the tag 'modern' at times, but I just want to say that the music is diverse enough to act as a Metal lullaby for the listener. Indeed, there are more joyful moments for a Deathrash fan, or a Metal fan, and that's about balance.

What's missing? I guess that some highlights. The album sort of arrives from darkness, but then returns to it. You listen to it and wonder - so has it (be it a song or the entire album) reached the peak or not yet? It is oriented to separate atmospheres, not to some kind of a culmination, and it's better to leave the question opened in the air - what's better? I am not sure at all, though, you must check this out yourselves. I believe that this kind of hooked music must act differently on each and every one of us.

Just that the previous album seemed tighter to me, even without the *Evil Has No Boundaries* cover.

Sacred Sin, c/o Jose Costa, PO. Box 4030, 2746-801 Massama, Portugal. sacredsin@portugalmail.com, www.welcome.to/sacredsin

Tadas

SADISTIK EKEKUTION 9

**Fukk
Osmose**

I seem to have lost my ability to sort out the copycats from the originals, for *Fukk*, the brand new album of **Sadistik Ekekution**, sounds no different in my threadbare ears than the next 'War Metal' attack from down under. They were the first, originating the whole concept of chaos and insanity, but somehow I get the feeling the unbeaten fossils haven't bothered to be attentive enough to the development of the extreme Metal scene. Or maybe 'development' isn't the word I'm fumbling for. Well, you know, it all goes in circles. It's all been said and done now, and *Fukk* just doesn't attract or shock the way it would have some 10 years ago.

Still, I personally know a whole bunch of people who'll just go wild about the idea of hearing a new **Sadistik Ekekution** album with tracks like *Fukking Death*, *Sadistik Abuse* or *Blakk Mass Murder*. And there's nothing wrong with that. The band has their die-hard fans, and rightfully so, for there's more to these fuckers than what first meets the eye. I admit. But that doesn't really invalidate the fact that I still expected more than *Fukk* is capable of offering.

Northwind

SALTUS 8

**Slavonic Pride
Breath Of Night / Merciless**

Hmm, not my favourite album from the Polish (Black) Metal underground, and let me explain why. It is not bad at all, capturing two different characteristics of heathen, historically-oriented music. One of them is focused on Metal, mostly on its Black origin, and another one is purely emotional, composed with keyboards and some non-organic sounds. One side of the band keeps changing with the other throughout the disc - which is not that lengthy, by the way. Maybe I'm judging it from a very hard point of view, but when music has Heavy Metal elements, it just cannot be too weak as a whole. When I hear those synthetic breaks lasting for way too long that is normally listenable in a Metal album, I do interpret *Slavonic Pride* as too an ineffective attempt to combine the two. It could be different if all the Metal songs were filled with power, roaring thunderstorm and massive production. But in reality it is just the opposite: too a weak expression, a bloodless guitar-sound and typically amateurish composing.

One curious thing, though: I first thought this must be a Czech band, because their lyrics sound not so Polish to me. And I also feel some resemblance to the Czech Death/Black way to perform this kind of underground music. Those Metal tracks could have very well been another manifestation of **Avenger**, but the heaviness is missing. If you look upon it

from the Heathen Metal side of things, maybe it is not in so desperate need of heaviness and brutality, but I still fail to spot the more convincing highlights. When it comes to the ambient/synth side, I cannot say I'm superbly impressed, either. It would be much better to experience these themes on a separate album.

This controversial album is available on vinyl as well, just to mention that.

Saltus, Tomasz Bithorn/ Boniecki, PO. Box 46, 02-105 Warszawa 21, Poland.

Tadas

SATANIC WARMASTER 9

**Strength & Honour
Northern Heritage**

This is a new incarnation of **Blutrache**, a project by *Nazgul*, the ex-vocalist of **Horna**. The title, the band name and the label should say it all to you - this is nothing else but another manifestation of the Black Metal plague that keeps growing on the Suomi soil. This one is as raw and dirge-like as most other *NH* releases, but it also has melody involved as well as some rare synth accompaniments. Well, the synth's there to cover up the ugly and straightforward guitar-riffs in certain places, but yet *Strength & Honour* cannot be labelled as mass-oriented Black Metal by any means. Not at all! Just listen carefully to that under-produced sound, the untight drumming, and the violent screams (somehow reminding me of the **Emperor** demo) - those things quickly unveil that **Satanic Warmaster** deals exclusively with the underground, and this is their mission chosen: to focus on the Black Metal values, long forgotten. With the 'untight' I do not mean that it is bad - it rather creates the right feeling. That's why this CD edition is limited only to 1000 copies, and this must be the optimal number to please all those understanding what is evil and destruction in music.

Can't say that this album would hit me entirely, though. I still can hear a couple of riffs that are just the same old stuff done again. And to me as an old timer I think some of the arrangements here make no sense - either they have too weak emotions, or something's wrong with the way they've put the music together. Indeed, it's sort of like music that is 'on the way' - sounds ok, but has room for improvement. I truly believe it will be dwelling more fiercely on further recordings! Try them.

Tadas

SATARIEL 9

**Phobos and Deimos
Hammerheart**



Satarriel IS one of those bands that were trying to follow the trends earlier on, pretending to be evil and grim, but with time they have turned into a purely musical band, without any background concept whatsoever. Just another band thinking only about music and how to record it properly. Gone is even their pentagram shaped logo. Well, I have their lyrics, so I've really tried to get a clue what the hell they are singing here about, and finally - why their album is named like that, but it's been in vain... It is not that surprising if you read their bio that is full of line-up crap and dry statistics, there's NO word about any concept, and even the title is NOT mentioned at all! Sincerely, I can't believe it is possible for a serious label to make such grave mistakes! Where have they been looking at?

As for the music itself, must admit their grooves are hooky. Comparing to the debut record, this one is way more diverse, delivering on a plate anything you want: new wave groovy/melodic Swedish Death, modern progressive vibe, allusion to brutal Florida Death (which was a surprise, and their best choice!) in *The Claim*, and of course in the middle of this sonic experience that (um) expected guest comes in the picture - his majesty **Messiah Marcolin**. Don't be a fool, with his talent and exceptionally he brings completely another angle into **Satarriel's** music, but - oh boy, this turns into more than just a diverse

album. It belongs to a market were you are offered anything you might want: bread, butter, meat, cabbage + the list goes on (me utterly hates market places!). Usually, you choose just this and that, so the same happens with **Phobos and Deimos** - it's hard to swallow this as a whole. They could instead make three separate albums with individual songs. Or even four. Separately they sound more or less ok, but why the hell is this delivered in one package?! Diagnosis: must be the **Hypocrisy** syndrome. Kids will like it to the max. acemelgoh@hotmail.com

Tadas

SAURON 10

**Kraina Martwego Slonca
Devil Worship**

Not the youngest band from the Polish underground, just a band that has not had any proper promotion so far, in spite of a few demos being unleashed in 1995 and 1997. Exactly those recordings are included on this album, marking also the beginning of a new record label, with a person in charge who thought it would have been a shame to let **Sauron's** music belong to the past. And he has some sense, indeed, since not only the newer, but also the older tracks are full of attraction and sense for ill-natured Black Metal the Polish way. It is not as violent and 'Nordic' as most others around - the guys rather pave a mid-tempo path and include Death Metal elements in their riffs. Who said early **Graveland**? Well, that's not quite correct, but such thinking may have its reasoning as well. I think a fan of Polish Black Metal will know what to do anyway, since this is another recording worth obtaining by all means. I dare to claim that the musical images are created with a help of echoed vocal effects and some kind of a 'musical fog', which might be an outcome of the raw recording, but as well an adaptation of a certain goal. If you think back to 1995 and 1997, there were not so many bands popping up from Poland, that would have been delivering Black Metal with a special feel, at least not as many as there are these days. Am I claiming they were, like, one of the pioneering bands? Not sure.

Indeed, I agree that 1997's **Kraina Martwego Slonca** is better than 1995's *The Baltic Fog*, both production- and composing-wise. The first demo has more primitive (that doesn't mean great, in this case) ideas, whilst the latter songs are more sophisticated, maybe richer in velocities and emotions involved.

A pity that this is only a CD-r release, but it comes with pro-printed covers and a CD sticker, so it looks almost as if was a normal CD. Well, you should ask the price anyway because the music is worth listening!

Sauron mgmt., panzergod@analgrinder.prv.pl, www.analgrinder.prv.pl/sauron

Tadas

SCEPTIC 9

**Paibetic Being
Empire / Last Episode**

I admit they have technicality and skills, but the **Death** influence is too evident. Too many of the same, already heard, episodes that certainly amazed the Metal world on *Symbolic or Sounds of Perseverance* can be found on *Paibetic Being*, but yet that does not justify the Polish band to pretend they are another premiere Florida band that can outrun the original albums of the genre.

Literally everything reminds of **Chuck** and the crew. Check out the track-titles, for example: *Only Lies*, *Children Eyes*, *Paibetic Being* - aren't they familiar? The cover artwork is different, though, yet I think **Jacek Wisniewski** has done better works in the past.

Well, I've already described how the music's like, but to give you more reasons to back up my reasoning, I can mention the truly complex way of playing, that is both heavy and crunchy, as if you are eating well baked cookies or watching a tasty (and very well-known) movie. Simply a piece of sonic art that is consumable without any hard effort. Bearing in mind that this kind of **Death Metal** usually requires more than one listen to understand what's going on, you can count this as a compliment for **Sceptic**.

Anyway, this second album still lacks of that something 'extra'. Maybe it is the slightly limited recording quality, a feel that it has been overproduced, - recorded in the famous *Selami Studio* - deleting all naturalism, and leaving just the clock-tight mechanisms left. It runs into too a mechanical, too a sterile position, and **Michal's** vocals certainly add in the dryness

of the picture. I think he's been trying to hard to resemble **Chuck**, and he failed. Useless to say, it wasn't a very smart idea. Much better is the 'keyboard-free' cover of **Nocturnus**.

This album is released by **Empire** in Poland, and by **LEP** for the rest of Europe.

Tadas

SCHATTENREICH 7

Vernichtung

They speak about a label, which delayed the release of this nine-tracker for half a year due to the provocative lyrics that were not bearable enough for the society, but, indeed, there is no sign of a label on this CD, so it's my guess that it was just a promotional trick. Well, let's consider it as a self-release.

German lyrics are not my field, so I cannot say anything about their content. When it comes to the music, their Black Metal sounds very German. Luckily **Schattenreich** do not resemble any of those lame gothic or whatever 'Black Metal' wannabes that Deutschland is full of. Instead, they stick purely to the Metal way of expression, steadily confirming their devotion to the dark side of music.

What I mean with 'German' this time is the monotonousness in the music - this album lacks of memorable composing. It is just one more Black Metal disc that sounds similar to plenty of others out there. It is hard to distinct one band from another, and I doubt they can attire more people than others. Indeed, that's not the main aim when you play Black Metal, but on the other hand for the listener it is impossible to enjoy all the identity-free bands. Who can distinguish one song from another in *Vernichtung*, ah? Not me.

I am trying to imagine how this could sound as a demo. Yes, this is their first recording after getting together in 1999. So, as a demo this would be quite reasonable, though still not groundbreaking.

Anyway, like all the other bands that manage to release albums on their own - they are lucky, and eventually, if they keep improving, this might give them positive results. Ask the price and availability from:

Schattenreich, c/o Koller, Horwerstr. 6, CH-6005 Luzern, Switzerland, tel. (+41) 765477123, schattenreich@hotmail.com

Tadas

SECRETS OF THE MOON 9

**Stronghold of the Inviolables
Gixatrix**

Six years, oh - who could believe! That's the time that has passed after the one and only **Martyrium** album was released. Back then this German band was not highly accepted, even if Black Metal flourished, and everybody was so excited to check out every new band (including all the rising labels as well!). This is sort of a reincarnation of that experimental line that was dropped back then, maybe for reasonable matters, since that album can hardly be interpreted as a very well put together one. **Secrets Of The Moon** have many allusions to **Martyrium**, *Daevus* being the most important of them. His vocal style is literally the same: echoed, sharp like knife, shrieks are sped up all over the place. Yet the new breed of German avantgarde are not so compulsory avantgarde. This time round they rather create Black Metal with a twist. Tracks like *Nemesis* clearly show where they get inspiration from, as it is a pure tribute to **Darkthrone**, the mighty. Hell yeah, the sound on that song is to be highly appreciated - it fits the riffs so well. On the other hand, when they sink their teeth into a more complex musical research, the listener has to focus to get a clue of what's going on. And then the feeling of the perfect sound disappears. I believe bands like this need at least a few different kind of sounds on the same album to make it sound more proper. Why don't they try a different production for different songs, just for the sake of experiment, ah? They shouldn't be afraid of one more try-out.

Besides that, I've caught a melancholic **Burzum** pattern and a very thin similitude to **Thorns** in the introductory composition. For the sake of difference, this album is worth a listen or two, at least it sounds much better than **Martyrium**. Well done graphics, but not for those who would like to read the lyrics...

http://come.to/secretsofthemoon

Tadas

SHADOWBREED 9

**Only Shadows Remain
Painkiller**

This does not grab me as effectively as **Unleashed** once did with their simple but effective death-hammers. Neither is the

epoch the same. This Dutch team is without doubts more complex when it comes to composing, but easy enough to get into and to shape an opinion about this debut album. It'll be very interesting to know if such music still has devoted fans, or has its good times gone forever, making a way for modern trends.

Once again, it is not 1991, so it will be very hard for them to break through, if possible at all. But who am I to predict the future? Actually any musician, if he or she is ambitious enough, can reach the goal whatever the circumstances around are.

But back to **Unleashed**, erghllh... I mean **Shadowbreed**, *Shadowbreed* spits out his lyrics *hailing ancient pagan traditions* (siting the press-sheet) in the way fatty **Johnny** made a name for himself. The name of **Bolt Thrower**, so actively suggested by the label as another reference point, does not work at all in my humble opinion. To put it mildly, that's another league, the British Premierie, and here is the Dutch division, ok let it be the first one.

No, this album is much more punchy, energetic, adopting more the Thrash standards, not so raw or dark. The music basically is about headbanging it requires immediate reaction from listener. Even the first listen puts everything in places, prepares the audience in a few minutes. Yeah, at some point this predictability irritates a bit - no room for surprises on this record. But when such psychotic solos as in *Warriors Blood* swings it forward, you are quite able to forget about peculiarities that are absent. Why don't three bang thy head, after all? Last hair has dropped? C'mon, just put on that crazy wig and bang thy head to the wall of the sound, until only shadows remain.

Painkiller has done a great job pressing this in four different formats: picture and normal LPs as well as digipak and jewel case CDs.

Shadowbreed, c/o Kasz, Hussenbergrstraat 14, 6243 AH Geulle, Netherlands, shadowbreed@home.nl, www.shadowbreed.net

Tadas

SINISTER 12

**Creative Killings
Hammerheart**



To lose such a throat as **Eric** had on the previous album, and to replace him by a female singer?! That must be SOMETHING, indeed, bearing in mind that these Dutch icons of Death Metal simply do not change, and to imagine whether the girl is using a soprano voice is the same as questioning whether pope uses condoms or if he rather prefers the real action. *Aggressive Measures* is a good point to start comparing to, but those are just great memories conjured up three years ago. The inhuman voice of **Eric** still rings in my ears, and actually it has taken time to get used to what **Rachel** tries to spit out. Her voice does not penetrate inside the listener's ego that much, and I am still not sure if it is just low sounding in the mix, or it is naturally whisper-like; but after a short examination it's certain that the girl has some guts to join in this killer team! Once again - to me personally a brutal, guttural voice in such type of Death Metal is very important, and I sort of hesitated whether to accept her efforts on this brand new album or to stay cautious about such a decision, yet finally the energy and the whole-heartedness of the four-piece team won me over. They are as strong a team of coddling aggression as they've been on every **Damned** **Sinister** record. Point me out one **Sinister** album that was so-so, anybody? And I'll kick your tooth out! Well, *Bastard Saints* was not the most successful experiment, but whatever, that was just the new beginning for the guys, sort of like a reorganisation before the new assault series.

I hear something from their early records in here as well - especially those slower passages in between the blasting bombardment and the high-note ripping guitar riffs, driving as fast as possible. That's **Death Fuckin' Metal** the **Sinister** way! And

my absolute hell for returning to more SINFISTER, occult-related, bludgeoning topics in the lyrics - I smell *Hate* times here, yet even more personal and murderous, maybe. The title-track, *Moralistic Suffering* and *Early Gothic Horror* are absolute hits! Well, and a cover of *Storm in My Mind* in addition - which is a much more aggressive and groovy version than the Mike & Jeff one. A must have release!!!

<http://sinister.wingsofdeath.nu>

Tadas

SIRIUS 12 *Spectral Transition - Dimension Nocturnal Art*

The best thing is that they have moved from their *In the Nightside Eclipse* fascination phase onwards, leaving the past far behind. The music's still symphonic, that has always been a core element of *Sirius*, but with this sophomore album it has grown into much stronger and rougher extension. So much more Death Metal brutality and contrast is involved within the compositions that any reviewer must be confused to find the right word to describe the final outcome. One word fits perfectly well, though - huge!

From what I hear in my promo version of the CD, the diversity and variation of music hits the ear first and foremost. Dominantly dark and gruesome, the line of the music can grow dramatically, and then these sound waves calm down, at times even involving background piano effects, or something like that. Yet the music in general is ass-kicking, catchy and exterminating. Due to this rough edge it is not right to speak about symphonic Metal as we know it. Unlike their label mates *Limbrick Art*, for instance, *Sirius* make their main impact with a live Metal sound, which is nonetheless lethal or life-killing.

The exceptionalism of this release must be suggested by that psyched out feeling you get while listening to it. I am sure this comes from the composing process and energies involved in the recording of these eleven songs. It must have been violent from the very beginning. Otherwise the result would have not been this immense. And I do not refer to those big names who participated in this record.

The *Emperor* cover marks another highlight won for *Sirius*, as making a cover of so well-known band you must be either a total amateur or a total professional. A killer rendition, by the way. But the grown potential of theirs is a keyword to this success, anyway. I am especially overwhelmed by *Abstract Eerie Corridors*, *Into Forbidden Dimensions* and *Paradox Timeline*.

Sirius, draconis@netcab.pt,
www.neverland.nu/sirius

Tadas

SITHLORD 7 *Labyrinth to the Gods Bleed*

Tell me how you read their monicker? *Sithlord* or *Shitlord*? Ha. I also thought of the latter until I had to start writing a review.

What's this anyway? One more attempt to make Thrash Metal sound evil, to make Black Metal sound groovy, to make... eh!h!h!h. Anyway, it is an uninspiring retro thing due to plainly typical handling of things and a production that leaves much to be desired. It seems to be a good performance, but it cannot move me an inch. Just listen to their screamy but powerless vocalist, or the straightforward bouncing of the drummer. In fact, it is truly for the better that they managed to feature only 30 minutes of music in here, although it still is too much of the same stuff, if you ask me. Just typical, so very very typical. How many Swedish bands have been doing this kind of 'questionable Metal' since 1995? Why should anyone bother if these Aussie guys could outrun them all, or just few of those bands. You need to be very good to become noticed, otherwise it is not worthy to be released on CD.

I feel trouble coming when claiming this is more Thrash than Black, not to sound like voting for this and that in particular. It's cleverer to say that neither one of the two styles is represented properly.

Enough said - it is too typical even for the fans of the retro thing in Metal. Inquire the price from their label.

Sithlord, P.O. Box 479, Melton, VIC 3337, Australia, sithlord@free.net.au,
www.nav.to/enraved2hades

Tadas

SIX FEET UNDER 9

True Carnage Metal Blade

Somehow I'm not convinced - the three-track adv. sampler that *Metal Blade* shipped prior to the entire rest of the songs I do find some fillers, and even if all of them are short songs, there still is a feeling that SFU are not living the best times.

Well, it's their kind of return-to-the-roots album - remember their first discs that were winners due to the emphasised groove there? So... groove in *Maximum Violence*, especially in the speed department. I dare to say that it is not what people have been expecting from them. Even if some tracks take up higher speed it still is so damn straightforward that you can just bang the head and do nothing else. Well, in the live-situation it certainly must work, but as far as the band's development goes, it's not a very positive thing.

Chris Barnes plays on his voice once again, and the combination of the low guttural roars and the groovy music reminds me of the *Zero the Hero* days of *Cannibal Corpse*. Did I mention that in the *Graveyard Classics* review? Hell yeah, but this feeling continues through the new record as well. Nope, it is amusing combination at the end of the day.

And the next in line is *Ice-7*, contributing in *One Bullet Left*. Umm, that's fine with me after some 5 or 6 listens, even though in general I have no reason to support this rap/Metal crap, really. In a way we may speak about some modern influences in the SFU sound, mostly in the rhythmic department, yet it's hidden underneath a thick layer of down-tuned guitars.

Must mention the amazing video for *The Day the Dead Walked!* It rises massively the actions of this release, because it is simply a masterpiece of a Metal video inspired by horror movies! It must be seen to be believed! A pity that song is so short as I would gladly check out a whole movie like that!

To sum it up - this still could have been better!!!

Tadas

SKYCLAD 9

Another Fine Mess Demolition

An active time of changes is more than noticeable in the camp of the Folk Metal veterans this year, and the current album marks another change of a label - and it's also the final release with *Martin* on board, it seems. I can understand them, it is very important to remain at the hub of everybody's attention and not to fall into oblivion.

Well, they are right in telling the listeners that this album is a collection of *Skyclad*'s live set at *Dynamo 95* and the *Outrageous Fourtunes EP*, recorded about the same time and released in a limited edition of 1000. An album for the die-hard fans of the band only, in other words.

Well, you may consider myself as one of those die-hard fans, but let me hesitate a while before pointing it as yet another unforgettable piece of the *Skyclad* history. Sure, it is exclusive material, yet nothing you could even compare with their glorious studio records, at least those done with *Martin*. Furthermore, they had some live stuff memorised on *Tracks from the Wilderness EP* already, and then there was that live video on *Vintage Wine* CD (with rather an average production, must admit!). I see another limitation in releasing a live recording from a show that took place six years ago. All the tunes are from that particular show. Well, on the other hand, I wouldn't mind a live recording from 1991 or 1992, to hear the earliest *Skyclad* gems live...

To cut it short - it is a matter of taste, but the best option would be a recent live set with tracks from various albums, don't you think? The four studio-tracks are rather special, though - it was the guys first try to interpret their heavy music with acoustic means.

This EP has a dark and gloomy character, unlike the later renditions of their Metal compositions. That's what I recommend for the fans - spiritually clean and musically pure episodes of *Skyclad*, from the era that have gone into the void... Check out that 'violin-only' version of *Spinning Jenny!*

Tadas

SKYFIRE 6

Timeless Departure Hammerheart

I wonder what music the young generation grows up with these days? *Dark Tranquillity*? *Dimmu Borgir*? Or maybe

Nevermore? Well, at least the latter does not inspire the members of this Swedish team; that's certain.

It's not really the main point that their music is faceless, cliché, and lacks of elemental imagination. It's more about the lack of self-respect, I think. Quite common - who thinks that it still is possible to find a personal niche in the dead world of melodic Death/Heavy Metal? Needless to confirm that *Skyfire* are deeply drowned in competition. Dead in the dead world.

I see absolutely no reason to investigate in what they present on this debuting record. If there is a branch of Metal that is supposed to be melodic, it still ought not to be the way bands like *Skyfire* deliver it. It's a wrong direction, it causes degeneration of heavy music, it cuts off the extremity - which is an essential part of intense music. The Saccharin-like synth domination and the most typical shrieky voice heard in ages are the worst details one can expect from these modern Metal kids.

To turn it upside down, this could have been quite a reasonable Power Metal record, if it only had been performed in a plain Heavy Metal style; a traditional singer who could compete with the best vocalists of the genre, and guitar-based melodies could fit their stylistics drastically better. But since they are taught that the best music available is the post era of Swedish Death Metal, a reviewer cannot but slag the guys off.

Drop the masks, look back, and stop the decline of melodic heavy music. Prepare your homework!

Skyfire, c/o *Jonas Sjögren*,
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skyfire@raytraced.com, <http://listen.to/skyfire>

Tadas

SOILENT GREEN 8

A Deleted Symphony for the Beaten Down

I've been thinking for a while now what exactly does this release (or the band itself, to be honest) remind me of the most. The certain answer is - *Pantera!* Just a bit rarer and more chaotic version of it. And that basically says it all.

Since I'm not very much into these kind sounds, I can't say this brand new opus of the New Orleans based outfit makes me pissing my pants out of excitement. Hmm... okay, it is fairly brutal, uncompromising, and should tear some feeble humans apart, but it belongs entirely to the so-called modern Metal school. Yeah, the biography emphasises the focus they've made on untraditional structuring of the songs - technically it certainly is innovative and a not-so-easy thing to do. Yet, do you enjoy music just because it is made with skills that other people do not possess? Neither do I.

For all the lovers of traditional rock 'n' roll based Metal music this release turns into a bursting pain in the ass because it's not the easiest task to get into the presented grooves. Surely *Pantera* is not as chaotic, it is much more traditional, and *Soilent Green* have taken their own grind/sludge roots forward, maybe giving them an additional punch (I'm not sure about it, as, indeed, I'm not an expert in these genres), so you can ignore this comparison, at least for a while. After you've checked out the songs, I am quite sure you will agree with me, though. Yet the vocalist *Ben Feldgust* does his best to resemble *Phil Anselmo*.

Yeah, some Death and Thrash Metal do find their way into this Molotov cocktail as well, as for example in *Stallonebole* - I wouldn't actually mind hearing more such influences in the band's music. But, then again, who the fuck would listen to such a record to find just few short jumps into the older Metal realms when there are plenty of other bands around who deliver exactly what you need.

Well, ok, extreme Metal for younger (de)generation.

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benfalgust@aol.com,
www.soiilentgreen.net

Tadas

STONEGE 8

Voyage of Ageless Time

Hellfire

Melodic, mid-tempo Heavy/Death Metal has reached the Mexican border, or better said - the southern part of United States, as this outfit with a few Spanish sounding names in the line-up hails from Texas. They must have been making some dirty business with this new Mexican label to get signed, but, no, maybe it was a true deal of Metal...

Like the press-sheet states: this music sells well nowadays, so why to fix a thing that is not broken... Hell, I truly think that toy is broken, dead seriously! This melodic thing has gone too far, and bands popping everywhere with the same kind of music do make the Metal culture mutate. Please stop diluting Metal with sissy melodies, and then pretend to be angry and tough guys.

Well, maybe *Stoneage* are not as melodic as some European bands, but they are not the meanest band around of that genre either. It's not just about the weak sound-quality, but also about the weakly built music. Seems like all the necessary components would be here; quite a rough vocalist who both growls and screams, various rhythms, twin guitars, even a few speed-ups, but the album still sounds so typical, usual, many-times-heard. *Gardenian*, *Soilwork*, and the later *In Flames* must have acted as their motivators, but the guys from Texas have taken it into another - wrong - milieu. If it wasn't for their growler, who brings a bit rougher feel to it, this would have been plainly a bad attempt to make melodic Metal.

These days a good presentation (that this silver disk truly has) is not enough. Labels release way too much anonymous stuff, and then you just feel helpless to take every single release into account.

Stoneage, 1561-B Rebecca Ann, El Paso, TX 79936, USA. tel. (+1) 9158572617

Tadas

SUBTERA 7

Discord Tumba

A strange record. This is quite brutal Metal - 'Grinding Death' wouldn't be the worst possible description - though yet it is not the most intense adaptation of this style ever, and nothing exciting for the *Cannibal Corpse* fan either. The musical vibes are wrapped up in some strange industrial shell, and the feeling is pretty awkward as I can't be sure what the fuck is going on. Then to add a pile of core elements is another annoying thing. It is suggested to be called as 'twisted sonic fury'. What the heck...

This band is run by ex-*Core* members - I remember passing a tape of that band some six years ago. Well, their new incarnation is driven by socio-political ideas and acts as a manifestation against the society, so that basically says it all. Thank hell it is not another sad attempt to be equal to *Sepultura*... though you will find some occasional Thrashy parts in the music as well. The industrial motives mainly appear in the vocals, recorded with distorted means. But then in the latter part of this album the whole crew starts to experiment more and more, which in my ears turns into plain boredom. I refer to *Weakest Link*, in particular, that perfectly lives up to its name! Just a waste of laser disc and my precious time.

The back-cover is pretty cool, depicting the pope kissing holy ground, entirely covered in dollars... that old fuckin' bastard ought to die someday soon now or for how long do we have to witness this circus going on? He is so popular even among people playing heavy music, ha ha. This does not work for the pope's promotion, but anyway - I'm sick of his face...

Subtera, P.O. Box 2040, 86023-970 Londrina - PR, Brazil,
subtera4@hotmail.com

Tadas

SUCIDAL WINDS 9

Victims in Blood

No Colours



Well, this album is hellishly listenable since it has the same infernal rock 'n' roll vibe as *Unpure* (musically) and *Carpentarian Forest* (vocally) please us with. That's why I can't but still put the Black Metal tag on their Thrashy music. Indeed, there are more straightforward riffs than your standard Nordic Black Metal band has ever done. But this actually limits these guys a

bit, because so many bands have been doing this Thrashy thing lately that it is very hard to be original or more noticeable. Yet *Suicidal Winds* have quite a strong feeling of darkness within their sincere Metal creation, as a bonus. It can be felt inside those riffs and vocal lines that deal with Satanic wrath and forces of darkness. Great to realise that it is not just another poser thing, as the crew focuses on the left hand path through several medias at once.

I am not quite sure what *Suicidal Winds* need to make their music even better. A bit of variety and maybe less straightforward riffs here and there? Well, this might have a reason, because when they go into a bit darker or weirder direction, it all turns much more macabre and provoking. Yeah, into the fatal swirl of the 90's Black Metal. Anyway, here is more to headbang to than to pose evil behind the mirror, so you would better prepare carefully and play this record to all the violent friends on occasion.

I was actually surprised to hear that the guys behind this band have played together since 1992. This must be another reason why they do older kind of Metal. So, please check this out for the sake of traditional ways to be Metal.

Suicidal Winds, *Peter Haglund*,
Fjällvägen 56, Lgh. 8, 451 53 Uddevalla, Sweden.

Tadas

SUNSET SPHERE 10

Storm before Silence

This Hungarian team surprised me a bit. They are not newcomer musicians - even if this band has existed just for a few years, and it wasn't until February 2000 that the current line-up was established. I say this because it is quite unbelievable if you take a listen to how *Kyrab* sings. Yes, another female singer in an atmospheric Metal outfit, but as she's a real professional, and has smart accompaniments supporting her, there is no reason to slag them down. Indeed, *Sunset Sphere* belongs to the better bands of this genre.

The only trouble of theirs is too an evident *The Gathering* influence, like for example in the second tune, and again it is both the singer and the rest of the crew to blame. They are a real team, in other words. But straight after that track follows the brilliant *Life after Light* with its ideal rhythmic decisions and strong far-reaching hooks both in singing (refrains!) and playing. A very good tune, which has complete structure as a whole. However, dare I say that *Sunset Sphere* will never achieve such recognition as *The Gathering*, because there is a matter of repeating involved - to introduce *Amekke* in 1995 was an event, now it would be usual as well.

Yes, as for now their music is of a bit too varying quality, so some tracks sound much better than others. Calm acoustic or piano accompanied episodes aren't so rare either, just confirming the atmospheric character that they build their songs with.

It is mentioned something about Egyptian thematics in the lyrics. Pretty usual, having in mind all those other Metal bands praising the ancient land. Well, *Nile* has sincerely developed this concept so much better. To put it plainly, such atmospheric music as *Sunset Sphere* deliver and Egypt, are quite different categories to me.

Other than that, it is no surprise they got a deal with the Dutch label. Solid enough music for the Dutch fans of atmospheric Metal!

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hungarysunset.sphere@mail.uti.hu,
<http://sunsetisphere.freeweb.hu>

Tadas

SURRENDER OF DIVINITY 9

Oriental Hell Rhythmic

Psychic Scream

It so happened that I discovered both the rehearsal tape '97 and the debut album of this band in a time of two weeks. Black metal invasion from Thailand? None the less...

Ok, briefly, if there are more bands of this calibre there, then Asian Black Metal is coming, indeed... beware of Siamese Christ-beheading Metal holocaust. With those long epithets for their music, it is easy to know where they take their inspiration from: *Impiety*, of course. But musically we go with much more intense and much more Nordic power here.

Unfortunately, *Surrender of Divinity* have adopted too much Swedish riffs, thus

losing a certain amount of the Evil Black Metal spirit. I understand their wish to be as 'molotivik' as **Marduk** or **Dark Funeral**, but they should realise that to reach such prominence, one must be a genius. Tons of blastbeats and fast blazing riffs here, but it does not always end up in a perfect combination - especially that vocalist has too a thin voice, which is deadened in the mix. Fortunately, this does not end up in too a melodic manner, and black is the only colour of Metal this album paints. The occasional synth works ok (*To Reach Out For Eternity*). Some lyrical subtleties could have been more worked out, though.

Everything I said above was judged from the perspective of the highest standard of Black Metal they obviously want to be a part with, so do not take this band as a just another amateurish newcomer from the south-eastern territories. They certainly outdo a bunch of those Swedish bands that have a few albums under their Viking belts. Check this out for a good surprise - that is, if Swedish Black Metal doesn't make you regurgitate. Yours for 12\$.

Surrender Of Divinity, PO. Box 161, Samsennai, BKK 10400, Thailand, surrender666@hotmail.com

Tadas

SURROGAT 7

Excuses For Oppression
Another self-released CD that looks almost like a release of a professional label - except the CD-r itself, although it's professionally manufactured as well, coming with a printed label - not the photocopied sticker put on it. In addition, the guys have worked out a modern looking inlay, which actually makes you expect some sort of modern Metal delivery. Yet in reality the music on this five-tracker is much more traditional, performed in Thrashing Death vein, with execution of the last tune.

Well, it makes me draw parallels with those old times when everybody wanted to be Death Metal, but either there was a lack of understanding what it actually is, or the musicians were not capable of playing at the edge of their abilities. All they were able to bring with them to match the 'Death Metal standard' was the growling voice. This is the case with **Surrogat** as well. Too bad that they are influenced by late **Gorefest** as well, so this growling turns out a bit *hardcore-ish* - hmmm, nothing to be excited about...

The instrumental part of the band lacks of vitality and energy. Yeah, there are some parts that could hardly be called Thrash. It's much rather Metal for beginners - simple, primitive and fairly boring. I hope this band wouldn't follow the *hardcore-ish* way further on, but would actually eliminate those episodes off the musical picture. If it is an attempt to create a groove atmosphere with that, then it is a wrong decision. This recording is not worth to be printed on CD.

To return to that special bonus track, it is completely another story - the Estonians try to combine their electronics with heavy distorted guitars, and I must admit it delivers that energy that their usual tracks lack of so much. The tune was done by a friend of the band and can hardly be related to the rest of the MCD.

Surrogat, Lauri Laanisto, Päeva 17, 50103 Tartu, Estonia, laanisto@ut.ee

Tadas

TANGORODRIM 10

Unholy Metal Way Aggressor
Yup, these guys did surprise me positively! It's another reincarnation of the necro-sound, both typical and somehow unique Black Metal. Very primitive from the musical point of view, yet unlike many of those who just showed themselves as feeble losers in their attempts to recreate that ancient Black Metal feeling. The **Tangorodrim** guys have the right, devastating spirit in these six tracks. It seems to me that they achieve this special atmosphere very easily - it must be their way of life. The music convinces me that it is done in order to express their morbid attitudes, first and foremost. The special sound has much to do with it. You can clearly hear all the instruments, yet it is so old-school sounding, fitting the material very well. Dare I say that it's one of those rare recordings where the prepared music has found its very place while recording it? Yes! And also do check out the vocalist *Mrakobes* - he simply shouts all of his blasphemies, and the result gets very odd and attractive.

They could still improve the lyrics, and maybe stick to some more spiritual things there, if my opinion counts to anyone. Even though some Russian curse-words fit this

necro-sound very well, hah. A strong spice, that is.

Aye, I haven't mentioned yet that this is a band of Russian emigrants who live in Israel now. Seems like their population down there is so big that some guys started to even play Black Metal, hah - although they are so much better than the other Russian band I've heard from there. They state clearly that the band does not belong to any race or scene, they just play unholy Black Metal and worship death. A pity that it's just a six track MCD - I want more like this!

Tadas

TENHI 10

Airut: ciivi Prophecy

I do not feel that drastic exceptionality in this singular mini-album release - that 'drastic exceptionality', their trademark, this Finnish collective established with **Kaunan**, when this new work, after a few years break, basically confirms it. For those who already marked their great sonic-escapes, it must appeal without hesitation... Yeah, sure it has a darker shamanism approach, especially on the first scary composition entitled *Tuulen Nostatus*. They use less harmonised voices, and play more of dramatic piano interludes or dreamy synth-themes in here. But I really cannot hear the massively emphasised ethnic touch - it was of the same proportion on **Kaunan**. On the other hand, who said that I am an expert of Suomi folk music? The truly admirable characteristic of *Airut: ciivi* is that sombre magnetism that crosses the entire experience like an arrow; flying long, but cutting sharp enough.

Nein, this is great experience, far above the emotional & folk music trend of today. What I would like in addition, to make this release even more perfect, is the timing. Why just two tracks and a kind of an intro? Why not a normal full-length? Those who enjoy the effort will naturally want more music like this. Those who say that this is not a special CD to spend some time with, will most likely complain about the length of it as the main factor of their irritation. **Tenhi** do open up to the listener, but then there's a natural thirst for more (I'd like to check out much more stuff in the vein of *Tuulen Nostatus*) - it must have been predicted before.

In any case, it creates another intriguing detail; what will **Tenhi** return with to support this record and to maintain that interest people have in them - which, I'm sure, is not ceasing. My sincere suggestion for everyone is to get this limited digipak edition and pray for more of their heavenish music.

Tenhi, tenhi@jobox.com, www.tenhi.de

Tadas

THEATRE OF TRAGEDY 9

Assembly Nuclear Blast



Woohoo! Dance, baby, dance! **TOT's** transformation from a Metal band to a dance-floor team has come to an end, and they don't feel clumsy about it. I suggest everyone who decides to dare and listen to what they have created this time does the same. 'Gothic pop' is a lame choice to describe this vital and happy music, since it is quite heavy at times and distorted guitars are still present in almost every track. I started to question myself, though, what six persons still do in this band, when it is crammed with electronics? But then again it still has rock music cannons, which are just modernised, sound-wise. Surely there is purely a pop approach here, but I'd still consider it as music which is ok to swallow by an open-minded underground freak.

Sort of like an underground invasion into pop culture. Yeah, they will be rotated on TV and maybe win some award in alternative music competition, but spiritually **Theatre**

Of Tragedy (or any other band that has went poppy way, say **Metallica**) will never appear in one rating with **Ober** or **Celine Dion**. We talk here about another kind of pop culture. And another thing is that there is that certain **Theatre Of Tragedy** feeling throughout this otherwise different set of tracks. Is it *Liv Kristine's* voice which makes me state that?

Huh. Why the fuck am I trying to defend their progress, though?! Let them do what they want! And to bear these plastic decisions instead of organic music sometimes is too much, indeed. I guess this album appeals to me in special moments of relaxation and loose. It shouldn't work in moments of hard tasks to make or some time when your mood is simply fucked up. Resume: be ready for another surprise.

Tadas

THIS EMPTY FLOW 10

Nowafter Eibon

I had managed to already forget this band - they demonstrated their craft of music five years ago (I mean the debut album *Magenta Skycode*), and after that have just occasionally popped up on an underground CD-r's and such. Not that a new collection of laid-back melancholic, depressive, dark rock songs would break through to sell tens of thousands of copies, but at least I hope everyone who feels that this could be his or her thing will have a better opportunity to find the album in some shops and/or mailorders now. The route taken by **Eibon Records** is probably closer to the Finnish artists than the one paved by their previous label.

Music-wise, **This Empty Flow** have moved even closer to the psychedelic art of rock music. The characteristically old-school feeling prevails, especially in *And Also the Drops*, where the moderately silent Hammond organ mildly embraces the phlegmatic and gloomy transmissions. Fragmentally, the sounds bring the listener to frame-free territories; no rock, no pop, no ambient, just the distant cry of that guy who sings (no, he is not literally crying, that's my metaphorical interpretation), then vaguely joined by the guitar, tranquil bass or low tuned drumbeat - that I believe is not performed by human kind. This band creates such a devastating atmosphere - *Dubby*. Yeah, this is not the album to lift up your mood on a long winter night... Useful to mention that *Nowafter* also contains material from those limited fan editions of their recent material, rounding up in 13 compositions.

At least **This Empty Flow** is a smart alternative to the **Apocalyptica HIM** culture that flows from the free state of Finland. If all your life you've felt like a loser, or you truly are, then check this out - the whole world is closer to you than you ever thought.

Tadas



T.H.R.O.N. 5
Subject to Damage Musickness / Metal Agen
I'm lost for words... and I feel so good about having somehow managed to avoid this band's debut album. I mean, with all these trades going on, sometimes you cannot escape the album you never wanted to check out, so luckily *Seductions of the Unbaptized Darkness* passed the **ETR** headquarters by hearing so many diverse opinions concerning them, I was sure something's wrong with this formation.

Judge yourselves; practising Death/grind since early 90's, they suddenly jumped into pure Black Metal in 1995 and were oh so evil up until 1998. The paradox has reached its top with the debut album I just mentioned, when the band was named as the Russian **Emperor** (could that happen with a competent reviewer? Hell no!). Further development of **T.H.R.O.N.**

bringing them back to their beloved grinding Death, which they 'proudly present' on a brand new record. Now, isn't it a phenomenal experience of deceiving your real nature?! Isn't it a case of pure prostitution? You think it's a single case in Metal industry? And it can happen only in Russia? Think again... The others just try to think of more reasons for changing and for hiding their real attitude...

Well, excuse me, but the technical abilities of these Russian performers are simply out of our evaluation scale. To vindicate briefly the five points I granted them, it's an admission of their skills and basic creative potential. Don't expect heaps of unforgettable Death/grind, though. Mostly it's just ideas stolen from **Napalm Death** and the extreme origin of **Burial Truth**. Some groovy tricks and industrially tuned vocalist here and there makes this record truly average. And then, what about the Black Metal way of life supported with a **Depeche Mode** cover tune?

T.H.R.O.N., c/o *Alexandr Ilyashenko*, 162-7, 103305 Moscow, Russia, thron@hotmail.ru, www.thron.hotmail.ru

Tadas

THRONEAEON 10

Neither of Gods Hammerheart

Cloning Decide on this side of Atlantic - this could be a fairly reasonable title for this debut full-length of these Swedish masters of Florida Death Metal. But they are a total rip-off! And I am neither kidding or mocking the band. Their brand of Death appeals to me quite a bit - maybe I even find them more attractive than couple of the latest **Decide** records. I mean, this could be a smart guideline where **Benton** and co. might have moved into, if not losing half of their spirit recently. But, no, **Throneaeon** do not jump higher than the early **Decide**, though. **Decide** were doing miracles back then. And nor do these Swedes use any typical clichés from those days. This slab provides twelve equally hammering outbursts of highly energetic, mainly fast and not-so-difficult-to-swallow Death Metal, much in the vein of later **Decide**, but with a few unexpected exceptions to the rule (like the closing *As It Has Come to End*, resembling the slower monuments of **Morbid Angel**).

Maybe it's about their capability of remaining interesting for the listener until the very last track. There is a huge difference when one band has a feeling to put one riff after another in a plastic and 'liquid' order, whilst another can deliver the same kind of stuff, but badly put together. The listener usually ignores the latter, and prefers the former. So I dare to claim that **Throneaeon** achieve their positive impression through the good composing quality.

Necessarily to say that this release also creates the totally negative atmosphere that Satanic Death Metal must be capable of. They still need to do something to get rid of that too obvious influence, though. To those unacquainted, this Swedish four-piece has been active for about ten years now, since 1991.

Throneaeon, PO Box 3091, 720 03 Vasteras, Sweden, info@throneaeon.com, www.throneaeon.com

Tadas

TROLIS & THE GIBERLINGERS 9

Tuundra Noxia

A project of an **Obtest** member. He is into ambient, folk and dark industrial as well, if you did not know. He is manic about it. Well, I had some expectations concerning this, his first release of such type of experimental sonic shamanism. I had my reasons - good response of others hearing bits and pieces as well as seeing him live during summer.

Some kind of a tendency of Lithuanian ambient projects is to lay down the best tracks at the beginning of their albums, but unlike **Girno Giesmes**, **Tuundra** amuses myself until around the middle of this disc. Then the second half sounds worse. Could it be that the music starts to repeat itself? No, I don't think so, yet if there were more characteristic tunes, such as *Aidikiaregaiti*, then I would praise this album blindly! Indeed, that opening cut is phenomenal even if it has just sampled singing of traditional music from Tuva (that's a small nation somewhere in northern Russia), this amazing element goes so well with the electronic data and the dark atmosphere. Singing, yes - exactly singing is missed in the further songs. I understand that it is difficult to stick the same original spirit to

all the songs, but think some more experiments with sampled vocals would do this project a great favour. Another remark: after initial allusions to folk music **Tuundra** steps aside to sink in the deep ocean of electronics. It keeps on with that shamanistic feeling, but anyway - something primordial is lost in the process.

Alright, there are much more dark ambient experts out there, so I leave this music open for their interpretations, but all of you out there - check this out, I'm sure some of you will enjoy this. Released on pre-printed CD-r with a coloured photocopied cover. Ask the prices from: trolis@email.it

Tadas

TROLL 8

Universal Head Not Found

Well, I am not familiar with the comeback album of **Troll** that was conceived in 2000, but this quick follow-up to the world of Metal is a bigger disappointment than expected. Feedback to *The Last Predator* were like if it was another attempt to modernise Black Metal - as it was done by **The Kovenant** - yet from a different angle.

Listening to this new work without any deeper insight in who hides behind the instrumentarium here, the listener would hardly recognise **Mr. Nagasb** - **The Kovenant** moments are rather indistinct, indeed. But **Universal** is not developed into some kind of an individual concept, like the press-sheet tries to assure us. What I hear is a surrogate of heavy music, consisting of the clichés of the epic period of **Bathory**, typical noisecore standards (but for a Norsk Black Metal freak they do sound addictive enough), electronically tinged experimental tunes and a database of ambient music for beginners. Seems like the neat concept is absolutely missing, and those separate stories do not work together. It is a real surprise and disillusionment to notice that **Nagasb** failed to deliver music that has taste, this time.

Tracks like *Rev Lammictal*, *Sannbetens Plagiat*, *President Besters Alimony* and *Fields of a New Sun* do sound fairly good separately, but I can't give credit to **Nagasb**, because despite his long journey in the scene, he too must bring only good and very good albums to support his reputation. Well, for some people it was destroyed with **The Kovenant**, but who cares. So, to make this happen, he must deliver an Album, not a bunch of separate tunes. At this point, *Drep de Kristine* was way better.

Don't bother unless you want to please your curiosity.

Troll, trollsn@btmail.com

Tadas

TROLLECH 5

Synore lesu Eclipse

Ooooooohhh! No, it can't get any worse! 'Poharsky lesu Black Metal'. Such a thing is written with big letters in the booklet, which in English would be as: Pagan Forest Black Metal. The radical Black Metalers simply laugh at any attempts to mix the Black and Pagan ideologies. In many cases I agree with them, in some situations I am ultimately against such assumptions, but **Trollech** is maybe the very example of how those two streams should NOT be intertwined. The two guys are staring at you with childish corpsepaints and inverted crosses on their necks, whilst the third 'warrior' wears a white shirt and Odin's sign. I really can't believe it's possible to be as careless and inexperienced these days as these dudes are! Lately even those bands that don't know a shit about composing usually bring at least bearable visualisation on their albums. But not **Trollech**.

The music? Well, I've heard their demo, and this is their second album. It hasn't gained any positive moments at all! Maybe less fun to listen to, but not an inch of the Dark here. The element of the sinister touch simply does not stick to those lame riffs they invent, or should I say steal from others. It's anything but Black Metal. It has a stupid Life Metal feeling in it! A melancholic character? It makes me bursting in laughs! Simply no excuse to this. How dare they to compare this to such great bands as **Forgotten Woods** and **Kampfar**? It's blasphemy to say things like that. Well, how do you like a band that has ripped off the unique shriek of the **Forgotten Woods** singer, added there a riff of *Dark Medieval Times*, and topped it with ugly programmed drums? I tell you: it is one of the stupidest things I've experienced recently. The debut record of **Satyricon** was unique due to its unexpected character and unpredictable turns of music.

Trollech keep repeating the same riff for 6-7 minutes, and seem to be proud of that. Hell, the only possible advice is to avoid this crap!!!

Tadas

TSJUDER 10

Kill for Satan Drakkar

My expectations were truly high – most of the underground celebrities keep on praising this young Norwegian band, mostly for sticking to the old-school of Nordic Black Metal. You may guess that I am no stranger in the melting pot of the devil either. But what strikes the ears first – a too Swedish sound. **Tsjuder** are not as grim and possessed by brutality as our Norwegian schoolmates are letting us believe. This album has fragmented reminiscences of **Dissection**, **Marduk** and **Dark Funeral**. Yeah, as far as the Sverige influences are concerned, they are not watered down with second-rate melodies, and due to their intensity they're quite ok to use. Generally this thing to hear a Norwegian band sounding too Swedish is not the best moment for their Black Metal, though. Need more Norsk flavour? Here you are; think about **Mayhem** circa 1993, if you believe that it is possible to revive that old, cult atmosphere. No doubt this is a technical Black Metal slab, the production just could be a little sharper.

Other than that, I hardly have any critical remarks. The infernal music is supported by Satanic lyrics and the same kind of presentation on the actual CD. Well, the images could have been more convincing here and there, but, on the other hand, they do create the right mood to manifest what **Tsjuder** are all about. Though, still I think this four-piece will continue progressing and improving, but the right spirit is already there.

This debut will execute you in half an hour, but it does not have that ultimate feeling of a fully prepared, short and extreme record yet. I mean, few more tracks would do no harm, and to make a short, effective album they need more input to their music.

My favourite track in this album is *Sodomizing the Lamb* – due to the choppy riff in the beginning and in the middle, and the majestic melodies in between. Buy from **Leao Takas Records** for 15 \$.

Tsjuder, c/o *Halvor Draugheim* *Storrusten*, Københavngata 14a, 0566 Oslo, Norway. tsjuder@hotmail.com, <http://tsjuder.qj.net>

Tadas

TWILIGHT 8

...And with the Twilight, They Return

In Vision Muzik!

Majestic Black Metal, which does not grab as much as it could have. Damn, this is a Greek band, but it sounds as if it comes from the north, Sweden maybe; but no – the feeling is still different, slightly weaker, so **Twilight** must be a mixture of Northern and Hellenic Black Metal, then.

Unfortunately the music on this eight-tracker is pretty typical. You've heard it many times before, and **Twilight** is not the crew, which could re-make some old good stuff to make it shine through. No, they certainly do not perform just for the sake of copying somebody yet what is composed on this album is nothing else but another generalisation of progressive keyboard-based Black Metal. If the synth disappears, like it does here and there, then it becomes clear that the guitar-parts are recorded too weak, as if creating a background. What nonsense, guitar on the background – it becomes even more awkward when you realise that the keyboard is the leading instrument on this record. Don't get me wrong – **Twilight** use quite a few intros in their music, performed with synth, most naturally, but that's the point I value the most in this record. Truly dramatic, and geniusly arranged. This must be the Greek touch I referred to above.

Even though a precious design with a special cardboard case supports this CD – it has made a bad game on those who thought that such a special packaging means great music as well – don't be tricked! This album is just for the devoted fans of melodic Swedish and Greek Black Metal, but unfortunately it is too common for a connoisseur. Why don't they just stick to the Hellenic Metal armoury?

Tadas

UMBRAKRAIL 9

In Unity 'Paienme'

Deadsson

It is a rule that when a non-Black Metal

label finally decides it is time to make friends with the Black Metal listening audience, they choose either the most typical band around or some totally experimental artist that differs from the whole milieu. The latter holds water in **Umbakrail's** case.

Slightly bizarre experience, indeed, and I can't even find out why. Yeah, this set of tunes has a special sound and the programmed drums add their own feel of a fake atmosphere. I mean, this is not Black Metal the cheap way, but a kind of a synthetic idea is dwelling in the air. It is much different from your typical BM release, especially the Northern ones. The guitar-riffs aren't very aggressive, they have a nostalgic element as well as a Thrashy feel in there, but the handling of guitars is in the BM way and the sound is accordingly dirty (could be more powerful, though). This eight track release is not entirely Metal as a few of the compositions explore the ambient synth horizons, with a fairly good result. I might add, these parts do not disturb the aggressive side of **Umbakrail**, as there is nothing superbly extreme there after all. Or maybe their (well, his, as the band consists of only one musician) destructive negativity is hidden between the lines?

A vast disappointment on the visual side of this product is the fact that the CD is ok, but the booklet's terrible. The front-cover features a picture similar to the debut album of **Dimmu Borgir**, while from the inside you are not able to read any lyrics, even if they are printed there! There must have been a major fuck-up by the computer, and I can't get it how the label boss allowed such a thing to be printed? In this age of perfection such a product will simply not sell. And what's the reason to print the band's biography in French then? Well, I can get a clue of it anyway, but what about others? Still I think the music is worth to be checked out, so expect some weird Black Metal here.

Tadas

UNPURE 8

Trinity in Black Drakkar

Who doesn't remember **Unpure**? They've been around since '91, harassing the world with blackened Metal of a rather 'underground' kind. The low profile they've had since the day one has made them rather a curious phenomenon in the scene. Basically no promotion, just occasional interviews, rare and casual releases... And I've got a feeling it's never been about being down on the luck, rather a result of a conscious decision. Who knows? The scheme works.

I personally haven't really had the chance to familiarise myself with their earlier material, but **Trinity in Black** is shadowed to a rather high extent by influences usually depicted as 'old-school'. Surprisingly so! I always thought **Unpure** was everything but an old-school band – which it still might not be – but the heavy **Frostan** influence I cannot let go unmentioned. **Destruction** and **Morbid Angel** come to mind, too. And there are couple of parts that won't let us forget that the band is from Sweden either...

Anyway, this wasn't really what I was expecting. A good thing? Hmm... yeah, it could be. It so depends. It depends on what you value in a record you are listening to. As blackened Metal music with strong ties to the best of 80's bands, **Unpure** do, but should you be looking for anything else, anything else at all. I do not think **Trinity in Black** can satisfy your thirst in any way. It's a one-dimensional record, but I believe that's also exactly what the band aimed at.

Difficult to say. Your call.

Norbwind

UNPURE 9

Trinity in Black Drakkar

I am glad that **Unpure** have grown into a solid ass-kicking band, which has found its place in the unholy Metal underground, and which has close to a kult following these days, too. They looked and sounded great live in Turku in autumn 2000, and this album is just another confirmation of their good shape. Well, to those unaware, **Unpure** were more typical Scandinavian Black Metal band on the first couple albums, but this new release is a fair drift towards Thrasher sound with all those old-school influences. The vocal lines also bare more Thrashy tones than unprecedented BM shrieking from the past. I believe this is their fuck off to trends attitude, and the way to show eternal hail to the tradition of Evil Metal from those times when it was still

united and sincere. That's what **Unpure** are about. Their music is not meant for the masses these days, but they enjoy the somewhat Thrashy energy combined with deadly riffs and unholy curses. And not to forget: the blaspheming attitude is very important to the crew.

I'm just a bit disappointed that the guys slow down quite some times, and lose their energy doing so. Because numbers as *The 3rd Call* or *Forever Lust* paint a completely different – angry and insane Metal picture, bringing the listener back to **Celtic Frost's** early years of fame. But, well, it is about the diversity of their material, so be ready for the various moods of this album.

I guess those familiar with the **Drakkar** catalogue will know what to do, as it is one more release of unholy underground Black Metal that the French label is well known for.

Unpure, Box 4058, S-128 05 Bagarmossen, Sweden. unpure@chello.se, <http://come.to/unpure>

Tadas

UNVEILED / TRAUMA 8.9

split Psychic Scream

Time to take South-eastern Death Metal seriously? Look what happened with their Black Metal scene; it was filled with bands and even more fans, and finally few artists broke through – I mean mostly the worldwide recognised **Impiety**. The same is going to happen with the most brutal of that scene. We, people from Europe or the States, are not aware of the huge army following the every step of **Cannibal Corpse**, **Decide** and **Dismember**. It usually takes time to make your own music sound good, but **Trauma**, for example, prove that you can make it worth of checking even in Indonesia. Yes, they are rather an old band, having been jamming since 1992. There is a one full-length album already under their belts, but since I have never experienced its contents, let me introduce you their side of this new split – it involves five fast, catchy Death Metal anthems. Deeply rooted in the American style of dark brutal Death, **Trauma** have all the necessary substances as the guttural vocalist and low-tuned guitars. Yes, they have got a good production, which makes it a pleasant listen. Confirming my remark about the United States school, the guys add a cover of **Fleshgrind** to end their set. With more catchy parts and personal attitude they might go far.

Malaysian **Unveiled** have less experience, so it's natural that their music is more average than exceptional. But at some point it does not make shame for the region, especially if you consider how much Death/grind shit is being released both in the Old Continent and US these days. Only four tunes represent them on this split, so I think future will show them with more material. Judging by the fast track, **Cannibalistic Mangement**, the style of **Unveiled** keeps evolving. I bet they would better stick to that thicker and more ultimate path rather than combining choppy riffs with middle-tempo interludes.

Require the split from **Psychic Scream** for 12 \$.

Unveiled, c/o *Feisal*, No. 9, Jalan 7/3, Taman Desa, 86000 Kluang, Johor, Malaysia. satanrule@hotmail.com

Trauma, c/o *Nimo Aspiranta*, Komplek P.W.L. Blok 1 # 123, Jln. Tajuk Rencana, Gopinang Muara, Jakarta Timur 13420, Indonesia. morbidtrauma@lycos.com

Tadas

VA 9

Czech Assault Relapse

One has to think before deciding which of the two – **Imperial Feticide** or **Intervalle Bizarre**, is the winner of this five bands' compilation. The former one is the heaviest, the most intense and violent out of the pack, but it lacks a live drummer which is a serious drawback (well, not so many a drummer could play that speed and techniques as their machine does) for a brutal Deathgrind band, in my opinion. Their colleagues from **Intervalle Bizarre** play with *Jirka*, who does his job pretty well, and makes their sound much more organic. But both bands do really powerful exterminating Metal, proving the scene in Czechia to not only be crazy about brutal Metal, but also still raising new promising bands, besides the already established ones. **Fleshless** also have a human drummer, but they certainly lose competition in creating the hardest hitting music, if it is a point of rivalry as such. Well, their music is not bad, but a bit typical. American Death

Metal the 90's way. Negligent **Collateral Collapse** have been listening to **Mortician** too much, turning down their instruments and adopting vocal effects of the lowest vibes, but their songs do not quite fit the **Mortician** standard: there are too many hardcorish parts in their music which do not sound good together with the fast blastbeats. That's why they are just another average grind band. **Contrastiv** is even worse and it simply drops out of this compilation. Their style is too different from the other bands – they play crap music, blending crust, hard/metalcore and techno beats. Well, is this a style **Relapse** is keen on supporting? Well, at least the rest of this album is interesting, especially for those longing for truly brutal Metal made in Central Europe.

Hope to be around when the full albums of **IB** and **IF** come out.

Tadas

VA 11

Dark Fire Dancing IV Dangus

Each era of time requests its own means and has its own requirements. What was good few years ago, might not be effective anymore. Three tape editions of Baltic Metal and ambient music compilations have certainly played their important role well, both awakening lethargic population and manifesting as at least some kind of united presentation of what a music freak can expect to hear from those 'savagely' lands. Would be stupid to argue that **Dangus** has been catalysing transmission of these sounds forward to the west, south, east and even the north... The time has come for the final part of **Dark Fire Dancing** series, which must be a breakthrough to some extent, simply because this chapter is pressed on CD.

Well, **Ugnis** has passed successfully the hard exam of making a compilation booklet look solid and interesting, once again, except for a few shamefully stupid grammar mistakes, and Baltic symbols that are missing here and there. It was avoidable... But the booklet design is good; maybe not that much dancing, but dark and inflaming for sure. Admitting the pompous statements presenting this release, I cannot go on without mentioning a clear message put in an additional toy that comes with this compilation: black as coal lighter that proudly states 'visit your local church at night'. Ain't it a strong statement, after all? You bet!

Alright, the music! Dark, folksy ambient is used just to begin (**Gdae**) and to end (**Donis**) the Baltic Metal compilation this time. Personally I support this attitude, after all, it is about Metal music. When it comes to **Donis**, this composition is one of the best included, excellent singing and fairly good modern background as well – the war theme enchants, indeed.

Many of the bands are so fuckin' known to you all, most of them are so fuckin' good as well, and those newer outfits do not poison the apple that much. A great achievement is those exclusive, or at least never-before-published, songs – it gives the release more importance. Ok, due to the mass-demand, I name them (but it is a bad thing to do – you must discover the Baltics yourselves, and the only way is to buy and learn all those names): **Kalm**, **Peorth**, **Slyforger**, **Obtest**, **Loits**, **Anapilis**, **Ugnelakis**, **Tharaphita**, **Heresiarh**, **Angis**, **Diaurys**, **Valefar**, **Assamalla**. The tape version comes with bonus tracks of **Dissimulation**, **Manatark**, **Ha Lela** and **Meressin**. A 'must have' volume for sure.

Tadas

VA 7

The Dead PH Dead Again / Prick

The Metal community may think that the brutal, grinding Death Metal sub-genre in Europe is only supported these days by the one and only **Repulse** crew, but it is apparently a wrong supposition. However smart I might be presenting you another label, straight out from London, it was a surprise to me as well to notice that England has a bunch of very extreme performers, which still lurk under the ground, unlike their colleagues who play something that is 'in' right now, and signing multi-album deals with major companies. Yeah, eight bands out of nineteen on this compilation hail from the shores of foggy Albion.

All surprises and wonders aside – more than an hour of sonic torture is definitely not for every ear. I have a feeling that the freaks will take this assault of violence with mixed feelings as well because the

compilation is full of weaker material; just a generic grinding experience. Too underground to be remarkable. The result would have been much better had the compilation consisted only of mature bands, because the development of acknowledged Death and grind bands as **Purgatory**, **Agathodæm**, **Inhumate**, **Goreotted** or **Prophecy** is far more advanced than that of the beginners'. From the names I hear for the first time here, the Scottish **Regorge** and the English **Mithras** are truly smart surprises. Both paving the American way of brutal Death. The **Regorge** guys manage to capture all the angst and the ferocity inside their up-tempo song *Inverted Throat Fuck*, whilst **Mithras** do it in a more relaxed yet dark enough *Morbid Angel* way – pretty good, but the vocal is to be worked on a bit more. Finnish **Deepred** is not so bad at all, either. But when it comes to the rest, familiar music is usually buried under too down-tuned or too weak recordings. Manic insanity, anyway.

Tadas

VA 10

Distorted Harmony 1989-2000 Distorted Harmony

Uhh, I thought this to be just another bunch of badly produced tunes, yet this compilation has residual value and should be considered as precious (and rare) item in any Death Metal collection. In spite of those numbers in the title, these recordings date back to 1989-1992 exclusively – the time when Death Metal was triumphantly conquering stages of literally the whole Metal world. And for those who can't remember those times I name tell that a small Mexican label named **Distorted Harmony Records** was putting out cult seven inch records of such glorious bands as **Carcass**, **Carnage**, **Thou Shalt Suffer**... hell, I'd better comment each of them step by step. But before starting with that, please note that this compilation includes the first seven vinyl releases of the label.

Ok, everybody knows **Thou Shalt Suffer** – the two tracks of their EP have been reissued numerous times after their first appearance in 1991. **Carcass** and **Carnage** are presented with rare live performances, and the sound is surprisingly good! I think to hear those tunes is essential for every Death Metal fan! Moreover, **Carnage** is a band not everyone is familiar with, whilst their contribution to the Swedish Death Metal was no less important than **Entombed's** or **Dismember's**. Yet even myself I hear the music of **Traumatic** for the first time now! Wow, a real surprise – they must have been another promising band in Sweden in the early 90's, but much like **Crematory** or **God Macabre** have vanished from the scene too early. A pity as those two EP songs show potential, especially for those times. Does anyone have more info about **Traumatic**? Enlighten me! Counting **Eternal Darkness**, it gets clear that the Mexican label-owner was fascinated by Swedish bands yet this one was paving a much slower – more Doomy direction, but still maintaining the heaviness of the Metal of Death. A growing vocalist was not the key figure... Beats me, why such Doomy growers have disappeared!

And last but not least – a few Mexican bands, once the only representatives of Death Metal in the country. **Shub Nigurath** have pretty much of grindcore and Thrash influences, their music is very straightforward. **Centopath** pave a very dark Death Metal path. It must have something to do with the old Swedish school, but also I think the sound is so dark because they had no chance to record it better. However, their songs truly sound powerful, with a kind of **Mortician** feel in there!

It's a pity that this CD is not enhanced with more info and pictures of the featured bands. In that case it would have been a real gem for the lovers of glorious, brutal Death Metal. Try to seek it at some Mexican distros, or write directly to the label.

Tadas

VA 10

In Unison Sentinel

Very patriotic! It reminds me actually of our own **Dangus Productions** and their compilations that have been dealing with the ancient pride subjects, gathering all the Baltic artists of the certain genre together. Only that this Irish answer is not so ideologically tinged and the atmosphere here is much more relaxing. I would say, they do not divide bands into styles, but simply feature everything that is the best in the Irish scene. It does not work out in all

compilations, but this time I have no trouble to follow Death and Thrash bands sharing CD space with Pagan and Black Metal dudes, and then some Doom as well. They even have a crazy photo-collage, so akin to the Metal lifestyle, where you can trace most of the participants of this compilation. It must be a good presentation of what the Irish crew is all about, hah... if you are not convinced, go to Wacken and meet them in person, heh.

But what about the music? do I hear you wonder? **Primordial**... oh yeah, a characteristic thing – almost no one in the compilation (except **Mael Morda**) try to imitate **Primordial**, which is surprising as well as encouraging! I can't imagine this thing in my own or any nearby country; if there is any band that has a solid following, then there would definitely appear plenty of those who emulate it.

Besides the notorious godfathers of the Irish Metal scene, **Brian** has managed to get all the best and worldwide acclaimed bands of his land in here, so for everyone who has been waiting to hear all those bands, this is more than a suitable chance: **Arcane Sun**, **Waylander**, **Cruachan**, **Morphosis**... Familiar monikers? Mind you – all of them do good, even great, music! Imagine an extreme Death Metal track of **Morphosis** that lasts for 7+ minutes! Ready for a groovy ride with **Waylander's** inspiring vocalist? Then we have **Geasa**, **Abaddon Incarnate**, **Mourning Beloveth** (reviewed elsewhere!), and my personal discovery – the Thrashing freaks of **Desolate!** Cool one-directional Thrash, where the vocalist also has a very personal way to stick to mind. I wonder how their next songs sound like?

Don't get me wrong – this compilation has unity and there is a true Irish spirit in many of those tracks that you could never miss for something else. They like to use especially whistles and bodhrans, and in many cases these extra musical means work out fine.

All in all this double album features 19 bands with their tracks, and I do hope it will act as a revelational release for the whole Irish scene! Let it blossom!

Tadas

VA 12
Originators of the Northern darkness - A Tribute to Mayhem Avantgarde



In spite of the huge amount of tribute albums around, this one was expected for quite some time, as this tribute was first announced a few years ago, as far as I recall. Long time in process, it caused some bands to feature their versions of these (im)ortal classics already on their own releases. It's a shame, really, but then again, you can't stay indifferent when music is played (covered, in this case) from the bottom of one's heart. So, it is a pure pleasure to hear again those great remakes by **Dark Funeral**, **Carpathian Forest** and **Vader**, altogether with the rest of bands.

Holy fuck! I can't find a single bad track here! Bad? All of them are either very good, or excellent! Indeed, the contingent of performers is of very high class, that's probably the main reason why this is so memorable and outstanding. Another factor is the uniqueness of the songs themselves. There is nothing left to prove for **Mayhem**, yet this kind of a tribute makes these pearls shine from another angle, again and again. There is no reason to mention all the tracks that are covered one by one (take notice, though, that **De Mysteriis** album is covered *entirely*) or to list all the bands – everybody will get a copy of it and find out, simply because it is a must have album. One thing that I noticed is that several bands (well, here we go: **Emperor** and **Behemoth**) are not full with just the track they cover – as they also incorporate a riff or two from other **Mayhem** compositions, manifesting this way the brilliance and importance of the entire discography. Indeed, it is not enough

to listen to just one or two songs by **Mayhem** – you always need more.

This tribute is just an addition to the numerous collection of all **Mayhem** albums – official and not-that-official. I am sure that many of you will put on their records after taking a listen to these cover versions. Isn't it the best way to show your respect for the legendary band? Not to forget either that the inlay features quite a few pictures never seen before, as well as liner notes by **Metalion** and **Bård Faust**. All hails to the performers and producers of this tribute, and to **Mayhem!**

Tadas

VA 10
Promo CD Vol. 2 Limb Music

I have never experienced the catalogue of this growing label, which specialises in melodic Power and Heavy Metal, except **Rhapsody** and **Luca Turilli** – most naturally – so receiving this promotional sampler at this year's **Wacken Open Air** was very in time, and eventually I decided to review it, as most probably some people reading this magazine would be interested in checking out some bands of their roster; if they haven't already. Still I thought to discover several heavier acts like the aforementioned **Rhapsody** (they open up the compilation), and the rest would be just too typical hard 'n heavy stuff, as **Limb Music** is one of those 'overground' labels, if you know what I mean. At least comparing to the other stuff reviewed here.

In reality, it occurred that only **Lana Lane** from this compilation paves the more hardrockish way, but it is pretty epic or atmospheric music, too, and I know she has a huge following amongst the fans of more mellow rock. Other than that, I hear a bunch of hard-hitting double bass-drum ridden Power Metal wanderers, or Heavy Metal dudes, who absolutely make no shame for these styles whatsoever. Don't know, maybe it's because hearing just one track of each artist works superfluously, but I would recommend almost all the twelve remaining bands! At least it would be curious to check out their albums!

Mob Rules play very tight, melodic Power Metal, they have a typical yet truly strong vocalist. **Double Dealer** are most probably my favourites here (or better; their track **The Long Way Road**) – they are slightly heavier than the rest of the pack, and have much to do with **Primal Fear**, although it's impossible to compete with **Ralf's** voice, that's clear! Then **Kenziener**, I believe a Finnish band, has a vast melody in refrains, as well as in the whole of their energetic tune, much like **Oratory** and **Vanishing Point** – another pair of great, melodic Power Metal crews.

Ok, I think the smartest idea is to go and check the entire catalogue of this label. And if you like Power, Speed and Heavy Metal – this is an obligation.

Tadas

VA 10
The Return of Darkness & Hate Drakkar

I think this compilation was in process for many years, generally from the time **Drakkar** was started. **Cyril** used to complain that he could not find proper bands who could stand proudly behind the slogan of this release, and this fuss sounded weird to me, personally. I think during all these years there have been plenty of (good) underground Black Metal bands that would have died for the idea, and not for the amount of sold units of their CDs. But probably the time is now better with more quality behind such recordings. Some artists have grown and demonstrate not only the extreme attitude, but also good composing skills. I have to remark especially **Garwall** and **Nebiros** for their unique feel in **Veni Vendi Vici** and **A Blackstorm in My Soul**, and then **Unpure**, **Nebular Mystic** as well as **Cyril's own Celestia**, which is fairly well done black music that kicks thy skeleton good. Sure, here we also have all those charismatic blacklight bringers as **Sabbat**, **Impiety**, **Anatomy** and **Mutilation**, though yet their stuff is already heard in their previous releases, so – nothing new, just an act of their loyalty. And, in addition, darkness and hate is brought by a plea of underground bands, who still are with demo tapes, but some of them are very close to the recording of their full-length albums, and so this compilation serves as a good introduction of what is yet to come from the most evil Black Metal map. Yeah, **Magané's** track **Isanaki** from the demo riffs supremely. And the rest are of varying listenableity. **Count Nosferatu**, **Demon**

Realm, Temple of Baal, Cursed, Grimlord.

To sum it up, the label has reached the goal, because this has not turned into a just another compilation promoting only the **Drakkar** roster, but spreading the black arts internationally instead.

Tadas

VA 9
To Magic 2 Prophecy

There is an ordering sheet inside this CD that asks a question: 'Your favourite band on this compilation?' Okay, let's start from there. I'd paraphrase it - my favourite track from those I have not heard yet. And the winner is... *Das 4. Tier an den Mutterwitz* by **Bethlehem**, from their upcoming album, which was promised to be a good surprise, but if it moves in the direction like this compilation track promises, then I'd predict the record to be a full blast! Innovative dark music, indeed; imagine a good, healthy yet very dark mix in between **old Bethlehem** and **Rammstein!** Bits of electronica, yet Metal is the law none the less! Needless to say, the song differs quite much from the otherwise calm, romantic or melancholic nature of most of the other bands on **Prophecy's** roster. **Tenhi**, **Empyrium** and **Dornenreich** let the ear the most from the other tracks, even if their albums were released a while ago.

From the new tunes, I think **SOTS** disappoint with their new electro/ambient direction, or at least it's not what people expect from this project. But it's hard to judge from a one short tune, as the whole album might be much more capturing. Then, **Schubadorf's** another new band, **The Vision Bleak** sounds way more interesting - intelligent rock music, a real alternative to the boring mainstream. **Orplid** is the last, but not least, from the new tracks - well, I think their new album of German folklore must be at least remarkable, or maybe exceptional.

Another amusing detail is the front-cover of this compilation that marks the five years of this German label - a young flyagaric in a blurred background. I think with the album-title it says it all... Though speaking about the music, not all the compositions make you think about drugs, or that music down there is drug-inspired.

Whatever - if you are not familiar with most of these artists, go melancholic! Pay no more than mid-price for this cd!

Tadas

VERMETH 8
Your Ruin... Drakkar

French hordes that have been dormant for some years keep returning. Think about **Mutilation**, and now here is **Vermeth** – unfamiliar to most of you, isn't it? But in reality it is the **Torgeist** guy, who calls himself **The Black Lord Belzeb' Rim**, lurking behind this new project, so you'd better not mess around him if nihilistic art does not fascinate your soul, since the guy's intentions are very crude and perverse, even for the most ultimate Black Metal standard. Music is not that much altered from what French hordes have been doing in not so distant past, and the same could be uttered about the production, which is simple and underground-like. Still, it's easy to catch the vibe, even though the compact disk abilities are not necessary for this experience – you can safely record these songs on tape, and listen to the same special magic code.

I can't say that the dirty **Vermeth** riffs or the atmospheres created by sick harmonies would be superbly genius, or marking a new cult out of the blue, but for orthodox Black Metal these things are not a necessity. Rather on the contrary: the less ears will hear it, the more respected this disc remains amongst the most dedicated fans. So – this is difficult to get into for trendy kids, but quite essential for the experienced adventurer, looking for the truth in riffs. The booklet of the album says it all: minimalist, simple, but includes menacing pictures and symbols that manifest death, mayhem and just plain pestilence of the human race. **Vermeth** wishes you the sweetest nightmares...

Tadas

VIRULENCE 7
A Conflict Scenario Morbid

An American neo-grind invasion into European market, nothing else. No, no, it is not an European band adopting this newborn style of mixing brutal Death with grind, as well as psychotic jazzy timings and hardcore. It is just a German label that

recruited a Boston based outfit, which follows the steps of their country-mates **Dillinger Escape Plan**, **Cephalic Carnage** and so on. The only good thing is that **Virulence** experiment less, and almost all the time keep grinding their Heavy Metallic overload, assaulting thy ears with unbelievably bizarre metrics and tempos, as well as changes on musical themes. Other than this, I have nothing positive to say about the album in question, as this is certainly different material from what I normally listen to. This can only be of curious interest to me as a listener, but the several specific means of expression unbelievably diminish the tiny wish to check out the band. I am talking about the vocalist who shouts in the hardcore manner and those disturbing rhythms that surely keep **Virulence** at the avant-garde of modern heavy music, but what to do if it is so different from what you understand as cool, driving music? Are there many of those reading, *ad Arma!* and enjoying hardcore (elements)?

An experience that is worth a listen just for all the admirers of the latest **Relapse** signers and those who are bored with traditional grinding Death. By the way this project was established in early 1998 and so far have self-released a MCD that led them to the current deal and their first full album. It is pretty short in length, though – only 27 minutes.

Virulence, c/o **Nick Peyer**, 1193 Comm Ave. Apt. #11, Allston, MA 02134, USA. tel. (+1) 6172543984, fax (+1) 6172542291, nman@aol.com

Tadas

VULGAR PIGEONS 7
Summary Execution Deathvomit

An awesome press statement made by the label's publicity department. It truly does convince anybody still hesitating about the record whether to grab and check it out or not. I wish I liked the music inside, though, as it is not even close to my likings: modern grind/hardcore/Death Metal, or to cut it shorter – the new US grind school so violently introduced by **Dillinger Escape Plan** and the whole lot of their followers.

This is music that acts negatively in all aspects – pure mayhem cacophony, let me say. I don't like the hardcore screams, or the industrial feeling in the guitar-riffs, and I'm certainly not a fan of completely fucked-up structures in Metal music. But none of those reasons could turn away the state of mind I occurred in when trying to get into **Summary Execution**. Well, those days were hard to live through on a personal level, but could anyone imagine this twenty six tracks' album would make me feel at least an inch better? No fucking way! Indeed, it was close to *I'm very close to do something violent, now!* attitude. Now I'm back, feeling myself as a reviewer, first and foremost, so expect no influence even if **Vulgar Pigeons** are back in the player. Today I'm just ill. I've got a fever, and maybe this record is the right choice to get the irritating demons fuck out of my earthly shell. Tomorrow I'll wake up and will be as sturdy as ever before!

Yet who the fuck knows if this record ever returns back to my CD-player? I can't say this will happen. Rather on the contrary... Maybe it's better to leave it for those manic freaks who follow and worship the new grind school – that seems like the best idea I can suggest right now. Concerning the **Deathvomit** imprint, they look like returning to a serious competitor for the ever monopolistic **Relapse** label; for such music, of course...

Vulgar Pigeons, **Pigeon John**, 1257 Sleepy Hollow Lane, Millbrae, CA 94030, USA, vulgarpigeons@hotmail.com, www.vulgarpigeons.com

Tadas

WELTENBRAND 10
In Gottes Oder des Teufels Namen M.O.S.

In 1995 or so, it was the time when Metal publicum was all of a sudden introduced to dark symphonic and ambient music, as well as to extravagant industrial noise. Among those without brains, it was popular to believe that this was the next development of Metal, huh. But those styles have not had more in common than some composers that have been involved in both kind of musical activities. Some of them are doing both styles right until now. Yeah, the first album by **Die Verbannten Kinder Evas** remains as the classic example of such melancholic and beautiful music. Yet many others that followed their path have simply started to repeat things. Including next albums of **DVKE** as well. I remember **Weltenbrand** quickly stepped in with their

debut, too – it was 1996. So, back then you could draw so many parallels with **DVKE** that it's unbelievable. The guys have been developing ever since, that goes without saying. You can't be so sure anymore of what gets out within their fourth album. Yet those who stick to neo-symphonic darkwave can feel safe ordering a copy – this music has not moved far away from the fulcrum point. The biography tells us about much more complex structuring than the one this album has witnessed. The usual keyboard sounds have been replaced by original samples, and a lot of work has been done in the vocal department. Like everywhere else, the listener hears a duelling pair of female (**Simone**) and male (**Ritche**) vocals. They have worked it out in an upright and impressive way. The whole effort has got more majesty and might. Yet for the common listeners this 'huge leap forward' might not be so noticeable, they care about good vibes and hooks down there.

Of course this is not music to bang your heads to, and dare not even to shuffle it with your Metal CDs. **Weltenbrand** do bring moments of relaxation to mind. This experience must suit you so well in the tough moments of solitude. Yeah, to be perfect the guys still must jump over their symphonic colleagues, but so far it remains as the biggest riddle how to actually make it.

Tadas

WIGRID 11
Hoffnungstod No Colours



All records - old and new - which have a strong feeling in music are great. It is especially wonderful to discover a totally new band that you have never heard of before, which struggles in these pools of new-born musicians who attempt to make something memorable with music. So let me introduce you **Wigrid** – a German Black Metal outfit with strong influences of several bands from the past (no necessity to name them here) as well as with a characteristically dirty sound, which was common some ten years ago. I do wonder and presume that the composer behind this is an 'old-schooler', who has either been involved in some other bands before or then just simply waiting for his emotions to break through the veils.

Anyway, we have here a band with four years practise in the field, and what a harvest they have prepared for us! It is simple but genius, predictable but tempting, monumental but otherworldly for sure. Who dares to say that such an excellent result is due to the perfect atmosphere captured by the distorted guitars and the slightly distanced feeling when you play this melancholic album? Well, I dare to say that as I am charmed by their abilities to use the right vibe in some particular episodes! It is not the most aggressive album around, but crude nihilistic spirit lives in these seven songs, that is for sure. When it comes to the riffs and structuring of music, it is an absolutely tightly thought-out performance, based on the early Black Metal bands of the second generation.

There are too few bands like **Wigrid**, who are able to return the lost feeling of darkness. Please listen to me carefully – this is a must for every true Black Metal freak, so go and get it now.

Tadas

WINDIR 12
1184 Head Not Found

Unholy revelation! Well, not so unholy as **Windir** have not changed their Viking/ancient concept a bit, so well-known from their glorious demo and two albums – it still reigns supreme and brings the band to another level in their heathen quest! Yes, this time they are a real band, and that is a slight surprise to me. **Valfar** has always been emphasising his individuality through this project, and now he is suddenly surrounded by five other musicians; the **Ulcus** crew (that had their album on



Shiver label). Must admit that this co-operation has resulted in even stronger **Windir** that is certainly able to fight back and conquer!

Yeah, progression towards heavier and more intense Metal is the first thing that hits the car – I am sure it is those five guys to blame! That smells of pure, genuine and so well-known Norwegian Black Metal. Like their label-mates **Ragnarok**, the guys do honour this typical sound-scape, even if they might not bring so much news in the picture. A sincere wish from the bottom of my heart to all those who do not believe and do not worship Norsk Black Metal: F*CK OFF & DIE!!! Others – you can read on.

Valfar has absolutely not lost his identity! You will find out yourselves all his familiar vocal arrangements, both rough and clean, his typical guitar melodies and energetic rhythmic changes, which fill the music with charming energy. Neither has he abandoned using keyboard in the same simple but effective way. If you take a careful listen to **Windir**, it is easy to notice that structurally it is pretty much undemanding, but after all – the created emotions do the main talking here. A pity that the biography tells us nothing about the title or the concept – must be some historical reference.

To conclude – Black Metal influenced Viking style of **Windir** has certainly worked out great, and there is but one thing left to do – to obtain a copy!!!

Tadas

WINDS 11 *Of Entail and Mind* Avantgarde

It is easy to recognise both, the technique and the manner of playing shine through these songs. I mean, *Jan Axel* plays in too many bands and uses different manners to kick it in for every project, but when it comes to **Arcturus** and **Winds**, then yes – these bands have much in common, thanks to both himself and *Carl August*.

Hmm, 2:30 a.m. – the perfect time for this brooding emotional music, just before the sleep... it is ok to listen to at daytime too, but to review it at night is maybe its destiny. I would still call it nocturnal – at least the emotions it evokes are of a mysterious, sacred kind. Something borrowed from the netherworld. That basically explains the peculiarity of this progressive Metal music. The established grasp of the progressive is associated with bands like **Dream Theater** and so on, but I would call them positive, daytime bands, which strive for progress, whilst **Winds** (well, **Arcturus** as well) are of northern and sullen kind of progression. It is an unique blend of dark aggression (check out that guitar sound on *In All Reflections*) and challenging emotional transitions.

Some would argue that traditional, progressive Metal is more expressive and bears top-notch selection of musical decisions. Well, at this point **Winds** may not be as wholeheartedly sensitive, but the emotions are still there. They are rather limited, the music works as a hint to discover what's behind those things played and sung. Interpretations are up to every listener and his imagination. The concept of **Winds** is rather free and unrestricted. It wouldn't be much off the line to say that this is the kind of music what some people have always expected from **Arcturus** after the *Aspera...* album, minus the vocalist, because *Garm* is not to be imitated, and *Lars* actually paves his own path within the frames of this live tracker. He sings in a clear voice.

A very good new band that should soon release a full-length album as well.

www.winds.no

Tadas

WITHOUT FACE 8 *Deepinside* Dark Symphonics

Huh, it would be easy to refer to their name and tag this album as being 'without face', as it is really close to that. Or does emotional/progressive Metal with a female

voice have a face these days at all, after some good albums were made by **The Gathering** and a few others, whilst a bunch of followers were equal to zero when it comes to individual creativity? **Without Face** mostly follow the pathways explored so many years before. And when it comes to their steps aside, they choose certainly the wrong ingredient: hardcore screams. Yeah, I remember a similar thing in the debut album by **Orphanage**, but **Andras** has gone much further: his yelling every now and then is simply unbearable in the otherwise truly emotional music. It tastes like sausage with champagne, or ice cream with chilli (what a smart comparison). The departed female vocalist sings well enough, her charming voice perfectly suits the laid off yet quite complex instrumentarium. Actually, when **Andras** uses a clean voice, they make together a harmonious duo. However, I cannot hear absolutely any genuinity among these seven compositions. My mind just informs me all the time about one or another influence that the guys cannot escape with their vocal, synth and guitar arrangements.

The CD comes with extra multimedia data, including a video for *I And I*, maybe their strongest track to date, yet I miss a more persuasive concept in there. Anyway, it brings in additional spice to the album that is actually a bit too short. I wish **Without Face** to find their face before the next album is finished, otherwise it will be very hard for their music to break through. Make **Andras** to shut up when he wants to scream, and your progress is on the way.

Tadas

WURDULAK / GORELORD 11.9 *Creature Feature* Red Stream

No doubt that this is another hyped thing, with rumours spreading like the almighty plague, but now it is worth the word: Yes, everyone screams mouths full about **Wurdulak** featuring this and that from the Death & Black Metal underworld, but let's see what the hell happens when a project band has so many musicians in its line-up (as the music could be easily performed by a three-some)...

The result is more than satisfactory – just sick, twisted, groovy Metal music, combining Thrash, Death and Black. I think. And as far as these two songs go... The fundament of **Wurdulak** is a repeating mid-tempo drive (some kind of a Ministry feel, but no industrial this time), spiced up with a fast fever and even blast-beat parts, the vocal-duo of *Killjoy* and *Maniac* fitting very well there. I tell you! Thank hell, it is not another rehearsed version of neither **Necrophagia** or **Eibon**. It might remind of **Mayhem** a bit, but unlike numerous cheap clowns **Wurdulak** give us some real push of the style! However, I would not rush to baptise them as a new sensation yet – let's wait for the full *Ceremony in Flames* album that must be out shortly. As far as these tunes go, I'm impressed.

Gorelord is a band by the guitarist *Fredriably* who is listed in the **Wurdulak** line-up. Never heard of them before, yet what an honour and cool advertising to be on this split! Music is a bit more old-school Death Metal here, with vocals ranging from the deep grunt to the high Nordic scream. The two songs **Gorelord** are featured with are way shorter, so to make up an opinion about their music is yet a more complicated task. What I hear grabs my attention, since besides that early 90's feel I also catch a special way of riffing, invoking macabre scenes, easy to be imagined. Absolutely need to check out their debut full-length *Forcefed on Human Flesh*, as these tunes have intrigued myself!

This split is also released on (picture?) 7" vinyl – fuckin' need it for my personal collection!!! Freakos – investigate.

Tadas

WYKED WYCH 8 *Angelic Vengeance* Demolition

Nothing groundbreaking about this Floridian band, except for a female vocalist that is of a Turkish origin, namely *Ipek*, who tries to compete with *Dani Filib*, and thus manages to make a stir with her voice. It is strange yet curious to hear that similitude. I actually thought that there is a difference between male and female screaming, but seems like it can be very similar at times. Whether *Dani* is too womanish or *Ipek* has learned quite a few male manners to scream it out? No, she is definitely natural when singing in that clean and operatic way, but turning extreme, she all of a sudden creates a feeling that *Dani* would be replacing her.

Much like the vocals, the music of **Wykked Wyth** is a complete copy of **Cradle Of Filth** and their countless followers. Some riffs are certainly stolen from there. They have even hired the same producer *Kill Woolven*, so expect the same kind of sound and attributes of it. Absolutely nothing special in a perspective of overcrowded 'Black' Metal scene – this band just contributes to the trend, in spite of a well-shaped release, as much in performance as in design and production.

Well, it is said that the first album of **Wykked Wyth** has sold over 12000 copies, so they will sell well again I believe, yet, except for kids, *Angelic Vengeance* will not find respect in the hearts of true Black Metal fans. They are looking for feelings in music, and not the sales or the vocalists' competition. A pity that the well-known bass player *Jason Blacbowicz* (**Malevolent Creation**, **Divine Empire**) is also involved in this affair. He did not play on this album, but joined after the recordings.

To sum it up: typically commercial 'Black' Metal slab, so don't bother.

Tadas

WYTCHFYNDE 9 *The Awakening* Demolition

If I understand it right, this band has been named **Witchhinde** in the past, and its story is glorious enough to wonder whom these guys are for such editors as myself. Anyway, this is my first appointment with these English veterans (well, they truly look like solid bad-ass Heavy Metal guys – no new kids on the block), so let's judge them from today's point of view, when scene is overcrowded with Heavy Metal revivalists and pretenders to the throne.

Can't say I dug this album with all my hands and legs, probably because it is kept in a truly old vein. It is not your Power Metal record, it goes back to the sunrise of Heavy Metal times, involving both hard rock peculiarities and rougher metal characteristics. Anyway, I think it is rare to hear **Deep Purple** influences in the modern scene, isn't it? Vocalist and front-man *Luther Beltz* seems to be a charismatic figure, and his task is not so easy; to fit in hardrock singer's shoes, then to switch to an energetic Heavy Metalter, and even scream like **Judas Priest** or **Dio**, maybe, here and there (not that he can outrun *Kalf Scheepers* or *Rob Halford*, though). What I truly admire in him is his devilish laughter on the closing *Arken Asylum* – sounds very realistic, even theatrical, cinematographic, if you will. And a big hug for the hateful, Christianity targeted lyrics – well put together and has a sense! Nice weapon.

Returning back to the overall evaluation of *The Awakening*, something is missing in here, a some kind of binding element. It might be energy and power for me, but it is after all about 80's Heavy Metal, so don't expect samples and industrial loops as well. Last but not least – unexpectedly simply styled design by *Oskorei Graphix*.

www.lutherbeltz.co.uk

Tadas

XPLDING PLASTIX 10 *Amateur Girlfriends Go Proskirt* Agents

Beatservice **Voices Of Wonder** Danger zone! This may have an infectious effect on your brain, stomach and whatever else that is damageable by music (is it really so, huh?). Well, someone might thought I am talking about power electronics or industrial music here? No fuckin' way. It is far more advanced in experimental department, and actually researches jazzy electronic music (though this kind of attempt to describe what's going on is stupidly poor). Well, indeed, the musical carpet here is very tasty. I would say - juicy and really rich in colouring, as a belt of a rainbow. What's so addictive in it? A groove that makes the listener open some niche in there to let those memorable sounds crumb in, yet they are like those friendly bacteria, simply keeping you in a good mood instead of grieving or regretting something while listening. Oh yes, this album is done with modern techniques, and it certainly has a modern approach, even if its base is laid with a help of tiny beats and pieces in a way inspired by 70's.

I'm not so good at evaluating this kind of material, but the biography helps me out by mentioning *Morriconne* and Italian erotic films. I can trace some similitude to the veterans of Norwegian experimental music, **When**, on my own. *More Pouab to Yab* has an **Apocalyptic** fragment sampled, or something very close to it.

The music is not cheerful – it has too much experiment in there to be either pop or Black, speaking in very primitive terms. But **Xploding Plastix** do have their way in conquering hearts of those who understand their psychotic manifest. That's why this debuting album by the duo of *Halfalard* and *Jens Peter* has quickly jumped into the tops of Norwegian charts. No doubt it has impressed me as well. Taste its eclectic attractiveness, now!

www.xplodingplastix.com

Tadas

ZA FRUMI 11 *Tach* Waerloga

It's always great to discover a new, never heard before outfit, which has original music and even beyond that to offer. It's double as fun to find out then that some of those performers have much more to offer than just good music! To cut the story short, this mysterious unit of crazy northern men certainly intrigues from the very first listen! Not just because their moniker sounded lame to me whilst the music happened to be truly remarkable, but more because of their concept and dedication to it! It must be experienced to be believed. The most surprising is that you can find new things every time you listen to the disc or check the inlay out. So, simply forget all the lame fantasy Metal attempts, and wipe out of your memory the music of most of those losers who claim to create keyboard atmospheres when they in fact don't know a shit about the matter! All **Mortiis** clowns, pay attention to this project, there's much for you to learn here!

Alright, it is fantasy music, but how well it is put together! I wonder when they'll score a soundtrack for the *Lord Of The Rings*. Listening to *Tach* you feel like appearing in a movie without actually watching it! Every soundscape there speaks for itself, and if that's not enough, here you are with a comprehensive story foretold in the pages of your booklet. Entirely dedicated to the Tolkienish world, the guys present it from a different angle, through the bodies of Orcs and other creatures of darkness. There are no bearers of the ring there, just a mystery hidden yet beneath the imagination of the godfather of it all, Mr. *Tolkien*. Fuck, this whole image is drawn through one single album! Maybe it's that Orcish tongue that creates this supernatural feeling, beats me...

Anyway, once again I must admit the mad nature of the musicians behind this project – they must have been working upon the concept for ages, writing those dialogues in an imaginative tongue, as well as adopting the whole concept to the sound picture, and it is interesting to read! So, moving back to it, the music is really original, mostly put together with temperamental percussion and kind of oriental melodies that pass through the poisonous air every now and then. In a way it has something to do with the legendary debut of **Pazuzu**, yet to say they copy the latter would be unfair to **Za Frumi**: Their emotions range from the darkest to quite calm and spiritually sweet. It is, indeed, a very original, previously unheard experience of dark rhythmical ambient music.

By the way, this is their second album, and the story just starts to evolve. Absolutely recommended!

zafrumi@hotmail.com, <http://go.to/frumi>

Tadas

ZOLTAR 9 *Into The Depths to Burn* Tumba

This crew is presented as Death/Speed/Black warship, praising old values of Metal, and if I tell you that they originate from Brazil, there shouldn't rise any more questions about their attitude and certain stylistics the South-American bands are well known for. I would still label it as pretty energetic Deathrash, but not in the sense of **Sepultura**'s classic period. There is much more of an old Heavy Metal influence in **Zoltar**'s sound, deriving from the 80's, as well as clear implications to rary early Death Metal (**Possessed**). They have just adapted it to a rougher and heavier fundament, let alone to a darkened obscure sound – the Brazilian Metal trademark, including a dirty production, which could sound clearer to my personal taste, but I know that the supporters of the old-school will enjoy it much better the way it is. I am not sure if it's correct to say, but it feels like there has been bigger demand for such type of Metal recently. Brazilian bands do not sell so many copies yet, but some freaks in Europe and US are starting to appreciate them more and more. So it looks like *Into The*

Depths to Burn has at least some certain support.

Almost an ideal picture for those longing for real Metal mayhem? Umm, not really. The vocalist has a memorable outlook and a recognisable figure, but his voice sounds a bit forced to me – it has a scream-like effect even if he growls. To bear it for one academic hour might be too much asked. Also, there are quite a few average riffs among those that are memorable, so the songs sound a bit incomplete at times. That is the trouble of many South-American bands: they find the right channels to transmit the creative potential, but usually stuck among a so-so realisation. The last four tracks sound different to me – I believe it's kind of bonus (demo?) material.

Tadas

ZORN 9 *Schwarz Metall* Last Episode

Pompous declarations from new bands can be truthful as well. Even from German bands, signing with a label once badly treated among the connoisseurs. Indeed, **LEP** has travelled a long way ever since, and bands like **Zorn** prove them moving in the right direction, finally, I do not know what milieu these guys come from (it is said they also play in other bands), but their effort with **Zorn** deserves a bit of attention.

Yes, to be grim when it comes to Black Metal is another trend nowadays, yet let me consider this particular effort as serious enough. The vocalist is too typical, though – anonymously screaming his lungs out, making the whole sound too familiar. The guitarists mainly also just revamp what once was composed (some **Octinomus** influences, some **Unlord** hints), but in Black Metal you cannot demand every release to invent something new – just as long as it is done with passion and taste it can be worth listening! **Zorn** do not polish their sound but prefer a clear yet dirty production. On the other hand, good to hear the guys are avoiding the typical Nordic clichés as well as that boring one-sided way most German BM bands build their music on.

Can't get into their booklet's layout, though, as it reminds me of **Gorgoroth's Destroyer** so incredibly much. Well, to do original music is not an easy aim, but I believe to make an original cover is easier and all these new bands should invent something new there instead of just stealing others' ideas. A pity that this disk is so short – only 30 minutes. The pace and manner of the music deserve a few more tunes to make it a full course dish. Ok, then let's wait what will follow next.

Tadas

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The 29th and 30th of March 2002,
Oslo, Norway

Just one single reason was enough for me to pay attention to this event. *Inferno* has gathered quite a few Norwegian (Black) Metal bands (who said stars?) that could hardly be found in one pack anywhere else in the world. And they have been gathered there to perform their best, for their – more or less – own audience. Well, it was great to see quite a few foreign freaks as well who have done quite some way down to Oslo, just like myself, but most of the audience was local people, nonetheless. In other words, it was curious to check out what kind of people follow the Black Metal events in Norway today. And, well, I must admit that it was mostly young guys and girls as well as some percentage of the 80's & 90's generation. No big crews of those in their 40's, as it happens in *Wacken* or other German festivals. Yes, this was only the second *Inferno*, so it's much too early to speak about any tradition yet. Their manifesto states that it is a festival for Norwegian bands, first and foremost.

My concern in particular was to see several interesting bands that were there this year, so right after an e-mail from *Moonfog* headquarters had arrived, politely inviting me to be a guest in the notorious event. I enthusiastically started to prepare for the long trip. As it turned out, it was indeed the blackest Easter in my life to date, in spite of the brilliant

spring weather, heh! Oslo met me with sunny and bright attitudes, yet the remains of a long and cold winter were still in the city. Anyway, I felt relaxed and truly great as it was sort of a vacation for me, away from those never-ending occupations with the label and stuff. Could I even imagine a better holiday schedule?! Unholy god, NO!

Well, to sum it up: the organization was excellent, the atmosphere was excellent, the sound was more than excellent, most of bands were excellent, only the beer cost TOO much!!! Goddamn – they do not even allow the selling of beer anywhere else than in pubs three days before the Easter! What an attitude! Hmm, well, I managed to buy one in some Asian district, and then some, but that's another story... So, if you decide to go to next year's *Inferno*, please be patient to wait three days before you get a chance to buy beer, or take with yourself heaps of dirty earned money! (I can't imagine participating in such a festival in sober state is possible, you know). Ok, there were plenty of more things that were absolutely expensive, but that's for the next year's report.

Usually, when you consume a few beers, it does not take long before the bands start to play, and you still think there's tons of time left. So, somehow I did not want to miss the start and had to leave my dear drinking partners *Lars*, *Roy*, *Aras*, *Kristian* and *Flo*. And yet I was too late: **Nocturnal Breed** was already on stage playing one of their first Thrashing tunes. For the start they were really ok to me, and those strippers let some lively feel in to their performance. Maybe they sound a bit more convincing on CD, though. Still none of my drinking friends in sight, I went to check out **Scariot** live. Well, they were more power/traditional Metal than on CD, and sincerely – I didn't become much of a bigger fan of the band after this show. But with a good and powerful sound it was an ok experience, all in all.

Yo, *Aras* is inside the *Rockefeller* at last, and so is *Lars* – good to feel not so alone again, heh... Yet there was no time

to waste as the truly grim guys with massive chains around their torsos were already on stage. Still can't believe that my dream came true. Yes, I traveled a long way to witness **Carpathian Forest** live. And it was great to watch them from as close distance as I managed. Hell yeah – thanks to the *Inferno* security crew that were so kind for everyone with a press card! You would never get that chance in other festivals. And then – close to 60 or 70 minutes of pure northern Black Metal nihilism, dirty rock 'n roll and even spooky atmospheric wanderings, much like the ungodly albums of the band sound like! It was really amazing, very powerful and suggestive performance. Let alone traditional but well thought-out and worked through years stage appearance. It was but cult minutes spent together with the audience. Indeed, I will never forget the feeling, and everything I wish for the future is to witness the Mighty Horde once again, wherever it may take place!!! And then we had an excellent chat with Mr. *Nattefrost*, but that's a story for #3, so have some patience...

And still it turned out that I had completely missed **Aeternus**, just watching it in another room on the screen was definitely not the most preferable thing when the band streams forth in all of its glory just a few steps away! Damn! I need to schedule the **Aeternus** gig to my future plans now. People talked that they were really good that night.

Even worse was that I also missed Windir! Well, it's impossible to check out all the bands, that's the sad side of the coin. According to Roy (Imhotep), Windir's performance was not the best, especially when it came to the vocalist. But at least they must have sold shitloads of shirts, maybe even as much as Dimmu Borgir. It was real surprising to me. Seems like the younger generation adores this crew. Anyway, I'd better jump over to the first foreign band on Inferno, and maybe to the first Polish band to appear on Norwegian soil in such an important concert. Once again, as in Wacken, the auditorium was simply blown away by the infernal energy flowing from the stage down the hall. The Norwegians were not arrogant at all – their reaction was splendid and sincere. I believe that some people were not expecting THAT kind of a blast from Behemoth, and they got enthused during the course of Thelemic magic. Nergal and his partners were incredible that night. Seems like it's a tradition of theirs already now – to be incredible, that is.

Dimmu Borgir were brought to finalize the first day of Inferno, and this time they showed their best techniques and acting abilities on stage, not to forget the tonz of pyros used. Well, I guess I'm starting to get used to this crew in a live-situation, but if I see them for the fifth time any time soon, I would like to listen to some other (new?) material. The audience reacted really supportively towards their, well, three acts, two breaks, 90 minute show. Yes, at least it must have been exhaustive!

More partying and less sleeping, and the Saturday afternoon was already there, and this means Inferno festival pt. II! Well, organizers brought quite a few foreign guests the second evening, in comparison to the Friday's shows. Or maybe it just happened to turn out like that. Anyway, I've noticed this tendency of two days festivals to gather the most important bands for the first night, and those 'guests' for the second. However, it was a real pleasure to meet those notorious bands on stage! First up were Minas Tirith, but their music was not what I had expected. I have a CD of theirs from ages ago, and this show was nothing like that. And also – they had young guys on stage. Hmm, anybody want to explain me this? Blood Red Throne were quite brutal on stage, providing exclusively red lights altogether, and tracks from both the first and upcoming albums. They were just what I had expected, judging by the albums – nothing better, nothing worse. And then I finally made my way down to the John Dee club in order to see how our Estonian brothers from Manatark would look in this bunch of experienced groups. Well, they also had a superb sound, but played as if they were shy, if it's appropriate to use this expression. I guess they were quite oppressed by the event itself. It was cool to see some people watching them and even headbanging to their music, though.

But the main courses were happening in the main hall. Vintersorg gathered an incredibly huge crowd that was headbanging and singing together. Well, to me, who is not a fan of this duo (enriched with session musicians), it was a small surprise, indeed. I guess it was mostly a pleasure for the younger generation of Metal fans. The Norwegians showed way less respect and attention to Lock Up and Agressor, but that's their problem. Both were making small and pleasant miracles on stage. Well, professionals are professionals. When it comes to the Birmingham four-piece, at first I looked at the band as a gathering of four individually excellent performers (well, Shane and Tompa were literally flying around their playing and screaming spots), but after a few tracks their team-power took easily over – it felt high! What to do? Just to headbang to all those short grinding tunes and cute renditions of Terrorizer and Impaled Nazarene! The banner of old-school was also held high by Agressor, including another cover of Terrorizer, ha! It was a real pleasure to see this French veteran band so powerful and unrelenting on stage. Killer!

To put 1349 on the John Dee stage was the biggest mistake of the organizers, since even those who had never heard of them before were somehow convinced by others, already familiar with the immoral blasphemies of these guys, so literally everyone wanted to see them there, and the small area was packed like real hell. It was hard to hear what was going on stage, let alone see it. Anyway, I managed to get quite close to the stage, and caught these freaks covering Mayhem and Celtic Frost, besides their old school Black Metal tunes. Seems like another cult is on the way, and Frost has just a little bit to do with that!

Witchery were finalizing the Inferno – I know it is not easy to be the last band, when everybody is fuckin' tired and wants just to take some rest from it all. But the Swedes surprised me, once again! I mean, their albums are ok to listen to, but on stage they were so much more convincing. This is a band that sparks some fire, indeed! Toxine and Jensen are total performers on stage. I strongly advise all those bands who have no stage image to go and check out Witchery – a splendid show with simple means! They were playing tight and fast, it was just the crowd to blame for being too weak to stand two days of pure Metal... It was a deep night outside, but the understanding of time meant nothing in comparison to the solid dose of great and heavy music which certainly enriched the bloody souls who were there.

Alright, now you know, but to summarize: it is close to impossible to describe the feeling of a Black Metal festival on Easter... We'll definitely meet next year!

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