

Metal Bulletin # 11

Interviews & Reviews

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Facebreaker



Cruachan



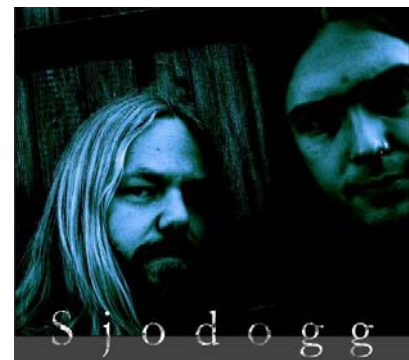
Crimson
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reviews:

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Facebreaker

"Dead, Rotten and Hungry" is the album by this Swedish severely guttural growling, raw death; just plain, fugly, fugly death done the traditional rotting way: one song and that's all you need to know what's playing for the funeral. Often it's fast and blasting, sometimes slower, sometimes midpaced. There is virtually no melody, so it's all in the zombicorpse groove. Songs about zombies and decomposition is what's on the menu. They get by on feel and energy. Nothing succeeds like vomit zombies on vomitfire. And this band gets by on their love of death metal and their energy. They do a good, solid job on this album. Jonas (bass/backing vocals) responded.

As you know, bands like Deicide have a reputation for "cheating" on the vocals because there are special/computer effects. Are there special effects on the vocals?
There are NO SPECIAL EFFECTS whatsoever. Who fucking does that anyway. If you can't sing for real the why bother. How does it work live??? We record on two channels just to make some parts sound more brutal, but we never use special effects. With a singer like Roberth who has a pair of lungs the size of Texas, we don't need to cheat.

When you play live, what things do you do to get ready? Does drinking beer help or not?
We can drink a beer or two but we are never drunk on stage. It would be a real fucking disappointment for the audience and really unprofessional of us. Five drunken guys on stage and nobody remembers any songs, fuck that. When we play live we give the audience what they have paid for. A real dose of pulverizing death metal straight in their face. But after the gig, the backstage area turns into a beer/whiskey drinking inferno.

By looking at the song titles, it seems that the decomposition of flesh fascinates you: "Slowly Rotting," "Dead, Rotten and Hungry," "Devoured by Decay," etc. Would you say that this has to do with your own thoughts about your own death and mortality and the weakness of the human body or more like just horror lyrics?
Definitely horror lyrics. We don't really have anything to say to the public. We just write lyrics that fits with our music. No political nonsense, just pure death metal. We will all die and decompose, that's fucking that, no poetry just slowly rotting away.

Facebreaker is about one thing: death metal, the real sick and twisted way. What motivated you to form a band to play this form of music in particular? What does death metal have for you that is more special than, say, black metal or thrash or whatever?
We really like thrash and black metal as well. But death metal is the

most brutal music there is and we all grew up with the extreme metal scene, and we have been involved in both black and thrash metal bands since the early 90s.

You started in 1999, right? Pretty soon, it will be 10 years that you have been playing death metal. Do you imagine yourself playing in Facebreaker when you are 50 or 55 years old?
Yeah . . . of course. We all love death metal and we will not change just because we get old. We will keep playing our music till the day comes for us to take the final rest sex feet under.

When I listen to the album, it's hard for me to hear the bass guitar. This is usually the case in metal. What are the sounds that the bass guitar is making on the album?
If you can't feel it, then turn up the volume and listen to the songs "Soul Eater" and "Dead rotten and hungry". The bass plays alone with the drums for a while on both of the songs. But you CAN hear the bass through the whole album. The sound of the bass is like an earthquake that scores the highest on the Richter scale. The bass stands for the brutality and thickness of the sound, and has a lot of distortion so it blends with the guitars.

Your song titles are similar to a horror/gore movie. Are your lyrics inspired by horror movies? Are they inspired by bands like Repulsion, Autopsy, the first Death album?
Yes there is some inspiration from horror movies. All the bands you mention are all great bands and sure we have listened to them growing up so they have surely rubbed of some musical influences on us. And they have also been inspired by splatter and gore flicks. Extreme music, extreme lyrics.

Sometimes in death metal, especially in bands that have gore lyrics, there are lyrics about violence, violence by men against women, in particular. Do you have an opinion about this?
You can see it as art and some people do really sick shit. But that is NOT what Facebreaker are about. We have no opinions about what other bands do or write. They do what they do, and we do what we do.

Your guitar sound is a classic death metal guitar tone. Can you tell us what you tune your guitars to? Why do you choose that tuning? How do you achieve that buzzsaw sound?
We tune our guitars and bass in H. It sounds more brutal when everything is down tuned, even Black Sabbath did it in the 70s. If you want to have a really good sound then simply turn up everything to maximum on the amplifier. That will NOT work on the bass amplifier by the way. The buzzaw sound is created by the genius Jonas Kjellgren.

You recorded at Black Lounge Studios, right? Is this album produced by the band or by Jonas Kjellgren?
Yes we did go back to The Black Lounge studios to record "Dead rotten and hungry" with Jonas Kjellgren. He is a very good

friend of ours and it felt natural to record with him again. We recorded "Bloodred Hell" there and we really liked being there.

One of your songs is called "Unlock the Horror." Do you think that with your songs you are unlocking the door to your own personal nightmares?

Hehehehe hopefully, so that we can write even more sickening lyrics on the next album. The concept of "unlock the horror" is just that unlocking the doors to your inner most horrifying thoughts and urges. Taking the sickness to another level.

What were the first metal albums you got into when you were young? How did you get into metal, through a friend or a brother? How did you get into death metal in particular? KISS – Creatures of the night. It was some scary shit back then. I got it for Christmas back in -82 along with a walkman and some recordable tapes. Not the kind of music I listen to today. I got into black and death metal through a dear friend back in 89-90 and I have been playing Black/death metal since -93.

Any last comments?
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We are all about "In your face old school death metal".
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Cheers beers / Jonas THE END



Crimson Moon

Scorpius Androctonus from atmospheric, often blasting black metallers Crimson Moon explains the basics about the band, their releases, touring, musical perspective, history of the band, as well as their focus for black metal.

Your release "Xepera Xeper Xeperu" is a double-disc: an EP "Serpent Beneath the Skin" and the album "To Embrace the

Vampyric Blood". The EP is from 2007 and the album is from 1996, right? Was it your idea or the record label's to make this a package release? Was difficult to re-release it because of legal rights? Did you have people asking you to make the 96 album available again and was totally out of print? The main focus was to have the new material from "The Serpent Beneath the Skin" E.P. recorded and released in time for the 2007 U.S. tour. We had undergone a fairly substantial restructuring in our line-up a couple months before the material was written which always tends to cause doubts to people yet to hear how such changes affect the music. So the E.P. was recorded in a rush in attempts to prove to our older listeners that this is the same Crimson Moon as it has been since the beginning in 1994. We literally had the recording finished for the planned release date in the nick of time, though I believe we have found things that could have been done better if we had had more time, I still feel this release is easily deemed as our most effective effort in sound quality and musicianship.

After looking into the options our label was willing to provide, we saw it as an appropriate time to include the debut "To Embrace the Vampyric Blood" CD. TETVB had been out of print for quite some time and there were many inquiries for the album. I also observed copies of the original pressing being sold on ebay for much more than the 'normal' price of a CD.

There was no difficulty due to legal rights. The original pressing of TETVB was released by Abyss Records and this was done by a verbal agreement, so I have kept the rights since day one. We of course did contact Abyss Rec. before planning the re-release to let him know of our plans and to be sure he had no objections, which he did not.

By the way, how did your tour go? With whom did you tour? How many shows did you do and what places did you play?

We toured with Demony, Tenebrous and Legions of Astaroth. I think it was around 13 shows, spread out through the US and one show in Mexico.

I think the tour dates/locations are on the website still as well. - Thankfully the label helped out with my flight from Germany to Georgia, other than that I pretty much broke even on this last tour, which is a first.. usually it ends up costing me quite a bit to tour. The shows were all different as far as how many people showed up, some very small, some decent. I was playing bass/vocals for Demony as well on the tour, so it was 2 shows a night for me and a lot of travelling in between, which meant in most cases when the show was over, we packed up and got back on the road, so there wasn't a whole lot of time to talk to people except for a couple shows where we ended up staying overnight.

Despite the time difference in the EP and the album, the music is

very consistent. On both recordings, the main thing that stands out is the feeling of the music: funeral, melancholic and grim. Is the music written by the same persons in 96 and 2007? What is the philosophy that guides your combination of high-speed blasting black metal and atmospheric guitars and keyboards? How has your perspectives changed from 1996 to 2007 in terms of experience in the studio and recording about what works best for your music?

I have continued to write music for Crimson Moon since I started it in 1994. The only relevant changes in songwriting, was the expulsion of our former guitarist who joined in for the recording of the 2nd demo in 1995. Early 90's Black metal influences had a strong inspiration for me personally to use dynamics in song writing such as the blending of speed and violence, with atmosphere and melancholy, which compliment each other well in my opinion for our song structures.

The major changes in the "Studio" for Crimson Moon... We have never recorded in a professional, 'pay by the hour' Studio. Though part of me would like to, as it COULD result in an ideal production, the common studio atmosphere just remains unappealing to us.

Things started out in 94-97 using primitive means of a home-studio (i.e. a couple analog Tascam 4-tracks). Since then, it progressed to ADAT, then Digital Multi-track Workstations and now primarily recording hardware routed to PC. Over the years I have learned more and more techniques and 'tricks' for recording and sound engineering and have studied it quite a bit through means such as online classes, video tutorials and working with others who have the experience I can learn from.

I suppose the largest change in perspective to how we record now as opposed to the earlier years has a lot to do with the line-up change. There has been much more of a collective effort on things and of course, as I slowly but continuously gain more equipment for recording it continues to cancel out limitation that could be barring.

Songs like "The Stormbringer" or "Sender of Nocturnal Visions" or "The Serpent Beneath the Skin" address themselves to particular entities. Would you say that the entity that you address is in reality an invocation to your own inner vision, to invoke what is in you, in order to channel the music's desired feeling throughout?

The 3 mentioned songs vary from each other more along the lines of Invocation and Evocation. The interpretations of the lyrics and meaning could go many directions for any individual listener. I have my own beliefs for all of this which would probably make little sense to explain briefly. It is however a form of channeling energy with particular properties and inducing an awakened state in the musick.

A song like "Kingdom of Shadows" concentrates its gaze on the

night and darkness. How do you view your lyrics and music in relation to the night as that other side: does inspiration reside in opposition to the day and daylight? What is the other life hidden in the night for you that you seek?

Yes, there is a plethora of inspiration in the contrast of Night and Day. I live on the edge of a Forest and spend a lot of time there in the woods (I know, really cliché). The changes from Night to Day in a solitaire place such as the woods is extremely prominent. Everything from what animals are active when, to common perception of the senses. In most cases, the denial of one sense, will heighten the reflexes and abilities of other senses. This can go far beyond just the physical senses.

You said you live by a forest. Would you mind telling where you live? What is the weather like? Is there snow there in the winter?

I live in the Rheinland Pfalz on the edge of the Tierwald forest. Weather here now is usually below freezing, only got a bit of snow this year, but it's unpredictable, sounds like it's raining now which will be either snow or ice later.

For you, what is the difference between recording and playing live? Is your mentality different? Is recording fun at all for you?

When you play live, what kind of mentality do you have to get into it and give it 100% in your show?

Honestly, I take recording more seriously. I say this mainly due to the general response and audience at a black metal concert, which is usually no different than any other type of Metal concert. A lot of people tend to go to concerts to hang out, have fun drink beers etc, so it is no surprise there when some of these people give a negative response to us live and do not comprehend what it is that we are doing.

My mentality is different on a lot of levels between the two and I always make certain to record in an environment that is accustomed to me and free of contaminations. For playing live I prefer to be in almost an oblivious state blocking out whatever audience there might be. This is really no different than working on meditation in a distractive setting and learning the abilities to remain in focus towards a specific goal.

From what I can tell, your lyrics have no interest in the workaday reality. Do you seek your music as a personal escape from reality of work and things like that? Do you see your lyrics as strictly personal and not social at all?

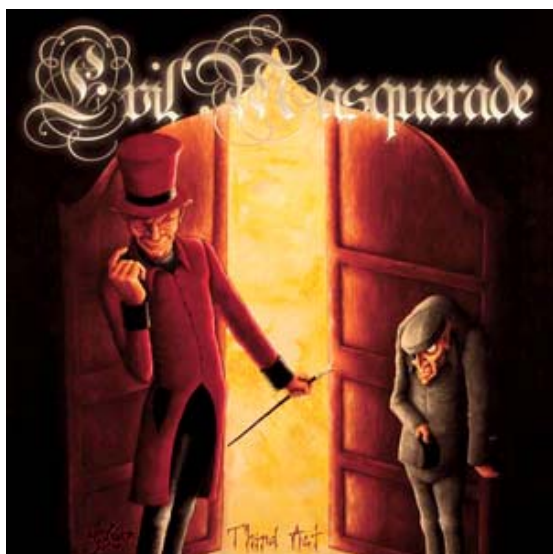
My lyrics I consider personal, yes. There is enough metaphor in them for some people into similar paths to relate to, however. I don't see them as any kind of escape, they are just not bound to things in linear means.

Any last comments?

As of December 2007 we have released "The Serpent Beneath the Skin" on EP through Deathgasm Records. (this is mainly for people who already owned TETVB and did not want to by the Xepera Xeperu release for only the EP).

We are currently finishing up the song writing process for a planned split-release for early 2008, some details as to who this will be a split with can be expected in the near future, for now we prefer to keep this information to ourselves.

From there plans are to continue with work on our next full length which I would find feasible to have released in 2008 as well. One can expect a lot more productivity as opposed to the previous years of Crimson Moon.
www.postmortemcreations.com/crimsonmoon.html
www.myspace.com/crimsonmoonofficial THE END -----



Evil Masquerade

The cool thing about the band is the quality of the songwriting, making them catchy for metalheads into more traditional grooves, as well as prog listeners, and anyone into quality metal. Henryk (guitars and jokes), being the squire he is, humored some of these sillybillyhorsing questions.

How are things going?! I have been listening to "Third Act" and I think it's very professional album, one with a serious, musical approach. How many albums do you have? How can people hear samples of your music? When did you form the band?
Hi there, and thanks a lot. Evil Masquerade is very up and coming these days - and I'm happy to hear that you dig "Third Act". It might not come as a surprise that it is our 3rd album. You can hear samples from all albums on the official Evil Masquerade website, and from the latest album on MySpace (www.evilmasquerade.com and www.myspace.com/evilmasquerade). I unintentionally formed the

band in the summer of 2003 and had our first album released early 2004. And since then we have continued to enrich the metal scene with some needed variation to the genre. Hopefully some of the greediest guys in this business will open their eyes and ears soon to make it possible for us to lay the world at our feet and thereby make them stinking rich... hahaha. The band, together with our ever-growing troop of loyal fans, have our goal set to World Domination!

Has "Third Act" been successful for you? Do you think your work has gotten a good response? Has your hard work been rewarded? Any surprises for you in people's responses? Artistically is "Third Act" as good as every other album. They are all very individual and with our hearts and souls equally put into them. I was most surprised about the overwhelming reactions when we released our debut album, since it was anything but mainstream - and with an odd presentation compared to what was offered at the time. We've just kept on doing exactly what we feel like doing - and still don't give a damn whether it's commercially appealing to the big guys. And since we keep growing in popularity and the record labels keep getting into more trouble by the minute, I guess this is the way to go. So to get back to your question, I'm not very surprised about the great response "Third Act" has gotten and still gets. As long as we know it's a really good album - that seems to reflect our fans' point of view as well. We have tons of reviews collected from all our releases on the official site if you are curious about what intelligent music journalists have to say. Just check the press section.

All the songs are written, composed and arranged by Henrik Flyman. Is this because this is your band? Just a coincidence? Can the other members contribute ideas? How do you divide the money from album sales? what about from touring or merchandising? Would you say that you are a "democracy" or a "one-man-rule" band, ha ha!!
Well, I'm the most stupid guy in this band who has spent a ridiculous amount of time keeping the madness going. I wouldn't know much about how money is shared. I only know that I'm the one paying for everything and the only one in the band that owes money because of this orchestra. Either I get rewarded for that in the end, or starve to death. Time will tell. This band came to exist because I recorded some tunes that were begging for eternal life. One thing led to the other and suddenly I was caught up in the whole thing. What keeps me going is the urge to compose music, the determination that I can improve and the lust to try new ideas. So therefore it is very likely that I will do most of the writing also in the future. The fans seem quite pleased about that. There have been some contributions from other guys as well, but so far none in the band. On the first album we had a song that was originally written by a friend of mine, Göran Jacobson. I just did some additional intrusions upon the original idea. Some famous classical tunes were abused and metalized on that same

album. On "Theatrical Madness" we used lyrics by Shakespeare on the song "Witches Chant". "Third Act" is the only album with material solely by me... but actually no. I just recall me paying homage to my native country Sweden by using a few notes from the national anthem in the middle part of "The Dark Minstrel Plays". Hmm... guess this means I have to do something to pay my respect to Denmark on the next album, or they'll send me back to where I came from... hahaha.

People call you a progressive metal band and you have a reputation for making complex music. Does anybody in the band have training from a music academy? Do you feel that you try to make more difficult music on purpose or not? On an average week, how many days do you practice with your guitar and for how many hours?

Hahaha... that's some reputation to have. I couldn't care less whether the music is complex or not. The only important thing is that the music comes with a melody worth remembering, or even better, impossible to forget. I'm a huge fan of simplicity. But I'm not afraid of experimenting madly either. The song decides where to go and we just follow. But hey, come on... songs like "I'll Make You Burn", "But You Were Smiling", "Far Away", "Now When Our Stars Are Fading", "Deliver Us", "Black Ravens Cry" can't possibly be described as complex? On an average week I don't practice at all on the guitar. I practice if I have written something I can't play. I would never try to make "difficult music", whatever that is, as a purpose on its own. Music should be appealing to the ear and trigger the listener's imagination, or just make people wanna bang their heads.

"Descended from the Grave" has a beat to it that sounds like it might have been inspired by another form of music? The main guitar riff sounds interesting, even a bit unusual? Is there a little story behind this song/riff or the melodies?

My inspirations come from any kind of melodic music, daily life experiences, fantasies, dreams and total silence. "Descended From the Grave" is just a cool song that wasn't written yet. The riff is very Evil Masqueradeish and I like the combination between that riff and the straight forward rocking verses. I rarely dissect music to analyze why it is the way it is. That goes for both my own and others compositions. I find it much more interesting to compose new music than pondering about already completed works.

You say that your music is "not intended for use by persons under the age of 18 unless needed". I know it's sort of a joke, but do you think that your listeners need a certain maturity to understand what's going on in the songs, to have the patience to listen and understand how your music functions? Do you get letters, messages or email from fans who are 13 or 14 years old?

Hahaha... oh the letters I get from 13 and 14 years old boys and girls. Some are so frustrated when they think that they aren't allowed to

listen to their favorite metal band. I try to explain to them that they are of course allowed to do so. But at the same time I take the opportunity to enlighten them that it might be a good idea to have at least one of their parents around when they do. I mean, they can get all sorts of wrong impressions if a grown-up doesn't shed some light on the situation when things get rough. You mustn't forget that some of our songs have titles like: "When Satan Calls", "The Devils Last Temptation", "Descended From the Grave (which you've already mentioned) and the list goes on and on. This can be a mouthful for minors to handle. It might also be problematic for religious people. Come to think of it, we should probably keep narrow-minded people away as well. Oh, and the MTV "bling-bling" generation. And the NU-metal guys... Hmm, seems to be lots of warnings we've forgotten to mention. Luckily there will be more albums from us where we can correct this mistake.

Who is Apollo Papathanasio? His vocals are strong!! His voice is midrange/high, but sounds "mature", meaning that it does not sound like he's try to prove that he can hit the high notes. He sings like he knows he can sing. The vocals on the album are quite good, I think. So, who is he? What's his story, music background, etc?

Apollo is a nice young man with heart and vocal cord in the exact right place. Just as the rest of us, he's doing his absolute best to make his performance shine. When you know that you're competent in what you're doing, there's rarely need to prove anything with show-offs that aren't required by the songs. Apollo proves plenty just by opening his mouth. I don't agree that his vocals are "quite good". A much better description would be "top-notch". I'd recommend you to visit our official page and go to the discography section to see all the albums he has recorded so far. Well worth checking out!

"The Dark Minstrel Plays" is a good example of the way the guitar has a certain classical feel to it. The solo, for example, also has that quality to it. How you characterize those melodies? Where do they come from?

I never thought about that classic feel you're talking about. The main riff, in my ears, is much more anchored in Swedish folk music. The verses have a clear musical vibe to them. I agree with you that the bridges leading up to the chorus and main riff have a classical touch in the harmonies, but that's about it. The first part of the guitar solo has kind of a Russian or Greek folk touch to it. A bit similar to what their native folk musicians do with their balalaikas and bouzoukis. The following parts are just Evil Masquerade madness.

One of the bonus tracks is called "Bozo the Clown". What inspired that song?! I don't think any metal band besides you has ever written a song about Bozo the Clown?! Is that Apollo doing vocals? The voice sounds different on this song?

Lyricaly I was inspired, or to put it better - disgusted, by some well-known world leader of today. I guess you have heard it on the US version of "Third Act" where it appears as one of two bonus tracks. The bonus tracks were taken from our previous albums to introduce the band better to the North American audience. The vocals are sung by our previous singer. I was a bit uncertain about which tracks to include, so we simply asked our fans on the Official Evil Masquerade Forum to make that decision. Who could better decide these things than our fans? You should take a minute to sign up and join us at the Forum. There's always a friendly atmosphere and a good discussions going. The address is: <http://www.evilmasquerade.com/forum>. Hope to see some of you there.

"The Final Goodbye," for the chorus, sounds like it has a bunch of people singing? You know, the choruses often sound like a choir. How many are actually singing on parts like that? How do you get that "many people singing" effect? It's in fact only me doing that choir, but I did it 100 times. No more no less. "Many people effects" are best achieved by letting many people sing. However, this was the night before we were mixing the album and a couple of details were still missing. I did that recording around 03-06 in the morning, so everyone in Copenhagen were sleeping tight and I was stuck with my own voice to build a huge choir. Luckily this is something I've done thousands of times before, so it wasn't a big deal. It just took some extra time.

Besides your own music, what are your top five metal albums of all time?! When you were young, were there any particular metal musicians/guitarists you admired? Who? What do you think about them now that you can play everything they did? Is it less impressive now that you know how they are playing those notes and solos?!

I never had a top 5 list and I never limited myself to only metal. But if I was to pick 5 good albums within the genre it might be: Rainbow [Rising], Black Sabbath [Headless Cross], Deep Purple [Perfect Strangers], Rainbow [Long Live Rock 'n Roll] and DIO [Holy Diver]. But there are so many more that ought to be mentioned as well. My admiration has always been more focused on the composers. People I think have done very well within metal and hard rock are Ritchie Blackmore, who still keeps improving outside the genre, DIO, Tony Iommi, the Metallica guys, the ACDC guys, the Iron Maiden guys, David Coverdale and a whole bunch of others. Most of the stuff I thought was good when I was younger is as good now. Cause again, I wasn't impressed about the complexity. It was the melodies that kept me interested, and they still do.

Any final comments on: your album, Danish metal, your future plans, 2008, touring, Thor your bass player's drinking habits, Katja Handberg or those Danish winters?!

"your album": I guess you mean "Third Act". It's well worth getting if you like metal and are tired of the usual cup of tea and prefer melodic stuff with attitude.

"Danish metal": The scene is healthier than ever. Many interesting and good bands are around these days. To mention just a few, I'd recommend you to check out Beyond Twilight and Wuthering Heights.

"future plans": to keep improving and stay away from artistic laziness.

"2008": A brand new album from Evil Masquerade.

"touring": My pleasure, if I don't have to pay for it.

"Thor's drinking habits": God help us all!

"Katja Handberg": Very strange girl.

"Danish winters": Are best experienced far away from them.

THE END

Cruachan

Celtic folky thrashing deathing metal is what the band's about: pretty distinctive, creative and fun stuff.

I had not heard your music until "The Morrigan's Call". I wanted to ask you how you achieve your combination of metal and traditional Celtic sounds. What are the instruments that you use besides, guitar, bass and drums, for your songs? When did you begin combining the two types of instruments? Did you have difficulty finding people who shared your vision in the beginning?

...It may not sound it but it is actually difficult to combine our Celtic sounds with metal. We could opt for the usual generic 'folkish' sounding tunes that so many other bands combine with metal but being Irish we feel it's our heritage and identity that we strive to put through in our music. We use all manner of Folk instruments like tin whistle, Bodhran, Harp, Bouzouki etc. we try to have 'real' instruments rather than rely on a keyboard or samples as so many other bands do and this can cause problems too as the tuning has to be right etc. We started the band way back in 1992 before folk metal was a popular thing but it wasn't hard to find the musicians as it was myself and my brother Keith that started it...he plays guitars and I was the main folk musician. The hard thing was convincing people with this relatively new genre...it worked!!

By coincidence, some time ago, I heard Tyr's version of "The Very Wild Rover." Have you heard theirs?! Do you like it? By the way, I don't know about the history of the song, can you say a little about it? (because Tyr emphasizes Viking themes and you do Celtic ones, but obviously there's some overlapping; the Vikings were in Ireland, etc.)

...The wild rover is a traditional Irish ballad. It's actually a drinking

song about a 'rover' which is like a pirate basically that wants to settle down etc. I suppose it can be related to some viking theme too but it's open to speculation...the only person that can tell you exactly what the song was originally about is long dead and anonymous. I've heard TYR's version after we recorded ours and I like it. I don't have any problem with viking/celtic crossover as (especially in Ireland and Scotland) our two cultures crossed and mixed with one another...for example a major portion of Icelandic people have an Irish heritage and a great part of Ireland can claim some form of Nordic roots.



What is the response in your home country to your music? Do you get to play nonmetal music festivals, because, obviously, your music has a lot more melody than the average metal band and probably has themes and melodies that people have not heard in this context?

...We actually get a better response outside Ireland. We still have fans here but the majority are in mainland Europe, Russia and South America for some reason. We play some purely Folk/Mediaeval/Celtic festivals too outside the normal Metal Festivals and it's good because 'normal' people outside the metal scene can experience a metal band and realise that it's not all noise as they seem to think it is.

If you had the money to do a show properly like you imagine it, what kind of theatrics and costumes and performances would there be to go along with the music?

...If we had the money, the sky would be the limit. Our problem is that we have to fly to whatever country we play in which adds to cost for promoters etc so we can't really ask for great props etc for the stage

shows and bringing stuff like swords etc all adds to more pain than what it's worth. If I did have the money, I'd have full folk sections like a concerto and all manner of dancers and re-enactments etc on stage....make a proper 'show'

How much of your songs are melodies from popular folk music? For example, on this album, do all your songs have melodies from folk songs or do you invent most of the melodies and they just happen to sound traditional?

We invent most and do 'covers' of some popular traditional tunes. In some songs also we sometimes add parts of trad tunes or change them slightly so that they'll fit with the metal parts.

Did Skyclad have an influence on you in the beginning? Did "The Wayward Sons of Mother Earth" have an influence on you?

As I said earlier, we were one of the first true folk metal bands and at that time Skyclad (who practically invented it) were the other. There were other bands that had some 'folkish' elements in their music at that time like Isengard but Skyclad had an actual violin player and of course they influenced us as we liked the idea of a 'real' folk instrument in a band and so influenced us in that way. We just took it one step further and went more folky and on our demo and debut mixed it with black metal. It was actually Sabbath (uk) that really influenced us...they had a real Pagan, Earthy feel to their band and that influenced us in the early days to try to get that mood through in our music. I still listen to the Sabbath and early Skyclad albums to this day!

How do you go about writing a song like "Téir Abhaile Ríú"? It's pretty crazy to have all-out death metal speed frenzy attack and then have it change into a folk song, no? By the way, is this song in Gaelic? How do you decide to keep some things in English and others in Gaelic?

I don't know really...We just write what we write and go with it. We try to make it flow as best we can. Actually that's another traditional tune that we put to metal. It's originally in Gaelic so we kept it in it's pure form rather than translate it to English. We generally write the songs in English and if it's traditional we keep it gaelic if it was originally written in that language. Although in some earlier albums we've written songs purely in gaelic just to add an authentic folk feel to it.

Is there a politics involved in your emphasis of Celtic elements in your music? Unfortunately, some bands that emphasize pagan/folk elements use their music to promote racist politics. ...There aren't 'politics' in the way some people may see them i.e. racist intentions etc. We promote our culture because it IS our culture. We don't say one culture is mightier than the other and I think people should embrace their culture wether it be Japanese, Scandanavian or

whatever. Your culture and heritage is what makes you what you are today and I don't think people should be afraid or ashamed of promoting their own culture. I mean...if you have a beautiful child your not going to hide it away and pretend it doesn't exist..you want to show it off with pride, and why shouldn't you? It's the politically correct brigade that scares me more than any other 'culture'...pc culture is the new (for want of a better word) Nazism. I'm an adult and can think for myself...if a band uses their culture as a way to promote racism or extreme ideals, I can choose to listen to it or not, just like I don't listen to any band that promotes gang violence...it's idiotic. Of course your culture can get used and/or misinterpreted by certain groups for their own ends but this shouldn't demonise being proud of and promoting your culture whatever culture that may be.

Any last comments?

Thanks for the interview. our latest album 'The Morrigan's Call' is available now and a new album should be released by the end of the year. For some samples of our music and upcoming shows check us out at www.myspace.com/cruachanfanpage or alternatly check out www.cruachan.cjb.net

Slainte!! **THE END** -----

Sjodogg



Espen Slotsvik from Sjodogg ("Sjodogg is a west-Norwegian name for a tick-borne disease in sheep," according to Espen) gives his take on the bands twisted combination of death/black metal. Personally, I think the album is about a feeling of twisted, dissonant, but coherent metal.

I have been listening to "Landscapes of Disease and Decadence" recently. It's a twisted album: the vocals are pretty sick and the music has some blasting and doomy dissonance. How have things been going with the album? Are there prospects for touring in 2008?

Thanks for the kind words! It's a good feeling finally having a record out, it's been 3 years in the making, and we are proud of the result. Hope I can say that without sounding like a pretentious asshole! The album is comprised of material from our two latest demos, Demo Anno 2005 and Demo Anno 2006 - in mastered versions. We are happy to be affiliated with infamous french label Osmose Productions, a label with a profound underground-feel, an influential label responsible for introducing formidable bands like Immortal, Enslaved, Marduk and Impaled Nazarene, to name a few. I'm not going to suggest that Sjodogg is an original band, we play extreme-metal like many others, but I am confident that we have developed quite a characteristic sound. You mention the vocals, and I think that's one thing that contributes to the cold, grim atmosphere of Sjodogg. So far we have no complaints, the album has just been released, and we go about our lives as usual. Hail the merry lads in Arkhon Infaustus who helped get us signed!

How does Vulnus manage to sound so sick? What kind of mood is he in when he is in the studio?

He he, only V himself can answer that question! His voice is characteristically diverse, I think, and it suits Sjodogg. It allows for many nuances in mood. In the studio we did quite a lot of experimenting with the vocals, some parts were rehearsed, while others were improvised. I had originally imagined the vocals much more subdued and "hidden" in the mix, but it became evident early on in the process that the compositions needed dominant, in-your-face vocals.

"Mahapaatra" is a pretty good example of the blasting speed that you combine with dissonant riffs. The song is memorable, but it's not about just speed. It's has a feeling of insanity to it. What or who is the title of this song? What does it mean?

Sjodogg has never been about bpm, or aggression or technical skills. Basically, the concept was to create dark and atmospheric metal with focus on groove. We never set out to make *black metal*, or *dark metal* for that matter, I didn't even know of that "category" untill it was brought up in a review recently. I see some reviewers use the word *progressive* to describe the music of Sjodogg - personally I don't see the connection there. There's no symphonic synths, no harmonious melodic guitars, no romantic female vocals, no shit. Just dark and compelling metal.

"Brethren of the Weeping Corpses" has doomy riffing, some slower parts. Does it gets boring to play fast all the time?

The doomy riffs are inspired in part by My Dying Bride's "Symphonair Infernus et spera Empyrium", in part by Cathedral's "Forest of Equilibrium" - two of my all-time favourites! Also on an atmospheric level, these albums have had an important impact on Sjodogg. Other inspirations, indirectly I suppose, are "Punishment for

Decadence" by Coroner and "Dreamweaver" by Sabbath. We don't sound like any of these bands, but they have nonetheless contributed to the formation of the Sjodogg-sound. I tire easily listening to bands playing fast and/or über-technical exclusively, often simply because of the lack of variation. In my opinion, the songs of Sjodogg have their own identity, each created from a specific idea. The sound is "roomy", allowing all the instruments to shine through, and variation is a key-word.

In some songs you use the acoustic guitar. What do you like about bringing some acoustic parts to the black/death metal?

The acoustic guitar is something which I brought with me from my solo-project prior to forming Sjodogg. After leaving Enthral in '99 to explore a slightly darker style of music, I worked on a black-metal-meets-movie-music sort of thing, combining acoustic guitar with various sound effects and other instruments, creating dark musical landscapes with a spoonful of traditional folk-music stirred in...when this project was gutted after about 3 years, and I met up with Kjetil to discuss further musical relationship, I used a lot of this discarded material as a template for Sjodogg. Furthermore, the acoustic parts, cliché or not, create small pockets of tranquility and "rest", and allows for interesting dynamics.

"Sentinels of Severed Flesh" has some unique vocals at the beginning, sounding kind of gargled, vomit-in-throat-like. Is this done totally by Vulnus? Are there any special effects here?

Back to the vocals! Yes, all done by V, no special effects employed. On the other hand, in many instances we have used vocal sounds, like you describe above, to create atmospheric, sinister effects.

Is this band a side project? Is a full-time band that will tour? Are the members busy with their other bands?

Sjodogg is my only engagement. Kjetil still handles drums and vocals for Enthral, and he plays with Crest of Darkness as well. No bands are full-time in that sense, and we all have "normal" jobs to sustain us. In Sjodogg, we seldom make more than 4-5 songs a year (quality before quantity), and rehearsals are periodic. Up to this point, we have chosen not to do gigs, rather spend our time being creative, arranging and re-arranging the material till we are satisfied. We are however planning to do some shows locally this spring. So we'll see how that goes!

Last comments?

We are recording some new material later this month, sticking to the established Sjodogg-formula (unmolested and unrefined since 2004). We are also discussing the prospects of making a Sjodogg-video of some sorts with an acquaintance of mine who is a director. I guess it is up to Osmose Productions to decide whether or not there will be a new album already 2008, if we are allowed to follow up "Landscapes

of Disease and Decadence". Check us out at myspace.com/sjodogg and buy the album if you like what you hear.

Cheers Mauricio, thanx for taking an interest in Sjodogg!Espan

THE END

REVIEWS

Astarte: Demonized (Season of Mist)

I like it!

The first song, "Mutter Astarte," is solid thrashing death opener. The energy level is kicked up to blastbeat speed on "God I Hate Them All." The next number, "Lost," is another pacespeeder. Overall, the guitar has a sharp thrash/death vibe, sometimes shredding, sometimes melodic, and memorable. Tristessa's growling is closer to black metal, though sometimes her guttural moments suggest death.

Actually, the middle batch of songs seems to get better and instead of the album leveling off, it continues in fine fashion. The songs are not too long, some thrashing and blasting, soloing, basically. When the seventh song, "Heart of Flames (Burn)" rolls around with some midpaced quick moments, but also lots of thrashing here.

The ninth song, "Everlast" is a keyboardy/piano-y, midpaced growler, then some blasting, and soloing. What begins like a slow number ends with lots of energy.

By the time, you get around the last few songs, the album is surprisingly upbeat, not like something winding down, but like something going strong. The next to last track is a cover of Accept's "Princess of the Dawn." I usually don't like covers, though this one is different enough that it gets the Astarte treatment, all growled up and thrashed up. Well done! The final number is called "Everlast II" and it's a nice keyboardy, mellow, instrumental track. Cool.

Astarte has good, solid, catchy songs on here. I didn't get the feeling that there were fillers, which is always a nice thing.

www.astarteband.com

The Battalion: Stronghold of Men (Dark Essence)

Now, granted, the vocals—having as they do, a certain death/black quality to them—might suggest that this is death/black metal. Really, I don't care to argue that it is not.

Once you listen to the riffing and the drumming going on; however, it is clear that this band is in reality playing thrash the only way they know how to do it: fast and sharp.

There is no blasting here and the guitar work has virtually nothing to do with death or black metal. This ain't fancy and it ain't real

pretty, either. Lyrics about graves and hate and other typical subjects is the soup of the day here.

Is this groundbreaking? No.

This band does not show such ridiculous aspirations. They want to thrash, make some noise and scream. Kids just wanna thrash.

Bullet For My Valentine: Scream Aim Fire

They are trying to "rock out," to be "heavy" including with gang shouted chorus, growled parts...Faster, angrier emo rock just in time to jump that sinking ship?

Dark Suns: Grave Human Genuine (Sensory)

What is the title, man? Is it a parody of Dimmu Borgir 's titles of three words that don't always make that much sense?

Actually, this is prog rock with long, instrumental, spacy and strange moments and the occasional bursts of energy thrown in for sporadic impact.

This is not metal.

The vocals, for the most part, are very mellow and not energetic at all, except for some screaming and there.

Overall, this is for the prog rock elite crowd, as there is not attempt at making songs "memorable." I'm sure the band themselves think this is very "catchy," but, unless you are prog freak, you will not find this to be something that sticks in your memory.

Every time this cd stops playing, I forget the songs and only remember that this is slow, mellow, long, very proggy, nerdy.
www.darksuns.se www.lasersedggroup.com

Dismember: Dismember Regain

The previous two releases "Where Ironcrosses Grow" and "God that Never Was" are two fun, instant affairs of death metal with melodic guitar solos. This self-titled release continues that style. Pretty quick, get-the-job-done-and-leave, "don't overstay your welcome" is basically the mentality of the band.

The vocals sound pretty much like they always have: guttural, traditional growling. The riffing is of the buzzsaw variety and while Dismember has never played superfast, the songs, for the most part, are uptempo.

Years ago Dismember settled into this "Autopsy/death metal fanatics who have a not-so-secret love of Iron Maiden" and nowadays this is more and more evident. Newer listeners will easily get what Dismember is about because it's nothing too fancy or weird or experimental: just pounding metal all the way around. Older listeners who want more of the same of the last two albums should be pleased. Anybody looking for bold new moves will be disappointed.

Enemy of the Sun: Shadows The End

The vocals can sound pretty shouted/screamed, including the pig squeals; there is also lots of clean vocals, not bad, but they are

not particularly distinctive; there are some growled parts (of course, because you have to show you are "hip" and "eclectic!").

In short, the thrash vocals are ok, but the other styles are not convincing.

The overall idea works out ok when they play thrash. However, they are often slowing things down to sound "international" or "hip" or whatever, with emo-like moments and some sort of strange sounds, like they are trying to sound "ethnic" or "Eastern" or again, whatever. It occurs to me that this band sounds like a band combining metal with alternative rock or emo rock. Just trying to be very "hip," instead of just thrashing.

Maybe this is the cool stuff at the moment. I have no idea. Waldemar Sorychta is the head honcho of this band and the last Sorychta band I liked was Despair.

Ill Nino: Enigma

Well...this is not metal...

"But tell me if it's good!"

Well, OK. Fine. Here it goes: this is not metal.

Mister Bones: Monster Burns... (Obskure Sombre)

The full title of this stoner rock is "Monster Burns And the Power Seekers." This is basically upbeat Black Sabbath-inspired rock. It's not metal, but more like basic, gritty, very 70s-ish rock.
www.misterbones.net www.obskure-sombre.tk

Nifelheim: Envoy of Lucifer

It's raw black heavy metal, noisy kind of stuff, simple, kind of minimalist, uptempo, pound, pound stuff. This is not that different from their previous stuff, so, no worries, everything is right with the band.

Of course, if you want brand new directions, this is totally the wrong band. Hellhammer, Venom and Sodom, dirty thrash, unflashy, dirty stuff. Imagine old Sodom or Sarcophago covering Iron Maiden, cuz there is melody here, but it's hidden behind the wall of noise and screaming.

Those looking for bands that have the oldschool, thrash metal mentality will find this worthy. Polished this is not. And not adventurous, either; just the same old thrash and scream until six in the morning.

The Profane: Chaosbreed (Hateworks)

This bunch from Paraguay, South America, goes for an obnoxious, loud, beer and rock sound. It's punky, nasty, dirty, raw, with screamed vocals. Bottom line, this is loud rock. Sounds pretty honest and genuine, if that's your cup of beerteas. www.theprofane.com

Sculptured: Embodiment (The End Records)

The people who listen to this band probably break down in some sort of mix of the following:

A) Some listeners who like metal bands that are experimental; that go beyond metal's perceived boundaries; "intelligent" metal, they would probably say.

B) People who like music for musicians.

C) Some people who make a point to search out what they consider not "normal" metal.

D) Some music critics.

E) Some of this band's parents, friends, relatives, significant others (whether these people actually like the music is debatable, but they feel it is their moral obligation to support this band).

F) People who do not really enjoy the music, but they listen to it because they think that this makes them smarter; or they just generally are arrogant and consider Judas Priest fans idiotic.

This music is jazzy death rock. I don't know if jazz is the correct word because I actually don't know what jazz means. This band is sort of "heavy rock" with clean and growled vocals. By the way, the clean vocals are actually nothing to get excited about, but not awful, but are here more for variation. The growling is alright, not bad.

This can sound funky, weird, wonderful, confusing, blasting, melodic, riffy, keyboardy, drummy, among other things, like instrumental interludes and spacey moments.

Spheric Universe Experience: Anima (Sensory)

This release is a huge improvement for the band. It is true that their "Mental Torments" was a good display of their progressive metal skills, as is this one. The difference is that before there were some of those longer passages of talent exhibitions where maybe only the metal nerds would really enjoy it: heavy on the keyboard and light on the rocking metal moments. This band is still very a progressive metal and one that already delivers, not one that has "potential" but one that is here now, doing it. The improvement is this: they are playing faster and have gotten heavier, the riffs are thicker, chunkier and the overall speed is up to a nice, rocking tempo. I am still surprised that they sound less nerdy and intellectual, and more metal.

The band's singer sounds very much like expected of a prog band: higher-end vocals and melodic singing, sing along, chorus-y type of stuff. The keyboards are less prominent now, though they still part of the equation and here and there, they show up for nice guitar/keyboard trade-offs or nice quieter, spacey moments. The drumming has stepped up the intensity, the double bass speed is way more upfront, which together with the heavier riffing give the album a solid, intelligent metal sound.

The songs are memorable, the melodies good, the production good, the balance between talent and songwriting is good. The metal listener that seeks out catchy, well performed, adult contemporary intelligent, serious progressive metal (with no funny or weird experimentation; just metal) cannot go wrong with this band. Maybe the superpicky people will criticize them for not writing 30-12

minute-long songs or for not doing 75 arpeggios in their songs or for not being way outthere wacked out weird, but it is the bands ability to write catchy songs that do not water down the musicality that makes this a good, solid and even fun (yes, fun) album. www.sphericuniversexp.com www.lasercd.com

Virgin Black: Requiem Fortissimo (The End Records)

Somber, slow, patient, melancholic, gothic metal with growled vocals, so, yes, death doom.

This is the opposite of instant gratification and speed. The music relies on a simple melody or a mood for each moment. This is not so say this is simplistic, because the sound is pompous, heavy, imposing and huge. The choirs and symphonic elements combined with the slow, melancholic guitar melodies work together to create a serious sound band.

If you have the patience, and the willingness to hear slow metal go from slow moods to slow grooves to slow emotions, all within the context of some dude growling like a caveman.

If you are not new to the genre, this means that this band is dooming out like 1991 or whenever it was that that early Paradise Lost, My Dying Bride and Anathema were getting the attention of the patient and the melancholic. Or, if you liked a band like Evoken years and years ago...

This is ain't no party and it ain't rock n roll, either. It's sick, depressive stuff. And they never lighten up, either. Damn.

[inter/re/views by mauricio (except where noted otherwise): theoutcastzine@juno.com]