


Steel for an Age

Heavy Metal Fanzine – Issue #2 (April 2012)

- 
- ◆ AXE BATTLER ◆ BLACK SWORD THUNDER ATTACK ◆
 - ◆ BORROWED TIME ◆ DAWN TRADER ◆ DECEPTOR ◆ ELVENPATH ◆ EVIL-LYN ◆
 - ◆ INNER AXIS ◆ LONEWOLF ◆ MANILLA ROAD ◆ MENACE ◆ METAL INQUISITOR ◆
 - ◆ MIDNIGHT PRIEST ◆ PORTRAIT ◆ QUESTION OF MADNESS ◆ RAMPART ◆
 - ◆ SANCTUAIRE ◆ SPIDKILZ ◆ SPITFIRE ◆ STAIRWAY ◆ TRIAL ◆ TUNGSTEN AXE ◆
 - ◆ VIGILANCE ◆ WAR DANCE ◆ WOLF'S GANG ◆ WRATHBLADE ◆

IRON ON IRON RECORDS

Releases!!!



IRON 001:
Dexter Ward - Antarctic Dream
LP (2010)
Heavy/Epic Power Metal from Greece



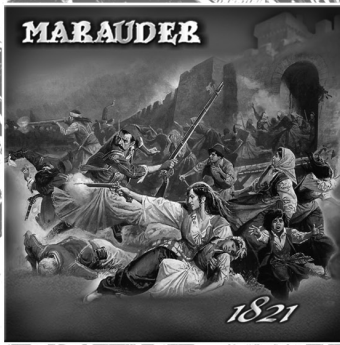
IRON 002:
Skull Fist - Heavier Than Metal
LP (2010) (sold out)
Power/ Speed Metal from Canada



IRON 003:
Crimson Fire - Metal Is Back
CD (2010)
Heavy/ Power Metal from Greece



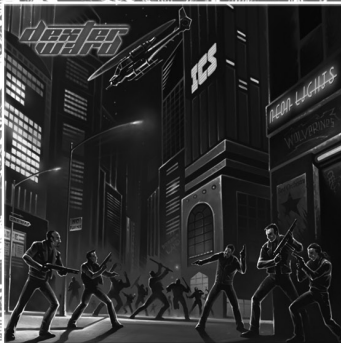
IRON 004:
Cauldron Born - Born Of The Cauldron
LP (2010)
Epic/ Power Metal from USA.



IRON 005:
Marauder - 1821
LP (2011)
Classic Heavy Metal from Greece.



IRON 006:
Strikelight - Taste My Attack
CD (2011)
Classic Heavy Metal / NWOBHM from Greece



IRON 007:
Dexter Ward - Neon Lights
CD (2011)
Heavy/ US Power Metal from Greece/Italy



IRON 008:
Emerald - Iron On Iron
LP (2011)
Classic Heavy Metal from Netherlands



IRON 009:
Dark Nightmare - Beneath The Veils Of Wintre
CD (2012)
Epic Heavy Metal from Greece

IRON ON IRON RECORDS
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ΑΘΗΝΑ 11144



IRON 010:
Evil Lyn - The Night Of Delusions
CD (2012)
Heavy Power Metal from Finland



IRON 011:
Stormtrooper - Armies Of The Night
CD (2012)
Speed/ US Power Metal from USA.

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Steel for an Age

Heavy Metal Fanzine – Issue #2 (April 2012)

EDITORIAL

Greetings Metal Maniacs!

It's been already a year since we were last doing this fanzine you are now holding in your hands. A year where quite a few things have changed around us in all aspects. Greece especially, is the European center of a crisis affecting us, the working people. Us, that we had nothing to do with the crisis in the first place, now called from a bunch of parasites to pay for them. Things may look uncertain and grim at the point but injustice never triumphs over the right of the many. As a great Greek writer/poet said when defending himself in court in the 1950's, "it took millions of years for the four legs to become two. I will not make them four again!"

Hence, the printing of another issue of *Steel For An Age* came under discussion several times throughout this period. However, despite the factual impediments and adversities, here we are busting your balls for the second time! And we owe all this strength and courage that we quarried to go on to all of you who cared to share your opinion with us, either good or critical; your kind words of positive feedback and your taunting stance were one source of inspiration for us. The other and most crucial one was of course our passion for Heavy Metal music, call it underground or mainstream!

This fanzine is trying to cover the happenings in Heavy Metal music in a period between 2011 and the first part of 2012; and it's been a damn great year for sure! Bands from the past resurfaced with good albums, while more and more underground purveyors popped up to carry the flag the predecessors had dropped. The releases that fluctuated above average were numerous, while for once you can really talk about a genuine comeback to a sound and quality comparable to the supposed glorious and unsurpassable past. Therefore, more space was given to new coming or still active bands in our interviews section; this is a Heavy Metal fanzine in the first place, not an encyclopedia or a documentary scripture, without meaning that in time we will not again include inactive legends or bands that we believe should get some more attention, which never did as they deserved back in their days. This is supposed to help and support The Underground, so we feel the only way to successfully achieve it from our side is by showing the work some bands do to the few that might have missed it.

Again, there is a column included, dedicated to some of the great but unknown to the most bands! Thanks to the help of our mystery friend M., the task was conducted with results—as you will see for yourselves—beyond expectations (plus it saved us extra work, haha). This short and detailed educational contribution of our friend covers a period when real Metal, the real deal, was actually dead, overlooked and totally neglected by the music industry and-up to an extent-by fans. This aversion started mainly in the States, so this is where this article focuses, right into the heart of the root of evil, with all these great bands that had erupted in the USA in the 90's and got wiped out almost right after their first—and most of the times only—release.

Talk is cheap, this is what the people say and especially when you have the suspense to move on to the content and greedily absorb what some of your favorite bands say instead of reading silly introductions, this is totally understandable. At this very point, with the overall picture of the scene that we have at present and without the misery of predictions involved, we can only say one phrase that absolutely represents the scribes of this zine,

WE LIVE FOR HEAVY METAL!

So, until next time

Up the Hammers & Down the nails!

Athens, April 2012

The "Knights of Metal",

Kostas Kailiazis & Thanos Stafylarakis



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MANILLA ROAD

What? Another interview with MANILLA ROAD? This is what I tried to avoid and worked a little more than normal to make sure this (quite long) feature will be interesting (and hopefully a "stepping stone" for better and more detailed ones in the future). The initial plan was to have Scott Park as well, but this wasn't possible in the end. So, this interview was done with Rick Fisher, Randy "Thrasher" Foxe and of course Mark "Shark" Shelton. I tried to focus more on the early days of the band until their break-up, as well as the 90's years until the reunion that I felt were less documented all these years. The post-"Atlantis Rising" years are more known, one way or another. I would like to thank Rick, but most importantly Mark and Randy for their Music first of all, as well as the time they dedicated to a small fanzine and a fan from the other side of the world to make this as interesting as possible. Choose a MANILLA ROAD LP from your collections, have a drink and walk the Road of the Light, while reading throughout the next pages a (as much as possible) detailed history of one the Greatest bands in the History of Metal...

What are your first memories of music? How at a later stage you got introduced to Hard Rock/Metal music?

Shark: My first memory is singing with my mom all the time. As for organized music I was taking vocal and piano lessons by the age of 5 or 6. My mother was a music teacher and so it was sort of bred into me. When I was really young I used to stay outside at night in the yard looking up to the stars and I would make up songs to sing. I think the whole neighborhood heard me because sometimes one of the neighbors would make a comment about what a great voice I had. My first excursion into the realm of rock n' roll was when I bought the "Meet the Beatles" album quickly followed by the purchase of the first MONKEYS album. Jimi Hendrix was the first really weird and heavy music I got into but what really turned me towards heavy rock and Metal was when I saw BLACK SABBATH on the "Paranoid" tour. They totally blew me away and I became a BLACK SABBATH fan for life. DEEP PURPLE was my next favorite band back then along with PINK FLOYD, HAWKWIND, UFO and URIAH HEPP. There were lots of others also but those bands were some of the first that help set my path with my likes for heavy music.

Rick Fisher: Growing up, music was always played in our house. My sisters played the piano, & I had some friends who played guitar & an older friend who played congas, he was the one that got me playing drums. I like a lot of different genres of music, but after hearing my sister's Led Zeppelin 2 album, I was hooked on heavy rock.

Thrasher: My mother played the piano and sang so there was often live music in the house. She'd hoped my two older sisters would play an instrument but they didn't. When I was very young, I was enrolled in piano lessons but I rebelled and really didn't learn anything at that time (much to my eternal regret). When I got old enough to take band class in school, at the age of ten, my mother wanted me to play an instrument. It was a very small town and there was no orchestra, only band. I really didn't want to play a horn so I chose snare drum. I found I enjoyed it and practiced all of the time. At approximately the age of fourteen, I decided to take up the drum set. Once I got my own set, I would practice as much as I could. My family's house was only a block from the high school. After school, I would hide until the teachers had all gone home. Then I would practice for about five or six hours a night. I hated weekends because I couldn't play my drums. When my oldest sister left to go to a university, she left behind several albums and cassette tapes. They included "Monster" (STEPPENWOLF), "Who's Next" (THE WHO), "Paranoid" (BLACK SABBATH), "Led Zeppelin II" (LED ZEPPELIN) and "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida" (IRON BUTTERFLY) as well as some compilations. That started my interest in heavier music.

How did the transition from being a music fan to a musician happened? And more specifically what inner need urged you to form a band and perform music?

Shark: The performing was part of my early education. With my mother at the helm I was trained from the start to be a performer. I think she would have rather seen me turn into a great pianist or opera singer instead of a Metalhead but I think she is still proud on my achievements. The inner urge you speak of was always there. I think one of the strangest things about it all is that there have been several bands that I was a huge fan of in the past and not only have I shared the stage with some of these bands but they have opened for us. That is a really weird feeling to have someone that I idolized warm up the audience for us. Wow. I don't think there was much of a transition from fan to musician. I have always been both for as long as I can remember.

Rick Fisher: My older sister knew some guys who played hard rock & I wanted to do that as well, as for the inner need, I guess I really enjoyed playing the drums!

Thrasher: I will always consider myself, first and foremost, a music fan. I have a huge music collection and I don't know what I'd do without music. When I listened to music that I loved, no one was doing what I heard in my head. And I wanted to understand what it was that I liked as well as what it was that I disliked. So I studied music theory. That led to experimentation, alone and with friends, into writing original songs.

Which are the bands you are referring to?

Shark: The first band that always comes to mind for me is ANGEL WITCH. They have opened for us twice and when MANILLA ROAD was still a young band I was enamored with ANGEL WITCH. Their first album is so incredibly cool and Kevin Heybourne was, to me, one of the best writers of Metal songs that has graced the halls of Metal fame. Not only that but since I have had the chance to share the stage and party with Kevin I have found him to be a really cool dude and I am proud to call him friend. That is pretty weird to me because I would have never thought that I would have ever had the chance to meet Kevin, let alone have ANGEL WITCH opening up for us. I would think it should be the other way around.

Randy, you are a multi-instrumentalist. Could you please tell us which instruments you play and how did you get so much involved with music?

Thrasher: As I'd mentioned, my mother really wanted me to play an instrument. When I graduated into middle school, I asked for money for gifts and took the money to buy a guitar. It was really cheap and played badly but it got me started. Of course, I was already

playing percussion at that time. A few years later, I started teaching myself keyboards. Once I was playing guitar, drums, and keyboards, as well as singing, that left only bass guitar to learn so that I could record complete songs once I got my first multitracks recorder. At one point, I was going to teach myself the flute but it seemed too arbitrary. On keyboard, the low notes are to the left and the high notes to the right. On guitar and bass, the low strings are at the top, the low notes are further from the body, the high strings are at the bottom, and the high notes are nearer the body. Drums are obvious...big drums are low notes and small drums are high notes. The notes on horns just seem so random to me. I couldn't imagine being able to improvise easily.

Mark, you played in a number of bands prior to MANILLA ROAD. Some of them would be EMBRYO, APOCALYPSE and THE HEARD. Could you give us some more info on these and maybe more outfits you were involved?

Shark: Some other bands I was in were SHADY HAZE, TUMBLEWEED and PARADIGM. I guess I will take them all in chronological order. THE HEARD was the first. This was while I was in High School and it was a Jazz band that my step-father and my mother had put together. I was the drummer. EMBRYO was a band that I formed while in High School at the same time that I played in THE HEARD. EMBRYO was mostly a cover band playing BLACK SABBATH, DEEP PURPLE, MOUNTAIN, UFO and all sorts of other popular hard rock stuff from the day. We did a few originals but they were not very good. APOCALYPSE was the first band that I ever played guitar in and the first band that I wrote songs for as well. We were a three piece and sounded a little like MOTORHEAD except a little bit stranger. It was raw and powerful but pretty disorganized. When I was first putting MANILLA ROAD together I did lots of session work for bands in studios and also played live with several different bands just to make a living. Also at one time I just played the night club scene around Wichita doing a acoustic solo act. SHADY HAZE and TUMBLEWEED were country rock bands that I played in to make money. PARADIGM was a band that Randy had put together after the breakup of MANILLA ROAD after we did "The Courts of Chaos". I played lead guitar in that band for a very short time but stopped when I formed CIRCUS MAXIMUS. Other than those bands it has been all MANILLA ROAD up until now. I have formed another new metal band with E.C. Hellwell called HELLWELL. We have just finished recording our first album at Midgard Sound Labs.

Was MANILLA ROAD the name of the band since the beginning? I understand that the first line-up consisted of Mark Shelton on guitars, Ben Murkins (RIP) on drums, Scott Park on bass and Robert Park (RIP) on guitars as well. Is this the first inception of the band? How did you meet? Through ads or mutual friends?

Shark: MANILLA ROAD was the first name of the band and even though we thought about changing several times it seemed to always endure the test of time. The lineup you spoke of is correct. That was the first inception of MANILLA ROAD and we all met each other as friends. I had known Scott from my High School days and when I got out of the Marine Corps I ran into him and ended up living in a flat with him and Ben and that is how we all met. Robert was Scott's brother so he came along with Scott.

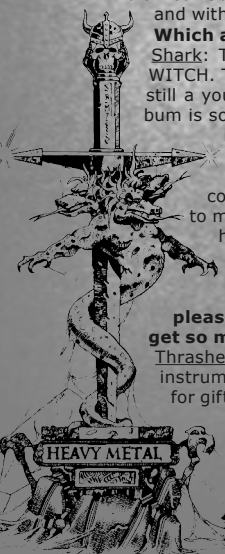
Did this line-up perform live or recorded anything? Was the band playing covers the first years? If yes, from which bands?

Shark: We did perform live many times actually mostly around the Wichita area. We did do a few covers at first. Mostly Jimi Hendrix songs. We did not really record anything professionally with this lineup though.

How was the club scene in Wichita back then? Were there any clubs where the band could showcase it's early repertoire? What about bands?

Shark: Oh yeah we have always been able to find a place to play in Wichita and the surrounding areas in Kansas. As for the other bands in the area we were the heaviest and the first to really do our own thing with original music as far as Metal goes. There were plenty of rock bands and even hard rock bands in the area but very few were trying to play Metal music. And especially not Epic Metal.

There is the 1979 demo with three songs, "Far Side of the Sun", "Hermann Hill" and "Manilla Road". As far as we know, no known cop-





ies of this demo exist. The band had already at that time replaced Ben Murkins with Myles Sipe. Was he recruited in the band only for the demo sessions?

Shark: We auditioned several drummers and Myles won the job. He was considered our permanent drummer at first and he was the drummer on that first demo that you spoke of. But he just did not seem to fit in after awhile and he was not nearly as dedicated to the music and the band as the rest of us. So we ditched him and brought Rick Fisher into the fold. Rick and I went to High School together and had hung out with each other for years. What was funny was that I never knew how good of a drummer he was until I mentioned that I was having troubles with mine and he told me he played and wanted to give it a shot.

What do you remember from these sessions? Can you give us more info about it?

Shark: It was the first time that we had ever recorded in a professional studio so we were all excited and nervous at the same time. We had no idea of what we were doing or how to go about making the whole recording thing happen. Luckily we were mentored by the owner of the studio, Jon Miller and he helped show us the ropes and gave us a great head start. He even helped promote the band and get us shows. He was essential in the growth of MANILLA ROAD in the beginning. His studio and us sort of grew up together in the industry learning how the whole music business worked. It was not easy being in the middle of the US, where there was very little music management or record labels. It was a tough market for us to crack but I figured if we could make a good name for ourselves in the mid-west where country music was number one then we could make it anywhere.

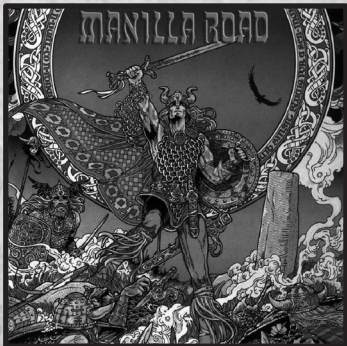
Was this particular demo recorded to attract radio interest around the Wichita area. Was it sent to any labels at the time?

Shark: No. We did not send it to any labels. I think only 50 or so copies of the demo were made and it was mainly to promote us in the Wichita area.

Soon after the band performed live in a local radio station songs that 30 years later would be released in the "After Midnight Live" EP. Could you give us more info on this radio session?

Shark: We had just finished recording our first album, "Invasion" but it was not released yet. It would be coming out in just a few weeks after the show. We had some demos made that were being played on the air at the time and there seemed to be a lot of interest in us from the University crowd. It was an early and hard winter. I remember carting all the equipment into the radio station studio in the ice and snow. I also remember that I had a really bad cold that made it difficult to sing well. But we pressed on and it was actually really cool. Several engineers that we knew and were working with at the Miller Cave Studio came with us and helped pull off the show. The radio station engineer and our guys worked it all out so we could play live in the studio and put it out over the air at the same time that we recorded the session for posterity. We had no thought in our head about releasing the tapes or even caring much about them after it was all said and done. Rick ended up with the 2nd half of the show on one tape and that was restored and released as "After Midnight Live". After Midnight was the name of the program that the show was aired on. Hence the name of the album. The only reason it was released is because it is all material that has never been released before. The other tape that is missing is the first part of the show, was mostly the songs from the album "Invasion", so I don't think I would have wanted to release that anyway. It's never really been about the money with MANILLA ROAD. It's always been about the music and the topics. It was a one time event though. We have never done anything like that since. Awwwww! It brings back memories.

A few years back, soon after "Mark of the Beast" was released, I remember reading in the Monster Records website, that a radio show with unreleased tracks would be issued. Was this the release that was talked about? What were the reasons it wasn't released from Monster/Rockadrome Records?



Shark: Yes, he was talking about what was to become "After Midnight Live". It took awhile for us to restore the tape. It was a cassette and in sort of bad shape. We only had one shot to get a good rip of the tape and onto a digital media form. But that worked out just fine and then it was just a matter of figuring out who the best label would be to release it. Well I had my choice between several but Shadow Kingdom and I have a pretty special thing going on. I have known the owner since he started the label and we have hung out together and shared many ideas. It was agreed years

ago that MANILLA ROAD would eventually start releasing projects with him if he could get his distribution up and running well. He did all that and it was time to put into effect a plan that was made years back. It just happens that "After Midnight Live" was the first of many releases.

When was the band left in its "classic" form, as a trio I mean? Was it before the "Invasion" recordings? Really, what was the reason for Robert Park leaving?

Shark: Robert left the band on the very first day of recording the "Invasion" album in the studio. We had a disagreement between him and the other 3 members of the band and he said he was through and walked out of the studio and never came back. So it was from that moment on that we were a 3 piece band. And it instrumentally speaking we have stayed that way ever since. Yes there are 4 of us when Bryan is with us but the number of instruments has always been 3.

How did you feel upon learning Robert's passing in 2000?

Shark: A bit sad at first but then when I heard how he had died saving his son from drowning I realized he had a good death and an honorable passing. Then it was more a feeling of being proud to have known him.

When did Rick Fischer enter the band? How did it happen?

Shark: As I said earlier we were having some issues with Myles and his dedication or lack there of for the band. Rick sort of saved the day by showing up at the right time. We were good friends anyway which just made it all that much more convenient. We sort of told Myles to take a hike and started jamming with Rick. It all came together really fast and we were off and running. Writing lots of songs and trying to find our sound. It was the beginning of the search for the lost chord.

Rick Fisher: Mark & I went to the same school and were in the same grade, but I didn't know he played or had a band. A mutual friend, Brian Masters, got us together several years after school and Mark & Scott already had MANILLA ROAD going but they were looking for a drummer. Brian mentioned it to me & I went to try out. I guess Mark & Scott liked what they heard.

So, the band recorded "Invasion" in late 1979 and released it in 1980. Why did you choose Miller Studios to record the album?

Shark: If you lived in this area you would realize how funny that question is to me. It was just about the only recording studio within 150 miles. There was one other in town but it was mainly doing Jazz and really had no understanding of metal music. Miller was really the only choice for us. Back then we still received our mail by Pony Express and indoor toilets were a luxury. Well maybe not quite that bad but the mid-west was very slow to grow in the music industry and it still is not a thriving market here. There are more studios around now and a few of them are very good. But in 1979 Miller's Cave in Newton was the best place to be recording if you were doing anything with rock music.

Rick Fisher: Jon Miller owned the music store where we all bought our instruments and supplies, so it was a natural decision to use his studio

The LP was released from Roadster Records. A band-owned label, right? Was it the labels disinterest that forced you to do it on your own or other reasons? A small technicality here. Was Roadster Mark Shelton's label or a collective effort?

Shark: Yes, Roadster was our label. It was because of lack of connections and interest from the bigger labels that we started our own. Roadster was a small corporation with a board of directors, stock and everything that goes with being a company. We paid our taxes and did everything on the up and up. There were several of us that started the company and ran it until the band got big enough that we got signed to labels that could better promote us than what we could do for ourselves. After a while we dissolved the label.

Rick Fisher: WE decide to do it on our own because I guess the established labels either weren't interested or didn't know what to do with us. Roadster was a collective effort with the band members & members of our families.

There are two different pressings of that LP. What was the reason for it and in how many copies was each version pressed? What year did you made the 2nd pressing?

Shark: The reason for the two pressings is because we sold out of the first one and decided to change pressing plants. So we did a new design for the 2nd pressing. The first run was only 1000 copies I think. If I remember correctly the 2nd pressing did not come out for some time. I think it was around 1983 maybe when "Crystal Logic" was making such a big splash for us. But to tell you the truth I would have to look on the album cover to know for sure. I have had many beers since then.

Did the album have distribution from independent distributors, or they was it too early for the indie distributors like Important, Dutch East India, Greenworld? If not, I guess you did everything on your own, so you must have a more accurate picture of the amount of copies you sold outside the State and even outside USA, right?

Shark: Yes, we did all the distribution ourselves on "Invasion" and "Metal". We sold about 2000 copies of each album on our own at first. Then, when we did the song "Flaming Metal Systems" on Shrapnel Records' "US Metal III" LP the doors started opening for us.

Rick Fisher: From the start we did it all ourselves. I can't say as to how many sold outside the states but I don't think very many copies of "Invasion" were sold there. Mark ran the everyday business of the label so he would know more about it than I would.

In 1981, the band enters the studio once more to record 10 songs that haven't been properly released until two decades later, under the "Mark of the Beast" title. Did you send this material to labels/fanzines at the time or was it only for the MANILLA ROAD "inner circle", members, close friends/fans etc?

Shark: The only label that ever got a copy of that back then was Black Dragon several years later. We had a bunch of demo tapes of the album that made it's way around the world and eventually bootlegs were starting to come out and it became obvious that there was enough interest in the project to give it a

proper and official release.

Rick Fisher: Mark wasn't very happy with the spacey sound of that music, meaning it wasn't heavy enough, so it didn't get shopped around. He shelved it & I had forgotten about it.

Black Dragon got a copy of the 1981 demo as you mentioned. After which LP? Was it sent to them because they asked for older material? Was it suggested by them to do "something" with these songs back then?

Shark: Yea, they got a copy of the demo but there was never any talk about releasing it. It was just a thing I gave them for the nostalgic essence of it. They did not really ask for it I just gave them a copy back in the day when we first started working together.

What was the feedback from the people that you sent the tape to at the time?

Shark: At the time I don't think I sent it to very many places. We only made like 50 if I remember correctly. Most of the copies ended up with friends or local fans here in Wichita. There were some sent to labels but I don't really remember which ones right now. I think most of them were labels like Warner Brothers and other fairly large major labels. This was before we really new about many of the underground labels yet. All of our friends loved it. The labels never even bother writing me back except for one that politely turned us down. I think that was Warner.

Allow us a small "fast-forward" here. Were you satisfied with the job Monster Records did on their "Mark of the Beast" CD/2LP issue in 2003? The vinyl version (despite being expensive) was outstanding from all aspects!

Shark: I was pleased with the results. I think the packaging is really great and you can't beat the art of Jim Fitzpatrick. I personally thought the master tape sounded a little better than what the final pressing sounded like but it was pretty close. All in all I was really happy with the release.

Rick Fisher: I'm glad you liked it. I always thought it would have some commercial appeal. I had not heard this music in a very long time. I think it was just last year that I heard a CD of it & thought they did a very good job of it.

How do you view this material after all these years?

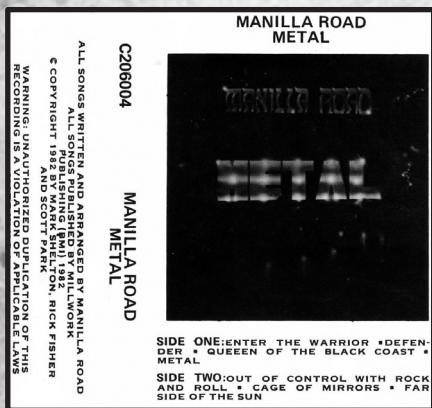
Shark: For such a long time I really did not care for it because the musicianship and production is not really that good in my book. But after reflection I would have to say that now I realize that all this old stuff is really important in respect to the formation of the MANILLA ROAD style. Some of the songs have a really unique approach and sometimes the lyrics are even cool but I still prefer listening to my more recent material.

Rick Fisher: It is still some of my favorite MANILLA ROAD music!

Did the band perform live songs off this album ("Mark of the Beast") back then? What was the response from the fans?

Shark: Yes we did most of those songs live at the time that they were written and recorded. But they dropped off the song list very fast once we started writing and recording more songs and albums.

In August 1982, your 2nd album was released with a very appropriate title, "Metal". This time the sound of the band was getting heavier and songs like "Defender", "Cage of Mirrors" and "Queen of the Black Coast" indicated what path the band would follow in the next years/



albums. Were you familiar with upcoming bands like IRON MAIDEN, RAVEN, ACCEPT as well as the heavier direction JUDAS PRIEST and SAXON were taking? Did this influence you in the songwriting process for "Metal"?

Shark: Oh yeah, we knew about all those bands. And sure all the music I have ever listened to has influenced me and the style of this band. Even the music I don't like has influenced me not to play shit like that, haha. What I mean is that I have always tried to keep an open mind to the fusing of different styles of music with Metal. But it was not just that those other bands were starting to get heavier as much as it was that I was a BLACK SABBATH and DEEP PURPLE fan so heavy was already in my blood it was just a matter of learning how to do the Manilla way. Anyone can be heavy. The trick is to be heavy and make it sound really cool at the same time.

Rick Fisher: I think those bands had some influence in our song writing, but we always had our own twist to things, you know.

This LP was once more released on your own label. Wasn't there the minimal interest from labels, or you didn't send them demo tapes at the time?

Shark: There was just a lack of interest in us by most labels until Mike Varney of Shrapnel Records heard some of the stuff off of "Metal" and decided to give us a chance to write a song for his "US Metal III" album.

Rick Fisher: I really don't remember if we sent demos out, but I do not think there was much interest from the established labels.

This time the album had distribution from independents like WIN, Important and Greenworld. Did this help the band and gave you more time to focus on other aspects of Music? How did you work with them?

Shark: We did not have that much distribution help from those companies until we put out "Crystal Logic" and that was when the machine started to get fired up. But I'm sure that the distribution that we were getting from them was helping lead up to what happened with "Crystal Logic".

Rick Fisher: Since Mark took care of the day to day running of things, I don't recall how we worked with them he did consult with us, but I didn't have an active hand in setting up those deals.

Around that time, the band was approached from Mausoleum Records and some talks were done, right? Could you

shed some light on this?

Shark: I vaguely remember that to tell you the truth. It might be that you are right. We did have some talks with them at two different times in our career but we never could meet eye to eye on things as far as a deal goes. Some of that is all a blur to me sometimes especially the stuff that never amounted to anything.

Rick Fisher: That is a question for Mark.

Do you remember when was the 2nd time you had contacts with Mausoleum Records? (You mention you had contacts twice with them...)

Shark: The second time was more recently. Like within the last 10 years. I don't really recall a specific date or even year at this point because the talks that I had with them were very short and fruitless. You seem to have an affinity for this label and I know that they put out some cool stuff back in the day but I always heard bad stuff about the label and the way they dealt with their bands so I was very cautious when I was approached by them. The talks of signing MANILLA ROAD to the label did not go very far because of that.

Say that Mausoleum had signed the band for "Crystal Logic" would you say that it would help the band get more known a little earlier in

Europe or would it result to the band being "lost" in the host of LP's Mausoleum was releasing back in the day? (With some being killer and some total crap!)

Shark: That is sort of like asking oneself if Hitler had not attacked Russia would the world live under the flag of the Reich now. Or if the Western Hemisphere Indians had discovered gunpowder first would they have come to Europe and conquered us. Who knows? I'm not too concerned with what could have been. I would rather spend my time looking after the now and the future. What I have done in the past I am sure could have been done better but I did it all with the best of



intentions. I would not want to change a thing because I have had the honor of playing for some of the very best audiences in the world and it has been magical.

Rick Fisher: I think it might have helped us get better known in Europe.

Did the band tour in support of the "Metal" album? How were the fans accepting the heavier direction? Were the shows with KROKUS and TED NUGENT done before or after "Metal" was released?

Shark: I'm not sure I would call it touring at that point. We did play all over the state of Kansas in every city and town that we could get a gig. We found Kansas to be really starved for hard rock and Metal music back then. There was a bit a scene happening in our hometown of Wichita (which is the largest populated city in Kansas with about 400,000 people) but the rest of the cities in Kansas did not have that much going for them and usually we played to packed clubs and bars because it was sort of an event just to have a band like us play there. We played with KROKUS and TED NUGENT after we put out "Metal" and right around the time we were doing "Crystal Logic" if I remember correctly. Those were fun shows to do and a huge learning experience for us as well. By the time we did those shows and put out "Crystal Logic" we were the undisputed kings of the Metal and rock scene in Kansas. To me this time was like our first major victory in the campaign to conquer the world with MANILLA ROAD.

Rick Fisher: I think the fans liked what they heard, they really liked "Queen Of The Black Coast" & "Cage Of Mirrors" when we played live. We didn't tour much at all, and I think the shows with TED NUGENT & KROKUS came after the album was out.

Why did you decide to re-record "Far side of the Sun" on the 2nd album? You had so many songs to choose from.

Shark: For some reason we all felt like we had not done the song justice on the first album and we had better distribution starting to happen where people would be buying "Metal" that had never heard "Invasion". The re-pressings of Invasion had not happened yet. It was probably a stupid thing to do by putting it on the album for a 2nd time but what is done is done and it has really never caused us any grief.

Rick Fisher: That song was around long before I joined the band, and it continued to evolve. I think the newer version was better.

The band participated with "Flaming Metal Systems" in Mike Varney's "US Metal volume III" compilation LP, released through his label, Shrapnel Records. How did you come in contact with them?

Shark: I was put in contact with Mike through a radio DJ that I knew here in Wichita. She did the Metal show on one of the top 100 station here. Her name was Shelly Hammer. Great last name for a metal DJ don't you think? She arranged it so that we could submit a song to him for consideration of using it on the album.

Rick Fisher: Again that was a Mark deal, so I'm not sure how all that came about.

When was this song recorded? Was this particularly for this LP, right? Why the full version of this track took almost 20 years to be heard by fans?

Shark: It turned out that he loved the song. And why shouldn't he? I wrote it just for his album so the lyrics had all sorts of metaphoric lines in it relating to his label and what the album was all about. The only thing was that he decided the guitar solo intro was too long and he edited the solo and shortened it for the "US Metal III" release. After the song fell out of contract with Shrapnel Records we put it out on the "Crystal Logic" re-issues. We put it on that album because it was recorded at the same time that we were finishing the sessions on "Crystal Logic".

Were you informed of Mike's decision to edit "Flaming Metal Systems" by him or were you sent the LP only to listen to the edited version? How did you feel about it?

Shark: Mike told me about it first and I got to listen to it before it was released. I would have preferred that the whole solo would have been on it but I understood the time restrictions of the release also. So it did not really bother me that much.

What's your opinion on this compilation LP?

Shark: I really liked it and thought it was the best of all the "US Metal" compilations that Shrapnel put out. There were some really good bands and songs

on that album.

Rick Fisher: I liked our song...

What's the story behind you working with Shrapnel? Why did you turn down their offer? Did your participation in this compilation give you more exposure, resulting in getting contacted by Metal labels?

Shark: Oh yeah we gained a bunch of popularity when "US Metal III" came out. It appeared that "Flaming Metal Systems" was one of the more favored cuts on the album and because of that MANILLA ROAD became a much more well known name in the industry. And it did lead to us being able to start working with bigger and better distributors with our own label Roadster Records. We were also starting to get contacted by other labels that were talking about possible label deals. As for why I did not sign with Shrapnel? I met with Mike Varney in San Francisco and gave him a tape of the "Crystal Logic" album. He said it did not fit the bill for what he was looking for. It was too artistic for him I think. He told me that if I could give him a whole album of songs like "Flaming Metal Systems" then he would sign us. I held my ground with him and just told him that there would be a day that he would regret not signing us with "Crystal Logic". And I guess I was the one that was right. Because MANILLA ROAD is still going strong and "Crystal Logic" turned out to be one of our most popular albums. And let's see what is Shrapnel Records doing nowadays?.....Yeah that's what I thought. I tried to tell you Mike.

Rick Fisher: I don't recall much action from any Metal labels as a result of that record & I don't recall an offer from Mr. Varney.

In 1983, "Crystal Logic" was released, a record that is still hailed as one of (Epic) Metal's milestones from Metal enthusiasts around the world.

Shark: Yeah it was a really important album for the band. It was where the whole package sort of started coming together and the style of the band was really beginning to manifest into the epic doom metal style that we have primarily stuck with through the decades.

Back then, had you realized that you were sort of starting a genre? There were so few bands releasing an entire LP full of Epic Heavy Metal tracks, not just a song here and there.

Shark: My whole musical career has been spent trying to achieve what no one else has done. I don't always succeed in that but it has always been in my mind to do my best to bring new sounds and ideas to the people through the music. So I guess that I would have to say yes I knew that I was starting or helping start a new genre but I had no clue that it would evolve into what it is today with so many bands following in our footsteps and paying homage to us. It is a remarkable thing but I am really proud of it all. There are so many really cool bands out there that have been pursuing the epic metal road and the idiom still seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. It is a magical type of music and when you listen close enough then you realize that there is a lot more there than just songs. I think the epic metal approach will be around for a long time to come.

Rick Fisher: I didn't feel we were starting a genre, we were just doing our thing. **Who came up with the now Classic motto, "Up the Hammers & Down the Nails", written on the back-cover of "Crystal Logic"? Is there a meaning behind it? Could it be Heavy Metal (the Hammer) versus the then rising glam scene (nails)?**

Shark: That's a quaint analogy and a little amusing actually. I was the one that came up with the saying. I don't think I added the "Down The Nails" part until later though. "Up The Hammers" has a dual reference for me. First is up with Metal. And there is also the praise of the Thunder God Thor and the heroic philosophy of the Vikings and the All-Father. The "Down The Nails" part just simply means to drive it home. If you raise the hammer it will fall eventually and it should always fall with intent. You know...Doom and Decimation to all that oppose the Manillan Empire...Ok that was a bit much I guess but it sounds cool. Hehe. But I don't mind if people take that we will crush the big hair bands. That seems to be a refreshing thought as well.

Rick Fisher: That would be Marks doing, so you will have to ask him about the meaning.

Could you comment on the cover ("Crystal Logic")? Is it a coincidence there are three warriors on the cover? (Maybe the band members??). Is there a meaning with the city and crystal pyramids etc.?

Shark: No coincidence about the 3 warriors. It was meant to imply the band members. I was the one that actually designed the cover. I can't draw even if my life depended on it. But I can come up with ideas that I see in my mind and I just told those ideas to the artist and luckily he did a really cool painting off the ideas that I had. The Crystal Pyramids are related directly to the title of the album. Crystal is supposed to have great magical qualities and the pyramids are the epitome of logic and brain work. Remarkable feats of design and construction they are. So they are just visual metaphors that I had envisioned.

Rick, how does it feel that all three albums you did with MANILLA ROAD are highly sought after by Heavy Metal collectors and can be quite expensive most of the times?

Rick Fisher: It blows me away that those early recordings are so sought after, but it always good to have one's efforts so appreciated. I recently saw on Facebook where there is the tribute album, "The Riddle Masters. It's just so surreal after all these years.

Could you give an estimate of how many copies of "Crystal Logic" you pressed and sold?

Shark: My daughter looked that up on some information website a while back and I think it said 60,000 plus. And that is probably pretty close. It's somewhere between that and 100,000. It's been re-issued so many times by so many labels now that I most likely will never know the exact amount.

This time the album had bigger and better distribution from the "growing" distributors of the era, could you please share some more info?

Shark: We secured distribution with Important, Greenworld and Dutch East India for "Crystal Logic". We pressed 3000 copies to start and the race was on. It sold very well for us compared to the other 2 albums but since "Crystal Logic" was doing well the distributors decided that they wanted the earlier albums also. Very soon we were out of "Crystal Logic" and having to press again and then we started getting label offers from European record companies and we signed to Black Dragon Records out of Paris, France. We then sort of shut down Roadster while we concentrated on being a band and recording albums and doing live shows.

The last track of the album, "Dreams of Eschaton" is one of the finest pieces of Metal music ever written. Could you expand a little on its lyrics? Also on the resemblance of the starting riff with the one from "Angel of Death" by ANGELWITCH, which is not a coincidence.

Shark: I have always been an ANGELWITCH fan and I was definitely influenced

by the band and it's style. That is why there is a semblance between the songs. But it is not in the same key and it is not the exact same riff either. We have even played shows with ANGELWITCH in 2009 in Germany and Norway and we get along great with those guys and have had a lot of fun with them hanging out in airports and drinking our sorrows away. I am still a big ANGELWITCH fan and always will be. Great band and great music. As for the lyrics they are about a man who has reoccurring nightmares haunting him with images of the apocalypse of mankind. Personally I think my writing skills are much better nowadays than in 1983. Some of the lyrics seem slightly fragmented to me now but that is just me because I always like my new stuff better than anything else I have ever done.

Did you tour in support of "Crystal Logic"?

Shark: Not really tour. We did play in about every little town and city in Kansas back then but I would not call that touring.

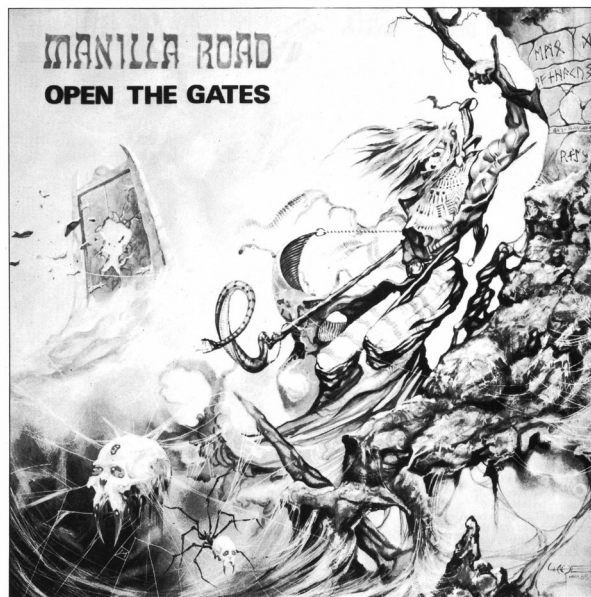
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In 1985, Paris-based label, Black Dragon Records, released your fourth opus, "Open the Gates". First of all, how did you come in contact with them? Do you know how they heard of your band?

Shark: Black Dragon found out about us because of our newly found distribution. When "Crystal Logic" was released by us several hundred albums made their way to a Swedish distributor that spread them around the Scandinavian and Benelux regions of Northern Europe. The response to the album was incredibly good and the stuff was selling fast so many more shipments of "Crystal Logic" went out to the Swedish distributor. At the same time we were voted the best release of 1983 with "Crystal Logic" in Holland. So we were becoming very visible to a lot of the labels in Europe. Black Dragon was one of them and they were the ones that sought us out.

Thrasher: I don't remember how that came to be.

You mentioned that Black Dragon was one of the labels that you became visible to at the time. What other labels showed interest in the band? Did some of them even proposed some sort of contract to the band?

Shark: Megaforce and Shrapnel were the other two main labels that were making offers to me. Shrapnel offered a contract but wanted too much control of the projects. Megaforce just wanted us to move to New York without a contract and see how things went. Black Dragon was offering money and said that they would let us have complete autonomy with the music and the projects. So it was a no-brainer for me to go with Black Dragon at the time.

In that album, we can hear for the first time the awesome drumming of Randy Thrasher Foxe. Looking back how would you view his addition to the band? Did it cross your mind back then that Randy would be such vital to the band's sound?

Shark: Oh yeah! I knew right away that Randy was going to be a fantastic advantage to us. He was so incredible on the drums that I knew I had a winner with him. It's too bad that he quit playing professionally.

I have read that Rick Fischer wasn't so much into the faster material of the "Open the Gates" album and also was not so much into the lyrics, but he was playing until late 1984 all songs later appearing on "Open the Gates".

Shark: That is primarily correct. Rick was not into the faster thrash like material at all. But Scott and I were adamant about continuing to get heavier and faster with each album. All 3 of us made the decision about switching drummers from Rick to Randy and Rick even stayed on with us doing sound and lights for a couple of years. And if memory serves me well all but 2 of the songs

for "Open the Gates" were written and Rick had been playing all of those with us but struggling with the faster and heavier songs. We wrote two of the songs with Randy to finish up the album.

Rick Fisher: I LIKED the music we were working on that became "Open The Gates". I was physically unable to play the stuff. My hands were giving me problems and just had to stop playing.

Rick, you stayed close to the band since you helped them with doing sounds and lights. For how long?

Rick Fisher: I helped with those duties for a very short time, maybe only a few months.

Randy, most of the material on "Open the Gates" was already written at the time you joined the band. Was it something that you didn't like since you didn't have space for your ideas, or did the songs indeed change as they were getting recorded?

Thrasher: I was given complete freedom to write my own parts. I believe there was a suggestion that I play double bass in "Heavy Metal to the World" and there were times Mark would like something I played and ask me to develop that part. "The Ninth Wave" grew out of improvisations. Improvisation just seemed to come naturally to us. We started improvising the first week we were playing together. Initially, we were practicing six times a week. That dropped to five times a week shortly after and stayed at that rate for a few years.

Randy, how did you hook-up with MANILLA ROAD? When did this happen?

Thrasher: I was playing guitar and occasional keyboards, bass, and drums with a band working on original material. We'd spent nearly two years writing and arranging three full sets of originals. Finally, we'd attracted a bit of attention from some management. They came out to see us and told me they were impressed with my guitar playing. Right after that, the singer announced he'd found religion and wanted to throw away all of the work on our original songs. The band just fell apart. Shortly after, I was talking with the management (they also ran a used record store that I frequented) and told them the band had ended. They asked what I was going to do next. I told them I didn't know but that I was actually a better drummer than guitarist. They got excited and told me about the opening in MANILLA ROAD. Apparently, Mark and Scott had grown tired of auditioning drummers at their house. So it was arranged that they'd come to my place and listen to me. They came over, heard just a bit, and invited me to their place to audition. I think I got the offer at the first band practice.

Were you familiar with their albums? What would be your best album and songs from the first three releases that you were not a part of them?

Thrasher: I was not familiar with them at all. I'd seen them once opening for KROKUS. That was my only exposure to them. I really don't know much of the early material. I liked "The Ram", "Far Side of the Sun" and "Cage of Mirrors".

Did you play in any bands prior to joining MANILLA ROAD? What was their style?

Thrasher: I'd always wanted to play in a band. In the little town where I was born and raised, there weren't a lot of musicians with which to work. I had a friend, John, who wanted to learn to play the bass guitar. Another friend, Danny, played drums. Since I couldn't find a guitarist and that was an instrument I'd been working on, I decided that would be my job. We played a couple of parties and we'd play for anyone who wanted to listen to rehearsals. It never went anywhere but we had fun. After that, I played in many bands. I played guitar in a cover band called RELAYER (named after the YES album). I played drums in a bar band that played rock and funk and another that played mostly punk (though I was never into the punk lifestyle...but it's a lot of fun to play) also while in high school. After that, it was mostly guitar and keyboards in various rock bands. Some played originals and some played covers. But it was rare to find a band that wanted to really take it seriously. It seems even rarer now. I should explain about "fun" versus "serious". I often refer to how important fun is to me in music. That's what gets things rolling and, in a good situation, continues throughout. But if things start to sound good, I would like to record it. Recording is, to me, quite serious. Only one of these bands, mentioned in the explanation about my stage name, progressed to the point of attempting to record original songs. But, to be fair, recording in those times was much more difficult. Even a basic four-track recorder was well beyond what most musicians could afford.

How come you took the nickname "Thrasher"? Also, was it a deliberate choice to use Randy Foxe as an alias?

Thrasher: A friend of the band, Jimmy, started calling me "Thrasher" at my very first rehearsal with the band. Before long, everyone was calling me that. Of course, it's fairly common knowledge that I was born as Michael McDonald. Long before I'd heard of MANILLA ROAD, I'd accepted an offer to join a band called RA FOXE as their lead singer (later I also became the lead guitarist). Shortly thereafter, I bought my first home and had telephone service connected. They asked if there was any other name by which I wanted it listed. Sometimes, I'll set up a joke well in advance. So I had them list it under "R.A. Foxe". Then I waited until the proper time presented itself and asked the other guys in the band if it had occurred to them that "Ra Foxe" could be someone's name thus exposing us to possible litigation. They thought it was a silly possibility, which it really was, but checked the phone listings. The looks on their

faces was well worth the cost of the extra listing! Then they noticed that it was my phone number and we all had a good laugh. Some time later, we decided that we were going to record an album. About the same time, the ex-leader of THE DOOBIE BROTHERS was enjoying a successful solo career...named Michael McDonald. Not wanting the confusion, as we were a hard rock band with a bit of progressive thrown in, they asked me to choose a stage name. Someone then suggested that all I had to do was decide what the initials R and A were short for and I already had a phone listing for a stage name. Wait...it gets sillier...At this time, I was in my early twenties. Along with music, my other primary driving inspiration was sex. I knew that "Randy" was English slang for "horny"... which, in turn, is American slang for lustful. Thus was born Randy Foxe.

Was the Black Dragon deal an one-album deal that got expanded or a multi-album contract since the beginning?

Shark: Man, so many questions about things I have at times tried to forget. Let's see...I think it was like a 3 album or 2 album deal at first but to tell you the truth I really don't remember right now. That was a long time ago and I have slept and had many beers since then. But I think it was a multi-album deal.

Thrasher: I don't remember the details of that. I don't think we were contractually obligated to give them the next album. But they were getting Eric Larnoy to do these wonderful covers and were making very professional looking releases so there certainly was incentive to stay with them. The big downside was that they didn't have U.S. distribution and it was very difficult for stores here to get the albums.

There is also a Brazilian pressing of "Open the Gates". Was this licensed from Black Dragon? Do you have more info about it?

Shark: Yes, there was a pressing from a Brazilian record label and it was licensed from Black Dragon by the Brazilian label.

Thrasher: I don't have any info about it. I don't think I even have a copy, though I could be mistaken.

"Open the Gates" did very good for the band, do you have any idea of how many copies it sold?

Shark: Once we released the "Open the Gates" album, our sales figures were looking really good. We sold 30,000 copies of "Open the Gates" in the first month of its release and for us that was enormous.

In 1986, "Epicus Doomicus Metallicus" from the Swedish Gods CANDLEMASS was released on Black Dragon. It's a known fact nowadays that upon listening to their demo, you urged (maybe not the right word???) the label to sign them? Do you mind telling us the story here? Really, have you followed the band after their debut LP? What about their current albums/career? Do you keep in touch with Leif Edling?

Shark: No, I don't mind telling the story. I was in Paris visiting with the label owners of Black Dragon in early 1986. "The Deluge" was just coming out I think. They played me a tape of a band from Sweden and asked me if I thought they would be a good band to sign. They seemed to be very undecided about it all. After I listened to it I told them that if they did not sign these guys that they were idiots. I told them these guys were going to go places. When I looked into whose band it was I sort of freaked out because I actually already owned the Nemesis EP, "Day of Retribution" which was the very first incarnation of CANDLEMASS you might say. Even though the vocals take a little getting used to (haha, like mine), the EP was outstanding. So I think I at least helped sway the opinion of Black Dragon a bit in getting them to decide to sign CANDLEMASS. As for me I still love the band. Old or new it's all great for me. Leif is an incredibly talented writer and musician and I love all of his work. And yes, I am still in touch with him. We email each other often and he has come to a couple of our shows to hang with us in Germany and Norway. I am honored to know him and proud as hell to call him friend. He has been very helpful to me when I am approaching turning points in MANILLA ROAD's career.

"The Deluge" saw the light of day in 1986 and even to this day it's considered one of the best MANILLA ROAD albums and your personal favorite from the Classic 80's releases, right?

Shark: Yes it is most definitely my favorite MANILLA ROAD release from that era.

Thrasher: I can't say that I really have a favorite album. I'm very critical of my own performances. I tend to focus on the mistakes and have trouble enjoying the entire performance due to them. I definitely have favorite songs on "The Deluge" though. "Dementia" is one of the most creative parts I ever played. People usually think it's in some odd time signature because of the drum part but it's just 4/4 and 6/8...two very common time signatures. I love to do complex things inside a predictable framework. I did get much more input on the production and arrangement of "The Deluge" album. I'd made suggestions during the "Open the Gates" sessions. Of course, they'd only known me a few weeks and had no idea whether my ideas were based on knowledge or if they were just silly ideas. But between the "Open the Gates" sessions and "The Deluge" sessions, I'd gone into the same studio with some friends who wanted some help recording their material. With their backing, I made a couple of changes that worked well and were used on "The Deluge".

The album was initially planned to be called "Friction in Mass", when and why was the name changed to "The Deluge"?

Shark: Yes, the original working title for the album was "Friction in Mass" but after we wrote all the songs for the album we decided to change it to "The Deluge" because it turned out to be the massive epic song of the album. It just seemed like the right thing to do. And it was a good decision because it inspired Eric Larnoy to do one of the best pieces of art that I have ever seen in the cover for the album.

Thrasher: I don't remember how the change occurred. But "The Deluge" was obviously the most epic composition on the album so it makes sense.

Speaking of Eric Larnoy did you ever meet him in person? How did it feel when you heard of his passing in the mid-90's? I remember reading somewhere that you wanted to buy the original "Deluge" drawing, right Mark?

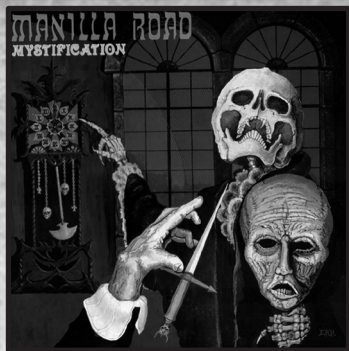
Shark: I did meet him in 1986 in Paris, France. We hung out and drank together for a day and he took me to the grave site of Jim Morrison of the Doors. He showed me his studio and the original painting of The Deluge. And yes I made him a ridiculously huge offer for the piece that he just would not take. He told me that he thought it was his best work ever and that he just could not part with it for that reason. I sure wish he would have sold it to me now. I was totally blown away when I heard of his passing. I was depressed for many weeks because of it. All I could think of is how we would never be able to see all the other great works of art that were ideas in his head. He was a really cool person and I am so glad that I had the honor to meet and spend time with him. One of the greatest artists of our time I believe.

Thrasher: I'm sorry to say I never met Mr. Larnoy. I felt the world had lost a true talent when he passed away.

In 1987, "Mystification" got released and the band seems unstoppable, another brilliant LP only one year after the previous one. How do you see "Mystification" nowadays and what was the response back then?

Shark: Well the response back then was not that good because it did not get very wide distribution. Black Dragon was struggling by this time because the main distributor that they used was forced out of business by the French gov-





ernment. I don't think it made it to that many ears back then and the reviews at the time were few and far between and most not very favorable.

Thrasher: There was actually a bit of frustration on my part and, I believe, on everyone's part. We were writing material faster than we could record and release it. I'm fairly certain it was "Mystification" that we recorded and submitted and then had to wait to release as the previous album was still doing well. That happened a lot. By the time an album was released there were already songs we'd stopped playing in favor of newer ones.

Sometimes we would have to bring songs back into the set-lists after an album was released because fans would ask for them.

There were some problems with the production and mixing of the album, right? Could you refer to them?

Thrasher: This could get long...I don't remember how the whole "let's record Mystification in Memphis" idea came up (and I'm not saying it was a bad idea...but, oh, the heartache!). It was a nice big studio. Not great sounds and not a great layout for us and it was not in the best condition, but it was very big. It had some very nice equipment. Some of it didn't work very well. Some of it didn't work at all. One of the things we'd looked forward to was recording on a twenty-four track recorder as we'd always been restricted to sixteen. They did, indeed, have twenty-four tracks. Unfortunately, some didn't work well, some didn't work at all...the whole trip was not what we were told it was going to be. They had production staff that clearly had never heard anything like us and I don't think they really liked what they heard. The gentleman working the mixing console was having an unofficial "Bring Your Daughter to Work" week. Kids want a lot of attention, especially from their parents. That's natural. But I thought the recording should get more of his attention. I think that's where the friction started. The same guy was staying after we left, probably on our budget, and recording disco music with the man who'd suggested the whole recording trip. This led to a huge fiasco later. When we came back, we went to Miller Studios to sequence the songs for the album. When we got to "Up from the Crypt", which was my favorite at the time, the song started and suddenly a disco song was in its place. During their late night sessions, they'd accidentally erased "Up from the Crypt" and recorded disco over it! Mark called and they arranged to get studio time so that we could remix it. So Mark and I took turns driving and sleeping all night, met the staff at the studio, remixed the song, and then drove back.

This time there was a US version of the album through Roadster Records. I assume that there were problems with the American distribution of your previous albums and you went for a domestic pressing?

Shark: Yep that is pretty much the story there. Black Dragon had lost their US distributor as well and we put it out on Roadster here in the states just to make sure that it got released by someone over here.

Thrasher: Yes, Black Dragon just couldn't get reliable U.S. distribution. **Sentinel Steel Records reissued "Mystification" in 2001 with "The Asylum" as an extra track, an unreleased instrumental from the album sessions. First of all, were there any other songs from that time and what were the reasons it didn't find its way on vinyl back then?**

Shark: "The Asylum" was originally titled "Gain Till Pain". But we changed the name when it was going to appear on the album re-issue. We played the song in the studio as a warm up to the recording session. The studio engineers used it to set the levels for the rest of the songs. We did not record any other songs during those sessions in Al Green's studio in Memphis. I remember that it was bloody hot in Memphis that summer. It was never intended on seeing the light of day on any release originally.

Thrasher: It actually wasn't an instrumental originally. It was a song that I had written the lyrics and I would sing. There was some disagreement as to what defined Heavy Metal. Everyone, except me, seemed to feel that the lyrics had to be knights and witchcraft and dragons and such. My lyrics weren't in that style. It's probably my fault but the song just got dropped. At that time, there were songs that were written, arranged, and often perfected but just never saw the light of day. We were writing very quickly, as we were constantly pushing one another, and we just couldn't get them recorded and released at that speed.

You mentioned that "The Asylum" was supposed to be a song with lyrics but you were sort of opposed to the whole metal-is-only-dungeons-and-dragons type of lyrics. This means you were feeling sort of dissatisfied with the lyrics of the band?

Thrasher: Oh not, I'm not saying that, at all. I just don't often write that type of thing. Myself, I had gone through a phase like that when I was a teen. Musically and lyrically I just write what comes. I've occasionally had luck writing in a style that was asked of me, but it's just not as enjoyable as just letting the music out.

What would be the reason that the cover wasn't done by Eric Larnoy this time? Had Black Dragon stopped working with him? Did the band receive criticism for not having Eric Larnoy doing the artwork once more?

Shark: We just wanted to continue the practice of never staying the same. It was our goal to have every album a little bit different than the others and that applied to the art as well. We were just always experimenting and still are. And no I don't really remember getting any negative feedback about not using him on the "Mystification" album.

Thrasher: I don't remember how the decision got made. But the artist, Ryan Hendricks, was an old friend of mine from grade (grammar) school. Whilst I really liked what he did for Mystification, I wish you could see some of his other works.

In 1988, "Out of the Abyss" saw the light of day, this time through Leviathan Records, the label of your friend David Chastain. Was this arranged between David Chastain and Black Dragon or were you somehow involved by talking David into it?

Shark: We were actually signed to Leviathan Records (David Chastain's label) and it was licensed to Black Dragon by that label for European release. We had signed a 3 album deal with Leviathan and things were looking up a little

for us at that time. The album was also released on CD at the time. I did not have to talk Dave into it. It was actually his idea for us to sign with Leviathan Records.

Thrasher: It was, indeed, just a U.S. pressing as Black Dragon released it in Europe. David Chastain had business dealings with Black Dragon and, I believe, we came to his attention through that affiliation.

It seems a little strange since this was obviously an one-off deal, as the following album, "The Courts of Chaos" was once more released by Black Dragon. Could you shed some light here? Was Black Dragon negative towards the faster, thrashier direction of the new album or you had problems with them at the time?

Shark: Everything was pretty nuts with the whole metal label and distribution scene at this time for everyone. It was no different for us either. Leviathan ran into financial troubles that caused them to bail out of our label deal that we had with them. So when we did "Courts of Chaos" Black Dragon was sort of the only label I had at my disposal to release the album. Black Dragon had also convinced me that their distribution woes were coming to an end and that everything was going to be more like it was when we first signed with them. But it turned out that things were not really going any better for the label and therefore things did not fair that well with the sales either. And I'm pretty sure that we did not get all the money we should have and that there were more sales than were reported to us by the label. But that is a long time ago and all I said and done so I don't really hold any grudge at this point. Statute of limitations you know.

Thrasher: A lot of people didn't care for the "thrasher" direction. David Chastain and his band were among the few that seemed to enjoy the album. I don't know if that was the reason he decided to release it in the U.S. though.

I don't know if I am correct on this, but was it during this album that Randy and Scott "drifted" apart to finally "not standing each other" as Randy stated a few years back? (e.note: this isn't the exact quote, but this is the answer both gentlemen gave me after it was corrected, so..)

Shark: Yes, this would be that time. It really sucked. Scott lived with me and it was impossible not to be in the middle of the crap between the two of them. I ended up being the middle man between them for so long that eventually I didn't even want to deal with them. It was all we could do to get through the recording of the album. We did some more live shows before we actually called it quits but the tension and stress of them not getting along started to show in the live performances and it was then that I knew we were done for sure with that lineup.

Thrasher: Mark and I were really pushing each other to play better and faster. I don't think Scott liked feeling pushed. He was really developing other interests and was unable or unwilling to keep up. While I've read that we were unable to stand each other, I don't think those were my words. I certainly hope I didn't say that.

The LP has a darker, more "sinister" feeling throughout, even though the Epic feeling is very strong. Was this a deliberate choice?

Shark: I'm sure some of it was just the turmoil that the band was going through at the time but it was intentional as well. The subjects we were dealing with were pretty dark and I was experimenting with the fusion of more progressive rock styles into the epic metal and doom metal as well which I think had something to do with it.

Thrasher: Few of the changes we went through were due to choice. We just played what felt right. Whether it was faster, darker, spacier...it just happened. Much of what we did came from improvisations and those tend to come from the heart rather than the head.

Were you familiar with the thrash movement? I guess so, but was the material influenced by thrash Metal bands (read: was it done on purpose to play a little like the thrash bands of the time) or you were just keeping up the "tradition" of playing faster and harder LP after LP?

Shark: Oh yea we knew of the Thrash movement for sure and I actually like several Thrash bands. We even slide over into that arena every once in awhile as I'm sure you know. MANILLA ROAD has many points in it's style that crossover to many different genres of music and that is part of the reason that we have had the luck of longevity with us. I never wanted to do the same song or album over and over just for the sake of making money. That is what I consider selling out. Part of the whole idea of the Road is not to sell out and to make sure it always gets done our way. I guess you could say that. We were influenced by a few thrash bands at the time but at the same time you can tell that "Mystification" was already heading in that direction anyway and it was all a part of the natural progression that we had started back on the "Open The Gates" album to get heavier and faster.

Thrasher: Not really. I'd heard some of the hardcore Metal though I don't listen to it much. But I'd gone through something similar when I played drums in a punk band in the late seventies. The instrumental talent in that band was good enough that we started playing everything faster and harder just for fun. We would, literally, race one another to the end of the song and be out of breath as much from laughing as from playing. If you could play every note in time and beat the other guys to the end of the song, you'd win! Incidentally, that band was immediately preceded, with some of the same members, by a band where it was important that every note be played with the maximum force. We called our style "Dirge Rock". Looking back, those two bands, and my love of prog rock, had a lot to do with my drumming style. Mark and I were going through something similar to the punk band with "Out of the Abyss". You have to understand that, since we weren't making money, fun and amusement were, and are, very important to me. There were so many little parts of what I played that would make me laugh. It could be because it bordered on the ridiculous how fast it was (like the snare drum at the beginning of "Return of the Old Ones"), how complex a normal time signature had become ("Dementia"), juggling multiple parts ("Prophecy"), picking up and putting down sticks to switch between drum, keys, and combos ("DOA"), etc. And every time we played, both at rehearsals and shows, I would do subtle little things for my own amusement often making myself laugh out loud. Mark noticed far more than



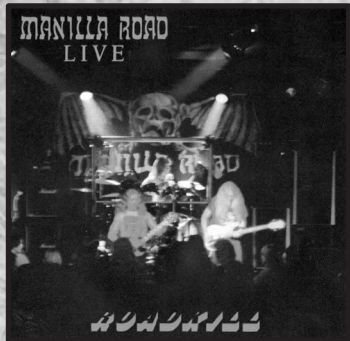
anyone else but many would go by him as he was concentrating on his own parts. And there some fans, notably my friend Chuck, that were noticing those things, too...which amused me even more when I'd see someone else laughing. I'd never really noticed that we were playing faster and harder from one album to the next though I certainly realize it now. We were always challenging each other and ourselves. With "The Courts of Chaos" I guess the arrangements and, for me, the keys became the big challenge and that slowed us down. On the other hand, I'm not sure we could have gotten much faster so it's good that a different challenge reared it's head so we didn't start repeating ourselves.

The band toured in support of the album from Kansas to Ohio, could you please tell us with which bands, venues and how many concerts? I only know you played with CHASTAIN in Ohio.

Shark: We did lots of shows in Kansas mainly but there was a time that we made our way up to New York and New Jersey and Connecticut. We did shows with LIEGE LORD and I remember playing the Hartford Music Festival but to tell you the truth I don't remember if that was even the same tour or not....haha man that was a while back and my memory has faded on some of that. Too many gigs and too many beers.

Thrasher: I'm afraid I never kept track of where and when we played. Mostly we played here in Kansas.

In 1988, "Roadkill" was released from Black Dragon Records including songs from the tour the band did in support of the "Mystification" LP. Was this a choice of the band to show how the band performed in a live situation on the strength of 6 studio albums, or a label choice?



Shark: I remember the label telling us that it was time to do a live album but I think we were sort of planning for it anyway. I knew that we wanted to record the shows in our home area because of the crowd response. We were still the kings of Metal in Wichita.

Thrasher: That was our choice though it's possible there was an agreement ahead of time.

The band played on that tour with LIEGE LORD, could you tell us the number of dates, people acceptance etc? Did LIEGE LORD headline or you?

Shark: Maybe that was the tour that we played with LIEGE LORD on. We did like two dates with them in the Connecticut and New York area. I remember we did a show with them at the Hartford Music Festival and I don't really remember what the running order was of the day. Both the show we did with them were to very small audiences. We were most definitely not a big draw in that area of the states.

Thrasher: Again, I just don't remember those details.

How did you fare with the LIEGE LORD guys? Did you like their music? They had just released their third LP, "Master Control" at the time.

Shark: We all got along fine. Partied together in our tour bus (which was a RV). Love their music and had a blast hanging out with those guys.

Thrasher: It's funny, but some of my memories of that time are crystal clear while others are very vague. I only remember really meeting the bassist (even then I'm not absolutely certain) and having a fairly long conversation with him. I bought one of their albums on CD but seem to have lost track of it. I remember enjoying it but can't tell you which one it was. I remember also playing with HITTMAN, who were all great guys and a great band, and BRITNEY FOX, who were very cold towards us.

The recording gets spoiled from the fake audience noises Black Dragon included. I guess you were pretty pissed off at the time, right?

Shark: We all got along fine. Partied together in our tour bus (which was a RV). Love their music and had a blast hanging out with those guys.

Thrasher: That wasn't Black Dragon that added that though they'd asked us to do it. That was done, by the band and our engineer, Larry Funk, at Miller Studios where we'd recorded most of the albums. I knew it was going to be done though I wasn't present. I don't remember where I was. Possibly off on vacation. Some time afterwards, we were back at the studio, probably starting the recordings for "Out of the Abyss". One of our crew, Max Merhoff, mentioned something about how it sounded. When I told him I'd not heard it, we went out to his truck to listen. I almost fell out of the truck laughing! I want to make it clear, though, that whether I had been present when the extra audience sounds were added wouldn't have changed anything. Black Dragon had sent the tapes back with the requirement that additional audience sounds were added. With the technology available at that time, that was probably the best that could be done.

Do you think it is about time to release another live album? What about a DVD done in a "history" manner with old footage as well as new?

Shark: We have been discussing such things but no solid plans yet. I'm sure that the movie will happen eventually but I just can't say when. As for a live album. I'm not really too worried about it. Nobody seems to be pressing me for a live album again and traditionally live albums don't sell very well anyway. There are several live videos of us out there though. The 2 KIT festivals that we did have DVD's and the Headbangers Open Air was recorded and aired in Germany by Strike/Streetclip TV. And there is footage by Strike/Street Clip of the whole concert that we did at the Hammer of Doom Festival in Germany this last October that I am sure will surface before long also.

One of the most unique MANILLA ROAD albums gets released in 1990, "The Courts of Chaos". Unique since the band "slows" down a little bit and adds more atmosphere to the songs, resulting in one of your best albums.

Shark: Well, you are one of the few I believe that thinks that "The Courts of Chaos" is one of our best albums. I know there are some devout followers of this project but I think the numbers are small. Maybe that will change when the re-issue comes out soon.

Thrasher: I'm very proud of the work on "The Courts of Chaos". I was taking a very active role in arrangements. And, of course, I was sometimes playing drums only, sometimes keyboards only, and often playing a keyboard with my left hand while playing drums with

my right. I had also been working on a technique where I could play drums and guitar at the same time. But I was setting up far too much equipment and something had to be sacrificed so the guitar was gone. I definitely had the most input on the "Courts of Chaos" album. The keys had a big influence on our direction. Initially, it influenced the songs that featured keys but I think it changed our direction completely. People often told me, at that time, that when I played keys it either came out creepy or pretty. Obviously, creepy worked better within The Road. We had done so many songs which would gradually crescendo or decrescendo. I'd wanted to try instant changes...thus the full volume of the beginning of "The Prophecy" to the instant change into the verse. And when I first mounted the keyboard onto "The Beast" (which was the name my drum set had gotten) I started playing the opening to "D.O.A.", a favorite since I'd been ten years old and learned to play it on the piano. Mark knew and liked the song so I spent hours getting all of the changes planned so that it could be done live. And, despite never playing it live, I spent days perfecting the keyboard/drum parts of "Road of Chaos" so that we could use the first two-and-a-half minutes as an intro and the rest could actually be performed.

The album had pretty bad distribution and I guess this is was the nail in the coffin in your relations with Black Dragon? Do you have any idea how many copies it sold?

Shark: It was not the final nail. My dealings with them during the CIRCUS MAXIMUS project were the straw that broke the camels back with Black Dragon. I really don't know how many copies were actually sold. I am positive that the figures I was given were inaccurate.

Thrasher: I've no idea how many copies were sold. But there were other problems with Black Dragon that I don't want to go in to.

Agnes Desgranges (one of the Black Dragon owners) has stated sometime in 1997 (at the time they were reissuing some of their back-catalogue on CD) that they could not send you money due to tax issues, that you weren't replying them and that you were just telling the press that you weren't getting paid. Are/were you aware of this?

Shark: Oh yeah, I was aware of that. But the truth is that I have always been able to be reached as you well know because we are talking right now. Why would I not talk with them if they were trying to send me money. And I myself and MANILLA ROAD have never had any tax problems. We pay our taxes like everyone else. They also told everyone that they had the rights to the "Dreams of Eschaton" music that became the "Mark of the Beast" album. They did a promotional release of some of those tunes with a Greek magazine in order to promote their other products without ever doing a contract with us and without sending any money. The fact is that they started having money troubles soon after their distributor in France (New Rose Dist.) got closed down by the French government for illegal activities. They had to say something to save face because they were still trying to be a label and we all know how that worked out for them. They were not the last label to end up owing me a lot of money that I would never see. Just ask any of the other bands that were on Black Dragon and I'm sure they had similar experiences with Black Dragon. And to add a final note to that story, Black Dragon tried to get us to sign with them again and do re-issue contracts with us but I turned them down after CIRCUS MAXIMUS. So if we had been so hard to track down how was it that they found us to try and get us to sign with them again but could not figure out how to contact us for our royalties? The straight truth is that they got into financial trouble and either could not or would not pay us what we were owed. This is all so long ago for me now that I consider it water under the bridge and I just don't let it concern me anymore.

In hindsight, do you think it would be better to release the album on your own?

Shark: It might have been better to release it ourselves but at the time the future of the band itself was questionable so it most likely would not have fared so well in our hands either.

Thrasher: If we'd had the funds to do so, it probably would have made us more money. But I never made enough to even cover the cost of replacing broken cymbals, drum heads, and drum sticks. We had no money at that time...at least I had none.

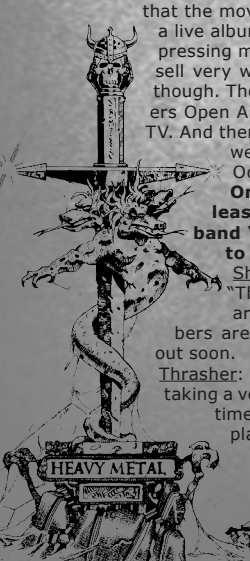
I mean, seeing the album had problems reaching USA crowds, why didn't you do another pressing on Roadster (since you owned the rights)? I am sure you would cover your costs just from local fans. Or not?

Shark: When we did "Out of the Abyss" we spent somewhere around \$20,000 dollars just recording the album. We did make all that money back from the sales but it did not leave much room for profit. We did all the mixing and some of the recording at Prairie Sun Studios in California with Steve Fontano and because of all the travel and recording expenses being way over the top compared to other projects that we had done it ended up being the most expensive album we had ever done. When we recorded "The Courts of Chaos" we spent about half that much but the Roadster Records label was at the time about to go out of business and Black Dragon kept telling us that they had a new distribution deal that was going to fix everything with the availability of the product. Well it did not really turn out like that. And Leviathan decided to pick up the project. So that is why we did not put it out on Roadster.

There is also a tape version of that album released from Leviathan Records, but under the MARK SHELTON moniker. What was the reason for it?

Shark: The owner of Leviathan was well informed about the problems that Black Dragon was having with Important Records Distributors and was afraid that Important would not distribute the project properly or even at all if we used the name MANILLA ROAD. They did not really have any problems with us (the band) but they were very upset with Black Dragon and said they would not even deal with any of the bands that were on the Black Dragon label. So that is why it was put out as Mark Shelton and also another reason that we did not put it out on Roadster because Important Records was who Roadster used as a distributor also.

Thrasher: I don't know whether it was a refusal to release it as a MANILLA



ROAD album or if they just wanted to try to market it as something different. After he'd been approached about it, Mark asked if I was open to the idea of releasing it as a Mark Shelton solo album. At that point, there was no MANILLA ROAD, so I readily agreed.

Why did Important refuse to distribute "The Courts of Chaos" under the MANILLA ROAD name? They had issues with Black Dragon, not Leviathan...

Shark: They were so pissed off at Black Dragon that they did not want to be affiliated with any of the bands that were on the label. I think basically if the band was still working with Black Dragon they did not want anything to do with them because it would be helping make Black Dragon money and at that point they had a very vindictive attitude towards the label.

Why was "The Books of Skelos", one of the best songs from that album, left out? Was it due to the duration of the LP?

Shark: Actually "The Books of Skelos" was recorded during the "Out of the Abyss" sessions. David Chastain did not really like the song that much and so it was omitted from that album. We put it on the CD release of "The Courts of Chaos" because we still wanted the song to get out there. It did not appear on the LP because of the length that the album would be with that song added.

Thrasher: "The Books of Skelos" was recorded earlier. I think it was part of the "Out of the Abyss" sessions but I could be mistaken. It was probably left off of the earlier album due to time constraints.

This was also the where band recorded a cover song, "D.O.A." from BLOODROCK, for the first (and last?) time in one of its albums. How did you choose this particular one?

Shark: It was the only song that all three of us in the band could agree on. We all new the song and loved it and it was not a very well known song to the metal public so we thought it would be a great choice and we would be sure that no one else had done a remake of the tune.

Thrasher: When I was a child, about the age of 10, I heard "D.O.A." on the radio while I was lying in bed. Often, when I was supposed to be asleep, I would listen to the radio very softly. So this song really made an impact on me. Typically, the sad songs on the radio were about lost love. Here was a song about much greater loss. The singer loses his friends, his girlfriend, and realizes he's about to lose his life. The song also had very unusual music. I snuck out to my mother's piano and, as softly as possible, learned the progressions of the music. I probably got a bit louder as I gained confidence in playing it. I stopped and heard a cough. My mother was standing behind me with her arms crossed. She was not happy to find me up and playing the piano! After that, most any time I sat down at a keyboard, I would start out playing "D.O.A.". It was one of the coolest keyboard progressions I knew. Many years later, I'd bought a keyboard synthesizer and decided to mount it on "The Beast". Of course, "D.O.A." was the first thing I played.

The band had plans to make a video at the time. Could you tell us if this idea progressed a little, or was it completely scrapped? For which song would it be?

Shark: It was a very short lived idea that was scrapped and left for dead in the dust. I don't even think it got so far as to knowing which song we would do.

Thrasher: I don't remember that, at all.

You had also said that few labels had approached the band. Which ones and why you didn't sign with them?

Shark: We got approached by a couple of really small labels (I don't even remember the names now) that were just getting started and at the time the band was in turmoil so I was not even trying to look for labels at the time.

Thrasher: I couldn't tell you the names of the labels. But all of the contracts basically gave ownership and profits to the label as well as the option on future albums. There was nothing in it for us.

Did the band tour locally in support of the album?

Shark: Yes we did some more shows before we hung it up. Mostly in Kansas and the majority of the shows in Wichita.

Thrasher: We played some local shows. Some of the people who thought they'd seen everything we could do were excited again seeing the keyboard/drum combo. I loved watching the reaction when people realized where the new sounds were coming from.

Randy, you performed keyboards on that album and on the live shows in support of it, but while playing the drums, at the same time! Sounds unreal, please tell us a few more things.

Thrasher: I had a normal sized Roland keyboard suspended on my left. The keys were angled nearly straight down. There was also a miniature Casio keyboard suspended on my right. There were various changes to this later but the Roland always remained in the same position on my left. The Roland was played with my left hand except during "D.O.A.". During that song the verse was done with both hands on the Roland with a quick switch to left-hand-only with the right hand playing drums during the chorus. The Casio was only used during the opening of "Courts of Chaos" though it was often used during improvisations as it was an on-the-fly sampler and I could catch samples of sounds Mark would make and play them back. Incidentally, this had started many years earlier when I was in high school. I would pull a piano over to my left as a played drums and play both at the same time. Then, before we recorded "The Deluge", I added a percussion synthesizer to "The Beast". It had a malfunction that allowed it to play twelve tuned notes (with some serious limitations). You can hear it about three minutes and thirty seconds into "Friction in Mass" as a new bass line appears and continues for about a minute and a half...that's the first recorded instance of my playing one handed drums along with another instrument.

Sometime after the album, Scott Park left the band. When exactly?

Shark: Actually the whole band broke up. We decided to disband. It was not just Scott leaving. We were done. This was in 1991 if my memory serves me well, which there are times it does not serve me at all haha.

Thrasher: I couldn't give you a date. It wasn't immediately after. It often gets blamed on me but there were other problems unrelated to me for some time before.

Mark, what were the reasons you decided to record a solo project after "The Courts of Chaos"? Was it considered a project just to keep you "busy" until the next MANILLA ROAD album or did you feel that there wouldn't easily be a new LP anytime soon for whatever reasons?

Shark: MANILLA ROAD was broken up when I started working on the CIRCUS MAXIMUS project. It started out as a solo album but when I realized how talented my band mates were at writing we decided to make it into a band project instead. I really did not see any future for MANILLA ROAD at the time.

Did this choice of yours affect Scott and Randy and in what way?

Shark: No because MANILLA ROAD was already disbanded.

What about you Randy?

Thrasher: Possibly. But a lot of things were changing. I'd gotten married. Mark got married sometime after that. Age...marriage...responsibilities...the world changes. So, in 1992 you enter the Miller studios once more this time with Aaron Brown and Andrew Coss to record 11 songs that would later be released on the s/t CD. Who was the composer of these songs? You, or was it a collective effort?

Shark: It was a collective effort. I wrote all the rhythm parts for the whole album. I also wrote the lyrics and vocal melodies for all the songs that I sang on the album. But the other guys wrote all the lyrics and vocal melodies for the songs that each one sang the lead vocals to. We all pitched in together to work out the harmony vocal parts. So it was indeed a collaborative effort from all three of us.

Really, how did you come in contact with them? I know Aaron Brown painted the "Out of the Abyss" and "The Courts of Chaos" album covers. What about Andrew Coss?

Shark: Andrew and Aaron were very close friends and went to school and grew up together. They had also been playing in many local bands for many years so I new them both from the bands and finally got to know Andrew through Aaron being so close to him.

Were you "tied" in a contract with Black Dragon and released the CD with them or was it because things were getting really hard for Classic Metal bands at the time and you played it "safe"? I know I would have second thoughts if they have screwed a Masterpiece like "The Courts of Chaos" the way they did!

Shark: We had taken the project to a couple of agencies trying to move up in the industry and at the time we were trying to sell it as CIRCUS MAXIMUS and not MANILLA ROAD. I had a manager that tried his best to do some deals for us in New York and California but to no avail. So I was sort of left with Black Dragon saying once again that they had fixed all their distribution troubles and that it would be well distributed around the world. Well it turned out that they did not have anything fixed at all and so the album did not get much attention. Also you are correct in saying the true metal scene was not looking too good at that time and so it was a bit of a desperation move. And to be honest there was a lot of upheaval going on within the ranks of the band at that time also. I was pretty sure that this was going to be the last album that I did with that lineup at least and I was fairly depressed about the whole scene and was just looking to get the deal over with at that point.

So, I understand you sent the songs to Black Dragon and they issued the CD under the name of MANILLA ROAD to sell more copies. How did it feel when you opened the package and saw the CD's for the first time?

Shark: Well they had told me about it before I actually saw the copies but it had already been pressed when I found out I think. To say the least I was pissed. But you know at the same time I really did understand why they did it. I just thought that I should have had more say in the matter.

What was the feedback from the loyal fans and press at the time? Did you have a hard time explaining that this was NOT a MANILLA ROAD album?

Shark: Oh yea. It was a big confused mess for some time. Especially since the album and the band did not really sound like MANILLA ROAD. Hell, it was not supposed to sound like the Road. It was a totally different band and a very different approach to Metal than that of MANILLA ROAD.

Did you play live with CIRCUS MAXIMUS? If yes, did you also add MANILLA ROAD songs in the set-list? What was the response to the songs played live?

Shark: Yes, we did a lot of shows locally in the Wichita area and we did add a few MANILLA ROAD songs but not very many. I think we did "Dig Me No Grave" and "Touch of Madness" off of "The Courts of Chaos" but that was mainly it. As for the response. We never played a live show under the name MANILLA ROAD. We were always known locally as CIRCUS MAXIMUS and the response was really good. Once everyone in town heard about us our shows always sold out.

Why was this album reissued in 2002 under the MANILLA ROAD name since it was never intended to be released that way in the first place?

Shark: You know, we thought about that a lot but decided in the long run that if we changed the name of the project that it could possibly lead to confusion among the fans and especially newcomers that did not know the history of the band or what happened with that project. We did not want anyone mistakenly buying the project twice not knowing that we changed the name of the band for the re-issue. We just decided to leave it alone to avoid confusion.

Randy, how do you view "The Circus Maximus"? How did it feel at the time when Black Dragon released it as a MANILLA ROAD album?

Thrasher: I especially liked Aaron's contributions to that. I saw them a few times and enjoyed the shows.

When did the story of that band end?

Shark: I played with CIRCUS MAXIMUS until about 1993 I think.

Could you tell us a few things about the band you were involved together at a later point, PARADIGM? Was it your band Randy?

Shark: I was only with that group for a very short time. I did a little recording with them and no shows. That band developed personnel problems shortly after I started playing with them and they soon broke up. The bands sound was more like pop metal and I would not have stayed with them very long anyway.

Thrasher: PARADIGM wasn't really my band. It existed for some time before I was involved. I'd heard they were looking for a keyboardist, auditioned, and joined the band. PARADIGM was a band with no hometown. Three of five of us were living in Wichita, two were in other cities. We'd practice in Wichita. Because of this, I only met the lead guitarist two or three times. He rarely could find the time or the money to come to practice. So, on newer songs, mostly those I'd written, I started playing lead guitar so that they'd sound complete. I could be wrong, but I think that helped lead to his leaving the band. The band had been a fairly commercial rock band when I'd joined. I think it was becoming more space-rock or art-rock, though. Since I was originally the keyboardist, we decided we needed another lead guitarist after the first one left. Having spent several years working with Mark, I called to see if he had time for the



project. When he joined, I realized how much I had missed "jams" (The Road's term or improvisation). Shortly after that, though, the band came to a sudden ending. Someone close to the band had some very serious legal troubles that nearly cost us all of our equipment.

When did you put MANILLA ROAD back together? How did you and Randy find Harvey Patrick? Must have mid-90's but when exactly? I guess by that time you had already understood that the scene had changed rapidly right?

Shark: It was around 1994 or 1995 that Randy and I put the Road back together with Harvey. Harvey was a good friend since many years before. He is Bryan Hellroadie Patrick's brother so we already knew him very well. At the time the metal scene seemed to be dying especially in the states. I don't think it really appeared that way to the European metal scene but in the US there was almost no activity in the market for bands like us. Randy and I put MANILLA ROAD back together with Harvey Patrick playing bass and did several shows locally for a couple of years

Thrasher: After PARADIGM was finished, Mark and I decided to again attempt to find a bassist. Harvey is the brother to our long-time roadie, Bryan Patrick. Everyone now knows him as the singer with The Road. We'd known Harvey as a talented bassist for many years. I don't remember how the idea of working with him came up. It was interesting working with Harvey. At first, he was actually reminding Mark how many of the songs went! He'd been a big fan of MANILLA ROAD for a long time. It would have been around 1996 or 1997, I think. The decision to play together again, for myself at least, was just because it was fun, our schedules were both free, and we'd built up some inertia from PARADIGM that we didn't want to stop.

What happened and this line-up didn't last long as well?

Shark: We broke up because Randy and Harvey could not get along with each other. And then for about 3 years or so I got married had kids and got a job at a golf course. Started playing a lot of golf and did not pursue the music business for quite some time. I eventually was going nuts from not playing or writing music and my brother from another mother Bryan "Hellroadie" Patrick saw that I was not a happy man at all and convinced me to start working on an album with him to get me back into what I was born to do. Thanks to him we started working on "Atlantis Rising", as a Shark solo project again, with Mark Anderson which eventually turned into the first MANILLA ROAD album of the reformation era.

Thrasher: I guess we just kept the momentum going and got a new bassist to reform The Road. Later, though, the bassist stopped rehearsing and wouldn't even answer our phone calls so it ended. Somehow that seems to get blamed on me too. The fact is, though, that he just seemed to disappear when his personal life experienced a huge change...nothing to do with me. I had a bunch of his equipment in my basement for many months as no one could reach him. Finally, a trade was arranged through his brother and mother so that he could get his stuff back and I could get a guitar back from him. Even then, he wasn't present. I'm not sure how to expand on this without getting personal. I really don't want to further anger anyone. I'm sure he had his reasons for doing the things he did.

In the early 90's (1993), your first two albums were bootlegged on CD by Reborn Classics. Were you aware of the fact at the time?

Shark: We eventually became aware of those releases but there was little that we could do about it at the time.

In the summer of 2000, Iron Glory Records from Germany secured a deal to release most of your catalogue and started with "Crystal Logic", thus introducing to a whole new generation of fans the Majesty of MANILLA ROAD. How did they contact you? Are you happy with the work they did?

Shark: They found me through the wonders of technology and the world wide web. It was a good relationship with Iron Glory and yes they did a great job of launching MANILLA ROAD back into the limelight again.

Thrasher: I haven't seen or heard any of them. The most recent versions I have are from Sentinel Steel, Underground Symphony, and Dragonheart if I'm reading the credits correctly.

Really, who is the copyright owner on your music? I guess you, right?

Shark: Yes, except for a few songs that were collaborations between me and Randy or Mark Anderson.

Thrasher: I believe everything is still owned by the band.

Are there any unreleased songs from the various time periods of the band?

Shark: There are still some tapes that have been lost that have songs that have never been heard before from way back in the day. And I have a vault full of reel to reel tapes from the days of recording jams in the old Road House where Roadster Records was based. But no songs from the studio sessions that have not been released. Oh wait I guess there is one song called "Road of Bones" that we wrote and recorded the basic arrangement for "Playground of the Damned" but I doubt if that will see the light of day. We never even put drums to it.

Thrasher: Unreleased songs...yes. Unreleased recordings...I don't think so. I used to believe there were, as Max and Jay had brought a four-track recorder over and recorded some songs. But I mentioned this once and the official word was that I was wrong so I guess they're gone.

In the summer of 2000, the band performed in Europe



for the first time in Bang your Head Festival. Despite playing early you were welcomed with enthusiasm from a part of the crowd (where the Greek fans made a serious impact, right?). How did it feel to play after all these years in Europe and in front of people that came from all around Europe almost exclusively for MANILLA ROAD?

Shark: To tell the truth I was amazed and totally surprised that we were so well known that fans would come from all over to see us. It was hard to absorb. And yes the Greek entourage was incredible as well as all the other fans that showed up. It was a glorious moment for the band and for me. I just wish we would have played better for that show.

Really, how did you decide to reform the band? Was it a need that needed a little push or something completely different?

Shark: We were approached by the Bang Your Head promoters and I decided I could not pass up an opportunity to play that show in Germany. Man, I'm glad I made that trip. It was that trip that decided the whole thing for me about reforming MANILLA ROAD. The love and respect that was given to me and the band while we were there was incredible and everyone was begging for another MANILLA ROAD album even if it was with new band members. That was the deciding factor for me.

The band was supposed to play with Randy Foxe on drums but instead you performed with Scott Peters. Could you expand a little bit why there was this last minute change? Was Scott Park approached for this journey/concert?

Shark: Actually what happened was that Randy was asked first to go and he said yes. Then about 2 days after I had already booked the show with the promoters he decided he did not want to go. So I got another drummer but it was Troy Olson that played with us in Germany for that show. Scott Peters joined the band after we returned from that gig. Scott Park had quit playing professionally so I did not even ask him about it.

Thrasher: When the offer was first made, I had a limited amount of vacation time I could take without losing my job (I believe it was two and a half days). There was no way to take additional time off without quitting or being fired. My paycheck is all that was paying my family's bills so losing my job was not an option. The arrangements that were made would have required me to miss more time that I had and I would have been fired.

This also created tension between you two, resulting in Randy leaving the band on bad terms, right?

Shark: Randy and I parted company because he thought that since he decided not to go that I should not either. He just did not want me to carry on with the band without him but I was not going to wait for another opportunity like this that might not ever happen. We have not talked to each other ever since. He told me and Bryan both to fuck off and then deleted us from his email.

Thrasher: Yes.

Why was Troy Olson replaced with Scott Peters soon after the German show (2000)? Was it considered from the beginning or something else?

Shark: Troy is a good drummer but he just was not hacking it with us and the change had to be made before we started recording drums for the album Atlantis Rising. So we let Troy go and brought another good friend of Mark Anderson into the fold and that was Scott Peters.

Another great moment for the band was your performance in the Classic Metal festival that took place in Kalamazoo, Michigan in the summer of 2001. Despite the low people attendance, the impressive amount of bands and the presence of underground maniacs from around the world made this a great event, right? If I am not mistaken, it was also a month or so before the release of "Atlantis Rising", right?

Shark: It was a great festival with a poor turnout. You are correct about all that. There were Metal heads from as far as Greece there. And I think most of the bands put on really good shows. We actually received our first issues of the "Atlantis Rising" album from the label owner who came to that show. So that show you could say was the release date for "Atlantis Rising".

In the summer of 2001, one of the best come-back albums (in my opinion), is released, "Atlantis Rising".

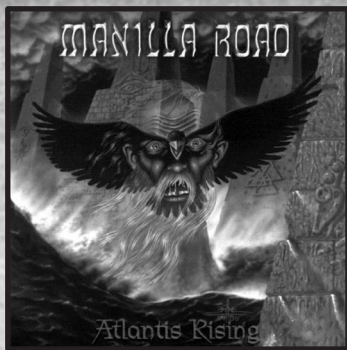
Shark: Thanks for the kind words. I really like all the music on that project and the concept also. I just wish the production was better. It was the first project that we did on our own in our studio Midgard Sound Labs.

The album is a continuation of "The Deluge" track concept and even uses the same sample in the intro of "Lemuria". BUT, I have to ask, why was "Megalodon" included? Apart from being a very average track is the only non-concept track, right?

Shark: It's not really part of the concept but it did have the aquatic thing going for it...haha. It just happened to be the very first song that we recorded for the album and when we did it we did not even have the idea of "The Deluge" part II in our minds yet. But to us it was a very important song because it was the first creation of the reformation.

I found it weird when the album ("Atlantis Rising") was released that the picture LP version lacked a song from the concept and NOT "Megalodon". I know that the entire album could not fit on a single LP, but "chopping" the concept? Did this annoy you?

Shark: It was a bit upsetting at first but then I came to the realization that most people buy the Picture discs for the collect-ability of the product and not to listen to it. So in that respect I did not mind as much. The thing that bothered me the most is that I was not consulted about the decision of which song to omit.



This album was not supposed to be released as a MANILLA ROAD release, right? Could you tell us the reasons it finally ended up a ROAD album?

Shark: It was originally going to be another attempt at a Shark solo project but Iron Glory really wanted us to be MANILLA ROAD and the fans wanted us to be MANILLA ROAD. The concept is part two of a MANILLA ROAD album and for the most part it sounds like MANILLA ROAD music. So it was alright with me this time that it became a MANILLA ROAD album.

I remember reading (in Steel Conjuring #3) that you and Randy were working on new material in the late 90's. Were songs that later appeared on any of the comeback albums written with you and Randy and especially "Atlantis Rising", since in my opinion this is the only album that can stand next to the 80's Masterpieces?

Shark: All of the songs on "Atlantis Rising" were written while we were working in the studio for that album. Now it was a bit different for about half of the songs on "Spiral Castle". Several songs on that album were written by me during the time that Randy and Harvey and I were playing together as MANILLA ROAD. I changed all the names to those songs and did them a bit differently than when playing them with Randy and Harvey but they are basically the same songs. But everything on "Atlantis Rising" was new music that was written for that album.

Randy, have you participated on any songs that are on the "Atlantis Rising" album? You and Mark were working on new material in the late 90's.

Thrasher: We had several new songs written. I don't know if any of that material was used on later albums.

In late 2002, the band played in Europe for the second time in mini-tour one show in Italy and two in Greece. What were your memories?

Shark: Awesome. Totally surprised at how popular we were in Greece. And the hospitality of the people was fantastic. The fans were nuts at our shows and besides I got to see a lot of great sites and set foot on holy ground where Leonidas and the gods tread. It was a great time for me and the other guys. Can't wait to go back. It was the same type of experience in Italy as well. I was just totally fascinated with the people and the country. Great shows and great times for me and the band.

Having played quite a few times after 2000 (almost) all over Europe, how would you compare the US and European audiences?

Shark: European audiences are much more fanatical about their music than US audiences. There are times you get in front of a crazy audience in the states but in Europe it is every show no matter where you are playing. I love it and I wish the US had the same attitude that Europe does about Metal.

Late in 2002, the band releases another album, "Spiral Castle". I would say this LP was/is more experimental than the previous one and I guess it didn't catch up with the fans so much as "Atlantis Rising" did. Could you give us some info regarding the recording process of this album?

Shark: We were still building the studio up and acquiring new equipment. We had not even finished building the control room yet when we started recording Spiral Castle. You are correct that in Europe did not really catch on to the Spiral Castle album but it did do well in the states. As a matter of fact the album reached number 2 on one of the Rolling Stone charts for one week. Even though it was only one week we thought that was quite an achievement for a small time band like us.

Iron Glory decided not to include one song in the album, "Throne of Lies", a decision that was frustrating for you, right? What were the reasons and how did you feel about it?

Shark: Yes it was very frustrating for me because once again I was not consulted about the changes before the album was released. I was pissed. The reason the label gave us for excluding the song was because they thought it sounded too much like Pantera. That seemed really weird to me because I don't think the song sounds anything like Pantera.

"Gates of Fire" was released in 2005 from the second "incarnation" of Iron Glory, Battle Cry Records. Were you "tied" in a contract with Iron Glory/Battle Cry and did this album with them or was their "editing" on your previous CD something that was over at the time and were happy with their overall behavior/attitude?

Shark: We were tied to the label with a 3 album contract but we could have got out of it if we wanted. The label knew that I was really unhappy with the editing of Throne of Lies from the last album but they swore that something like that would never happen again so we mended our misgivings with each other before the Gates of Fire album was released.

Soon after the release of "Gates of Fire", the band remained as a trio with you handling entirely the vocals since Bryan "Hellroadie" Patrick left (temporarily as it proved) to dedicate more time in his family. This didn't last long as Bryan was back in the band some time after that.

Shark: Yes it was a short lived departure for Hellroadie and I am glad it was because he is sort of an essential part of the band now days.

In April 2007, German label, New Iron Age Records (later known as Iron Kodex) released a split 7" featuring "Death by the Hammer" from KIT II 2004 and "Ravenwreck" from Californian Legends BROCAS HELM from their performance in KIT I in the summer of 2003. Did you have a say in what song to use or was it up to them?

Shark: It was up to them and I thought the cover art for that was pretty cool.

"Voyager" came on Italian label, My Graveyard Productions in 2008 and this time "divided" fans a little. How do you see this release nowadays? Any further info you would like to share with us? (be it from the recordings, etc.)

Shark: First of all the production on that album was a lot better than the CD revealed. When the glass mastering was done by the CD pressing plant they screwed it up by trying to add more bass EQ to the whole project. It just screwed up the sound entirely. The actual master that we sent the label sounded a lot better than what was released. Nothing we could do about it though because once again I was not in the loop with the label about what they

had planned. And after that we lost all contact with the label and they pretty much dropped out of sight to us and anyone else that they owed money too. As for the music itself that album caused us to gain a great following in the Scandinavian countries so even though there were some other fans of ours that did not really like the more thrashy and doom like approach to the album that release did do us a lot of good to earn a bigger fan base across Europe. And I think when it comes down to it most of our fans do realize that we love to experiment with all styles of metal and they sort of expect it of us at this point. And they also know that what we do on one project will most likely not be what we do on the next. Change is inevitable in all aspects of life and that goes for MANILLA ROAD as well.

"Playground of the Damned" is the last effort of the band once more on a new label, Shadow Kingdom Records, while the LP version is released through High Roller Records. How did you decide to work with these two labels?

Shark: High Roller because we have had dealings with them before on LP reissues and they have always done a great job with our stuff. Shadow Kingdom because I am friends with the owner and have watched him develop his label from nothing into a fairly well distributed label with a decent amount of clout. Both labels work well with each other and they are both good businesses and honest. It's a good partnership for the labels and for the band as well as the metal underground.

Mark, it's been 32 years that MANILLA ROAD have been releasing albums, a time span that most of us weren't even born (or at least listening to Heavy Metal). How does this make you feel?

Shark: Old? Haha. In truth I am most likely one of the most lucky metal heads in the world. I have been given (or earned as some say) the opportunity to do what I love in life (play and write music) for 3 decades and it is not over yet. I can't ask for much more than the love I have felt over the years from my supporters and friends. I have toured all over Europe and had the honor to play with some of the greatest metal bands ever. Met some of the greatest people in the world and stood on the hallowed ground of the ancients. 3 decades and I'm looking to make it 4 or 5 at least. If I can find a way to come back from the dead to do shows and albums I will. Until then I will continue to play and write and record as long as someone wants me to or until I draw my last breath.

I am sure you are aware of the impressive number of bands that have stated MANILLA ROAD to be one of their favorite bands and biggest influences and the bands that have covered your songs (There is also a 2CD tribute available). Can you name some bands/covers that you liked the most for whatever reasons?

Shark: CRYSTAL VIPER did a great version of "Flaming Metal Systems". I love SLOUGH FEG's version of "Street Jammer", ROSAE CRUCIS did a marvelous job with "Fires of Mars" and BATTLE RAM pulled off a flawless version of "Queen of the Black Coast". BATTLE ROAR did a cool rendition of "Mordib Tabernacle". Man, there are just a lot of really cool covers of our stuff that have been done out there. Keep an eye out for AXECUTER doing a version of "Heavy Metal to the World" on their next album. I even sing and play a guitar solo on it. It is the greatest honor to have so many bands refer to us as one of their inspirations.

Thrasher: I haven't heard any of the covers. I've just never run across them.

So many albums, so many labels that MANILLA ROAD has worked with over the years, be it for reissues, or new releases. What were best and worst to work with?

Shark: Best to work with are Shadow Kingdom, High Roller, Iron Glory, Iron Kodex, Battle Cry, Roadster hehe, Monster/Rockadrome, Sentinel Steel, Shrapnel, Leviathan and Solemnity. Worst to work with were all the others.

Mark, you have been writing the lyrics for the band, always dealing with fantasy issues. Sometimes you have also created concepts based on fictional characters, horror/fantasy writers, mythology etc. Upon first examination, this shows someone really into this, with a wide literary background. What would be the obvious and not so obvious writers you are into?

Shark: Obvious ones would be Robert E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe. The not so obvious would be Robert Graves, Edger Rice Burroughs, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Clark Ashton Smith, Michael Chriten, (probably spelled his name wrong) and a plethora of other writers like Tolkien and a slew of history books and archeological and anthropological data, Myths, legends and folklore. The Elder Eddas and the works of many Greek and Roman poets and philosophers. It is an amazing world out there and there is plenty to find to write about within our own history as a species.

I have noticed through the years and in interviews that you are very familiar with many old and new bands. Would you consider yourself a Metal fan and/or collector?

Shark: I was definitely a metal collector back in the day. I will always be a metal fan but I don't really go shopping for the music anymore. I get turned on to it by bands sending me their stuff and by my friends and band mates turning me onto what they are listening to. I really do spend most of my free time in the studio working on music. It was a life long dream to be a musician and have my own studio and now that I have both of those things going for me I don't want to miss out on anything that I might be able to achieve musically. It has been a rough life sometimes but it has been a good one and a life that has proved to me that if you really strive for something hard enough and put an undying amount of effort into it your dreams can come true.

Thrasher: Well, as I've said, I am a music fan above all. Metal is one of the types of music I love...but certainly not all of it. In many cases, lyrics mean little to my perception of music. I hear the singer and, with some exceptions, it's just another part of the music. Obviously, it's usually the melody. But, again with some exceptions, I want a singer who is singing notes...not screaming a rhythm. There's a scene in a favorite movie of mine called "Almost Famous" where a groupie is talking about loving a piece of music or a band so much that it hurts. That's me. I still obsess over little details in music that I love or in music that I'm writing or recording.

What would be some of your favorite Metal (and not only) releases? (Randy Foxe)

Shark: SLAYER-"Reign in Blood", just about any BLACK SABBATH album (if you call them Metal that is) but especially "Master of Reality". Almost any DOOMSWORD or CANDLEMASS album. OPEH-"Black Water Park", RUSH-"Caress of Steel", most of the JUDAS PRIEST collection but especially "Sad Wings of Destiny", "Sin After Sin" and "Stained Glass".....and to tell the truth I just realized that I could go on and on here but let it suffice to say that I have been influenced by a multitude of bands and styles.

Do you keep an eye on the current Metal scene? Which bands do you think stand out?

Shark: I'm not sure that I would say that I keep an eye out on the scene but I do pay attention to it. I know that does not really make that much sense but what I mean to say is that I don't really pursue looking for metal news nowadays. It just sort of comes to me through all of my associates in the business. The newest band to really stand out for me recently is Protest The Hero. These guys are what they call mathcore metal. But they are really good musicians and have a bit of a new twist on the mathcore thing. Even though the songs are jam packed with lots of sweeping guitar movements that don't always carry an easy to remember melody, this band really does employ a lot of melody and creative genius into their music.

Thrasher: That depends on one's definition of Metal. I love almost everything Devin Townsend has done, "Ocean Machine" and probably "Addicted" or "Accelerated Evolution" being my favorites. I love BLOTTED SCIENCE or anything involving Ron Jarzombek or his brother Bobby. I really like DISTURBED. My son and daughter got me into AVENGED SEVENFOLD. I liked the new HEAVEN AND HELL album and will listen to anything involving Tony Iommi. I should probably stop here because...At this point, there are already people reading this who are screaming, "That's not metal!". For me, the lines are not well defined. If what I like overlaps into what someone else calls Metal, that's fine. If it doesn't, that's also fine. I can't imagine narrowing my tastes to any one kind of music. I grew up when good music was "rock". You could hear BLACK SABBATH, THE RASPBERRIES, JETHRO TULL, YES, RARE EARTH, THE HOLLIES, PINK FLOYD and THE SWEET, all bands I truly love, on the same radio station in the same hour. Without realizing it, I began cultivating strong interests in multiple types of music. But if you're asking if I really get deeply into the current hardcore or thrash Metal scene, then the answer probably would disappoint. I always thought the really hard and heavy stuff was much more fun to play than it was to listen to it. That's just me, though. I'm certainly not saying it's bad.

How do you see the resurgence the fantasy genre seems to be living the last few years? Have you followed some of the new-est works?

Shark: I love the fact that Fantasy stuff is on the rise. It's a great media form and great entertainment. I have been following some new stuff the best I can when I have time. It's actually fairly hard for me to even find time to go to a movie nowadays.

Are you interested in classic literature or is it just fantasy for you? What about more recent writers, like maybe Jack London, Franz Kafka?

Shark: Oh I am definitely interested in classic literature for sure. "MacBeth" and "Hamlet" are two of my favorites and I love most of the great classics as well. By more recent you mean like Call of the Wild or the Mark Twain Classics? Yep I like those also. I like everything from historic to fiction and any genre is good for me as long as the yarn is a good one.

On the same train of thought, you have presented so many times your "take" on the above mentioned issues, that it puzzles me why you haven't attempted to create a small (or bigger) concept based on your ideas...Someone who reads a lot can't write a great book, as well as listening to a variety of bands/music doesn't make you a great songwriter, but I would bet that you would present us something at least interesting.

Shark: I may even try that someday. I have had many tell me that I should write a book and that time may come yet but for now music is my choice of media for my words and works.

I guess it is completely out of the question to perform live as the classic trio of Mark, Scott and Randy for a few selected shows, right?

Shark: Actually Bryan and another promoter have approached Randy about it and I would not be opposed to doing a special show or shows of that sort. But Randy never did get back with any of us on this so I expect it is not possible.

Thrasher: I'm not going to say it would never happen. But it seems unlikely.

A "hard" question now. Do you think that MANILLA ROAD is still the same band or just Mark and a band, since the unique chemistry the 1984-1991 line-up had, hasn't been reproduced in the later albums with very few exceptions in my opinion.

Shark: I think it has always been, is now and always will be MANILLA ROAD as long as I am involved. I wrote everything in the old days and I still write most everything now. Even when you look at the albums that were done with the members you spoke of none of them sound the same. It was not the lineup that changed the music as much as it was me changing the direction of the writing all the time. Don't get me wrong I am not saying anything against any of the previous members but it really all comes down to a matter of taste. I can safely say that if Randy and Scott and I were still together the music we would be doing now would not sound like "Open The Gates" or "The Deluge" or "Mystification" or "Out Of The Abyss" or "Courts Of Chaos"...oh wait a minute none of those albums sound the same anyway and wow it's the same band members on all those albums. It just goes to show that it was not the lineup that was changing the sound of the band but the music itself. There are times that the older styles still creep into the material here and there but with different members. The London Philharmonic Orchestra changes members every year but does that make the organization anything other than the London Philharmonic Orchestra? BLACK SABBATH had Ronnie James Dio in the band at one point but it was still BLACK SABBATH as far as I am concerned. AC/DC lost Bonn Scott and replaced him but I swear the band is still AC/DC. I know that some bands do lose their identity when band members are changed but when the main writer for the band is still in the band it usually still sounds like that band. As far as I am concerned I tried to do other

projects a couple of times where the labels and the fans wanted it to be MANILLA ROAD. As long as our supporters think it is MANILLA ROAD then I expect it is MANILLA ROAD. I'm sure it will be really obvious if it ever is not MANILLA ROAD. And that will be the day that I hang it up with MANILLA ROAD. And to tell you the truth most of the musicians I have played with over the years are really talented and many of them more so than the ones I started playing with years ago. And then there is the issue of dedication. In my mind if you are not dedicated enough to stay the course with the band until the end then you are just a hired gun. I'm going to stay the course as long as there are people out there that want me too.

Thrasher: I haven't heard any of the new material. But changing even a single member of a trio is going to result in a different band. That doesn't mean it shouldn't be called MANILLA ROAD, though. If that were the case, the name should have been retired before I joined.

Rick, have you stayed in touch with Scott and Mark through the years?

Rick: I lost touch with the guys for several years and have not talked to Scott in a very long time. I recently have been in touch with Mark & might be recording some material with him in the near future, but nothing concrete as yet.

Randy, have you kept track of what Mark has been doing with MANILLA ROAD the last few years? I understand the answer is "no", but why is that?

Thrasher: Not really, no. I spent some time on an early fan forum but it became clear that the band did not want me there. I pointed out that the drummer on a song called "Throne of Lies" (or something similar) was clearly playing virtually the same part I'd played on a demo. The drummer confirmed, in an email to me, that he'd been given a recording and told to play it much the same. But the claim from the band was that it was mere coincidence. Somewhere in that discussion I got called "psycho" and other names by current members. I just decided to avoid the agitation and aggravation.

What have you been involved with after that? I remember you were writing music for a Metal project, right?

Thrasher: I record a lot. But lyrics are very important to MANILLA ROAD fans and I don't write that type of lyrics. I had one project that might have interested MANILLA ROAD fans but it didn't last long enough to complete any recordings. It was myself and two good friends, Alan Sigers and Chuck Good. Chuck played guitar and sang some songs. Alan played bass guitar and wrote the lyrics. I played drums and keys and sang. We all wrote the music. It was a whole lot of fun and really showed promise. I regret that it fell apart.

How do you feel for the work you did with MANILLA ROAD these years?

Thrasher: I'm proud of what we did. There was a lot of energy, thought, and heart that went into it. Of course, I don't take it as seriously as I did at the time but the little parts that amused me then still amuse me today.

Are you aware of the status MANILLA ROAD has been enjoying after the reunion, aided by the resurgence of the Classic Metal sound the last few years? What about you, as a drummer, many mention you as one of the best Metal drummers of the 80's, how does it feel?

Thrasher: I know they're putting out albums. I'm always honored by the compliments.

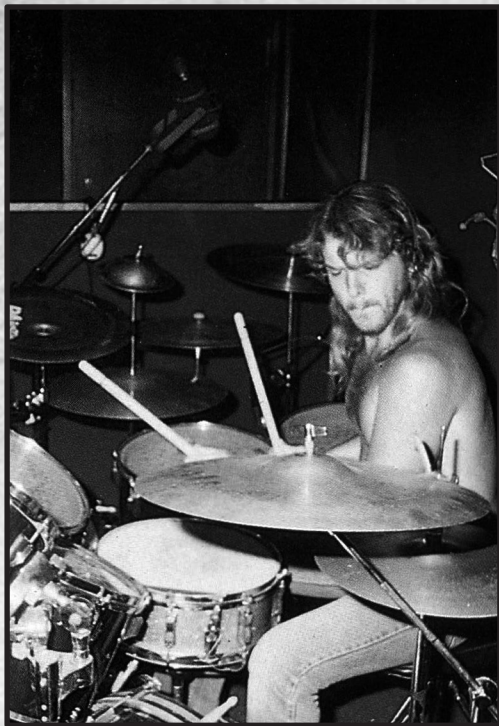
I would like to thank you for your Music first of all and for the time you dedicated in this feature. The last words are yours, end this any way you like.

Shark: The last words are always for our fans, friends and supporters. If not for them MANILLA ROAD would not be. Hail to all of ye for thine undying support. It is your faith in MANILLA ROAD that has kept the band and the music alive all these years. And as long as you keep that faith I will keep churning out the recordings as long as you still think it sounds good. My whole life has been based around music and MANILLA ROAD. It has been a long and arduous road but it has been worth it because of all of you being so devoted to the ideas of the band and the music. Thank you so much for giving MANILLA ROAD this honor. Up The Hammers & Down The Nails. Mark The Shark Shelton (MANILLA ROAD/HELLWELL)

Rick Fisher: I would like to thank you and all who support MANILLA ROAD all these years past & in the future. "Up the Hammers", as Mark would say!

Thrasher: I feel very honored in being asked to do this interview. I really had to sift through memories to answer some of these questions! And I'd like to give a very big, "Thank You", to all of the fans and anyone who ever listened, either to the recordings or to the performances! I know how deeply music has affected me and hope I may have had some affect on others!

Kostas Kailiazis



VIGILANCE

The only thing I would bet anything on, is the flourishing of the underground Metal scene, especially within the last few years. Accomplishing our wish to include bands from all over the world is essential for our 'zine, however it can at least be characterized utopic. We daily discover bands from the most distant part of the world, which makes them hard to reach, as they often suffice on their own country's market. Argentina for example is an endless source of Metallic treasury that not so many people know of, full of professional acts! Heavy Metal is finally globally accepted and can be found in the most unbelievable part of our world. Thanks to the internet, I was lucky enough to spot a young Slovenian band that convey the 80's heavy feeling with a unique fidelity and forced their guitarist and founding member, Gilian Adam, talk to me about his band, VIGILANCE.

Gilian, hi and congrats on your recent debut with VIGILANCE! Even though this is a new band, it is not your first one, as you played with RAGER and after they disbanded VIGILANCE took form. Describe us your course in your active experience in the Metal discography by giving us a bio of the band. Did the rest of the guys play with another band in the past?

Hello and thank you very much! After RAGER disbanded, I instantly began searching for new members to get back on track as soon as possible. I had a lot of ideas left from the RAGER days and I was determined to start a completely new thing-starting with a new band name. I knew Tine before as he used to hang out at RAGER rehearsals and at one point he was even asked to join the band as a guitarist, haha... I didn't even know he's also a very talented drummer, but when I got a hold of that information I gave him a call and we were already jamming our favorite songs the next day. After a few jam sessions, he invited his ex-band mate Anzo to fill in the bass position and it worked like a charm, he was exactly what we were looking for-dynamic and punchy bass lines and a lot of attitude! We decided it would be a good thing to have some sort of a promo/demo so we could build our name and find some gigs so we recorded the 3-track "Ritual of Death" demo. It got accepted really well and we had quite a few gigs booked in no time, but I felt we needed someone who can really sing and I sent the demo to Jakob-I knew him only briefly...Actually, all I knew about him was that he can sing and that he's a big AGENT STEEL fan haha, I thought that was enough to work. Well, he liked the demo, we jammed some songs and it went really good...so that's more or less it! **RAGER recorded a demo and a mini CD entitled "Eat Metal!". Why did you decide to release it in a micro press of only 100 copies and what led to the band's break up after that?**

"Eat Metal!" was released by ourselves and by the time it came out, we already started to sort of grow apart... We didn't know much about how these things work either, so you could say we sort of "sabotaged" ourselves in a way too... weak promotion, sloppy artwork, few gigs... We did open for HELSTAR after the release and one would think that this is an awesome way for boosting the band's morale and creativity but it was all downhill from there really... I'd say the most obvious reason for the break-up was general lack of interest from the guys...

RAGER was also featured in a US compilation CD, how did this pact come into place?

Damn, thanks for the reminder... I totally forgot about that haha! Well, we published our first demo version of the "Iron Beast" in 2007 I think and we got an email from this bloke, saying he wants to include a track on his compilation... It was some sort of independent thing, it was called "Heavy Metal Hurricane" or something like that.

So, as soon as VIGILANCE was born, you already had 2 tracks ready for your first demo that you carried with you from the RAGER days. In both bands you started as a guitarist/vocalist, but later on you gave up singing. Why's that, especially in VIGILANCE, Jakob's style is so much different than your raw vocal style.

That's because I never considered myself as a singer. In both cases it was more of a situational thing as it's hard to find a good singer...but as soon as we found someone who can belt out some wicked vocals, I gladly left the spotlight to them haha.

How did your very good first demo "Ritual of Death" in 2010 help you spread the band's name in the underground scene? I wouldn't say bands from Slovenia are really popular, since the scene there is probably limited, was the underground press kind enough to welcome you in its warm embrace? Was the fame RAGER had left behind ahead of you? Was this demo the stepping stone to sign with Haliaetum Records for the release of your first mini CD with VIGILANCE?

The "Ritual of Death" demo was a great stepping stone. The Slovenian Metal scene might be small, but it's packed with great bands, dedicated head-bangers and very supportive underground press, such as Paranoid 'zine and Profanity. It did of course help a bit to be related to RAGER as in those few years in that band I met a lot of fellow bands, promoters, organizers... What actually led to the cooperation with Haliaetum Records was a raw mix of "Vigilance" taken from the EP recording sessions, but I think the "Ritual of Death" demo gave them a good introduction.

How did you choose this tracklisting for "Steeds of Time", I mean "Rituals of Death" was a fantastic track and in the same vein as the rest of the EP, why was it excluded?

Well, the EP was supposed to include only three tracks in the beginning, but we wrote the instrumental track



like a week before the recording sessions and we decided it would be cool to round the number of tracks to five. We didn't want to include both RAGER tracks, so we went with "Iron Beast"... It felt more in the style of the rest of the album. But don't worry, "Ritual Of Death" will be included on the next release! **Again, a tiny press of 100 copies is done for "Steeds of Time". Any specific reason for this? Don't you think people who might be willing to support the band will be held back or even, in the worst case, unaware of your existence?**

That was just the first pressing. It was sold out very quickly, so more copies were made, but I don't know the exact number. We sold a lot of CD's in Slovenia-it was really a big hit, but we sent quite a few copies to Japan, Greece, Ireland, Croatia and Germany too. Haliaetum Records are great, they really do the best for their bands and are also great people to hang out with, but they are still a small independent company and we are still a band making our way on the world scene so that might be a reason for smaller quantities printed...

Your lyrics mainly focus on war themes. Is this the image you want to introduce for VIGILANCE?

Yeah, the EP seems to give that kind of impression, but war is not our only inspiration...we get inspired by all the dark and mysterious things; be it dark literature, history, the occult and women...the latter being the most mysterious haha.

What's going on with the essence of our music, which is the gigs! Are you active in this field? Have you played with any bands you would only dream of playing with?

We take every chance we get and so far it's going really well. We gig a lot, we have also managed to build a really sturdy fan base in Slovenia, so it's always crazy at gigs! Well, for example, we played at the Metal Mania Festival and we shared the stage with bands like DESTRUCTION and ENTOMBED...that was a really great experience!

Your sound is so damn 80's, but in a way that comes through naturally, as if you always existed in this period! However, you mix in a very nice way a blend of speed Metal with heavy NWOBHM influences, in contrast to classic German speed Metal, as one would imagine as a main influence of yours. Will you name some bands that you adore? What are a few of your favorite heavy metal albums, excluding the classics (IRON MAIDEN, BLACK SABBATH etc)?

Thank you! I'm a very big fan of the NWOBHM scene, so obviously bands like JAGUAR, ANGELWITCH, SATAN, CLOVEN HOOF...too many to name really haha. Other bands I really like are EXITER, MERCYFUL FATE, RUNNING WILD, WARRANT (German of course)...As for the albums... I'd say TANK's "Filth Hounds of Hades", MERCYFUL FATE's "Don't

Break the Oath" and CLOVEN HOOF's self-titled album! I do have to say that there is one younger band that really got me hooked for months, and that's IN SOLITUDE and their last album "The World. The Flesh. The Devil"...pure genius.

By the way, I'm always interested in worldwide underground Heavy Metal bands, but my knowledge around Slovenian scene is restricted to say the least. Could you shed some light and name some promising bands that are active now and some that ruled in the past?

If you like early CELTIC FROST and BATHORY, you HAVE TO check out our label mates HELLSWORD! They've got a killer demo out, called "Blasphemy Unchained"...KELLER and ERUPTION (Their singer was on the "Eat Metal" EP!) are also worth mentioning-killer thrash Metal, full of great riffs, energy and attitude!

Well, let us know of your future plans, any upcoming releases on the foreground? A full-length maybe? Aren't you interested in a vinyl release by the way?

We have just released a new demo/single titled "Behind the Cellar Door" and we are already working on a full album which will definitely be released in 2012. We have more than half of it already written and the tracks are regularly played in our live set. Vinyl? Yes, Please! That's a dream I hope that get's fulfilled one day!

Thanks a lot mate for doing this interview for Steel For An Age! Last words are yours.

Thank you for the invitation! Well, keep it heavy, keep it fast...and as a great band once said: "DON'T GIVE IN, NEVER SURRENDER!" Cheers!

<http://www.myspace.com/vigilanceofficial>

Thanos Stafylarakis



Borrowed Time

JP, BORROWED TIME struck the Heavy Metal scene like a lightning bolt of steel twice last year! Would you care to supply us with the appropriate details concerning how these certain mongers associated in the form of this unique yet oldest school sound and vision band?

Hah, I appreciate the enthusiasm for sure! Well, we basically formed a band "think tank"

style, to use the term loosely! David and I on the first demo just sat in the basement and figured out exactly what sort of music we wanted to make, how we wanted to mesh our own perspectives and influences together.

Were any of you in another band prior to BORROWED TIME?

Victor is in SAURON, Cult Thrash Metal Titans. Dennis, Danny and I were in a Power Metal band called SHADOW SELF, and Victor and David were also both in HARBINGER, the Speed Metal band that released the album "Doom On You" on Chris Black's Planet Metal Records.

As said above, it was 2010 that the first demo tape was released and apparently grew adequate interest to make it unavailable (got sold out in a blink of an eye) in this format and force Irish label Sarlacc Productions re-release it in CD right the following year! In addition to that, in this same year you first vinyl output is out from Dying Victim records in the shape of a 7" single and is again rapidly almost sold out. Do you feel everything moves quite fast for the band, taking into consideration that some bands can't even reach the demo stage and does this act as a means of pressure to you?

Well, there's a bit of pressure, but it's a challenge I accept! Funny enough, just last night I was at the diner with Dennis and Victor after practice, and we were talking about how despite the fact that we don't really hang out or have tons of free time, we are incredibly happy that we've been able to work something that we love so much, HEAVY METAL, into our professional lives. There's no illusions, we all work and we put a lot of ourselves into this band.

What was the initial idea when forming the band really? I understand you are fans, which means to me that you are also interested in the underground and you don't care if a band is known or not when listening to it, but whether the songwriting applies to you. So, did you have in mind to play this NWOBHM/early US metal mix and sound as such?

It was basically a fan perspective and us trying to blend the music we love with our own musical ideas. I actually got the idea for "Burning Mistress" from turning a JOY DIVISION style bit I wrote into a NWOBHM/PAGAN ALTAR style song. We're fans of good, expressive and beautiful music, and Metal to us, especially that of WARLORD, GOTHAM CITY and SATAN. So it's really a pool of all kinds of musical influences that go into it, but we are reverent and believe that we can take Heavy Metal into our own arena!

I now know the reviews you get in general are raving, but was it like that ever since the demo tape had surfaced? How many copies of it did you press exactly and why was it so limited? What made you also accept a CD reproduction of your demo?

50 copies were made and given out for free at our first gig opening for RAVEN! It was only limited because no one knew about us at all, so I figured 50 free tapes was a good start. I accepted the CD reproduction because we were flattered by the interest and Sarlacc Productions seemed like a really cool new label, and they definitely are! I met the head of Sarlacc at the PAGAN ALTAR show in Montreal in December 2010, GREAT TIMES!

Although everybody can spot a couple of influences in your music, can you expand on the band's main sources of inspiration, both musical and lyrical, and which are the bands that would fascinate each of the band members separately?

My inspirations as a vocalist range all over, but in Hard Rock terms I'm mostly influenced by Rod Evans (original DEEP PURPLE/CAPTAIN BEYOND frontman), Dave "THE LION" DeFeis (I love doing howls, they sound beautiful to me), Marc Bolan (T. REX!), Anders Zackrisson (GOTHAM CITY) and the immortal Rob Halford! I'm a person who believes with absolute conviction that the same amount of work applied to honing vocals should be applied to lyrics. I put a lot of thought and work into them and try to flesh out a decent narrative or expand upon an idea and make a point. I dislike lyrics that simply go nowhere. As a band, I'd say Victor, Danny and I are definitely influenced most on the SATAN and GOTHAM CITY end, and Dennis, our bass player, has been jamming lots of AVALON "The Third Move"!

Moving on to the first demo-EP, everything was excellent while listening to it, but entering the intro on "Sailor on the Seas of Fate" I felt a chill that turned to awe as soon as the main theme started and culminated by the time the whole song unfolded. Dude, I had never heard better vocal lines and arrangements a long time now, so why the fuck don't you use these dual high/low pitched lines in other songs as well? Is Moorcock or other sword and sorcery scribes part of the BORROWED TIME idea?

Hah, well, that's because there are TWO vocalists in the song! On the demo, both David and I were singing, and to handle the songs live, Dennis and I both do the different vocal parts and harmonize them. We believe that we have to be as true to our material live as possible, we work hard to stay strong on that front! I really appreciate it, not to mention, we will certainly be doing dual high/low pitched stuff on the full length. Also, we are writing one new Elric themed song about a certain Sad Giant... ;)

There are times that one might be thinking where is the Metal scene going to and others that you are sure that it can't get any better! I've witnessed myself being caught in this maze in several cases during the period I'm listening to this music, in an attempt to find answers in my Metallic philosophical quest! The conclusions that I've made are another story, so I will refrain blabbering and move on to this wonderful interview J.Priest, singer of one of the hottest US Heavy Metal bands, BORROWED TIME, gave for Steel For An Age; a band who definitely establish themselves in the type of groups that with their thoroughly disheveled regressive style, will contribute in the progressive perpetuation of what is known for ages as Heavy Metal music. No lavish and other fancy shit!

BORROWED TIME is undeniably a no frills all-out Heavy Metal attack obscure sounding band. Was it deliberate to achieve this kind of sound. Do you choose to play analog and record live by the way, unlike most of the other recording bands?

We record our music and mix it to sound like an amalgamation of the records we've always loved, but with our own obvious spins. The newest song we're recording for a split with UK rockers WYTCH HAZEL, "Black Olympia", should come out like a mixture of the demo and the "Fog in the Valley" 7 inch material! **A while later you complete two more songs, "Midnight Tygers" and "Fog In The Valley" and release them as a 7" single. Both kuts slay but have not much in common with the demo... The production job is different in this one, more "polished" but not a moment distorting the whole atmosphere and image you want to promote for yourselves. Is this the path you pave for future releases?**

We plan on having a guitar tone more similar to the first demo in the future, we were trying something new and thought a smoother, reverberated guitar sound would work for the song "Fog in the Valley". Consequently, it sounds way nastier in the live setting, hehe...

Also the issues you talk about differ from the demo, sometimes looks like a songtitles' collage, if we can say so... Is this indicative, or maybe a tribute to what you regard as the ones liable for what you are doing with BORROWED TIME?

Absolutely. "Fog in the Valley" is essentially a song about vainglorious freedom, that such a thing isn't truly real and all things must die. A little depressing for such a happy song, but I certainly pattern my love of NWOBHM in that song, cool that you catch the references!

Speaking of future releases, I'm eager to know when is the full length coming? Have you prepared anything? Do you have any release dates fixed and if so, what stage are you at the moment?

Our full length will be titled "Libertine," and feature 8 ENTIRELY new songs. We have, as I mentioned before, a split coming out with a song called "Black Olympia," which won't appear on the album. It's a song that basically throws all of our influences in one pot, so we figured it should stand on its own!

Talk to us about the cover art in both of your releases! Do you have anything in mind regarding the drawing style and the theme of the one printed in your next release?

I have VERY high standards for the artwork of the band. We used a photo of a protestant pamphlet from the 17th century defaming the pope called "The Papal Ass" for our demo. I then found a FANTASTIC artist by the name of Seth Bennett, who has done work for Black and Death Metal bands such as FAUST-COVEN and ARES KINGDOM. I saw in his work the potential to do awesome 70's/80's style Frazetta type work, and he has continuously delivered ever since I've contracted him to work with us. Great guy to have a beer and jam Metal with as well, we've seen each other at Maryland Death Fest quite a bit! He did the "Fog in the Valley" 7 inch, a couple shirts and will be handling the next two releases!

Is there any direction change, or any other change that we should expect, in your full length?

Hah, actually, people can expect it to be more reflective of our first demo but with more bottom end and nuanced production, since Dennis is an absolutely fantastic bassist and we're working with our original guitar player David again as of late (Victor and David are brothers).

No matter how good the music might be, a very good Heavy Metal band is in my opinion established in the elite only when they can pull it off live! I've seen a few videos of some of your gigs and the picture is more than promising, so how active are you after you became better known in the underground? As far as I know, you've only played in your country so far, whereas you are preparing for your first European assault in April for the Keep It True festival! How do you feel about that and is there a chance to be back in Europe, where admittedly all the Metal happenings are held? How was your show with ANVIL that you recently played with by the way?



Thank you so much for the kind words! Yeah, we are NOT content to rest on ANY laurels, we are continuing to work and work and work. We're not doing this because we think we're anything special, we want to write great songs and we want people in Greece, Germany, England, all over Europe to be given something great from us, something that involves tireless hours of preparation and practice to meet you guys' expectations! The opportunity to play Europe is something we are NOT taking lightly, and we also will be appearing at Live Evil fest in the UK on October 27th and 28th of this year! The ANVIL show was a blast, Rob and Lips are super cool, we hung out for a while backstage and discovered their new bassist used to play in CIT-IES! Totally awesome!

Looking back at your short career this far, are you satisfied with what you do and with how people and press face and treat BORROWED TIME? What is the general feedback that you get?

I'm very satisfied and entirely grateful for the positive feedback we've gotten, our only mission is to work and make good on what people expect from us! I also appreciate any criticism thrown our way, everything to me is a learning experience. I've seen really flattering reviews, forum posts that both praise or decry, it's all rock and roll to me. :p

Are you collectors in music? Is there a chance that you would like to be treated the way collectors treat bands of the past? What is your opinion about extreme pricing we meet currently at some records that are named "rare" and how do you face the fact that some people use file exchanging methods to listen to the music they love? Is duplicating music a moral crime against bands? Lastly, what's your opinion on bootleg production that scourges our age and is a consequence of overpricing music, whatever the reason or means of bootlegging or the price might be?

Hell yes! We have our own distro, and we HATE eBay prices. We sell our records for 5 to 20 dollars, at the ANVIL show actually we sold really cherry copies of DEF LEPPARD "On through the Night", HIGHWAY CHILE "Storybook Heroes", the first LOUDNESS record, and once and a while we'll get something really obscure in, but like I said, we hate how people get cheated, so when we come to your town, you can thumb through our distro and expect to be treated fairly!! I think filesharing is OK when it comes to our music, but I can't speak for other bands and I respect their viewpoints. Bootlegging is definitely the consequence of the unfair treatment of Heavy bangers that I'm talking about, for sure!

Since you are Heavy Metal fans, are you associated with the underground scene of our time? Are there any recent bands that had an impact on you and impressed you? Do you view this revival of the old school style as a viable form of resurgence or as another short lasting trend?

Yes! WYTCH HAZEL from the UK impressed us IMMENSELY; I contacted them immediately asking them to do a split with us. We're also fans of HIGH SPIRITS, PORTRAIT, IN SOLITUDE, COLOSSUS, COBRA from Peru, QUICKSAND DREAM, and tons more. There are bands out there now that I consider to simply be riding a trend, but you can easily tell the difference between music bizzz pretenders and the true vanguard!

Could you describe us the scene in your area or in the US in general, if you are familiar with it? It is a fact that The States have lost their gleam as far as leading the Metal race goes, a long time now...

Here in Michigan it's a tight knit scene between Metalheads and Punks. There have been numerous great Crust Punk bands out of Detroit, and a lot of those people have Metal bands now. Bands such as ACID WITCH, REAPER, ANGUISH and PERVERSION we're all very big fans of and good friends with. We also keep very good touch with Chris Black, we think the work he's doing in all of his bands, especially HIGH SPIRITS and PHARAOH, is taking a place in the same 'race' you speak of and filling in that empty slot that's been there for a long time, and I agree!

Thanks for spending your precious time to answer these questions JP, you can have the last say!

Hail Hellas, we want to play in Greece around Keep it True time, we respect your dedication and especially your love of US Metal. We will arrive!

www.myspace.com/borrowedtimemetal

(Photos by Jena McShane)

Thanos Stafylarakis



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INNER AXIS



The band was formerly known as MIDGARD and you had released three demos under that moniker. Why did you change the name? And what were the reasons for the new one, INNER AXIS?

Zack: From the members that founded MIDGARD back in 1999, I am the only one still on board. Also, the band itself was never too happy with the name. It turned out that there were about a dozen other bands called MIDGARD. The difference between MIDGARD and what was going to be was just too much: 4 new members, no more female vocals, heavier and faster new stuff... I guess we have to see INNER AXIS as an (almost) new band. The name INNER AXIS does not have a special meaning ...

Kai: ... or maybe it does.

Zack: After months of discussing a new name at a local fast food restaurant (eating about 5000 cheeseburgers) we got this one left ... INNER AXIS!

Are some of the songs compositions released or written back when the band was called MIDGARD?

Zack: The song "Punisher" was recorded several times and released as a demo-version back in the MIDGARD years. Some other riffs and songs were more or less written when Kai joined the band. But they became totally different when we rearranged them for INNER AXIS.

The CD was recorded in 2009/2010, but it took almost a year for its' release. Was it that you were in search of a label or something else?

Kai: We did not record the tracks in a row, so the whole process took some time. And we were looking for a label indeed. Finally we took care for everything by ourselves and had to learn the business.

"Into the Storm" was finally released in late 2010, almost on your own. Was this a deliberate choice or were Metal labels negative towards releasing your CD?

Zack: We have sent "Into the storm" to some Metal labels but it is very hard to get a deal. Some labels were not interested in this release; others made offers which were unacceptable. Now we have financed everything on our own, we are holding the rights of our songs and we got a local label that is distributing the CD. It was very important for us to get the steel out there: Amazon, eBay, iTunes and all kinds of download portals. And I think we made the right choice.

How was the response so far for your debut, both in terms of fan/press acceptance and sales?

Zack: The fans are excited. On every concert we see new faces that can sing along the songs. We got mail from all over the world from people that like our stuff. Most reviews are also very positive. Of course, we are doing Heavy Metal in a traditional way. People and reviewers that like modern kinds of Metal or the more brutal stuff, especially with growling vocals did not rate us very high.

Kai: We are always selling some CD's after our gigs. Our label will soon get back to us with the official trading sales of last year. We were already told that we are doing well at download portals.

Zack: "Another thing was quite amazing: About 2 days after the official release you could find "Into the Storm" at nearly all illegal download sites! Lucky us ... we are not into it for money. So, it's great to see your work spreading all over like a disease!

Kai: As INNER AXIS is not what we do for our livings we can be tolerant towards downloads. But we enjoy every fan who realized our songs are worth buying.

Do you think that a small label would help you more in terms of sales and promotion? Or nowadays with the help of the web bands can bypass labels and do the same job with the same effectiveness on their own?

INNER AXIS is a German band that released their debut CD last year. While I am not the biggest fan of their music (read the review elsewhere...), I am sure German Power Metal fans will like it a lot. Add to this their dedication to what they are doing and in my opinion we have a band that fits our fanzine's "agenda" like a (steel) glove. Fellow countryman Zacharias Drosos (drums) and Kai Hagemann (vocals) replied to the following questions. Metal on Metal!

Zack: As I mentioned before we are just using the distribution ways of our label. The web is a great thing, but you got to have the time to use it. We are all working in our day jobs and some of us got families so the biggest problem is time. With our distribution you can order "Into the Storm" in 8 countries as a CD and you can download the album from the worldwide biggest sites. Also, without a record company it is very hard to play the festivals, even the small ones. But, you have

to get a good deal. Many labels are just signing bands and don't care about promotion, since they don't invest any money in the production of the CD's. We made promotion packages for the CD by ourselves and sent them to webzines and magazines worldwide."

What bands have influenced you as an individual? What would be the ones you all listen to? Some common influences?

Zack: We are all grown up with the classic Metal bands: JUDAS PRIEST and IRON MAIDEN, some 80's German Metal acts like HELLOWEEN, ACCEPT and BLIND GUARDIAN, some true stuff like MANOWAR and HAMMERFALL, or kind of newer bands like POWERWOLF. Some of us like a little more brutal stuff like SLAYER and some more progressive stuff like DREAM THEATER. Just our drummer Thies seems to be from another planet. He likes Funk, Jazz, Punk but he also adores the drum intro of "Painkiller"!

Kai: I personally like a range of music. Some of my favorite bands are far apart from INNER AXIS. Any listing would be oversized or incomplete-but HEAVY loaded for sure.

Zack: In our music you will find probably references to classic Metal bands. Twin guitars, melodic parts, instrumental parts, guitar solos, chorus lines etc. This "classical" fundament is getting mixed up with some thrash parts, keyboard arrangements and unusual guitar riffs and drum grooves.

Tell us a few things about your live performances. What should someone expect from a concert of INNER AXIS? Any bigger bands, local or foreign you shared the stage with?

Zack: If you take both, MIDGARD and INNER AXIS, we have shared the stage with acts like VADER, Paul DiAnno, PARAGON, ENFORCER, DARK AGE, NOISE FOREST, PORTRAIT, UNREST, SILENT SCREAM, BLACK HAWK and almost MYSTIC PROPHECY (they canceled their concert 2 hours before we started ...).

Kai: People told us, they felt the fun and energy we have on stage. This transfer is significant to us. And when the audience takes over singing the hook lines the show becomes perfect.

I read in your bio that you participated in the contest for the "Punisher: War Zone" movie soundtrack. Tell us a few things about it.

Zack: I have always been a great Punisher fan. I even love the 80's movie with Dolph Lundgren. After the second Punisher flick with Tomas Jane I thought about writing "The Punisher". He is just the ultimate Heavy Metal (anti)hero-so dark! We have played the song about 2 years live when I first heard that they are planning to make "Punisher: Warzone". It was a piece of work, but I found the email address of a photographer that knew the director. I sent him the song and asked very polite to forward my message to the director Lexi Alexander. Of course, I never thought that this would work. A few days later he got back to me, telling me that he likes the song and forwarded the mail. Of course, I never thought that the director will get in touch with a small Metal band from Germany. But Lexi Alexander liked the song, contacted us and brought us in touch with the music supervisor of the movie. He told us about the competition and we recorded a version of "The Punisher". Finally we got some internet-radio airplay in the USA, but it seems that they were looking for something differ-

ent. Listen to the track at the movie credits-it's anything but not Metal.
Kai: That version of "The Punisher" was my first recording with INNER AXIS. We re-recorded and added some parts for the CD later. I think the final mix is even better. I am a fan of Garth Ennis' work on the Punisher (Marvel) by the way."

The band also made it to the top ten of the Metal-related videogame, "Brutal Legend". Do you think that this particular game benefited bands that participated in it by making them more known?

Zack: For this competition we changed some lyrics of our song "Metal on Metal". It's a very rare version. If you find it, keep it. The competition was on Myspace. At the time we had some good reviews, new fans and more traffic on our Myspace and Facebook accounts. So it was worth it.

Being a new band, how do you see the current underground Metal scene? Too many bands and labels or is ok? Please give your opinion from a fan's as well as an active musician's point of view.

Zack: As a fan it is just amazing. You got new bands everywhere. It doesn't matter what kind of Metal you like, there are tons of bands out there. Of course, you need the time to listen and choose. Not everything is of high quality. In the time of home recording everybody can make his production, even in his own bathroom. Sometimes bands can handle the PC better than their instruments. We have low experience with labels but we learned very fast that there are black sheep.

Physical formats (LP, CD) vs. mp3's. Who will be the "victor"? How do you, a new band see this whole thing? Your album can be either obtained with someone's hard earned cash or downloaded for free



with a "click", Is the fans' mentality changed towards the latter or something else results in low sales and bands losing money?

Kai: There will always be fans and collectors who buy the physical formats-especially if there is a great artwork or additional stuff like DVD's. The quality of mp3's cannot keep up with a CD or even more a LP. So it depends on your standard and habit of listening. Metal fans tend to savor a full album in contrast to kids who grab mp3's from youtube and then listen to it in random play. Incidentally an album you enjoy for years is not that expensive according to other kinds of entertainment. I think both will still exist for a while.

What does the future hold for INNER AXIS?

Zack: Currently we are preparing to shoot a video to our song "Killing Lullaby". We are also looking forward to give our fans some great INNER AXIS in 2012 and we are working on new material for the next heavy strike!

Thanks a lot for your time guys. The last words are yours; we wish you the best for the future.

Zack: Thank YOU guys for having us in your great fanzine. And you people out there ...support the underground. Keep looking for fanzines and bands besides the mainstream. So many people are working hard because off their passion for Heavy Metal. Find them!!!
www.inneraxis.de

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On my own "Femetal Records" label out, MALTEZE, IGNITOR "Take to the sky" and "Road of bones", SCARLET ANGEL ; HYDROGYN "Bombshell" LPs and ACID "Live in Belgium 84" CD (full of old photos). Great female fronted bands in 80s Metal style! Plus DREAMS OF DAMNATION LP (great old style Thrash Metal, new band of Jim Durkin of Dark Angel with fem. Singer). Homepage with more informations: www.femetal-records.com!

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I have also a very big video collection for traditional Metal, Thrash and female fronted Metal from all around the world, from the 80s till today, old TV shows, and live. It includes many old cult names. I always look for more material, trade, buy, sell on DVD+-R (no copies of official videos or DVDs). List under the same directions.

Myspace page: www.myspace.com/el_metalero



QUESTION OF MADNESS is a new band hailing from Chicago, Illinois, home to many great bands, old and new. Despite they only have released one CD so far ("Dark Corners of the Mind" in 2010) I have added them to the "list". Doom Metal with a strong Epic element is what you will hear. The initial pressing of the CD is sold out for quite some time now, so until the reissue of it (and of course in anticipation of a new, 2nd CD), read what band leader, Alfonso Polo had to say.

When was the band put together and by which members?

Since the late 90's I had the idea of doing a solo album. At the time I was still playing with ANGELES DEL INFIERNO. But in between tours I wasn't doing anything musically. So one day I had the idea of doing a solo album, but I never took it too seriously. It was one of those "it would be cool" moments. After I left THE CHASM in 2003 I started to develop mild depression and anxiety, nothing too serious but enough to search for professional help. After a few months of therapy I came to the conclusion that a good way to deal with my inner demons was to put this stuff on paper or in this particular case on a CD. Fast forward to 2008/2009. That's when I started working on the whole concept of QUESTION OF MADNESS. I've always been aware of my limitations as a guitar player in general and I can't play drums that well so that's why I asked my former THE CHASM band mates for help, Julio Viterbo playing leads and Antonio Leon on drums, and thus, QUESTION OF MADNESS was born. Albert Rybka was technically the last member to join the project.

Interesting choice for a name. Where did the inspiration come from?

The idea of using the name QUESTION OF MADNESS was mine. You know, nowadays it is pretty hard to name your band. I took that name from a drawing I saw in a book as a child from a German artist called Fons Van Woerkom. The phrase "Question of Madness" sounded so powerful that it got stuck in my head for all these years. So when the time came to name the project I immediately went for QUESTION OF MADNESS. And it worked out great with the whole lyrical concept, the concept of the album. A funny fact is that the actual drawing has nothing to do with the whole QUESTION OF MADNESS concept as a Heavy Metal band.

You all have recording/live experience in other bands, most of them in the extreme Metal field. Could you please refer a little to your other bands?

I've played with numerous bands in the 20+ years I've been a musician; one of the most important bands was ALLUSION from Mexico City which was a Death/Prog Metal band, in the vein of ATHEIST, CYNIC and VOIVOD. After that I got the chance to join ANGELES DEL INFIERNO from Spain and then, THE CHASM from Mexico City (Via Chicago, Illinois). Every band with different styles and having different experiences with each one of them.

How was playing with ANGELES DEL INFIERNO in particular, one of the best and most popular Spanish bands of the 80's? (they are also very popular nowadays I guess)

I joined ANGELES DEL INFIERNO in September of 1995 and played with that group until the summer of 2000. That's what I like to call my "Rock star" period, haha. There were a lot of good things that happened during my time with them. I had the opportunity to play some amazing arenas in front of thousands of people. I traveled A LOT and partied like crazy. It was a great experience, I learned a lot from those guys. The most important lesson I learned was that THIS after all, is a business. And you have to be very careful with the decisions that you make and the people around you. Towards the end, the relationship turned a little sour so I decided to pack my bags and move on. I don't regret any second of that experience and I'm very grateful to them for the amazing opportunity they gave me. I agreed with some of their decisions and also disagreed with other decisions but hey, I wish them the best.

You had an extreme Metal background, how did you decide to release an Epic Doom Metal CD?

At first, I wanted to do a Death/Black Metal album. But been aware of my limitations as a guitar player I dropped that idea very quickly. I'd always been a Doom Metal fan so I thought, why not go slower and heavier instead of faster and chaotic? Basically QUESTION OF MADNESS is the result of all my influences put together in a band. I have a very open mind when it comes to music. 99.9% of my CD collection in Metal, the rest, a little bit of everything as long as it has quality, from Zappa, to THE BEATLES, to GOV'T MULE to LUSH, COCTEAU TWINS, MARILLION, GOBLIN, Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Angelo Badalamenti, Giorgio Moroder, MINISTRY, THE WHO, YES, PINK FLOYD, THE MARS VOLTA, CAMRL, music from the 40's and 50's, funk, etc.

You have Albert Rybka from KATAGORY V on vocals. Were you familiar with this band and seeked him out or something else?

I met Al at one of the last shows I did with THE CHASM. We played with POSSESSED that night and one of the opening bands for that show was a Power Metal outfit called BAVMORDA which was Al's band at the time. By the time we did that show I already had "Hollow Caves" complete, and I had the LuxInfra-

mundis contract secured. In the beginning of the whole QUESTION OF MADNESS project, I wanted to use Death Metal vocals for the album, but Daniel Corchado (who was working as our producer) convinced me of using a clean powerful voice instead. So I was pretty much scouting for singers in the Chicago area. When Al got on stage and I heard him sing, I knew he was the right guy for the job. At the end of the BAVMORDA set I approached him and shook his hand and that was it! I never even mentioned QUESTION OF MADNESS to him.. I just said "Good job" and that was it. About a year later I got in touch with him through Myspace and the rest is history...

Could you refer a little on the recording process of "The Dark Corners of the Mind"? Any funny incidents, difficulties etc.?

"The Dark Corners Of The Mind" was recorded throughout various periods of time between 2009 and 2010 at different locations. Mostly at Lux Inframundis Studios (some small parts where done at my place). The drums were tracked and engineered by Geoff Montgomery at The Ensomeroom Studios in Forth Wayne, Indiana. Funny incidents, and difficulties??? Dude, I like to call "The Dark Corners of the Mind" the "Hysteria" of Doom Metal haha! For those of you reading this that are not familiar with the history of DEF LEPPARD let me give you a quick history lesson. While recording "Hysteria", EVERYTHING seemed to happen to the DEF LEPPARD guys. Drugs, alcohol, hepatitis, a drummer losing his arm, etc. Well, QUESTION OF MADNESS got its share of bad luck too. Julio became ill, there were blizzards that stopped us from actually going to Indiana to record the drum tracks, musicians going out of town for weeks at the time, musicians having visiting relatives in town for weeks at a time, myself ending up at the hospital ER with a fucking kidney stone!!! And inches and more inches of SNOW. And delays, caused by various different factors. Some of them completely out of our control. It took a whole year to record the album because due to all of this. Plus everyone had different schedules which was one on the major headaches of the recording. Getting all this talent together to record leads, drums, vocals or to do the mixing and mastering. It was a nightmare!!! But in the end, all of the delays, problems and other stuff were well worth it. Oh! And we drank a lot of beer a and ate a lot of donuts haha...

How did you decide to release your debut CD on Lux Inframundis Productions?

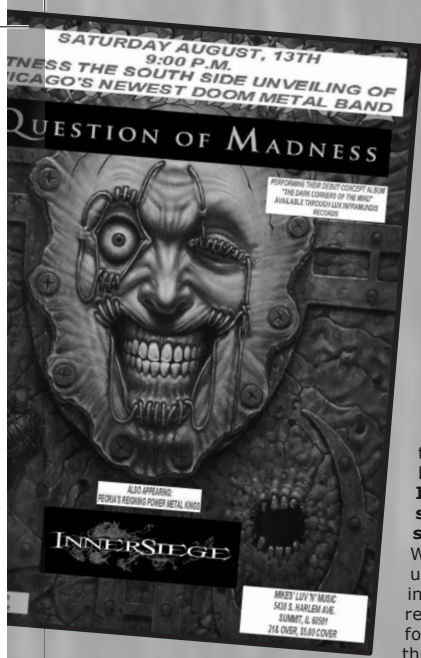
I told Dan (Corchado) about the whole QUESTION OF MADNESS project even before I began writing the music and he told me that he would have no problem releasing the CD as long as the music had quality. He's brutally honest when it comes to telling you if your stuff sucks haha. You gotta meet his standards which by the way are really high. And I guess it was the obvious thing to do since Lux Inframundis is the official record label of THE CHASM. And knowing Daniel for so long, why go somewhere else? So, after I did the demo of "Hollow Caves" I gave it to him and he really liked it. A few weeks later I gave him a copy of "Rhymes of Madness" and that closed the deal. After that, I finished the rest of the songs at home on my computer. I did the original demo without vocals which I gave to Al so that he could start working on the vocals. He then recorded vocals on top of the original demos and gave them back to me for approval. And that became the "unofficial" QUESTION OF MADNESS demo with vocals. The demo is not that different from the actual CD. Only a few changes were made. The solos are different. Only two of the original solos made it to album. The last solo in "Waves of Desperation" and the first solo in "Hollow Caves", which are mine. The rest are Julio's (Viterbo). The only other changes were the length of a couple of songs, the vocals which changed quite a bit and of course the albums overall sound after the mixing and mastering.

I really think that releasing a new CD in the quantity of 300 copies is a real shame. I mean, as far as I am concerned it's not such a big deal to do 500 for a little higher price. What's your opinion?

Money didn't have anything to do with the amount of copies Lux Inframundis released. What happened was that Lux Inframundis is more of a Death/Black Metal label and at the time they weren't sure about what reaction the people was going to have towards QUESTION OF MADNESS, so they decided to "play it safe" by releasing only 300 copies (boy was that a mistake haha). We were all surprised when the CD actually sold out that quickly. Also, it is Lux Inframundis' "policy" to release "limited quantities" of their releases.

What has been the feedback from local (and abroad) fans and press? Did you anticipate it?

To be honest I was worried about the reactions I would get to the album. Especially since I was talking about my "solo album" for so long without actually



doing it. And on top of that, well, having the THE CHASM and ANGELES DEL INFIERNO history behind me, well you know, you have to keep the flag very high. I was worried that people were going to be like "This is it??? All this talking and all this time waiting was for this????". Fortunately the CD has been getting great reviews from the media and the fans. But hey, in the end, as long as I'm happy with it, that's all that matters. When I approached Dan with the QUESTION OF MADNESS concept I made it very clear that I wasn't going to reinvent the light bulb or that "Alfonso Polo was going to create the new style that the world of Metal was waiting for". I made it clear that all I wanted to do was a "good, enjoyable, Doom Metal album".

I guess the CD is already sold out by now, so are there any plans to do another issue?

We're already working on a re-edition. But as usual the main problem here is Money. Releasing an album nowadays it's pretty easy (the recording process that is,) but actually paying for the recording and the pressing, well, that's the hard part... We're hoping that the re-edition of the Mind" will be out sometime this summer.

of "The Dark Corners

You may have experience for years in other bands, but QUESTION OF MADNESS is a new band. How do you see the whole mp3 "thing"? In my opinion is a double-edged sword, since there are tons of bands/releases nowadays (really, what's your opinion on this as well) and to put it lightly Metal fans for the most part come from more "poor" environments and the current situation on a very big part of the world doesn't help neither lots, nor "blind" purchases. I understand that bands and small labels (I couldn't care less for the big ones) losing sales but maybe they don't take into consideration the above points.

Well, you're right with the "double-edged sword" thing. I mean If the listener or "music buyer" is "like me" a collector, you really wanna own that CD; meaning the artwork, the lyrics, inserts and stuff, and you'll do what ever it takes to own an actual copy of that CD or vinyl (thank you e-bay). To me is pointless to have "the files" or "the digital download" but then again I see it from the collector point of view. Is like... those people that collect comic books or baseball cards, you wanna own the actual thing. What's the point of having a photo copy of it? Now the other edge of the sword... It really helps to put your name out there specially with bands like us with a limited amount of copies for sale. I'm pretty sure that right now there's someone in a "what-ever country" on the other side of the world DYING to get a copy of our album, and album that is sold out... So what can you do? PLEASE give him a copy of the CD! If that's gonna quench his thirst for Metal... go for it. The music business nowadays it's horrible, a lot of people complain that the cost of live shows has increased a lot in the last few years, but you gotta keep in mind one thing, the artist is not making money on record sales no more! If I buy a CD and burn it and give it away to "John Doe" and "John Doe" burns another copy and gives it to "Jane Doe" whom makes another copy to give to "John Doe" whom makes another copy to someone else, multiply by millions... There goes your record sales. And as a musician, well you still gotta make a living regardless of who you are, either IRON MAIDEN or say... QUESTION OF MADNESS haha... So what's the next logical step to make up for the money you're losing on record sales? Increase the cost of merchandise and tickets! And the same applies to book sales, DVD's etc... you can download a book to your Ipad, but you can not... hold it, display it, you know... Now you mentioned "blind purchases"... Well we all been through that but to me that's the magic of buying music, you can buy a CD with the cheesiest, crappiest cover out there but it can turn out to be the best thing you ever bought. Or it can be the opposite, great cover made by the best artist out there and be a complete dud... You gotta take that risk sometimes. I mean in the whole mp3 thing there is no rights or wrongs, I believe like tons of people that file sharing is killing well, pretty much any form of media, like I mentioned before, music, DVD's books, but in order to get rid of this problem, we would need to get rid of the internet and without the internet well... It's a vicious circle you know... Of course, before the internet was tape trading and everyone will record an album for a friend and stuff but it wasn't but it use to take longer. Now is just a click of a button away...

If we are to label your debut, I guess Epic Doom Metal would describe it justly. Do you agree? What are your personal and collective influences?

I guess so, I call it heavy/Doom Metal. Personally I don't think is that EPIC, but the audience and the media seem to like the term so... Influences? You have time haha? Too many. There's ROOT, CANDLEMASS, MERCYFUL FATE, SOLITUDE AETURNUS, MAYHEM, IRON MAIDEN, TROUBLE, BLACK SABBATH, MY DYING BRIDE, CATHEDRAL, BOLT THROWER, FATES WARNING, SLAYER, KRUX, ANCIENT WISDOM, NEMESIS, MANILLA ROAD, SPIRITUS MORTIS, SIGH, WINTER, MERCY, TIAMAT, AUTOPSY, MEMENTO MORI, DAYLIGHT CRIES, SWALLOW THE SUN, RUNEMAGICK, SORCERER, REVEREND BIZARRE, CONCEPT OF GOD, ABORYM, old school thrash, speed ... But like I mentioned before I enjoy all kinds of music as long as it has quality.

I have read in an interview you did that you like the idea of having "The Dark corners of the Mind" reissued/re-recorded with brutal vocals. Have you written the material intended for a death metal vocalist in the first place or is it something that you feel needs to be done after playing live the songs or whatever?

In the beginning of the whole QUESTION OF MADNESS project, I wanted to use Death Metal vocals for the album, but Dan Corchado (who was working as our producer) convinced me of using a clean powerful voice instead. To this day I've gotten comments from people telling me that they like the album but

they think it would've been even better with guttural vocals. That still bothers me. Haha! I mean, I'm not losing sleep over it but maybe in the future it would be interesting to do a re-edition with Death Metal vocals. But this is only an idea; I don't think any label would like to be releasing albums left and right just to see how it sounds with different vocals haha; too much money. Only time will tell. I still think it'll be cool. Maybe one of these days we'll do a live show with a guest singer or something.

Do you keep an eye on the current Metal scene? Any favorite bands?

GHOST is outstanding! DEAD CONGREGATION, DIAMOND PLATE, HAIL OF BULLETS, COFFINS, VOIVOD, Devin Townsend's work is insane, literally... I'm not that much into that new wave of Thrash/Speed but there's quite a few bands out there that are really good like CAULDRON, ENFORCER (Sweden), and obviously, I stick with the classics, waaaay too many to mention. The other day I went to see TESTAMENT with ANTHRAX and DEATH ANGE here in Chicago and I felt like I was 15 again. They killed! I wanted to get into the mosh pit but with my physical condition... I'm outta shape haha...

Has the band performed live yet?

So far we have played 4 shows since the CD came out, mostly because the other guys' schedules. Hopefully next year we'll be able to play some more. I think there's something line up for March and we're talking about a small tour with STONE MAGNUM, ACID WITCH and maybe RAVENSTHORNE.

Any offer to come and play in Europe? I guess you would be interested, right?

So far... No... Again, a lot of people don't even know about the existence of QUESTION OF MADNESS, a lot of this has to do with the small about of CD's that the label did. And even the label did some promotion and we had the album reviewed in magazines like Terrorizer and stuff, again, not a lot of people know about us. Everything more or less has been like "in the old times" you know? Word of mouth and the internet. Honestly I HATE FACEBOOK!!! But I had no choice but to open an account for the band and boy, was that a smart move. Damn social networks haha. It has helped the band a lot! I get mail from El Salvador, Brazil, Argentina, India, Indonesia, Netherlands, Italy, Malaysia, Chile, Sweden, Puerto Rico and so on... But then again, there is another problem regarding QUESTION OF MADNESS touring and it's a MAJOR problem since QUESTION OF MADNESS does not have a steady line up. All my musicians are session musicians and all of them have their bands or multiple projects going on which makes pretty hard for QUESTION OF MADNESS to either go on a long tour or even practice for local shows; and as incredible as it may sound, it's pretty hard to find Metal musicians in Chicago AND especially Metal musicians that want to play Doom Metal. Trust me I'll love to go back to Europe with MY band, but hey... We'll see what happen once the new album comes out. Everything's possible.

How is the Chicago scene nowadays? What would be your favorite bands from bands? What do you think of bands like TROUBLE, ZNOWHITE, SLAUTER XSTROYES, DAMIEN THORNE, ION VEIN and RIVAL?

The Metal scene in Chicago is pretty decent. Better than in some other states. We get all major acts coming to Chicago and the suburbs and most of the time there's a good turnout. It's still a little hard for small local bands to put shows together and have good attendance though. TROUBLE are the MASTERS here in Chicago, although I miss Eric Wagner been with them haha. SLAUTER XSTROYES are really good. What can you say about ZNOWHITE? Fucking Speed Metal with Nicole Lee singing her lungs out! RIVAL... Mmmh, I just don't get the whole



RIVAL story. Bad luck I guess, they sign with Metal Blade

but the label never made any promotion for the band, therefore the band never took off. They released the first two albums on their own, but after the "Metal Blade incident" I guess most of the band members started to lose interest in an active music career and ventured in other directions. Last time I saw them was this past summer, they play at a carnival with some cover bands...

What are your future plans? Should we expect a new CD soon? Could you give us some info?

Well, at this moment I'm working on new music for the next album. So far I have two songs done with no lyrics. I'm thinking about an 8 song album this time but we'll see what the future brings. I also have the title for the album already, BUT it's obviously a little early to reveal it. Pretty much the new material will be in the same style of "The Dark corners of the Mind" so you guys can expect some more Heavy/Doom Metal with an Epic influence.

Thanks for your time Alfonso. I wish you the best and I am looking forward to more from the band soon.

Thank you so much for your interest and support! Cheers! Hail Greece!

<http://questionofmadness.com/>

Kostas Kailiazis

BLACK SWORD THUNDER ATTACK

This has to be one of the biggest surprises for Epic Metal fans for the last years. (almost) out of nowhere, comes a demo tape (yes!) with three songs that will blow away all fans of EPIC Metal. And I emphasize on the term, because nowadays many bands claim to play Epic Metal, just because of a few melodies or lyrics, but most of them (and with them, fans, labels and media alike) have forgotten that this music has to come from the heart. Exactly as it was done by the Masters. Well, BLACK SWORD THUNDER ATTACK is a band that continues in that direction. I am aware of my statement and enthusiasm for a band that has only three songs to showcase. Below you can read a very interesting (and at times funny) interview with Stellos, bass player and singer of the band...

Hello Stellos. Congratulations for the fantastic demo you released, which despite being a poorly produced demo tape, puts to shame many so called Epic bands. Please give us a bio of the band.

We were still two teenage students in the High School of our little city, Kalambaka, in 1996 or 1997 I think, when me and my best friend Chris decided to form our own band. Chris handled the guitars and I took over the bass (my old "job", which I will once more take over) but we didn't search for other members. It just happened that Marios, who had a drum set, came along at a certain point and became our drummer. So simple. A few years later it was decided that I would sing in the band. Throughout the years of our existence there were periods that we were casually occupied with the band (without being hard workers), periods that we were apart due to studies in other towns, army duties etc. jobs etc. Even periods where we were forgetting we had a band. In fact we have always been an active and inactive band at the same time. But I think the time for a new start has come, since for the first time after many years we all live in Kalambaka once more, something that will surely help us. **You had another release in 2002, the "Gates of Fire" demo, an one-track affair. Tell us a few things about it.**

That demo was a rehearsal in the drummer's house. It just happened that we found a 3-channel tape recorded, which we borrowed that night. We decided to record a version of our new (at the time) track, "Gates of Fire", more for personal reminder in the future. The next day when I drew (for fun) a cover with the songs' theme we thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to send a few tapes to friends or underground maniacs that may have heard worse. Even back then we knew that this demo was way below our abilities but in the end it proved useful. Why? Because it didn't let us forget that we have a band. Even 4 or 5 years after there were a few people (ok, very few) that asked me about the band. I remember them, one by one and they need to know that they played a huge part so that this stupid band from Kalambaka to make a comeback, even 9 years after.

Didn't occur to you to re-work these ideas?

Now, as far as this specific track ("Gates of Fire") is concerned, of course we haven't "abandoned" it, I think I have 4-5 versions of it from all these years at my place. It has certainly changed, even from the first days and we continued to improve it as the years passed by. It is noteworthy that a guy from Kalambaka has covered it using a traditional instrument, bouzouki. I think he did it in 2003 and it's really interesting.

How come and we didn't hear from the band earlier?

A few months after the 2002 demo, I had to serve in the Army (e.note: it's still obligatory in Greece) and unfortunately when I got back I had to work for 12/15 hours/day, every day. I had forgotten I was a human being, let alone thinking about the band. At the same time, Chris was still in Thessaloniki for his studies but kept writing songs on his guitar. The people that had heard more material helped us a lot at this time by telling us that it would be a great mistake if these ideas never saw the light of day. Sometime in 2006-2007 we started working on our songs, unfortunately by phone (usually). We must have spent thousands of hours talking through the phone trying to make each other understand which guitar riff we are referring to by making weird noises like "dararararam,dararamtiram" with our mouths... Those discussions were so ridiculous! Most of the times one of us would make funny sounds and the other would laugh at it, haha! As you can easily understand things couldn't move fast with this way, the times we all rehearsed together were very, very few. We had recorded some tracks, but usually one at a time and we didn't want to release an one-track demo again. One weekend we thought we were on a good way towards completing a 3 or 4 track demo, but we finally recorded "Don't hear the Sirens" and "On the way of Acheron". Luckily we had "Evil Sorcery" ready from the previous session (I think 1-2 months back), we decided that the sound fits with the other two and that this could be the third track of the demo. This is how we reached in releasing "Hell's Reign", almost 9 years after "Gates of Fire"... What can I say? Time marching fast...

You hail from Kalambaka, a small but wonderful town of central Greece. How are things there concerning Heavy Metal?

Niagara waterfalls are also wonderful, but it's not nice living under them...Until the end of the 90's, some superstitions were still common among people, that

I think were already in the past in the big cities. Being a Metallor and more importantly looking like one was something very strange, not only for society but also for our fellow students in our High school, many of whom were certain you were a Satanist. This has changed as time passed by; we now think others are Satanists, since we are white Metallors...Now to the band subject...Until a few years back, all bands from our area were cover bands with no original tracks...But things have changed and now there are quite a few bands from here (or with members from Kalambaka) with original songs. I can mention us, BLACK CASSTLE, LIQUID FIRE (it's uncertain if they will use that name), RUTHLESS RAGE...we have "created" a movement, which we call "Farmer's Metal" (Αγροτικό Metal) and it's one of the best things that has happened in Greece. For many years, metallors from Athens and Thessaloniki argue for which town has the best bands. We came with the Farmer's Metal movement to solve this problem and make them friends once more by sharing a common knowledge: Kalambaka Metal is the best in Greece.

How was "In Hell's Reign" received so far from fans, etc.?

I would say "love or hate", but it's really not enough to describe the real situation. I think "too much love or too much hate" is more appropriate. We have received e-mails with incredible comments like "you are the best Epic band nowadays", "your demo is the best thing I have ever heard the last few years", "I already rank you among bands like MANILLA ROAD, CIRITH UNGOL, PAGAN ALTAR etc." and many more. It was a real honor that we had/have so many e-mails from around the world from people to get a humble tape. Even the postal office employee, seeing me every week sending packages in every possible and impossible destination, didn't hold his curiosity back and asked me "what the hell do you send in all these countries"? To receive my answer, "drugs and guns of course!". I have to say though that some fans didn't like us at all, especially in one or two internet forums I saw some very bad comments, but you can't be a "love or hate" band without the haters, right? We need those that hate us as much as we need those that love us. The only ones that are "useless" for a band are the ones they will never tell you a few words, give you feedback, they will not support you, they will not mention your name and finally they will not make those that love you angry by saying bad things in order for them to love you more...

Did you send your material in labels? If yes, what was the reaction?

The label issue is the last thing on our minds and we didn't send nothing to a label, maybe because we are very lazy and do minimal promotion for our music. We have talked with 3-4 independent Metal labels from different countries, whose owners approached as fans first of all, something that we appreciated a lot. I would like to thank them through this interview once more for the honor they did bothering with us.

Why did you choose this specific style?

Unfortunately, it's the only style we can "produce". I say unfortunately because the economic crisis is huge, our jobs really suck day to day and it would be very useful to make some money from the band. It's a matter of survival now...But the songs have the same anti-commercial, obscure/epic style...Unfortunately...Some bands when things were better for mankind would declare "we will die for our music", but we live in these times and we cry in desperation "we will die from hunger because of our music!".

The LORDIAN GUARD influences are more than clear, was this done deliberately?

We are in love with LORDIAN GUARD and I think you know the saying "love and coughing can't be hidden". When you have something in your heart, it's bound to come out eventually. The only thing done on purpose is the dedication of the tape to Vidonne (ok and the vocals...a little...). We had/have in mind the bad words that were (and still being) said about this wonderful, heavenly voice.

What are the lyrical subjects you deal with?

In our everyday lives we are bothered with issues common for men around the globe...Football, basketball, where we will find the best food to eat, the most beautiful women etc. But when it comes to writing lyrics, for weird reason themes that never trouble us in our "real" lives spring. Like the Gates of Hell, Armies of Lucifer, Judgment of the Dead, the Eternal Battle between Light and Dark...All these nice things...

Did you think to release the demo in CD format so it would be easier to be distributed/heard from more people?

We have already sent over 400 tapes...I really don't want all these people to see a CD out of sudden. It would be a little unfair. I have to reveal that some close friends of the band (that supported us a little more or just kept in touch all these years), already have a CD version of the demo (I didn't want to do it, they forced me to do it a few months back, haha). If someone is not satisfied with the tape, our e-mail is always available. There is not a chance to distribute through distros etc. CD's, the release is a tape and this is how it will stay.

Stellos, we know you are a staunch Metal fan. How do you see the situation with all these new bands, labels, releases etc.?

It's pretty clear for me, I don't feel that I am facing an overdose of new releases. The musical style that I am interested in is very specific and limited and I can eliminate something from the first second. I know what I want to hear, which labels' material might be of interest to me, what fanzines to read and whose reviews to trust. I have many friends that I know will keep me updated for the existence of a band I don't know but it's most certainly something I will enjoy. They know my musical tastes.

We live a "new wave" of re-issues. It seems that everything released/recorded in the 80's is reissued with the only criterion being how "cult" it was/is and the number of limited copies the LP is released in or how many patches there



are in it and not its' musical value.

I prefer to see expensive/rare albums being reissued...The others I already have, or I can buy originals whenever I like. The rare/expensive albums without musical value were "dangerous" 15 years ago with many people losing hundreds of dollars. Now anyone can check the music and not risk not even 10-15€ for the reissue... If someone is so stupid to collect CD reissues of rare/expensive albums of bad music, this is a reason to laugh, not trouble myself. **Does this have an influence on the fans and as a consequence to the new bands that release their material either through small, independent labels or on their own?**

What do you mean? Only the new bands have rights? Don't the old bands have soul (e.note: Greek expression, I don't know if it makes sense)? I am glad that many old bands got a small part of the recognition they always deserved, music is something that doesn't have age. If a 30-year old demo is really worth it, I ask from labels to reissue this. I want to listen to it, not an average new band. On the other hand, many new bands (old school oriented) should feel grateful that fans still search for the old/forsaken/cult bands. There are the same fans that might give them a chance as well.

Which are the releases you distinguished in 2011?

My favorite is "In Blood in Battle" of our brother band VALIDOR. The s/t LP of the Portuguese MIDNIGHT PRIEST was amazing, I love this band. I have to mention two mini albums that impressed me, "We rule the Night" from ELIMINATOR and "White Knight" from DAVID CLEREST PROJECT. For the new year (2012), I anxiously await the releases of Greek bands like MENACE, VALOR and WRATHBLADE, as well as the return of the Legendary WARLORD.

Should we expect new songs soon?

Not only new, but many songs that we have been working for years now. We argue almost every day which songs to include in our debut and which to leave aside for the next one. I hope we decide this year.

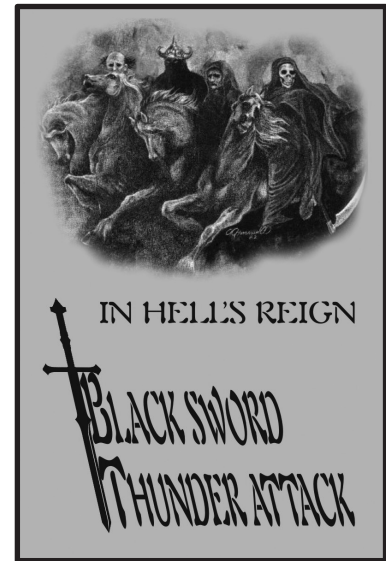
Is in the band's plans to have a permanent line-up so we can enjoy a live show soon?

The lineup is the same since the band's inception. We are just lazy and we bring more to mind the Three Stooges than an actual band. I had quit playing bass for many years, I just picked it up again and I am almost all the time the one that delays the band. Chris has the bad habit of forgetting the songs (it happens if you rehearse twice a year) and playing the riffs in the wrong order, haha. We are speaking for his own songs, the guy is even stupider than me. The award of course goes to Marios, the drummer, who was forced to sell his drum set so he could afford a lawyer as we speak, so he could get out of jail twice last year and doesn't have where to practice. As you understand, if we play live now, it won't be something to enjoy, more like a tragedy.

Thanks for your time, see you soon in Athens.

Thanks and see you soon guys, Farmer's Metal or no Metal at All!!!!
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Kostas Kailiazis



DECEPTOR

DECEPTOR is a new force in the heavy metal scene hailing from the depths of the British undergrounds and I still question myself on how luck had favoured me on my first contact with them, them being a group I didn't even know they existed! They became an instant favourite of mine as soon as I played their disc and I know now that there is a band out there that is worth the wait of another album and that can be looked up on as much as bands in the likes of VEKTOR are. Without hesitating a bit, I knew these most of all heavy metal fans would fill some space in our new issue, so here's what Paul, Sam and James told us about their venture. I wholeheartedly hope they get what they deserve, which is more than just much or enough...

Congratulations on the release of your first official MCD! I had no idea this band was out there till James introduced it to me, so give us a brief bio of the band, how long is it since you first got together and formed the band etc.

Paul: DECEPTOR has had a fairly uneven road up to this point, with a few twists and turns along the way. We first started in 2005, but it was a very different band then. I was just starting university in Birmingham, and despite it being the home of heavy metal itself, it wasn't easy to find a suitable brigade of metal crazed warriors to hammer out some solid steel with. Almost everyone from the first incarnation fell by the wayside due to being too much of a wimp, except for Bestial Bill and me. We got jamming with J. von Slutthraser soon though, and along with another guitarist we bashed out the Start the Assault demo. The other guitarist soon revealed his fickle nature by quitting the band via email just after our first show! Sam Mackertich was actually in the crowd for that show, and when we asked if he'd pick up the missing axe, he was bang on it. With this line-up we wrote some more songs and went back to the studio to lay down "Bound to the Oath". Some time after this, J. von joined the list of drop-outs, but by letter this time at least, not by email haha! Luckily for us, this left the drum stool open for a certain James Ashbey to come in and show us what real drumming was all about. Around this time Sam was taking more of a role in the songwriting, and our material was getting more technical and twisting. James' drumming fitted this new style really well, but unfortunately this direction was not really what Bill had in mind, so he left the band after a few shows in 2008. At this point, we thought about getting a new guitarist in, but in the end we couldn't be bothered with teaching another guy all the twisted riffs only for them to wimp out on us, so we carried on as a 3-piece and haven't looked back since. We wrote the rest of the material for the SOOTHSAYER EP and took our time getting the record right. We've played a lot of shows recently and we're really feeling like we've hit our stride. We have a lot of storming new material ready to go, so the next step is to launch it into people's faces at a hundred miles per hour!

Did any of the band members play with another band before you decided to bring DECEPTOR into life?

Paul: In fact, every member of DECEPTOR had played in other bands before: Sam and I used to play in SONIC DEATH, a band we started about 9 years ago, I also played in MUTANT, and James had already been playing in CRAVEN IDOL for a while, and also played in DOCTOR DEATH for some time. There are actually a couple of old SONIC DEATH riffs hidden away in the SOOTHSAYER EP.

So, you release "Start the Assault" demo in 2006 which included 3 pure thrashers. The band sounds like a raw SABBAT(UK) at this point without letting yourselves become a cheap copy of this pioneering British group, but the production job is quite poor to say the least, making the

songs sustain an 80's charm. Was it deliberate or it was only a matter of experience (or the obvious lack of it) and was this demo, exactly as your next one, recorded live in the studio as it sounds like to my ears?

Paul: When I listen back to this demo, I really quite like the production job. It's very raw, that's true, but as you say I think it had an 80s charm. This wasn't entirely deliberate: we just had little money, experience and time to do it. This was recorded semi-live: we did guide guitar, drums and bass at the same time, then re-recorded guitars and vocals over the top afterwards. There are a few vocal lines I would like to do a re-take of on this one, and a couple of guitar riffs could be played better, but I think it sounds like a young furious band just going for it.

Sam: Hearing 'Start The Assault' made me want to join DECEPTOR. It obviously sounds a bit baggy all round, but it has massive charm to it. I love Fulda's vocals on this, it's the strongest part of the record for me. Almost all modern thrash acts have appalling vocals, and Paul's performance on "STA" made me wonder why I ever bothered singing for SONIC DEATH.

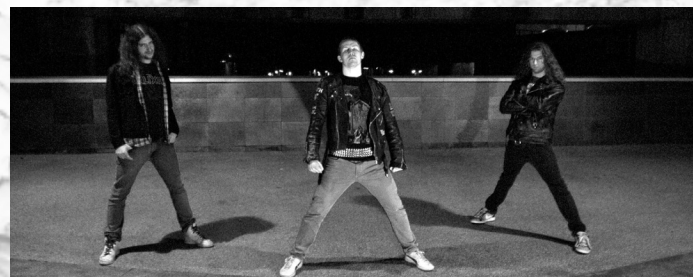
Enter 2007 and you have the 4 song "Bound to the Oath" demo prepared! Not much have changed regarding the style the band serves, maybe the songs are a tad more straight-forward and rabid I would say, compared to the previous demo. Also, "Mistress of Metal" sounds as if it was recorded in a different session strangely how....

Paul: Well I have to say I don't like the production job on this one as much as Start the Assault. You can barely hear the bass for one thing! We used the same studio but had a different producer, who really didn't know what he was doing. Also on this demo the tightness of the original drum tracks was not enough to record the other tracks over well. It's interesting that you mention "Mistress of Metal" sounds like a different session... it is from the same session, but it had been recorded once before: "Mistress of Metal" originally came about when J. von's brother, Apples von Warbastard, wrote the lyrics while waiting in a queue for a metal show. He sent them to Bestial Bill for a laugh, but we decided to write the music and record the song for Apples' birthday, under the name 'Ejaculator'. Only 5 copies ever existed of that recording.

Well, the British scene is not renowned for being the most active the last few years, concerning bands that embrace the traditional metal sound in every branch or sub-genre of metal music. How did you try to promote your music over there? Were you supported by local press and gig promoters at all?

James: You're right, the UK has definitely lagged behind other countries for traditional metal as well as other styles. The country's brightest hopes for the classic sound are probably DARK FOREST, ELIMINATOR and WYTCH HAZEL. (Sam: Don't forget the brand new AMULET). Our promotional efforts have not been as extensive as they could have been, although we have had small features in Terrorizer and Zero Tolerance mags. The internet opens lots of doors to bands if they plan on spamming themselves everywhere, but that doesn't come naturally to us really, so we've maintained a relatively low profile - I don't think there will be a DECEPTOR Twitter page any time soon!! Our favourite way to reach people is playing gigs and selling our CDs there. We do have a blog however, which we use for our sinister propaganda from time to time.

4 long years later, your first MCD is finally out on your own funds! There is a distinct shift in your musical direction, in an overall qualitative



approach mainly, the songwriting became more mild and technical, yet sustaining the raw power of the past. I believe this is the most suitable direction this band should follow that could make it distinguish, bringing in mind the legendary US technical power/thrash bands of the early to mid 90's, a style that had left its mark in metal history and sadly never got reproduced with equal success! How did this change come about?

James: The biggest single factor in the stylistic shift was probably the line-up change following Bestial Bill's departure. At this point I would say that the song-writing style of Paul and Sam's old band SONIC DEATH came more to the forefront, as there was now only one guitar and Sam's playing style is very different to Bill's. Another factor could be our further listening as metal fans, which of course continues all the time; bands such as HELSTAR and SLAUTER XSTROYES became particular favourites, and this navigated us away from the more conventional thrash traits on the first 2 demos.

Sam: You are correct, it has been quite a dramatic shift. When we initially settled on being a three-piece, we considered a name change and re-launching with the new record. However nothing seemed to stick, it's quite hard to think of a name better than DECEPTOR. Even though we are almost a completely new band from the original line-ups, some of the older, faster tunes sneak into our set lists still.

Personally, I can hear a lot of diverse influences in this MCD, ranging from US power metal bands such as HELSTAR and the likes to CORONER and DEATH! If one would have asked me, I would bet my ass that DECEPTOR is a US band. What made you write this way? I know you are die hard metalheads with a traditional heavy metal background as depicted in the band picture in the booklet, I also know you are avid NWOBHM and doom metal fans.

James: It's true that the newer DECEPTOR material draws a lot of inspiration from certain American riffmasters. We all like listening to complex fast metal that manages to retain a strong dose of evilness and melody - the bands you mention all achieved this. In my opinion the term "heavy metal" can loosely apply to a very wide range of bands who capture the same feeling, whether it be NWOBHM or death metal. For example, in this loose sense I would regard IMMORTAL's 'Pure Holocaust' as a killer heavy metal album, just like 'Altars of Madness' or 'A Sultan's Ransom' is. They're all drawing on the same force. But yes our particular way of songwriting is most shaped by the more technical side of things.

Sam: I would also add that we have just as many European influences as American.

When I met James and he gave me the CD, I remember him telling me that production sounded a bit more "modern" than what you expected. Listening to the music, I can't really imagine how this style could be conveyed with an old-school production. What changes do you plan to do in the future to make improvements in your sound. Experience is a teacher on its own, but are there any mistakes that you wouldn't like to repeat on a future recording?

James: The 'Soothsayer' EP was certainly recorded in a very "modern" studio environment, so it does sound a lot crisper and cleaner than many '80s recordings, but I didn't mean to suggest that it sounds like other culprits of modern metal. It doesn't sound totally plastic and over-engineered like a lot of new bands do, and the mastering process really succeeded in giving it extra warmth and power I think. Nevertheless it did take over a year to complete, and while this was partly due to our busy schedules and geographical separation, recording in a more 'live' fashion would have sped things up a lot. It would be great if we could do a more live recording next time, because as well as being quicker it may also sound more organic and energetic.

I've noticed there are no guitar solos in your songs, apart from the more "accessible" "Oracle of Despair", even though there is excessive talent and skill to add some exhibitionism residues on and I always appreciated bands that consciously opposed to the compulsive song structure some people want heavy metal to have acquired and persistently perpetuate, with me being on one side yelling that solos in traditional metal music is a necessary ingredient for an integrated song! How come, what is the band's attitude in that?

Sam: DECEPTOR never planned on being a trio, but when B.C. left, we were happy with how things sounded in rehearsal. As a three piece it's uncool to put too many things on a record that can't be replicated live, i.e. dual guitar or even rhythm guitars under solos. In recent years I have focused far more on riffs, lyrics and songs than practising and writing solos. I derive much more pleasure from conceiving a riff that sounds heavy and eternal, than practising solo licks. It's not a rule as such though, and there will be splashes of lead guitar on our next release.

Where do you stand concerning the lyrics? I read they are very well done mixing the issues that bands of styles involved in your blend of influences encounter! What is "Kursk" by the way. Is it the band's mascot and does it have to do anything with what the cover art portrays?

Sam: "Kursk" is not a mascot. "Kursk" is about a Russian submarine disaster in the year 2000 (e.note: shit, I thought I had googled it right!) The vessel was named after a Russian city where the largest tank battle in history took place, during World War II. Tanks and submarines are seriously heavy metal. The cover of the EP is painted by Paul, and is a vision of the "Crypt of the Fates" referenced in "Oracle of De-



spair". We like song titles and lyrics that conjure vivid imagery, we are not preachers, and we will never write a song about current affairs (aside, "Pain Amplifier" is about using Heavy Metal as torture at Camp X-Ray). I usually find ill-informed politics/opinion in metal cringe worthy.

James: The fate of the Russians aboard the nuclear sub "Kursk" was both horrific and mysterious, and it therefore seemed like a great topic to put to music. The exact circumstances will probably remain shrouded in secrecy, but the official verdict was that a torpedo malfunction caused catastrophic damage to the hull, and no one survived the subsequent influx of seawater. There was evidence however that some sailors remained stranded in the icy recesses of the vessel until their oxygen ran out, so this gave us extra scope to speculate on their final bleak moments.

Is there any particular reason why you switched from using nicknames in your demo days. Was it combined with the change in the songwriting style?

Paul: We just thought it was better to put our real names in, no major scrutiny went into the decision.

We were a few years older than when we put out the first two demos, so maybe we grew up a little.

How many copies of your MCD have you pressed? Are you in touch with any labels after it was released? Was it deliberately self-financed?

James: 500 copies of the MCD were pressed. We have sent copies to various labels, but this has not been particularly proactive, and we certainly haven't conducted any major promo campaign for it. Part of the reason for this is that we have to work at a limited pace, and wouldn't want the weight of expectation that might come with a label. But on the other hand, teaming up with a smaller independent label would be ideal for us with future releases in mind, so if a suitable party expressed interest we would discuss it eagerly!

What are the band's future plans, is there a full-length into the picture? Do you have material enough for an album at this point and what is the surprise in the band's musical direction this time, if any?

James: We have numerous sonic seeds in the DECEPTOR 'riff bag', and several of these are now taking shape into full songs. We foresee ourselves having the material (and time) to record another similarly lengthed 4-5 song offering in the first half of 2012. I don't think there will be many stylistic surprises this time round as we feel we really hit our songwriting stride on the previous MCD. If anything the USPM slant is more present in the new riffs, although we also still have several moments moulded by earlier heavy metal. Future lyrical themes include black ops jungle warfare, the grisly evolution of modern medicine, and the treacherous labyrinth of perceived emotions.

Can you name some influences you have as a band and each band member separately? Are you collectors of any kind of music or format? Can you also name 5 of your favorite underground metal records, new, old, whatever...

James: To give an overview of our shared tastes in different directions, we like: classic/power metal with heroic soaring vocals and razorblade riffs (ATTACKER, SORTILEGE, CRIMSON GLORY, DESTINY'S END); rabid thrash-hammering (ARTILLERY, INFERNAL MAJESTY, VOIVOD, DESTRUCTION, CORONER); labyrinthine weavers of deathly maledictions (NOCTURNUS, MORGOTH, PESTILENCE, MORBID ANGEL); and various unique progressive forces (SLAUTER XTROYES, CHICK COREA, JOHN MAGLAUGHLIN, BRAND X). I like to own heavy metal in solid form as much as possible, and I primarily buy CDs. I certainly couldn't claim to be a 'collector' though, partly because there's too much catching up to do to become fixated on one particular band or scene's output. Vinyls are obviously the ultimate heavy metal 'objects', and I do get things on wax on occasion, but storage space and postage costs are always a consideration. I personally love acquiring new music on both formats, as long as it sounds good to my audio receptors.

Sam: Things I'm currently spinning...MORBUS CHRON-"Sleepers in the Rift," CHRISTIAN MISTRESS-"Agony & Opium", OBLIVEON-"From This Day Forward", DEMENTED TED-"Promises Impure", ENERGY VAMPIRES-"Energy Vampires"

James: A somewhat arbitrary batch of gems...SATAN-"Court in the Act", FATES WARNING-"Awaken the Guardian", CANDLEMASS-"Epicus Doomicus Metallicus", CIRITH UNGOL-"One Foot in Hell", OMEN-"Battle Cry"

Paul: Some current anthems of steel...ADRAMELCH-"Irae Melanox", SAVAGE GRACE-"Master of Disguise", SLAUTER XSTROYES-"Winter Kill", SADISTIC INTENT-"Resurrection of the Ancient Black Earth", FATES WARNING-"The Spectre Within".

Are you aware of the band VEKTOR, that is moving towards a similar (but more thasy and technical) direction with DECEPTOR by the way? Do you ever get compared with them?

Paul: Yeah we're all big fans of VEKTOR already! Actually I was lucky enough to be one of the few European residents to see them play live recently. I was visiting Pasadena, CA and they were playing a show supporting EXMORTUS in Fullerton, about an hour's drive away, so I went to check it out. They only got to play for less than 30mins but they were awesome. I chatted for a while with their guitarist Erik; he's a really cool guy, and I gave him a couple of copies of the EP. Haven't heard what he thought of it yet though. Nobody's compared us with them really yet, I guess even though they're signed to Heavy Artillery they're still pretty underground. We tend to get compared to UK bands by the UK press, most recently with SAB-BAT (UK), but we don't really take much influence from other UK thrash bands.

Sam: I have a "Hunger For Violence" t-shirt and "Out-er Isolation" sounds like a furious front-fuck.

Since I have a cloudy sight of what's going on



there, please let us know of the situation regarding the current British scene? Is there a light in the dark for the country that actually raised the banner of heavy metal initially? Is music there so much fucked up and corrupted by the music industry?

James: As mentioned above there are a small cluster of bands pursuing the classic metal path, and a few bright hopes at the extremity end of things. I think it's always easier to judge (and to some extent artificially construct) a country's "scene" from the outside, whereas the reality is usually individual bands doing their own thing in the face of more or less apathy. So I'll refrain from spouting too much English pessimism, except to say that I do think commercialism has sounded much more of a death knell for metal here than elsewhere - you only have to look at UK festivals to see that!

James, you are the publisher and editor of Cimmerian Shadows 'zine, a well done printed fanzine which had its first issue out a few months ago. Being a part of this crusade, do you feel fanzines are necessary to promote underground music and do they actually help the underground scene? What do you think of the fact that the last 10-15 years or so printed publications are dramatically reduced in number and got substituted by the so called e-zines?

James: I do think fanzines are still the best way to genuinely engage with the underground and sidestep commercialism in music. Reading a magazine that operates as a money-making scheme will never be the same. I don't mean to denigrate the work that a lot of passionate people contribute to glossy magazines, but when you encounter a magazine charging bands hundreds of pounds to appear on a disposable cover CD for example, or when reviewers are told to write positive things about bands whose labels have a sufficiently high marketing budget, you know something is wrong.

Fanzines on the other hand wouldn't exist if their creators weren't personally in love with the music, and this is something I really appreciate as a reader. Also, with no premium on space, fanzines are free to delve into bands as much as they want, and hopefully convey a lot more passion and character in the process. When you see the amount of effort and enthusiasm that goes into tomes like "Snakepit" - or indeed "Steel for an Age"! - there's no real reason to look elsewhere for your heavy metal nourishment! Quantifying the help they give to the underground is pretty impossible, but I guess if even a handful of people check out a band after reading an interview or review, then something has been achieved.

I don't personally enjoy browsing e-zines much (for the same reason why I would never buy an e-book) but if they are done with the same motives and enthusiasm as fanzines, then they should be applauded. On the other hand I am a regular visitor of various underground metal forums, and I think that for all the online silliness that always crops up, these are a strong force for good, and I bet metal fans in the '80s would have loved the level of communication and immediacy that forums allow.

Sam: These days in the UK a glossy mag costs as much as our EP, and is filled with shit, not metal. Zines are great because you can't leave comments.



However where the internet really works is in the archiving and availability of old fanzines, allowing those dedicated collectors to share their findings with the world. Always fun to be found at a site like sendback-mystamps.org

You are in charge of an alternative printing, giving space to horror and fantasy literature articles along with the pure music stuff, themes that had always been connected to the metal cult. Is this the vision you have of how you want your future issues to come out as well?

James: Yes absolutely, I'd like to build on this element more if anything. I like it when fanzines have some extra flavour - "Tornado" from Denmark is interesting in the way it's part devoted to horror films, for example - and given how interwoven heavy metal is with fantasy/horror literature (and due to my personal love of it as a reader and wannabe writer), it seemed like a good theme to run with. I therefore plan to continue publishing weird fiction in "Cimmerian Shadows" (penned by myself and anyone else whose work evades the "Finger of Scorn") and celebrating it in various other ways, while keeping heavy metal as the primary focus.

When is a new issue offered for sale? Do you have a time plan on the consistency of its release?

James: It wouldn't be wise to set any specific deadline, and I have no timescale of when issues will surface.

This is both a blessing and a curse; you don't have to compromise or cut corners on content, but at the same time there's potentially no driving force to put the effort in. A loose target can be helpful (e.g. a particular metal event), but ultimately it will just have to be 'done when it's done'! I would be quite happy if it appeared twice a year, but we shall see.

In this first issue that I got hold of, you focus on doom metal and NWOBHM bands mainly...

James: Issue 1 reflected my listening habits at the time of writing, and these have not really changed since then, so despite planning to feature a wider range of genres in number 2, it's currently shaping up to be more of the same haha! I love old-fashioned death metal, black metal and thrash as well, although doom and classic/power metal are what I absorb most as a listener. Also, to some extent I think doom/HM receives less coverage in the current fanzine climate, so if people want to they can find extremier stuff featured in lots of publications far more venerable than mine!

Thank you for this wonderful interview guys, I wish you all the best with DECEPTOR because you really deserve it! You can count another one die-hard fan in your list!

Paul: Thanks for the questions! Hails to the Greek DECEPTOR too, we didn't know about you when we chose our name, but we do now!

Sam: Horns up, cross down. We look forward to our debut Greek performance. Anti-hail to the now defunct American DECEPTOR.

James: Thanks for supporting us Thanos and I look forward to reading Steel For An Age 2.

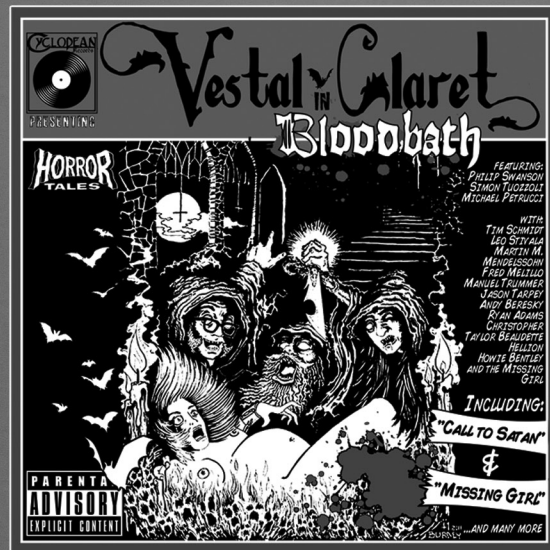
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SPITFIRE

SPITFIRE is one of the oldest Italian METAL bands ever to get their material released on vinyl and one of the forerunners of Italian Heavy Metal band in the early 80's. Their only release back then was a 7" single (in 1984) and it wasn't until 2002, when a CD compilation of 80's demo material saw the light of day that made many people (re)discover this obscure band. In 2010, the band released a fantastic CD, "Time and Eternity" with old songs re-recorded, which is a must for Classic Metal fans. Reason enough to contact the band and make an interview about the band's history, present and future. The following interview was done with all three members of the band, Gaetano Avino (drums), Giacomo Gigantelli (bass/vocals) and Stefano Pisani (guitars). Enjoy...

When was the band formed and which were the founding members?

Gaetano Avino: SPITFIRE was formed in 1981 by me and Paolo Martelli (bass), with Massimo Cazzoli (lead guitar), including a singer and a rhythm guitarist whose names are lost in the past. With that line-up the band played some live acts performing UFO, SCORPIONS, IRON MAIDEN, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, SAXON, THIN LIZZY and JUDAS PRIEST covers. Giacomo Gigantelli as a new singer and Stefano Pisani (guitar) joined the band in the summer of 1982, when SPITFIRE renewed the line-up.

Was SPITFIRE the name of the band since the beginning?

Gaetano: Yes, SPITFIRE was the first and only name since then; I named the band after an 80's famous (in Italy) denim jeans brand (my family traded in clothing). Therefore, no inspiration from the WWII fighter or from some legendary dragon (even if sometimes we used both those concepts for covers or concerts playbills).

How was the Italian Metal scene back then in terms of bands, clubs where one could play, fanzines/magazines etc.?

Giacomo: There were already some bands which were spreading the new wave of Metal coming from England such as STRANA OFFICINA, VANADIUM, VANEXA and STEEL CROWN. They passed from a 70's hard rock or from hard blues to a British-inspired Metal. Then in the first part of the 80's a lot of new bands began to play this music and consequently many fanzines and radios started promoting this new musical trend. But the availability of places where to play didn't changed so fast, so in those years it was very difficult to organize concerts and festivals.

More specifically Verona, was this a good place for Metal back in the early 80's?

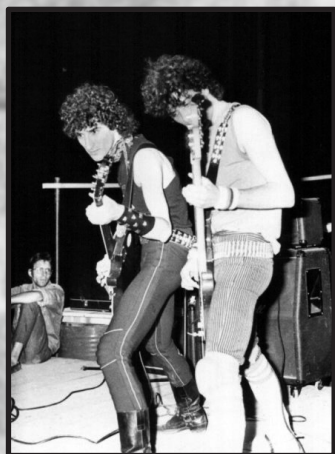
Stefano Pisani: Despite the high number of Metal bands active in those years, Verona was, and still is, a very conservative and narrow-minded town; besides in those years the Italian political situation was very tricky (terrorism, social protests, drugs, etc.). We Metal kids were always seen, by people and police, as outsiders, junkies, bad boys. Therefore everything we made was a fight, and that made us strong and resolute, still in the things we make now.

What were your influences as a band back then? Both individually and as a band?

Giacomo: As a band, SPITFIRE was strongly influenced by IRON MAIDEN, mainly in the song composition modes, which were a little bit different from the classic Metal riff style (SAXON, JUDAS PRIEST). Indeed the Metal press welcomed our first demo calling us the "Italian IRON MAIDEN". Actually we felt very close to "minor" bands like ANGEL WITCH, TANK, RAVEN, FIST, MORE, TOKYO BLADE, SATAN. As single musicians we love definitely all kinds of music but, speaking about rock, I love American rock (KISS, KANSAS, GIANT, STYX), Stefano likes best English rock, Gaetano progressive rock (PINK FLOYD, GENESIS, CAMEL).

On the same train of thought, what bands would you say that have influenced you? Maybe not directly in the band's sound, but it could also be other things like dedication to music etc.

Stefano: In addition to what we have said before, in those years we were teenager and we felt the strong appeal of the street, the fight, the music and the stage, as brought out by NWOBHM and by bands like MOTORHEAD, THIN LIZZY or SAXON. And another great solid base was provided by the sounds and stories of bands like Jimi Hendrix Experience, CREAM, NAZARETH, URIAH HEPP, LED ZEPPELIN,



DEEP PURPLE, BLACK SABBATH, DIO, OZZY.

What was the band's initial line-up?

Gaetano: The first "official" line-up (1982) was: Giacomo Gigantelli (vocals), Massimo Cazzoli and Stefano Pisani (guitars), Paolo Martelli (bass), Gaetano Avino (drums).

You first appeared in the Metal scene in 1982 with a three track demo including "Spitfire", "Samurai" and "Beyond Price", recorded live. First of all what was the reason for this? (I mean the live songs).

Stefano: We were very young and with no money. We had cheap instruments, poor musical skills, and little knowledge of recording techniques. The technicians in the recording studios had no idea of how to record rock, just imagine what was Metal for them! An obscure mystery! Let's say that we made the only possible choice at the time.

What was the acceptance from the audiences and the press at the time?

Giacomo: Despite the overall poor quality of the demo, we received a very good response by local fans, national fanzines, magazines and radio stations. This was particularly useful for us, because it raised our energy and our will to go on.

There have been some line-up changes in the time between the demo and 7". Could you please refer to them? For what reasons?

Stefano: The first real line-up change took place in 1983, when Paolo Martelli and Massimo Cazzoli left the band. Paolo couldn't keep up with the band's pace (very, very fast indeed in those early months...); Massimo had a different idea about the next steps for SPITFIRE, he wanted a break in order to improve the technical skills of the band. On the opposite, we thought we had to seize the opportunity and to play live as much as possible... For then our passion must be enough, technique would have followed (and I think that was the right choice, otherwise I would have never become Gibson endorser and Giacomo would have never become Washburn/Randall endorser!). So Giacomo became singer and bass player (as a matter of fact bass was his "real" instrument), and Stefano Bianchini joined us on guitar, coming from another local Doom Metal band, BLACK HOLE.

Two years later, you signed with Minotauro Records for the release of a 7" single, with "Blade Runner" and "A quiet Man". How was the feeling of holding a single from your band at your hands? In how many copies was it printed?

Giacomo: We were very proud of it, not least because the single was among the first records of NWOIHM (New Wave of Italian Heavy Metal), and the first record released by Minotauro Records (Catalogue #001!). It was the reward for hard work, long days spent in Milan, Bologna, Pavia and other music-business cities, when we were looking for a suitable label. Minotauro released a first run of 1000, which were distributed all over the world and soon were sold out.

Once more, what was the response and sales back then?

Gaetano: A very good feedback: many fanzines/magazines reviewed the single all over the world (mainly Italy, USA, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Belgium, Poland, France, even Great Britain...). The recording was better than the first demo, even if the technicians' knowledge of Metal was still too poor to get the right sound.

I can't resist but ask about the cover! Was it something presented to the band or something you chose? I personally like it, but "childish" is an understatement. Do you think it affected sales?

Giacomo: Ha ha ha, you're right! Many people noticed it and talked about that cover-we call it "naïve" ;-)- but we are still much attached to it... The good thing about the picture is that so many people noticed the childish style that there was a consequent indirect promotion of the single!

Stefano: At the time we were only young boys, and we knew nothing about marketing and graphic design; so we asked a friend to draw something with a spitfire dragon for the single, and there came the cover.

Why did you choose these specific two songs? The band must





have had some songs by then, right?

Gaetano: At the time we had a lot of songs (many of which would have been collected in the next demo and many years later in "Time and Eternity"), but we chose two recently composed songs, a strong one ("Blade Runner", which became and still is a big number in our live acts), and a more quiet one ("A Quiet Man", precisely).

Was there an option to also do an LP with them, or just the single?

Gaetano: With Minotauro we signed a contract for the single only; the following years there was some further contact with that label in order to make a complete album, but we were mostly oriented to a foreign label; then in 1986 the split came.

In 2009, Minotauro Records reissued the single. What were the reasons?

Giacomo: Yes, in February 2009 the single was reissued: shortly after the release the first run was sold out, and (despite-or maybe thanks to-the cover) the original single became soon a high-priced collector's item. We were very happy for that, and of course we were very pleased with the reissue.

After the single, the band had some hard times, with some members leaving. What were the reasons?

Gaetano: I had to go under military service, and after few months Stefano Bianchini had to go as well. When after a year he came back, he seemed to have lost interest in our project, so we decided to keep on as a trio.

"Heroes in the Storm" was released in 1986 and shows a greatly improved band, as all 5 songs impress the listener. Classic Heavy Metal with excellent songs and musicianship. Were some of these songs written with the previous line-up or from the "classic" trio?

Stefano: We improved our technique playing hard, many hours a day, rehearsing and playing live! "Merchants of Death" and "Heroes in the Storm" were composed in the first months of SPITFIRE; I think we had already played them during the first line-up period (5 members). For the 1986 demo we only re-arranged them for the trio line-up. "Hurricane (I'm Free)", "Shadow of the Axe" and "Stones of Venice" were instead new songs, composed by the trio line-up.

What was the feedback for the tape? I guess that due to the 7" the band was more known and had more contacts so more copies made it to more "important" distributors/fanzines etc. Right?

Stefano: Despite the better quality of the songs and of the recording, as a band we were a little bit weakened by the continuous struggle for attention and space, by the military service, by some changes in the Metal trends (more keyboards, more American-oriented Metal, more glam) which as a band we didn't want to follow, because they were not in the SPITFIRE's line. We needed some change but were unable to find the right road. So the 1986 demo was not properly promoted.

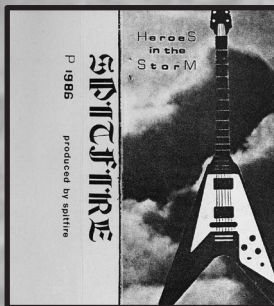
When did indie Metal labels of the era show interest? Was it after or before the 1986 demo?

Gaetano: As a matter of fact, we used the "Heroes in the Storm" demo mainly to find a contract for a new album. So we sent it to many indie Metal labels like Axe Killer, Music for Nations, Rave On and King Klassic. The feedback was very good, and some labels suggested the demo to fanzines/magazines for reviews. **It's known that King Klassic Records was interested in the band and even suggested a contract. What went wrong?**

Giacomo: After our survey, King Klassic turned out as the label most interested in releasing a new album. The first step should have been the inclusion of a song in an American Metal compilation, but when the contract was ready to be signed, the band was already adrift. Afterwards it came to our knowledge that other Italian Metal bands had some contract troubles with that label (contracts signed, masters delivered, but no album released).

When did the SPITFIRE story end and for what reasons?

Stefano: In the end of 1986 it was obvious that SPITFIRE was a too narrow concept for our personal ways as musicians. We were no more completely satisfied with what we were doing. Giacomo received a proposal by



DANGER ZONE (band from Bologna, Italy), and joined them as a singer. I joined the Veronese EXILE and Gaetano after some time joined another local Metal band, ICY STEEL.

Could you expand a little on the bands you were involved afterwards?

Stefano: Of course none of us could leave behind music, particularly after the SPITFIRE experience; music is and always will be the most important feature in our lives. So in 1986-as I said before-I joined the friend hard rock band EXILE, for a hot year of concerts with a totally renewed line-up (except for the singer and blood-brother Gianni Della Cioppa); then I founded a band called VERTIGO, with which I played from 1989 to 1994 and where my dream of singing rock in Italian came true. After the split of that band I played for a while with FRENETICA and X-HERO (1994-1997) with another blood-brother of mine, Mirko Galliazzo, and with other bands, sometimes as a guest. Then I joined MADRETERRA (1997-1998, with one album released) with musicians coming from the Doom Metal band EPITAPH. Finally in 1999 I put an end to my roaming, joining EX-in which I still play-a hard rock band with lyrics in Italian, and 4 albums released so far. From 2009 I'm endorser for Gibson Guitar Italy.

Giacomo: After the split I moved to Bologna as a singer for the Metal band DANGER ZONE, until 1992 (two American tours and an album produced, and released only in 2010). In those years I also collaborated as a session-singer in some productions for the Japanese market. After a long break from music, in 2002 I founded a KISS tribute band, JULIET KISS (in which I still play the role of Paul Stanley), and produced two compilations dedicated to KISS. In 2007 I became official endorser for Washburn/Randall. In 2009 I founded LIVE 4 WIN, a special tribute to KISS frontman Paul Stanley, and in 2011 TWO TIMER, an acoustic tribute to KISS. All along these years I had the wonderful chance to play together or to share the stage with George Lynch, Neil Murray, Gregg Bissonette, Derek Sherinian, Stef Burns, Yngwie Malmsteen, Glenn Hughes, Elias Viljanen and Timo Tolkki. Now I've just ended the recordings for the DANGER ZONE new album, and I'm keeping on with the live gigs with SPITFIRE, DANGER ZONE, JULIET KISS, LIVE 4 WIN and TWO TIMER.

Gaetano: After the split (but I would call it "stand-by") I had a break, after which I joined the metal band ICY STEEL, from 1990 to 1992; when that band split too, I joined the band NOVADIVA (Italian rock).

Looking back do you regret for not keeping it up for a little longer and see what could happen if a SPITFIRE LP was released in 1987, let's say?

Gaetano: We are used to look at reality as it is, so we don't have any regret about our past. All that could be possibly done, we did it. We don't regret our past decisions, because for us it is always important to follow our feelings and let our lives go where they have to go.

Italy had many great bands in the 80's, be it bands that had their material printed on vinyl like you, DANGER ZONE, GUNFIRE, ADRAMELCH, BERSERKS, DARK QUARTERER etc. with some becoming more known (DEATH SS, VANADIUM, SABOTAGE, ASTAROTH), as well as a thriving demo scene with bands like BLACK EVIL, TOUCH OF DEVIL, DOMINE etc. Were you aware of these bands (or others)?

Gaetano: Thanks to the magazines/fanzines good promotional efforts, all the bands were well known in the Metal world; besides there were a lot of contacts, exchanges and relationships among the bands when it was possible to play or to meet at concerts or festivals.

Have you stayed in touch after the band's demise with what local or foreign acts you liked did?

Giacomo: Our love for music kept us always in touch with all the Italian and foreign bands. With some close friends we kept and still keep good relationships, but at least news and information about all the Metal (and rock in general) world have been always updated all along the last 30 years.

What are your best and worst memories from these days?

Stefano: After all this time all memories are for us positive and happy, even if sometimes we had to face someone's envy or someone's stupidity. Anyway everything was part of a great rock'n'roll dream, so at the end we are very happy of every experience we had. We fought hard for every goal we achieved; we never get any gratification as a gift, so we grew up strong and combative. We were also lucky to have met all along the way some people who



trusted us, and many people who supported us. In 2002, almost out of the blue, Italian label Andromeda Relics released "Heroes in the Storm" CD, a compilation consisting of the 1982 and 1986 demos, the 7" single plus an unreleased live track. First of all, how did this release happen?

Stefano: In 2000 I began digitizing every SPITFIRE material available, and then I collected the best stuff in a promo CD, which was reviewed by some local fanzines. After that I gave the CD to Gianni Della Cioppa, an old Metal friend and brother, who was doing at the time a very good work in "recovering" past Metal bands with his indie label Andromeda Relics and this was the starting point for "Heroes in the Storm".

Are you satisfied with the job the label did? This CD introduced to a whole new generation (me and Thanos as well) your music legacy. Did the band get lots of feedback/reviews at the time?

Giacomo: We were very satisfied of the issue and the CD (which was sold out long ago) got many positive reviews, almost as a cult item; that helped to raise a new interest about the band.

Was this after the CD acceptance that the band decided to re-unite?

Gaetano: Let's say that as a matter of fact SPITFIRE as an idea never split! Anyway, after the release of "Heroes in the Storm" we considered several times the possibility of getting back on stage, but without putting it into action.

In summer 2004 (22nd of July) the band performed in Metal Legion Festival, a reunion concert performing 4 of the 5 songs from the "Heroes in the Storm" demo and "Blade Runner". Was this supposed to be a one-off performance for old fans or had you already decided to reunite for more shows and albums?

Giacomo: The short gig we played at the Italian Metal Legion Attack in 2004 was a enjoyable chance to meet on stage old friends like Gianni Della Cioppa or Mirko Galliazzo (X-HERO) and new ones (like for example the Greek friends of Eat Metal Records, who proposed us a vinyl issue of "Heroes in the Storm" including two never released songs recorded during a 1985 rehearsal. Unfortunately that project was not realized, and the two rehearsal songs, "Escape from Babylon" and "Time and Eternity", were included in the live CD "Live Reunion 2004" as bonus tracks; after some years they were re-recorded and included in the "Time and Eternity" album). But at that time we hadn't yet thought seriously of recording a new album or playing more live shows.

Was it considered to invite old members or did SPITFIRE had their best period as a trio and therefore you kept it that way?

Stefano: The trio line-up was and still is the best expression of the SPITFIRE spirit. Moreover, it didn't make any sense for us to involve again people who in the past didn't believe completely in SPITFIRE.

You also released a CD with 7 songs from that show, simply titled "Spitfire-Live Reunion 2004"...

Stefano: Yes, that event was very important for us, so we decided to fix that experience in a self-produced CD, which we released in 2007 in a very limited number of copies, and which we titled simply "Live Reunion 2004". That CD included also the two rehearsal songs mentioned before, being by then clear that the vinyl project with Eat Metal Records would have never been realized.

What's your opinion of the other bands that played that night? It must have been a magical night as bands like DARK QUARTERER, CRYING STEEL, THE BLACK, GUNFIRE, X-HERO, DARK AGES, EXILE and of course SPITFIRE played.

Giacomo: We met again a lot of people whom often in the past we were meeting on stage or elsewhere. Old friends and good bands like THE BLACK and DARK QUARTERER (old lions!), close friends like EXILE and X-HERO. CRYING STEEL and DARK AGES had some troubles and didn't play that night.

Under a new label, My Graveyard Production, we reach 2010 when the brilliant "Time and Eternity" gets released, once more a compilation of old songs, but re-recorded in 2009.

Gaetano: This album was the consequence of the real reunion, strongly promoted by Francesco "Running Wild" Campatelli, who is a close friend, a fan, and a good Metal writer. In 2007 we met and he managed to persuade us to join our forces again under the name SPITFIRE. He then put us in touch with Giuliano Mazzardi of My Graveyard Productions, and so we started to work for "Time and Eternity".

One of the things that amazed me is that you perform songs that are 20+ years old with a passion rarely encountered in such occasions. Most old bands that have been absent for a while (and not only) seem not to do well when re-recording older songs of theirs. Is there an explanation other than passion and belief in the songs you did all these years ago?

Stefano: During the process of selection of the best songs to include in the album, we became aware that many old songs still kept some strength and appeal; so we understood that, despite the poor technique and the inexperience of our first steps, nevertheless the ideas were good and - quite amazingly indeed - the songs sound still quite relevant. This feeling and this second chance of releasing a fistful of songs we never had the possibility to record gave us the edge over.

Is it ok to suppose that the new CD (is it about time or no???) will also include new songs? For me it was (is) the main drawback of the CD. I would really like to hear what SPITFIRE "can



do" musically in 2010. I bet that the style hasn't changed and Classic Heavy Metal is what we will get!

Gaetano: The "SPITFIRE entity" is like a strange animal creeping slowly under our skins, in our veins, running silent together with our blood; in short, it is deep in our DNA. At present our individual efforts are devoted to our single musical projects, in which every one of us can express his deepest passions and musical feelings. Stefano for example, would think about a SPITFIRE band singing in Italian; Giacomo about a more melodic or American-oriented SPITFIRE. So, we now are not able to forecast anything about the band but, who knows? One day the animal could wake up again and surprise with a new leap forward!

Nowadays almost everything gets released on vinyl. How do you see the possibility of both albums getting an LP release? Have you had any talks with labels?

Stefano: After the possible deal with Eat Metal we had no other chances to speculate about a vinyl version of "Heroes in the Storm", but thinking of it now, we cannot exclude some future possibility, because, as you say, in these years many past albums are vinylized or re-vinylized. As for "Time and Eternity", as a matter of fact we talked with our label (My Graveyard Productions) about a possible vinyl version, especially because the album cover and graphics are quite beautiful (the cover is a fantastic drawing by our Spanish friend Ciriuelo Cabral, an all over the world very famous fantasy illustrator, who made cover drawings also for STEVE VAI, MAGNUM, ARTHEMIS). It's a possibility, maybe practicable when the album on CD will be sold out, maybe sooner.

Are you still into Metal? Do you keep an eye on new releases from old or new acts? How do you see the Heavy Metal scene nowadays compared with the 80's?

Stefano: When we were young boys, Heavy Metal opened our eyes and literally helped us to develop our temper, to consider the world around us with a wide mind. We were not defenders of any faith, because where there is faith, reason fails. So we learned to love all music, because from everything we can

learn something. That said, Metal, hard rock, and rock in general are still very important in our lives, so we are quite well updated on bands, new releases, live acts and so on. Obviously nowadays the Metal scene (and the music world in general) takes advantage of better technological chances, is more accepted, even part of the system, and often you see young rich boys learning impossible riffs on expensive guitars bought by their parents. In the 80's, particularly in Italy, there was nothing at all: no money, no rehearsal rooms, no music clubs where to play, no Metal culture and no suitable recording studios. We all kids (musicians and fans) did absolutely everything ourselves, we can say we had to build ourselves our ideal world, fighting for every single need. I think that's the reason why almost all the bands born in the 80's are still on the road: because the road is their life and we all are used to fight for what we want, to stand up and shout: "We are here, we are not afraid of anything, listen what we play, listen what we have to say".

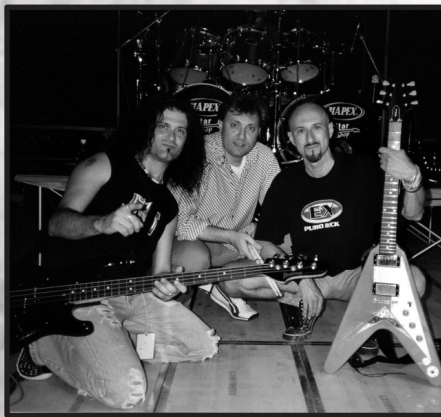
What's your opinion on the internet and more specifically mp3 sharing sites etc.?

Giacomo: Internet is a great and wide system of communication, and who runs it down maybe is wrong, because music-especially the less commercial one-needs communication and promotion. Of course the quality of it depends on how people use it: good, if useful for spreading your music, your ideas, your reaction; very bad, if you become its' fucking, stunned and lobotomized slave. Similarly, mp3, sharing sites, music download are good chances to have a listening to strange, far or unknown music, why not? We don't think the problem of music selling is caused only by Internet, but mainly by the music business itself, a monster which wants to suck all the available blood, until nothing is left. Anyway we are "old school people", we like vinyl records and CDs, booklets and covers full of photographs, can anyone blame us? ©

End this interview any way you want. Thanks for your music and hope to listen to new stuff soon!

Spitfire: We would like to close this fantastic interview primarily saying a big "thank" to you Kostas, for your support and passion! Then we want to greet all the fans all over the world, who gave us heat in the 80's and whose warm love and friendly attention still encourage us to keep on with our music. We want also to say to everybody: be free in your life and in your choices, don't be slave of anything, neither masters nor false ideas. Take care of the people you love, of the world around you, protect the weak and always fight-it is self-defense-against the power, stupidity, arrogance, falsehood. Take life as it is and make the best of it, and always fight hard for your rights and for your dreams. Life is hard, you know, but could be more simple and easy if people would respect each other and wouldn't mess with fucking boasters. Music is freedom, music is love, music is reaction and fight, music is life. If Satan really would exist (he doesn't, obviously, neither god does), he would be just the fucking bastard who wants you to be slave of his own absurd religion, who wants you to listen only his fucking "good" music, who wants you to be a number, a puppet, and not a free thinking individual. Stand up and fight!

www.facebook.com/spitfiremetal
Kostas Kailiazis



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DAWN TRADER

DAWN TRADER has been one of those fairly unknown bands from the glorious days of British Hard Rock and Heavy Metal revival of the late 70's and 80's. Big in their hometown they managed to release the obligatory 7" single coupled by some demo tapes but unfortunately they never made it to the album stage... not until now, that is!!! The return of DAWN TRADER is a thing I never thought I'd see when getting my copy of the 7" single some years ago but it seems that things are doing better in UK as there are many comebacks like the DAWN TRADER one (now that the children grew and the wives got boring, it's back to being rockers I guess!!!) But let's see what Wayne Vizard, their guitarist, has to say about the album, the past and the future of the mighty DAWN TRADER!

After almost 30 years of absence, DAWN TRADER has returned not only to play a couple of gigs but with an album full of newly recorded material. What motivated you to reform the band?

A loyal fan from the 80s suggested we have a 30 year reunion gig. So began the task of getting in contact with original members to see what they thought of the idea. Through availability we had Steve, Ric and Mick from the original line up but none of the drummers were free, so we looked around for a suitable player who would be able to do the job, luckily we found Pete. The first rehearsal was airy because we looked at each other after blowing through a few songs and we all thought the same: that the music had not dated and we were all fired up for a reunion gig!

Last year's DAWN TRADER album, entitled "Castle" was a real surprise! A very fine album full of great music. Can you tell us a few things about the whole recording experience? what differences are there in recording today and having your music recorded in the 80's?

We decided to record in a studio in Sheffield, the same one as ARCTIC MONKEYS use, actually. We liked the live set up there and the atmosphere was right. We then went to a studio in Nottingham to record the vocals and any overdubs that we thought necessary. The difference in recording back in the 80s is that digital recording rather than analogue tape makes it a lot quicker process to get the end result.

How did you choose which songs to record for the "Castle" album? After all there is quite a large back catalog of songs that DAWN TRADER have composed over the years!

Having Steve in the line up we chose songs that he had input in originally. This was quite easy, but as you say the DAWN TRADER back catalog of songs is quite formidable!

DAWN TRADER have been included in the large catalogue of NWOBHM bands. Did you feel, at the time, that you were part of a Heavy Metal movement happening in Britain or were you doing something else that simply fitted in the NWOBHM era?

We do what we do and it was hard to be pigeon holed, so the press at the time put us in that category. I have never thought that we were a Heavy Metal band, more a rock band.

Going back in time, DAWN TRADER have released a single along with some demos and had been gigging a lot, what are your memories of those early years? What was the peak of DAWN TRADER's early career?

Some fond memories of gigs and people we met right through 80s. Loads of memorable gigs. The hometown gigs in the Market square and Rock city will always be my favorites.

What was the connection between Bernie Marsden and DAWN TRADER?

WHITESNAKE were doing a tour which included the Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham and our manager at the time interviewed Bernie on the local radio station. He was talking about his experience when he first started out and how hard it was to get on the ladder. He asked if there were any local bands playing that weekend and would like to see them perform. So after our Sunday night gig we were introduced to him and he was knocked out with the show and the songs he had heard. We first invited him to get up with us which was great fun then after that we got together and we wrote "Take It" ,which we recorded and he produced down in Britannia Row studios.

What are your thoughts on releasing an album of the old recordings, including your 7" single and demo tapes? I am sure many of your fans would love to have such an album.

Great idea ,where can I buy it from?

Can you tell us what were the main influences at the early stages of DAWN TRADER?

Early days we all liked bands like JOURNEY, Y&T and MAGNUM. We had the pleasure of meeting and playing with Y&T recently and also MAGNUM back in the day so if there is a job going to support JOURNEY, we would take it!

What were the reasons of breaking up the band?

Towards the end of the 80s the trend for selling records was on a downer, so the deals we were offered made us very disheartened, hence we called it a day.

Over the years many bands reform but after a little while disband. What are the plans of the reformed DAWN TRADER? Is it just a one off or are you planning on staying for good? Will there be a second DAWN TRADER album and also will you be doing any gigs outside England?

Our initial aim was to chip in and record a set from the 80s and have a good recording of a few of the songs. Having then found new interest from local and national radio plus a couple of agents listening to the album, we were offered support gigs with STATUS QUO and on the bill at big Rock festivals up and down the country. As for a second album, well we have a lot to choose from and we are writing new material as well, so watch this space! Doing gigs outside Britain is a strong possibility as the album is selling in many countries and if we are invited to go, then I'd better get my passport renewed!

Having the "Castle" album released on vinyl was another surprise, how did you decide to have it released on LP as well?

I think this came about from interest from a company that specializes in manufacturing and selling vinyl after they had heard and seen the CD. What a bonus this has turned out to be!

There have surfaced many videos of DAWN TRADER live back in the 80's. Will you be releasing any DVD sometime in future with those videos?

We haven't even thought of the possibility of a DVD . . . but I'll bring it up at the next meeting of the band.

How's the Hard Rock/Heavy Metal scene nowadays in the U.K. compared to how it was in the 80's?

I think there are fewer venues to perform your own music now than there were in the 80s. But this new law might encourage landlords to support live music bit more. There are some good young bands out there. I Heard a band the other week and I actually thought it was us! Apparently they were inspired by old recordings of us. Great compliment.

Nowadays downloading music is the main way young people (and not so young!:-)) listen to music. Obviously along with the legal downloads there is the illegal downloading too. What do you think of free illegal downloading of your music?

I think the more people listen to our music, they will like what they hear. . . but as for illegal downloading that's stealing isn't it?

If you could go back in the 80's in a time machine, what would you do in order to make DAWN TRADER a big worldwide success?

Ah right, a time machine! I think if we had met people who are helping us now get DAWN TRADER music in everybody's record collection, then hopefully we would have made it worldwide.

Thanks for your time, last words are on you:

Thank you for inviting us to your world. KEEP ON ROCKING!!!

www.dawntrader.net

Michalis Bakoulas



Evil Lynn

It's great to see how traditional Heavy Metal became a habit again! It's even better when newly formed bands can reproduce the same exact feeling that came through in almost every 80's recording without distorting the general idea. This is mainly because all these new coming bands have the know-how and most of all, the required hearings of all the past legends and when combined with their supporting attributes, you get what EVIL LYN would infuse. Anssi and Marko promptly replied a short while before their debut mini-CD was unleashed!



Hello Marko and Anssi, EVIL LYN is a new upcoming force, so give us a short bio of the band!

Anssi: EVIL LYN was initially formed back in 2007. From the current line up Lasse and I have been in the band since the formation. Our musical style hasn't changed that much during the years. At the very beginning it was slightly more hard rock oriented until we settled to pursue the horror-laden style of KING DIAMOND. We have had quite many lineup changes, but to cut the long story short; Marko joined the band in 2008, Jani and Johanna at the beginning of 2011. After Jani and Johanna joined we felt that something just clicked and the whole thing started to work on a different level. I guess it also reflected to our style and we have since broadened our style and brought in different influences more freely.

Did any of the current members play in another band of any genre before joining EVIL LYN?

Marko: Oh yes. And to be honest, some of us still do. Jani was playing in thrash/heavy Metal band NORDIC NECROPOLIS before moving into Tampere area and joining EVIL LYN. Johanna's previous band was a doom band SLUG LORD. Anssi is currently playing in a thrash band called BESTIAL TORTURE. I have been playing in several bands in past, but currently I'm still playing in a Power/Heavy Metal band called BURNING WINTER.

Was the initial idea when forming the band to be fronted by a vocal powerhouse that we hear in Johanna Rutto today? Was the band fronted by a male vocalist at any point?

Anssi: Well, it wasn't the initial idea at all. I was actually pretty much against the female vocalist when the subject came up, but after the try out with Johanna we all knew we had found our singer. We had a male singer until Johanna joined in early 2011 but he didn't fit the band that well; he

was technically a good singer whose style just didn't fit our style. And he wasn't really into Heavy Metal in general so it became a credibility problem. It's damn hard to find a great singer and usually all the good ones are already singing in a dozen of other groups. So, I guess we were pretty lucky to get Johanna on board.

I don't remember seeing or hearing anything about a demo by EVIL LYN, you never ventured to record something that could be used as promotional material and help the band's name spread around?

Anssi: Actually we did a 3-track demo in 2009 with the previous, male fronted line-up. But we weren't too pleased with the result, so we never sold or sent any copies to the magazines, labels etc. We used it just to get some gigs in Finland.

Marko: We were supposed to release the forthcoming "The Night Of Delusions" EP as a demo first. And we planned to use it for promotion, but since it caught the interest of a few labels we chose to team up with Iron On Iron Records. So, Iron On Iron will release "The Night Of Delusions" as a proper EP. I think it is a huge advantage to get our first release out via a label and I'm sure it will get wider distribution than any self released demo could have ever gotten.

There are a few songs of the band up for listening at your official page, what I hear is traditional Heavy Metal with a lot of RUNNING WILD and some IRON MAIDEN as a major influence. What is the style of music that you want the band to be stamped with exactly?

Anssi: Haha, I think I know which songs you are talking about. I guess I can shed some light on those IRON MAIDEN influences. IRON MAIDEN is my all-time favorite band, but "Last Of My kind" (I believe you referring to this song) is actually influenced by a number of other bands (perhaps a bit similar to MAIDEN though). Somehow the end result is still very IRON MAIDEN-like and well, I'm damn pleased about it. I like to pick up influences from a really broad field, also from more obscure stuff like HEAVY LOAD or VANADIUM. When we started, KING DIAMOND and MERCYFUL FATE were huge influences to us, but I'll guess our style has shifted a bit since. I hope people will see us as a female fronted traditional heavy metal band in the vein of WARLOCK, CHASTAIN, MESSIAH FORCE and so on.

Fresh news concerning the band, are that you signed with Iron on Iron Records for your first official release. Give us some details about that and about the release date.

Marko: Yes, Iron on Iron Records will release our "The Night of Delusions" EP as a CD at the end of February. Right before Up The Hammers festival. And I know Iron on Iron will be present in the festival so don't forget to pick up your copy of the CD. Anyway it will contain 5 catchy traditional Heavy Metal songs in total. And the cover artwork is great, haha!

Have you done a lot of shows promoting your material and are there any tour dates scheduled for Finland or abroad?

Anssi: We have played some gigs in Finland and they have been amazing. Crowds have welcomed us really well. I would reckon the festival gigs (Jalometalli 2011 in Oulu, Metal Warning festival IV in Helsinki and the after party for Sauna Open Air 2011) to be among the most memorable. Personally, it was also cool to open for METALUCIFER in 2011 at Helsinki. This was just a day before I flew to Keep It True. That was a great week of Heavy Metal extravaganza!

Marko: And of course EVIL LYN's first shows ever back in 2009 need to be mentioned. Supporting ENFORCER was awesome. But unfortunately we haven't been playing abroad this far, but is going to change really soon. We were just confirmed to play in Up The Hammers festival in Athens. That will be the first EVIL LYN show ever outside of Finland, so be sure that we are going to blast the stage with Heavy Metal on that night (2nd of March)! And in addition to that we have been discussing having some gigs in Sweden and to play in some other festivals elsewhere in Europe.

Is there any particular show that you incorporate on stage? Do you do any covers at all?

Anssi: If you mean theatrics and stuff, not yet; but boy would I like to have some pyros! Haha.. Well, what can you expect from someone who has spent his childhood watching IRON MAIDEN and KISS videos. Seriously, we'll just try to play as tightly as possible, run around, have fun and enjoy being on stage. Give our 100% and that's the show! I guess someone could consider our look as some sort of gimmick, but to us spandex, studs etc. are just natural part of the Heavy Metal charm. And yes, we do some covers although those are mostly for our own entertainment; one or max two per show. It's fun to play some classics and rehearsing those spices up the usual routine of going through your own material week after week. We have covered MERCYFUL FATE, KING DIAMOND, ANTHRAX, JUDAS PRIEST, HEAVY LOAD and IRON MAIDEN. I think the most fun cover to play is maybe MERCY-



FUL FATE's "Come to the Sabbath"... or IRON MAIDEN's "Purgatory". From the feedback we have gotten, I believe we are a solid live band. And all the following we have built so far has been mainly through playing live shows; so, if you get the chance to check us out live, do so!

Do you consider any female fronted bands as an influence? Can you name some bands that has inspired you one way or another? By the way, even though the Finnish Metal scene of the 80's was not as popular as let's say the Swedish, there are some legendary bands from Finland such as OZ, RIFF RAFF, LOUDCROWD, TAROT or even the more hard rock oriented SARCOFAGUS, do you like the local scene of the past and how did these bands influence the current happenings in metal over there?

Anssi: Of course there's some female fronted bands I consider as influences (like the aforementioned WARLOCK, CHASTAIN or MESSIAH FORCE) but not as much as some non-female fronted ones; quite frankly, I think it doesn't matter whether the singer is male or female, it's more important that the singer fits the band. For example, we have never covered any female fronted bands, but I think Johanna did a great job with, e.g. "Medusa" 'cos it fit her voice pretty nicely. About the Finnish scene; at least TAROT and OZ have had their influence on us; in the beginning of our career we even considered covering "Turn the Cross Upside Down". This was before OZ made their comeback. Little did we know that a few years later we would get to share the stage with them; we've played at the same festivals twice in 2011 (Jalometalli and Metal Warning IV). Overall, the 80's bands have very limited, but loyal following here in Finland. Heavy metal is pretty popular in Finland but unfortunately only certain type of Metal gets media attention, radio play etc. So, most mainstream metal fans only know TAROT from the 80's scene. And even that is just because of Marco's duties in NIGHTWISH.

Marko: I am the only person in the band who was old enough to live through the days of 80's and to see what happened back then in Finnish Metal scene. Bands like OZ, SARCOFAGUS, TAROT and ZERO NINE didn't get much attention from our local media. And even worse, our media belittled the Finnish Metal bands, like they were something to be ashamed for. That's bad because many good bands didn't ever break through, and the foreign bands got all the attention here. But there were still some people who listened to Finnish Metal back then already. Hietala is still the Heavy Metal voice of Finland for me. And that worship started when I found "Spell of Iron" C-tape from the local store (I still have that C-tape). Things changed a lot during the end of 90's or something. And that's good in a way that many Metal bands have popped up from Finland after that. But you have to keep in mind that we also lost one excellent generation of Finnish Metal music before that. The others in the band are a little younger than I am, but they have done their homework as well. And I am sure that we can proudly agree that bands like OZ and TAROT have affected to our music as well.

Can you make a past vs. present comparison between the happenings in the Heavy Metal scene in Finland? Are there any traditional Metal bands that are worth checking out, not particularly retro sounding...I know extreme bands are quite numerous and popular there, but what about pure Heavy Metal worship groups? What happened to your promising country mates CAST IRON really? Their EP was a huge surprise but after that they vanished!

Marko: Haha, CAST IRON. Funny to hear that someone asks us about that band. I'm not 100% sure what happened to CAST IRON, but at least front

man Jori Meriläinen has been in the front row for our shows a lot lately and singing along. And we have chatted many times (and had a lot of beers with him), but seems that he is not going to bring CAST IRON back anymore. Well, you never know what might happen, but at least I wouldn't count on it. Anyway, something to check out: Maybe BATTLE BEAST is nowadays the most known traditional Heavy Metal band from Finland. Keep your eyes focused also to MERGING FLARE, that's a good one. Maybe ARMOUR needs to be mentioned here as well and OZ of course. But that's mostly it, everybody else are just trying to be more extreme than the others.

Anssi: Yeah, I even asked Jori to resurrect CAST IRON at the Metal Warning IV festival, but he wasn't too keen on doing that. Well, at least I got to see them twice when they were active. I think MAUSOLEUM GATE is well worth of checking out; great old school Heavy Metal with, not surprisingly, Mausoleum Records kind of vibe, haha! Really cool stuff. Also, SOLITAIRE is a pretty cool band, but I guess most readers already know that.

What is your opinion about this retro-MERCYFUL FATE/NWOBHM sounding mega-wave that has possessed almost every new coming band?

Marko: Well, there is of course a risk that there come more bands than listeners can take. I don't mind, for me MERCYFUL FATE and NWOBHM style Metal rules anyway and are the reasons why I listen to music and why I play guitar and bass.

Anssi: If PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE count as MERCYFUL FATE sounding bands, then I fuckin'love it! I think people sometimes overreact to these 'trends' or waves. When enough like-minded people from a new generation find, e.g., MERCYFUL FATE, the end result is quite naturally a number of MERCYFUL FATE sounding bands. I don't see anything wrong with that. Same thing is happening with the retro thrash boom. Of course, not all the bands are good or great, but you just have to sort the good ones out. I guess someone could see us as a retro band utilizing some mega-wave, although we've been listening and playing this kind of music for years.

Apart from the upcoming EP that is soon to be released, what are EVIL LYN's plans for the near future? Is there a full-length in the forefront?

Marko: First we want to do some shows abroad. As mentioned we have something going on already to get out of Finland for a while. And then again, we want to hear and see how our EP will be taken by the crowd, and do we get much attention abroad. Full-length album will come eventually. Maybe not in 2012 yet, but in 2013. We have written good new material for it, but first we have to gain some more attention for our band. I mean, some record label to offer us a deal or if this EP sells well it could convince ourselves to record the full-length album as self-financed as we did with this EP. We have capabilities of doing that as well.

Thank you Marko and Anssi for your time and all the best to the band, you really deserve the appreciation of every fan devoted into the traditional sound! Last words are all yours!

Marko: Thanks, I would just like to add that keep the flags high and stay true as steel! We just hope to see many of the readers in the live shows eventually! Especially in Up The Hammers!

www.evillynband.com

Thanos Stafylarakis





In our previous first issue I had stated that I would like to give some more space to the overlooked by (Greek?) Classic Metal fans thrash genre, a promise I couldn't sadly fulfill in this second issue as well. Judging from the quantity of bands rising from the Heavy Metal underground, there's presumably an equivalent number of bands popping out in the thrash underground, that if you won't spend your entire life trying to discover them, you will never have a complete picture of this original and genuinely underground style! I would never forgive myself though if I hadn't supplied the adequate space to cover the story of MENACE, a relatively newfound band from my own hometown sworn to the gods of rabid speed, not because Stelis Kartsonis is a friend, but since their song "Blacklist" has spread sheer terror to thrashers everywhere, time will only tell whether this fetus will turn to a menacing force for our necks and your parents!

Hail guys, MENACE is a new coming force in thrash metal, so introduce yourselves with a bio of the band!

Hi Thanos. We got together as MENACE in 2006. Before that, we were called ANGEL EXECUTION and later on EVOCATION, bands that were formed by Stelis Kartsonis (guitars, vox) and Kostas Tzetzas (drums) in 1999. In 2006 Stelis, George Koutalounis (guitars) and Kostas formed MENACE with the later addition of Kostas L. in the bass spot.

You are hailing from a small town, Chania (Crete), where Heavy Metal was hardly known and a general aversion and depreciation towards this music was shown by people there. How were MENACE treated by Metal heads there? Could you create a fan base in Chania?

We generally have a positive response from the few Heavy Metal fans here but I'd say that our loyal fan base are our closer friends who of course constantly encourage us and we thank them for that!

Have you performed live in your town yet, or even in Athens?

Even though we were asked to play in several places around Greece, there's no show held by MENACE mainly because we are on the process of making our imminent album. It is definite though that we will play in a festival in Larisa by the end of the summer.

Nevertheless, with only one track recorded and available in youtube, there's quite an intense reaction, especially by old-school thrashers who are increasing anyway with the resurgence of the return to the old sound in the genre.

Indeed there's a pretty big response but I'd say this is more from people that grew up with this specific old-school sound and are still there, but also from people into Heavy Metal in general.

How do you view in general this revival of the old style thrash metal, after a hiatus that intervened with extensive use of lots of modern elements from the big bands, within the last 15-20 years, namely by legends such as KREATOR, WHIPLASH, INFERNAL MAJESTY etc? Was this return to the old style successful in your opinion?

I believe that those big names we grew up with should have stuck to the real old-school style and feeling that they had delivered in their albums. Unfortunately, this sound is now replaced by lots of modern elements that we of course disregard and oppose against and we show it with our music!

In "Blacklist", the tune that is available as a token of where the band is moving at, the production is totally a rough 80's underground job, with the purpose to sound like that, is this how your final recording will sound like as well?

Yes, by all means! This is the sound we are after, this is the sound that we love and we want to keep it similar for the rest of the tracks in the album, so you can more or less realize where our style is fluctuating.

"Blacklist" reminds me a lot of early RAZOR, POSSESSED and WHIPLASH. Which are your influences as a band? I know that you are also

fans of classic metal and like to discover new hearings...

The aforementioned bands have stamped our lives and are our main influences. Specifically, the whole bay area thing and Canadian bands like: ANVIL BITCH, DARK ANGEL, AGENT STEEL, MILITIA, RIGOR MORTIS, MERCENARY, VIO-LENCE, SACRIFICE, SLAUGHTER, D.B.C. etc. Of course there are some classic metal influences also from the most popular to the most underground bands like MANILLA ROAD, CIRITH UNGOL, OMEN, SLAUTER XSTROYES, ION BRITTON, MATAKOPAS, NIGHTCRAWLER and many more...

What are your lyrics talking about in general? Are they referring to the same issues as the bands of the Olde?

Our lyrics talk about social issues mainly, but also about our personal experiences surrounding issues such as friendships, treachery, threats against humanity, conspiracy plot that occur as much as the unknown and unexplained. Of course we are also influenced by issues like human relations, religion, politics etc, that bands in the past had used in their lyrics and we also do now ourselves.

What are the future plans of MENACE, there is no demo out yet, so are you in the works for the band's first release? Is it also true that you are working with DEVISER's Manthos Chnras on the production of your offering?

There will initially be a three track promo tape including "Blacklist" in 150 copies by the end of February 2012 and in the middle of May our five track debut album. It is true, we are working with Manthos from DEVISER, he has helped us a great lot since he is really experienced and since we are friends, but also because he has shown keen interest in MENACE. We thank him so much for it! **How do you plan to promote your new material? Are there any gig plans, since I don't think Chania would be the most hospitable place for a band like yours?**

It is sure that in the promotion plans of our new recordings, along with a lot of rehearsing work that has to be done; there will be a few gigs scheduled in the future, something that we are after anyway. Of course we need support and interest shown about it (which I doubt we can find in Chania, haha).

Have you heard bands that stand out in the thrash and heavy metal genre from Greece or abroad? Are there any remarkable bands in your area that you think can offer anything to the scene?

Of course there are some notable bands in Greece, as BLACK SWORD THUNDER ATTACK, REVENGE, RELEASED ANGER, CRUCIFIER, MORTAL THREAT and METALMORFOSIS or from outside Greece like ENFORCER, VEKTOR and FUELED BY FIRE. In a small town like Chania you cannot find the desired crowd and as far as I know, there is no other band.

Is there enough material for a full-length in the future? Is there an offer from any label who is interested in releasing your songs?

There is material worth of seven songs so far, five of which will be included in our debut album, which will

possibly be released by ourselves in the middle of May, if of course we get no offer from a label. The fact that there's no interest shown is partially our fault to be honest, as we haven't sent any more songs to arouse some interest. We hope there will be in the future though.

Can you describe the musical style that your new album will be moving at? Will there be any stylistic differences compared to the demo?

The album will be primal 80's thrash sounding. Maybe some of our influences will be brought up to an extent but our personal style will be present for sure! In terms of sound, I would say it will be different from

our demo as we achieved to approach the sound we really wanted. Other than that, it will be pretty much of the same style and tone.

What's the general response from those who have faced your MENACE so far?

We have received particularly positive feedback from those you have heard our music, both in Greece and abroad, they have confided they expect more music from us, something that makes us very optimistic and proud!

How hard is it for a band who wants to stick to the traditional sound to cope with being established in a small town, where the relation of fans with Metal music, even with the ample use of internet, is confined by the will of Metal Hammer kind of brochures?

You have no idea how hard it is for people like us to overcome several obstacles that appear when living in a small town. We barely find a place to practice and rehearse for the recordings and it's damn hard to finally release something. In other words, we miss a few important benefits that you can have when living in a larger city (like Athens or Thessaloniki). But we all like what we do and despite the daily hardships we come across and have to face, we will go on by any means!

The last lines are yours Stelis.

First of all we'd like to thank you for showing interest, for the chance you gave us to express some views we had always wanted to and most of all, the people that have supported us from scratch and still do!

eleytheria_th@hotmail.gr

Thanos Stafylarakis



SPIDKILZ

The resurgence of 80's driven Heavy Metal goes strong and Italian SPIDKILZ wouldn't miss joining the ride! Elisa Over was restless after WHITE SKULL broke up and made this raging speed/thrash Metal band to scream out loud and make sure that metalheads everywhere won't give up banging their

heads at the sounds of good olde Metal music. Let the woman speak for herself...



When was SPIDKILZ formed and by which members?

I founded the band in September 2010, just after my split from WHITE SKULL. I was already planning to start my own thrash Metal band since about one year, so the time had I called were Francesco Musumeci on guitars and Mattia Rubino on drums. After a while Pietro Baggi (guitars) joined the project and also played bass in the "Ultra Demo". We changed a couple of bass players and at the moment we have Gabriele Rubino in the line-up. The last piece of news is that Pietro is out of the project and we're searching for a second guitarist. But in the meantime Pietro's still playing with us until we find the new entry, so we won't miss any live show.

come to act! The first 2 members Musumeci on guitars and Mattia Rubino on drums. After a while Pietro Baggi (guitars) joined the project and also played bass in the "Ultra Demo". We changed a couple of bass players and at the moment we have Gabriele Rubino in the line-up. The last piece of news is that Pietro is out of the project and we're searching for a second guitarist. But in the meantime Pietro's still playing with us until we find the new entry, so we won't miss any live show.

Did any of you play in other bands prior to SPIDKILZ? Which bands and did they have any recordings released?

I've been playing in several underground Metal bands before (one of them, the all female band BRAZEN with me on guitars, 2000) and my last and most important experience in WHITE SKULL ("Forever Fight", 2009). Mattia is also playing in OPENING SCENERY (they've just recorded their first full-length) and Francesco actually also plays in an popular Italian METAL-LICA tribute.

What inspired the name of the band and what are the issues you mainly capture in your lyrics?

I was inspired by an old Metal compilation that was around in the late '80s and early '90s, "Speed Kills". I always loved that name and I just distorted it a little into SPIDKILZ to make my band's name. My lyrics come out from my personal human experiences and deep feelings. Rage, loneliness, hate... and other nice stuff like this!

What are your influences, both as an individual and as a band? How would you describe your music to someone who hasn't heard of the band and which bands would you call as a comparison?

I come from Heavy Metal and American thrash Metal of the '80s and I'm still into the old school since I was young. Bands like OVERKILL, METAL CHURCH, NUCLEAR ASSAULT and also IRON MAIDEN and SCORPIONS are my main inspirations. The other members of the band listen also to prog Metal and classic rock as well. We try to mix all this together and simply play what we feel and love.

How did you seal the deal with Inferno Records in order to release your demo? Does this also mean that we should expect a full-length released by this label?

Actually, the "Ultra Demo" (in CD) is self produced by ourselves. After we joined Inferno Records he decided to print a limited edition in MC, and we loved that idea. We're working on the full-length that will surely be released by Inferno Records, probably at the end of 2012. We're very excited by this and we're proud to be in the Inferno list!

What were the reactions so far to the demo from press and fans (most importantly)?

We are happy about the impact of the demo on the metal maniacs, we really can't complain and hope they will also love and support our future work. Even if each of us is playing since years and had other experiences, SPIDKILZ is a new band, so we have to work in order to bring our music around as much as possible.

How many copies did you press of "The Ultra demo" and how are the sales so far?

We pressed first 200 copies of the "Ultra Demo" in CD and then 100 in MC under Inferno Records label. At the moment we have only 12 copies on CD left and some tapes, so we're thinking about re-printing it on CD as soon as possible.



sible.

Can you say a few words about your local scene? Any new bands that you play with and/or would like to recommend to all metal fans?

After Years of Decay (quoting OVERKILL!) and depression in the Italian Metal scene of the last years, something's moving again since a couple of years, and I'm happy about it. Many young bands are coming out and also other older bands are finally having their space in the scene. I suggest everyone to listen to PENTAGON, you'll be impressed!

Since you are a dedicated metal fan of the 80's, I'd like to ask you which were your favorite bands and albums from one of the most exceptional and peculiar at the same time scenes of European steel? Legends such as ADRAMELCH, DANGER ZONE, SPITFIRE, DARK QUARTERER or the more thrashy HEADCRASHER, EXTREMA, BULLDOZER influenced you as a musician?

I know HEADCRASHER personally, as they're from my own hometown, and we're proud of them! At the end of the '80s/beginning of the '90s my city (Torino) was very, very Heavy Metal! HEADCRASHER just played one live show last year and it's been totally exciting. I didn't follow EXTREMA and BULLDOZER too much, 'cause I've always liked better more melodic stuff. I also remember GRIFFIN, MEANSTREAK (all female band) and ANGEL WITCH from the very old school and I find them amazing!

Being a new band, how do you see Heavy Metal nowadays? You see this resurgence in the traditional metal sound and the adjacent styles as a hopeful message for the scene, or the circle goes as vicious as it did in the late 80's and the "trend" will go down sooner or later?

This is a nice question, 'cause I'm actually wondering the same thing. At first I've been very excited by all this reprise, but deep inside I'm also afraid it will just be such kind of fashion between the youngest metalheads. But, after all, we can't know it and only the time will show us the truth. All I know is that I'm into heavy and thrash since 21 years now.. So I really don't think I will ever change!

What are the plans of the band, regarding gigs and future releases?

We have some gigs planned in the next months but most of all we're working on the new songs for the recordings of the full-length. We can't wait for releasing it, as "The Ultra Demo" was a very quick work, recorded and mixed in 5 days, only in order to introduce our new project to the metalheads. The full length will surely be more accurate and strong and we'll put all our passion for Metal in it!

How will the full length sound production and music wise? Will it be in the same style as your demo or are we to face a kind of surprise? Have you already come up with a title and a release date?

Well, our sound is going to be always a bit "old school", 'cause we like it and we want to reproduce it as possible. Of course, the demo was very raw also because we recorded it in only 5 days, and the full length will be more accurate, but I don't think you'll have some strange surprise. I hope it will be out at the end of 2012 and I already have a couple of titles in my mind, but still not defined, so.. we'll see within the next few months!

Thanks Elisa for this interview, end this feature the way you fancy!
Thanks for this opportunity, everybody stay thrash!!

www.spidkilz.com

Thanos Stafylarakis

Another Greek band gracing our pages. This time the Athenian quintet of **WAR DANCE**, with some members being active in bands before with great results. Having seen them live, I have very high expectations. Send the band a mail to order their promo-CD in anticipation of more news and hopefully a debut album soon. Enough with the intro, let's see what main songwriter, Tassos had to say.

WAR DANCE is a new and quite unknown band. What about an introduction first of all?

We were formed in March 2010 in Athens. The band's lineup ever since is: Tassos Pananoudakis (guitars), Ioannis Dres (bass), Jim Rouvellas (drums), Lefteris Pletsis (vocals) and Vasilis Koumroglou (guitars). So far we have performed twice in the Festival organized by the University of Peloponnesos and twice in Athens, supporting ATLANTIAN KODEX and EMERALD. In June 2011 we released a 4-track promo-CD in order to attract label interest for a possible deal, but also to have something available for the people that have interest in our sound.

WAR DANCE. How did you choose that name? Is there a meaning behind it?

When we were offered to do our first live concert, we had to decide what name we would have with our participation. Then in a talk we had about it, it was told that our music creates emotions that someone has before entering the battle. Our mind went to Pyrrichios, which is the oldest war dance. A dance to prepare yourself for war, where the warriors took part with their full armor and weaponry and executed moves with a certain rhythm. This is where the name was taken from.

Did you start with a goal to play like this, or it something that was developed afterwards?

First of all, the only thing we are interested in is playing the music we like, nothing more. We do nothing



ing on purpose, the songs we recorded for the promo-CD were already written, we all wanted to work on them, as well as in new material. We play as we feel; we never said "hey, let's sound like this band".

The cover is wonderful! Some details, more info please...

Thank you! The cover is part of a painting of Mistiis (<http://www.mistiis.com/entrance.html>). At a certain point and after production was finished, while looking for a cover, I suggested to the other members, that since I already knew him and beloved his style fits our music to pay him a visit and ask him to visualize our idea and see his works. As soon as we entered we saw exactly what we were looking for in front of us. It wasn't our initial idea, but it's very close to it and we think it fits the atmosphere of our songs perfectly.

Since there are no lyrics included in the demo-CD (not a "wise" move in my opinion), could you give us more info?

It seems interesting to us to deal either with personal experiences, or values we deem important, with mythological themes, or even from poetry. More specifically: On "Recall" the lyrics have to do with the atmosphere transcended through the music, they are quite lyrical and they have references to the roots each one of us has and in the idea that there is an indissoluble communication and cohesion of man with these and his place. The source of inspiration on "Freedom" is the ideal of Freedom with all the struggles and sacrifices one has to do to approach it. "Prometheus" is about the Hero of the Greek tragedy, which is known for most, dared to steal the fire from the gods to pass it to mortal people, knowing of the consequences that would follow. Finally, "The Thunder inside Me" is a hymn to the energy within each one of us and that comes from the need of dignity and the realization of the real values of life.

Would you care to tell us a few things about the recordings?

Everything was done by us in the garage we rehearse with minimum equipment, but with a very clear vision and huge amounts of will and energy. The atmosphere was "explosive" for the most part and we lived some very intense moments



we will remember for a very long time. After the recordings were completed, I did the mix and mastering in my place. The final result justifies is, despite all difficulties and we are proud of it.

How do you see the Greek Metal scene? Any bands you single out?

There have been some progress and there are bands like ROTTING CHRIST, SEPTIC FLESH, INNER WISH, FIREWIND and others that have managed to have a steady presence through their albums and have made their existence known also outside the borders, something that was rare in the old days. I am talking about "successful" bands, despite of my personal taste.

As a new band, how do you view this explosion the Classic Metal sound (re) lives? Big labels look for bands in that style after many years and in general we see a revival. Is this a need due to saturation from more new/extreme genres or just marketing?

Time will tell, I can't answer this...What is important for me is good and interesting releases.

You have already supported/played along bands like the Dutch EMERALD, ATLANTIAN KODEX, ARRYAN PATH as well as Greek bands like WRATHBLADE and STRIKELIGHT. What are your impressions?

Yes, the shows have been done and its very important an experience to us. We really like to share our music with people and the moments on stage are very intense for us. In the recent show with EMERALD and STRIKELIGHT (e.note: and WRATHBLADE) we were impressed that people knew the lyrics in parts and sang with us.

Would you agree that in your music someone can recognize as main influences bands like MANOWAR (mostly) and DOOMSWORD filtered through your personal sound (mostly evident in the melodies and rhythms)? What bands would you say are your common influences, but your personal ones as well?

So far, I am the one that has written the music. I can tell you that there influences by all the big Metal bands, but in a much filtered way, combined with Metal and non-Metal stuff I listen to. What you said about melodies and rhythms is valid, some things come from traditional Greek music forms and this may be one of the elements that sets us apart a little. I am afraid that our common influences will eat up lots of space, since we all listen to many kinds of music. About MANOWAR, I think it's the vocals that lead there, not the songs. None of us is listening to DOOMSWORD.

Lefteris sings very much like Eric Adams. Is MANOWAR such a big influence, or is it his voice?

It's his voice. We didn't do it on purpose. We think that it fits our music very well and because of a more "epic" feeling throughout our songs, the final result satisfies us.

What was the fans' and the metallic "media" reaction towards your effort? Really, did you send the CD to any labels?

The reactions and comments from fans, as well as the media have been very good to enthusiastic so far. Yes, we have sent our material to some labels. Something will come up, sooner or later. We think it's all a matter of correct timing...

How do you see the internet and generally the possibilities that a band has nowadays to promote its' music on its own? On one hand you have this, but on the other hand, the number of bands is really huge.

We see it in a positive way, since people from around the globe can have access to the music of a band. The number of bands is indeed very big, but this doesn't have to do with the internet. I also don't know how many of these bands have a reason to exist.

What are the future plans of the band? Should we expect a full length album?

Exactly, we want first of all to complete the songs, which along with the 4 included in our promo-CD will be included in our debut. Of course, it's important for us to play live anywhere, we are open to all suggestions.

Thanks Tassos, anything you would like to add?

We thank you Kostas for your interest and the presentation in the fanzine. We would like to thank the people that supports us so far in their way and everyone should know that we want to "reassure" their faith in us with a very strong debut. Anyone wanting to contact the band don't hesitate to do so... wardance.band@gmail.com

Kostas Kailiazis





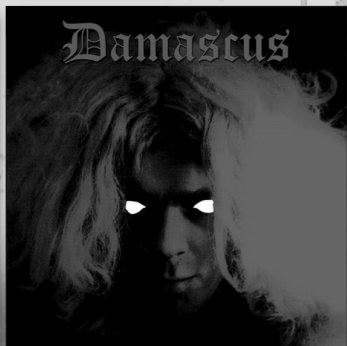
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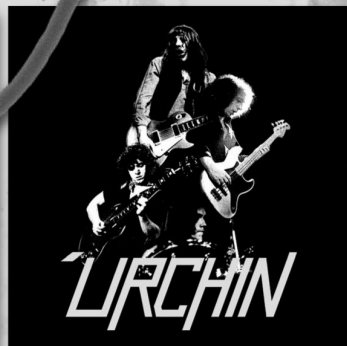
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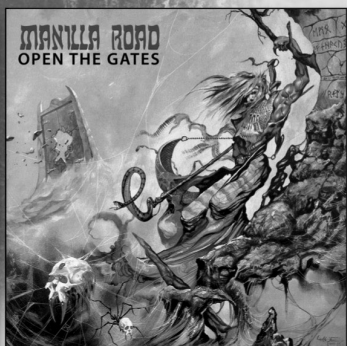
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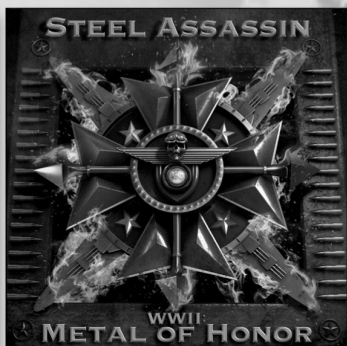
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Midnight Priest

MIDNIGHT PRIEST is a new band hailing from Portugal and last year they released their same-titled debut after a demo and mini-CD, all three highly recommended. "Midnight Priest" was one of the best 2011 albums in my opinion and I soon contacted the band. I couldn't imagine that this interview would turn to be so interesting thanks to the answers of Iron Fist (guitars), which can be funny and very serious in the same time. So, enough with the useless intro talk, read what one of the most promising underground bands at the time has to say about their music and all Metal-related stuff I asked.

Congratulations on your debut album, "Midnight Priest", we liked it a lot. You are a relatively new and unknown band, so I guess a bio of the band would be needed, right?

Hail Metal Maniacs!!! Iron Fist from MIDNIGHT PRIEST here, you better be ready for some Heavy Metal Madness!!! MIDNIGHT PRIEST was born in 2008 when three hairy and dirty slobbs decided they could actually put a Heavy Metal band together and play a couple of songs to break the ghastly boredom of our city Coimbra, which was at the time dominated by fat gothic chicks with lesbian tendencies and pseudo rocker leftovers. We started to play at a squat with the lowest grade instruments one could afford, a bucket for a snare drum and a radio as PA system. Soon enough we were avoiding classic alcoholic lifestyles, having to perform to crowds of 20 people whilst being sober enough not to get kicked out of the stage and eventually being paid enough money to buy a pack of cigars and a pack of potato chips for dinner. It was me (Iron Fist) on guitars, Alex Wartank on drums and The Priest, fronting what was soon to be MIDNIGHT PRIEST. A few weeks later the gang was joined by our good old friend and bass player Joe "Widowmaker" Dalton whose infamous reputation led to the band's establishment as a relentless Heavy Metal Machine. Aware of our intentions to have a classic twin guitar act, MIDNIGHT PRIEST ranks were soon joined by Rod Wolf who left the band after the second release to later be replaced by Nasty Nightmare, whose short lived period in MIDNIGHT PRIEST led to the band's new replacement on guitars with Johnny Kilmister. Among our infamous releases are "The Priest is Back" demo (2008), "Rainha da Magia Negra" (2009) and the homonymous "Midnight Priest" album in 2011 which was released in Portugal on vinyl and CD in the USA.

"The Priest is Back" demo tape was released in 2008 from Herege Warfare Productions. How did you decide to release your demo on tape format? Don't you think that in today's standards (f.e. many fans don't even have tape players) it limited your audience a little?

It sure is true, and even though demo tapes are experiencing a revival it certainly has a major influence on the distribution. Most people don't give two shits about cassettes, but then again we couldn't care less, we wanted to start in the old way and so we did. Einstein said that tradition was the identity of idiots, so I guess we're a bunch of idiots anyway. I'm sure that more obscure hordes of Metalheads around the world got the message and we know that the demo has been rolling from Mexico to New Zealand and Russia, which is what really matters.

What about the label behind its release? How was this arranged?

We were already good friends with Roger from HWP so it was pretty easy to get the demo out. His label only releases stuff on tape so we looked no farther. We did it in a couple of hours in a small studio and a few weeks later it was reaching mailboxes all over the world, it's always better to have someone taking care of distribution since the band was a complete clueless at the time and times were very blurry.

What was the feedback from this demo? I guess the 400 copies sold out, right? What about fans and press' reaction?

We never thought the demo would be sold out, given the fact that MIDNIGHT PRIEST sings in Portuguese and we were a rather unknown band at the time, not that we're playing arenas now, but a lot of stuff changed and the acceptance among the old school scene has been growing strong. One good thing about tapes is the press reaction, which is virtually non-existent, most magazines and webzines don't really take this kind of analogical release seriously so we avoid a lot of "press" throwdown this way, leaving the reviews for the underground and the real Heavy Metal zines.

You also participated in a compilation put together by Keep it True and Iron Kodex, the "Underground Kodex" LP. How did this come along? What do you think of the other bands/songs in that album?

Personally I think we got a bit screwed over, because our information on that compilation is quite fucked up with typing flaws, the lyrics are also fucked up and our photo was randomly picked from some website, nevertheless the sound quality is incredible and that's all that matters. The other bands are great but it amazes me how we are the only band singing in its own language, that's how we feel about the "Global Village" folks!

The band created some buzz, as next year you released "Rainha Da



Magia Negra" on Stormspell Records. How did this happen?

Well, it happened quite naturally, Jordan from Stormspell got in touch and it went from there, it was a leap of faith for both sides but we did pretty well. It's great to see the language barrier being broken and people enjoying the band even if they don't have a fucking clue about the lyrics. It shows how Heavy Metal is a Universal language and has no boundaries at all. We actually saw people in Greece singing the songs, regardless the accent! I think it's fucking insane and an absolute honor to see something like that happen.

You stayed with Stormspell Records for your same titled debut album. Is this because you weren't interested in a new label deal or other reasons?

Since the first deal went pretty well, we saw no point in changing to a different label. We also have distribution in Europe through A Forja which released the album on vinyl so we can cover good ground this way. Nevertheless we're still expecting a deal with Nuclear Blast anytime... Haha!

Tell us a few things about the new album. Be it the recording sessions, songwriting process, whatever.

It really was what you would expect from five dirty bastards on parole in polish land, a fucking great time!! Some of the songs were not ready at all, and we were writing lyrics on the plane, in bars just the night before recording, that kind of thing! We were completely drunk every single night and getting through the recording sessions wasn't always easy, but we did it and we're very proud of it. The studio was brilliantly packed with all analogical apparatus and the team working with us was flawless. It was fucking 1985 for all I know! I don't think we could have made any better in 5 days and it shows the power and aggressiveness of the times. It was impending chaos made into a record and we're much pleased with the end result. We hope that people will headbang to it as hard as humanely possible and live to see us play live, that's where the magic happens.

"Midnight Priest" also saw a LP pressing from The Forge Records of dedicated Metalhead and friend Francisco Serrano. How was this arranged?

Francisco has been supporting the band from the very beginning, and he alone was the only reason why we were able to record both the EP and the album. We have always been on the edge of poverty and he stepped in willing to pay for the recording sessions without even asking questions or considering benefits. I mean you don't see this happen very often, if ever. The album was also based on these terms, and we always wanted to have something released on vinyl, so Francisco gave us some cash and said "get back with an album or I'll have to rent your asses downtown!". So there you go!

What motivated you to sing in your native language? What have been the reactions toward it so far?

I don't know if you've noticed, but when a Portuguese tries to sing in English it sounds as annoying as a turd in a shallow bucket Hahaha. Other than that, we wanted from the start to stick to our language and carry on with the artillery, it won't make a fucking difference when you're a lover of the genre, you will listen to about anything as long as it sounds good and even try to sing along the chorus parts. At least it works for me. We are not fundamentalists and we couldn't be farther away from being nationalists or any kind of shit for that matter like some donkeys suggest. I mean, that's how we have fun, and our fans are very pleased with it, it kind of rebuilt an identity that was fading in the Portuguese Heavy Metal scene and we're very satisfied with it. We've had several people telling us that we'd be much more popular if the lyrics were in English, and maybe that's true, but we don't really care. That's what we were set out to do and it's too late to change now anyway... Sorry EMI!

Since we understand shit in Portuguese, would you care to tell us a few things on your lyrics?

MIDNIGHT PRIEST songs are most about depraved women trying to have sex with Satan in order to conceive the Devil's Child.

Ok, but what REALLY some of the lyrics deal with? They can't be all about these sex-hungry women, haha.

Well, in fact they are (e.note: I had it coming...)! Maybe in a slight different tone, but yes, all our songs have depraved, naked women at some point... because that's what we effectively are, depraved, nasty bastards looking for action. Some songs are also based on the Portuguese Black Book of Magic, which is an extremely rare, handcrafted publication in which I had the honor to lay my eyes upon. There are only 3 copies of it, they have a lot of information on how to summon demons and ultimately to call upon the Devil, whom must be summoned at this specific location in the North of Portugal, from where the name MIDNIGHT PRIEST derives-back in the Middle Ages there was a Priest who made a pact with the Devil in order to save a fugitive from certain death, so goes the legend that the Devil himself appeared after upon the chasm at midnight, spreading his wings across the river banks so the fugitive could escape into the woods, and never to be seen again. The Priest had evoked the Devil from this same ancient book, but the original page in which the summoning was written was destroyed

by the Inquisition back in the day. There is a grave site where the Midnight Priest is said to be buried, and inside which is also said to be a transcription from the page in question. Anyway, the tombstone has part of the prayer but nobody knows how to complete it. It's rather a warning. The bones of the Priest are at some undisclosed chapel location and are regarded as a precious relic. On the other hand we have "Ferro em Brasa" (Flaming Iron) which is a battle hymn inspired by ancient medieval times-such as ancient Greece, and other songs that are heavily influenced by the likes of Amando de Osorio, Jess Franco, Lucio Fulci, Mario Bava, Zé do Caixão and other cult horror motion pictures-"O Conde" (The Count), "Numa Campa de Cristal" (Into the Crystal Grave), "Segredo de Família" (The Family Secret) "Rainha da Magia Negra" (Black Magic Queen) and so on. To finish this topic, all of MIDNIGHT PRIEST songs speak of something other than political, social and economic views of the world, which we don't give two shits about as a band. OK, one thing is for sure, right-wing pseudo national, fascist, Nazi scum... that kind of shit we shoot to kill, GO DIE!!!

Your band has many similarities to IRON MAIDEN and MERCYFUL FATE. First of all, would you agree?

Sure, we're not trying to reinvent the wheel, and aren't hiding anything or trying to pass shit through the back door. If you love Classic Heavy Metal you will definitely enjoy MIDNIGHT PRIEST a lot, if not, well just fuck off! Maybe go listen to U2 instead.

The last few years we have seen many bands playing like early MERCYFUL FATE, most of them with a more 70's feel. My opinion is most of them suck big time and one main thing would be their musical background. The majority comes from an extreme Metal background and most likely they first got to know and appreciate KING DIAMOND (for obvious reasons) and at a later stage the early (and some of the best stuff EVER) MERCYFUL FATE, thus ending up with a "forced" result. Would you agree on the 2nd part? What's your opinion on this?

Yes completely. I mean Do What Thou Wilt right? But some bands just think they can cook this formula and just shit out a record and people will bow down to their knees. It's not like that, or at least it shouldn't be. Something's definitely wrong with a lot of bands and releases these days; I figure a lot of bands are trying to catch this "New Wave of Who Knows What" train, and all I see are the big labels and promoters cashing in with the prize. It's great that people are going back to the old ways because let's face it, modern music stinks, but it's still the corporate bastards who are cashing in day after day-promoters, studios, magazines, labels, etc. They are killing the underground for all I know. All I see is a bunch of sissies trying to look mean, but their mother's are still changing their diapers after the shows. As far as I'm concerned, we are still the same five mother fuckers your dad kicked out of the house for having sex with your sister.

What bands are you into? Are there some bands that all members of the band agree upon either as common influences or as bands you all like?

Sure, even though a lot of these bands don't translate into the music directly, there're a lot of crossed influences on MIDNIGHT PRIEST. From ZZ TOP, THIN LIZZY or RAMONES and of course the obvious ones JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE or MOTORHEAD, it all goes. We're just having a good time you know, we're not busy trying to look like our "idols" and we're not trying to reinvent Heavy Metal, so it's pretty obvious what our influences are to the naked eye. Of course we also have a more obscure approach to music and do a lot of other underground influence and pay tribute to less know bands like GOTHAM CITY, PROUD EXISTENCE, VAULT, LEGEND (US), BLACKLIST or most of the NWOBHM ranks. That would be the common ground within the band, and I'd place MIDNIGHT PRIEST among those ranks attitude/balls wise.

How is the Metal scene in Portugal?

Well, I'd say it's a mix between guys with dreadlocks screaming and 7 string guitars. Frankly it quite sucks at first sight but if you dig a little deeper you get some class acts. The popular bands really stink and we don't want anything to do with them. PUSSIES!!! There's also a huge catalogue of Black Metal and Grind Core as those genres are very popular here. I guess most people get confused on what "Metal" is, and that unfortunately translates into mediocre bands. They should call it something else rather than Metal, because when some real Heavy Metal band plays in Portugal the crowd attendance is a joke! Like JUDAS PRIEST - 600 tickets sold, MESHUGGAH (or what the fuck that is) - 1000 tickets sold... You get the picture! Needless to say that a lot of bands that claim to be "old school" influenced or GG Allin fans are a completely joke and have to be at home by 10 o'clock. Anyway, we're still going strong and the Portuguese Metal scene will never die. We're the ultimate renegades!! It kind of reminds me of Mad Max, as you'll have Punks and Metalheads partying together on this bare wasteland, fighting for the last drop of beer. There will always be outlaws and mother fuckers out there ready to Rock and we couldn't care less about what's going on around, we will naturally kick your metalcore asses and carry on the fucking show. Metal Lives!!!

How do you see the current situation in underground Heavy Metal? Too many bands/releases/labels, or is it just fine?

The more the better! As long as there are labels getting out Heavy Metal records, the more bands will come to life. You will obviously find great acts among the shady/shitty ones. You can never have too much Metal.

Portugal didn't have a big scene in the 80's and few bands got to have their material released on vinyl with average results most of the time. Could you please refer to/

recommend some old and new bands that are worth checking out?

We always had huge diversity in bands, and the 80's were insane, but since most of them sang Portuguese lyrics the industry didn't care about them. There was also a huge deal with heroin during this period, not to say that Portugal is at the very end of the continental Europe and far from the action, so it was really hard to make a stand back then. VASCO DA GAMA is definitely worth listening to, they rock pretty hard. You have several other bands which were much more NWOBHM influenced such as XEQUE MATE, ALKATEYA (now GARGULA), THE COVEN, SAMURAI, NZZN, TNT, early FERRO&FOGO, or the fairly known ones like TARANTULA, IBERIA or V12 and they all have vinyl releases. Thus being scarce pressings and hard to find gems, being the early stuff always better. And then, of course, the obscure ones, which are my personal all time favorites from Portugal like SEPULCRO (now on tape on A FORJA) SATAN'S SAINTS and BLACK CROSS, these guys were the ultimate badass Metalheads and even though most of them only put out a bunch of demos or died in the process they were pure mayhem, and their shows still have incredible reputation these days. As to the latest period of our Heavy Metal history, I will have to say IRONSWORD; I guess we all have that restless warrior blood in our veins.

How is a typical live show of the band? Have you played with bigger bands, local or foreign? Most memorable gigs?

MIDNIGHT PRIEST has played with some great bands, from DESTRUCTION, the mighty PAGAN ALTAR, MINOTAUR, ASOMVEL, ATLANTIAN KODEX or ENFORCER, to others like BEHEMOTH and FINTROLL and always had a blast. Regardless the place we always have a great time playing live, and every show is memorable because every show is the last fucking show, you never know what will happen from there so it's balls out every time. On the most memorable show, we had a fucking blast at Metal Bats Festival in Valencia this month with CAULDRON and STRIKER, absolutely amazing venue and crowd, fire blasts, stage invasion, people flying off the balconies, it was madness. Also, we will play with TOKYO BLADE in Madrid next month (April), ANGEL WITCH, CANDLEMASS, ASPHYX and IMMORTAL, and also with the ultimate Metal Warriors MANILLA ROAD in Athens in October. If you want MIDNIGHT PRIEST to come to your town just ask and we will be there!!

The band was supposed to play in Greece last October for the Up the Hammers Festival, but bad luck "struck" you. Could you please tell us a few things?

Even though it was a fucking hard time for the band, particularly to our drummer Alex War Tank who sadly had his father pass away a day before the trip, Dalton, our Road Manager Mad Man Gonzalo and I arrived in Athens to raise hell and meet with our friends Manolis and Greg in person to honor our appointments. We landed in the midst of a fucking street war with tear gas and rubber bullets flying, loads of booze and lots of relentless Heavy Metal madness. It was a fucking great time we had. We stayed at Greg's place who is one the nicest mother fuckers I've ever met and got to meet a lot of truly great people like Nick and the guys from CONVIXION and STRIKELIGHT along with other utterly good class Metal acts. We were actually there playing a couple of EXCITER and ANGEL WITCH songs with the guys and had a fucking great time drinking and partying with everyone. We actually got a hand painted MIDNIGHT PRIEST shirt in the mail from a fan from Thessaloniki, how fucking cool is that!! Greece is insanely fucking great Heavy Metal wise... People know how to party and you can feel that Heavy Metal is alive, you can breathe it man, people really know what they are doing and take no shit from anyone. We were treated like fucking royalty there. That being said, I sincerely hope that MIDNIGHT PRIEST has another shot at playing in Greece, I tell you, it's one of the things I regret most for this band since we started, it was a much fucked up situation. We will return Hellas soon!!!

What does the future hold for the band?

You tell me! Haha... I don't know, there has been so much highs and lows that we don't think about it much anymore (I don't think we ever did anyway). We definitely want to put out another record and do the recording sessions with our great friend Choco from STEELHORSE and NIGROMANTE in Madrid; we also want to do a couple of splits with foreign bands. We are doing a split 7" with the great KHAN from Madrid (check them out). While we were in Athens a split with CONVIXION was talked and it would be the ultimate collaboration. Also, if everything goes as planned there's a European Tour on the calendar with WALPURGIS NIGHT from Italy and WILD from Madrid. We are looking for shows anywhere, so if you are reading this and have the balls to bring MIDNIGHT PRIEST to your town just let us know. Other than that we will be releasing our EP and album on tape in Colombia this year also. A Brazilian connection was made and maybe you will see MIDNIGHT PRIEST in Brazil in the near future thanks to our friend Slanderer Possessed.

The last words are yours, see you soon in Athens!

A huge thanks to you guys and the Greek Metal Maniacs, you show the world what it means to be fucking Heavy and Loud. Heavy Metal is all about the people in the underground; they're the ones making it happen, and hopefully we'll be there also to raise hell with you. THE PRIEST IS BACK!!! Buy our records and go to our shows or be damned!!!

www.myspace.com/midnightpriest

Kostas Kailiazis



LUIS JORDAO PHOTOGRAPHY 2011



STAIRWAY

In a world of equity and justice, a band in the caliber of STAIRWAY would need no introduction and would bring excitement to the readers of this feature. Unfortunately, in this real world there's no such case and this band with almost three decades of active past still floats into obscurity. With five high-class full lengths of solid melodic Heavy Metal so far, they should have easily reached legendary status and reach every devoted fan's collection, much more than many so-called ultra rare masterpieces and renowned crap do. STAIRWAY's mastermind Graeme Leslie answers in a retrospective mood and myself hopes that the record will be set straight eventually!

Graeme, even though STAIRWAY is unleashed for more than 2 decades now, still a lot of fans are unaware of the band's existence. So, can you please shed some light on how the band started in the once NWOBHM dominated and afterwards music industry captivated Great Britain? Did any of the initial line up play in other bands before the formation of STAIRWAY?

We started the band as a three piece when we were all still in High School, Pete was on drums, Rob on bass, and me, Graeme, vocals and guitar. Andy joined us a couple of years later as drummer; he'd been in the Reggae band DELAYED ACTION who'd had a couple of hits in the UK. With Andy in the band as drummer, Pete moved onto lead guitar - We played a lot of Club gigs and Youth Clubs around Britain in the early days which sort of got us off the mark and the way.

What's the reason for the band's lagging so much till your first output, as there were obviously no line up issues (you kept the same members almost from the beginning) and you were there while heavy metal music in Britain was well holding the flame high on behalf of the worldwide metal scene. I can't think of a better chance to burst out!

I guess it was pretty much down to the fact we were all very young at the time, all the other emerging bands were a good 5-10 years older than us, so it was a case of getting some experience behind us.

What was STAIRWAY's style like on the very early days? Did you start using lyrics concerning Christianity and religious matters from the very first day? Don't you think such a "restricted" lyrical content that would lead to characterizing the band's style in general would totally restrain the band in the first place and "close lots of doors"?

We played a style closer to SWEET meets QUEEN meets THE EAGLES and was a mixture of both Christian and other lyrical content, we played a mix of our own material and our favourite covers, which is pretty much the same now. I can't say that we've been restricted in any way at all really, not that I can recall anyway.

What were your influences at the time, was your dream to continue the STRYPER legacy or something? This movement with bands using Christian lyrics was once pretty big in the States but not after late 80's...

Well STRYPER wasn't around when we started. We were influenced by the likes of THIN LIZZY, QUEEN, DEEP PURPLE and later on by IRON MAIDEN, SAXON and those early 80's bands. The STRYPER thing was something that caught everyone's attention at the time, especially in America but it wasn't something we consciously sat down and decided to emulate, we just did our own thing.

Your first appearance in discography was in the compilation CD "White Metal Warriors-Last Ship Home" released in 1991 carrying the cover art courtesy of renowned artist Rodney Matthews consisting exclusively of UK bands, half of them some already known thrash acts, pretty hopeful kick off, did this CD help you boost your reputation?

Well it put us in a good place as far as getting the band known outside the UK, not so much in Europe but definitely in the USA and it also carried the option of recording a full album afterwards.

When did your signing with Kingsway records occur? Was it a label strictly working with white metal bands by the way? I don't think

I had ever come across any other releases from this label. Yeah, it was solely a White Metal label. We'd made a demo round about this time and heard Kingsway was starting a Metal label so we sent it off and signed to the Kingsway label Edge Records in 1989/90. There were I think maybe two or three other bands who had albums released through Edge or on White Metal Records another Kingsway label, one being SEVENTH ANGEL.

Alright, I want to be honest! Although the band has 5 very good albums out, I talk to a lot of people knee deep



● Pe
of Tr
● Stairway
letting their
hair down
at the Royal
Albert Hall
● Andy and Roger
of Licence Renewed

o n t o
underground metal, most of them didn't know about the band whatsoever, myself only got to hear STAIRWAY a couple of years ago and was pretty amazed! I heard high-class heavy metal that occupied great melodies and playing that would appeal to both hard rock and die-hard metal fans. What went wrong and you didn't gain the reputation you deserved, at least not abroad?

Timing I guess. Although we signed with Edge in 89/90 it took 3 years to get our debut out, and by that time, Grunge had taken over and Metal bands were finding it hard to get any interest from new fans. The die-hards were still there, but the media and music industry had moved away from the bands of the earlier years.

Come year 1993 and your first full length is out, one of the best white Metal albums in the not-QUEENSRYCHE-sounding league in my opinion. I don't want to focus in your lyrics at all, as this is how the band moved on and most of all it concerns apparently personal beliefs. Why did you press such a tiny quantity of this great album and how did you promote it? Was it welcomed by the press and fans at the time?

You may be referring to the re-release in 2005 which was a limited edition of 1000 units. Edge Records released the original in 1993 as I said, so I don't know how many copies were initially pressed; it was licensed to Teichiku Records in Japan where it got into the Japanese Import Charts. I'm not sure how much promotion the label did for it, but it did gain us a lot of interest Internationally both with fans and press, so I guess they did a good job with the promotion. As a band we played a lot of live shows around the UK to promote it which also brought us a lot of new fans.

Again, you used Rodney Matthews' brilliant art for your first CD offering a showstopper artwork. In addition to that, you worked with Paul Hodson (Bob Catley etc) for the production job, all sounding too prominent but did success come with this "heavy artillery", each one at his own field?

Yeah, I think it did, although at the time it was all going on we didn't know it, it's not until we look back on it that we can appreciate it all.

Second album "Bleeding Heart" ,took you almost 5 years to get it prepared. What happened in the meantime? Same good music, same tone but this time at your own label. How many copies did you press of it and how was it received?

Well, Edge held the option to release a second full-length album, which they didn't take up, but we had to wait until we were out of contract with them before we could release any material, either on our own or any other label. We did a lot of shows in the mean time that kept us busy and enabled us to finance the release of the "Bleeding Heart" CD. It was very well received when it was released, which was great seeing as it had been a while since the "No Rest..." album. We pressed I think 1000 copies at first and went for another pressing soon afterwards.

So it took you again quite a while for another release! How do you explain this hiatus this time? Was the band put on ice or you spent time touring around the Island?

No, no hiatus it was still very much business as usual.

Did you give a lot of shows till then with STAIRWAY locally or even abroad?

Yeah, we were still playing a lot of shows and with a second album under our belts a lot more material to choose from, we hadn't had the opportunity to play abroad at that point, but we were kept very busy in the UK.

2002 and your third full length is out under the name "On Hallowed Ground". The music is on the same style but in my opinion this is your weakest effort, as along with the anthems like "Justify" and "Deo Volente" the listener comes across some ups and downs throughout the album, as much as the bluesy "Foolish Heart"! Did you try to experiment a little bit with the overall result, the production job sounds a tad different as well...

I think there's a slightly more progressive feel to the album - there's stuff on there I really like and we still play live, it does have that slightly different feel to it compared to the others, but I still think it stands up on it's own.
How many copies did you press of this



one? I see it is on your own label again. We pressed it the same as with Bleeding Heart.

Lyrical content is the same though, so do you plan to go with Christian lyrics in all of your songs as long as the band is there? Aren't there any other issues that might intrigue and allure your writing lyrics?

I do write about things on varying subjects; there are tracks on most albums that do so; even a few love songs, "Show me a Woman" on the "Bleeding Heart" album for example; "Red Alert" talks about a nuclear disaster, "Under the Gun" from the "On Hallowed Ground" album was written around the time of the Iraq conflict, granted it has a slight religious flavour, but ultimately, all the songs are about love in one form or another.

Is it correct that at around that time the band participated in another compilation CD on a US label? I've never seen that CD, so in hindsight do you remember the other participants and if this was a white metal compilation CD?

No, it wasn't a white metal compilation, all the bands on there were unsigned bands of differing rock/metal sounds. I don't know any of the bands on the CD; it was all very much a taster compilation put out by the US label who had the idea of following up with full lengths. We did get quite a lot of interest through it; I don't think it's available anymore.

I said that it is only recently that I found out about your music, but when I bought your CD's I tried to listen to them in a sequence of their release date. So it was a huge surprise to me when I played "The Other Side Of Midnight" disc, I reckon it is one of your best albums, maybe my favorite next to the debut! Once again on your own label, you gave up trying to get a deal or no one was interested?

Thanks, I'm glad you like it. We were talking with a number of labels at the time, but we decided in the end to release it on our own label. We did sign with a promotion company who did great things for us, getting a lot of airplay, especially in the US.

Did this one sell well enough to keep you going?

It has been our most successful album so far and gave us enough to make the next one. Every album is self financed and relies on the sales of the previous album to finance the next.

I hear you as being stubbornly stuck to your hard rock influences, keeping the melodies and using keys in a discreet fashion, but this was not the product in a music market like the British one, as it wasn't a good selling product in the beginning of your career, when metal music was obsolete and other trends took hold of this market. How could you tolerate this apathy everyone showed and went on recording as if nothing happened? I saw lots of bands quit... What was the situation in the British metal scene in retrospect from your beginning up to this point?

In the beginning and up to around 1995 it was great, and then Grunge came in as I said earlier and changed everything. We still carried on playing live shows, albeit fewer than before, but there were still the fans around from the earlier years; things go in cycles I guess, classic rock and metal seems to be making a come back lately, and a lot of the bands from the early days are making new albums which is great!

It's a wonder how you guys stayed together after a long career. Next album turned up after the common hiatus of 4 years, as strong as the previous ones and "Interregnum" is unleashed! This time you surprised me differently, as if I'm not mistaken, it is your first vinyl! release, how come? How many copies did you press of the vinyl?

We pressed 320 copies of the album on blue vinyl as a special limited edition with a different back cover to that of the CD. I'd always been slightly disappointed that Edge hadn't release "No Rest: No Mercy" on vinyl, but by that time nobody was releasing stuff on vinyl. With the success of "The Other Side Of Midnight" CD we decided we could release "Interregnum" on vinyl, and with Rodney supplying the cover artwork it seemed an opportunity not to be missed!

The fifth attempt is at the same level as all of your records, the listener gets nothing less than well done melodic Heavy Metal with religious lyrics and fantastic guitar work.

Thanks very much!

But this time you recruited Mr. Matthews again for another showstopper cover art and I believe this one is among his top efforts, at least from the ones I have seen on albums. Moreover, it is the first time that you change the line up. Why was Rob Jennens out of the band?

Rob decided he wanted to spend more of his time with his family and do other things, so he retired from the band at the end of 2008. We still meet up and see him once or twice every month and he's doing fine and still consider him a part of the STAIRWAY family even if he isn't playing with us anymore.

So how did you promote the album this time? Did you book enough shows to satisfy your fans? Did you ever get airplay for the last releases or British radio is of no use in your opinion if you don't sound as a music industry puppet?

We signed with a media promotions company in the UK who sorted all the promotions for us and we've played a few shows in the UK to support the album, we've also picked up more radio plays in the UK. There are some great independent radio stations around now who are dedicated to keeping rock and Metal current and relevant!

Looking back at your entire career with STAIRWAY, do you see anything that you would like to change in each album separately, is there something that you would like to achieve in hindsight



and are you satisfied with the whole job done?

Nothing really springs to mind. Maybe the time between albums might have been shorter, but hey! I guess achievement wise, it would be nice to do more shows abroad, but hey, there's still time eh?

How did your shows differ now that you appear on stage as a trio? Did you also perform in the past handling both the vocals and the lead parts in guitar?

I've always handled both the lead vocals and rhythm guitar in the past, with Pete handling all the lead guitar parts. There isn't much that we can't do as a trio that we couldn't do before, if anything, I think we are a slightly tighter unit.

I know that you are in the making of a new sixth album. Can you give us some info on that? At which point are you now regarding the process of writing or even recording it?

We've got all the tracks sorted and have just started the recording proper, so there

isn't too much I can say at this point, it's a bit early in the process. What we've done so far though is sounding great!

Are we to meet any surprises this time? Anything different from what we are used to?

That would be telling ha ha! We are working on something a little different. I can't say more than that at the moment!

When is the release date scheduled for, if any?

If all goes well we're hoping to release the new album this Summer 2012.

Graeme, what are you listening to at the moment?

I've just bought the new MR BIG CD "Bitter Streets". Not the US band, the original MR BIG from the 70s. I used to love that band back then and it's great to see them back again, another I'm listening to is the new SAXON CD "Call to Arms", another great album.

What are your current influences and what are your influences in general, both musical and inspirational? By the way, you managed to avoid the NWOBHM tag, no matter how we hear a few British residues, not so keenly in any case.

Still very much the bands from the early days, I like what Kip Winger is doing, and also THRESHOLD, there's some good stuff around these days.

So, where can the fans buy your albums Graeme?

A few places as the Stairway store (www.stairwaymusic.co.uk), CD Baby (<http://cdbaby.com/artist/stairway>), Amazon (www.amazon.com) and downloads on iTunes

How do you feel that after this long career and quality albums, STAIRWAY is still considered an underground band and despite all that, still overlooked by fans? Where do you think the band should stand at in a virtual heavy metal (or music if you prefer) universe and which are the factors that prevented the band from getting there?

That's difficult to pin down really, the same happened with a number of other bands like ANVIL, MACHINERY and WRATHCHILD, all who started around the time of the NWOBHM era but never got the breaks either. I guess it could be put down to timing, the amount of exposure we got at the time, and that over the past 20 years or so metal in general has had to compete with coming in and out of mainstream consciousness along the way. Having said that we're not down hearted, I think we've carved out ourselves a niche which can only get bigger-we still enjoy what we do and we're excited about releasing a new album this year and playing some shows, the first being Elements of Rock in Switzerland this month, so, it's onwards and upwards eh!

Thanks a lot for your time and clarifying replies Graeme,

No problems, it's been good to reminisce a little, thanks a lot!

Feel free to add anything you fancy to your readers and good luck!

Thanks a lot to all our supporters, old and new, it's you guys who keep us doing what we do! Keep it metal!

www.stairwaymusic.co.uk

Thanos Stafylarakis



METAL INQUISITOR



It's been over a decade since this German quintet sent a loud message through their debut single. Resistance is futile. And how true this is. I really can't think how a Metal fan with a soft spot for great 80's Metal will not love this band. Their albums sound like a collage of 80's styles/bands, but they sound so fresh and inspired that it's impossible not to admire them and headbang to their tunes. I haven't been very excited with the last album of the band (see previous issue), but I couldn't resist to contact Blumi and ask him a few things concerning the past and the future of one of the best Metal bands of the last decade.

So Blumi, tell us how did you get into Metal in the first place? What drew you in this music?

I guess I have got into the Metal scene quite "traditionally". In the late 80's I tried to find a part in the society where I felt comfortable and understood. If I remember right it was around 1988 as I bought my first LP, which was AC/DC's "Blow up your video". It was just pure brainwashing and I was immediately assimilated. At this time it was just easy to distinguish the youth cultures: punk, skins, Heavies and poppers. So the Heavy-Scene made me very interested because of the good coherency, these colorful LP covers (when you are young, you get hypnotized by IRON MAIDEN's Eddie) and at last the expressive music. This scene was just honest. And it still is nowadays!

Was METAL INQUISITOR the first band you were involved? If not, could you tell us some info for previous bands you were in?

Together with some friends I formed my first Metal band, CREMATION in 1989. We were so bad in playing that we just stood in the rehearsal room. Our first gig was in front of the rehearsal room right at a bus-stop. After 2 songs we got back indoor and never went back hä,hä. We existed for just 2 years but this has marked me for my whole life. At the same time Infernal started with DESASTER. One of the very first songs of DESASTER is originally a CREMATION song! On the first DESASTER gig in 1989 I stood in front of the stage and Infernal played the first riff I have ever played on a guitar. After that I did experimental music like PINK FLOYD. Some Metal-pals still smile about this music I did, but for me it was an important development as a musician! After some years I felt an inner order to get back to my musical roots. This was at the end of 1997 when I formed METAL INQUISITOR.

You formed METAL INQUISITOR along with Witchhammer on drums. Were you two friends before forming the band?

I knew Tormentor (Witchhammer at METAL INQUISITOR) because of DESASTER. One evening in our Metal pub I asked him for playing the drum parts on a demo. He instantly said yes as I told him that I got interesting riffs in a traditional style. Well, Koblenz is just a small city and every Metalhead knows each other.

How did you find El Rojo and Kronos? Were they the first (and last) members you had on the first line-up?

In the very beginning me and Tormentor wanted to do everything just alone. But later Tormentor said that he found 2 guys for making the band complete. I was lucky to find in the right moment the right people. I don't think that the first demo would have sounded this way if I would have been alone with Tormentor.

Is there a special meaning behind the names you use?

METAL INQUISITOR doesn't mean that we are the heroes of the scene. "Inquire=exam", we exam all typical 80ies Metal styles in their roots and try to make it like they did. So that's why you hear many different styles in our music

even if it tends more to NWOBHM and Bay Area.

So, in April 1998 the first demo of the band gets released including three songs, "Monday Eve", "Smoking Kills" and "Four by Four". Tell us a few things about the recording process, the songs etc.

At this time the whole band was totally new formed. We didn't really knew how to do music together. These songs are something like unfinished and rough. Well, it views the status quo of the band in 1998. We recorded it just on a 4(!)-track-tape recorder. I think you can hear that hä,hä.

What was the response to that tape from the press and the fans? How many of them did you sold/distribute?

I sold maybe 100-200 tapes for just 1,50 Euro. I guess that most of all bought it because of the low price. The response wasn't really euphoric. Just in our Hellbangers Club some guys were interested. We have been just a super-underground Demo-band.

Was there label interest at the time?

No, after the demo release nobody was interested in METAL INQUISITOR. Or better nobody who told me that he would like to do a recording with us. Well, the music was just too underdeveloped. But I like to listen to it often anyway... its ultra-authentic.

The next "strike" of the band came in the form of a 7" single, "Seven Inches for the second Attack", which the band released on their own in 1999. Shed some light please. Why did you go for a 7" single?

First of all we had just 2 songs and a vinyl single was cheap in production. We acted mostly on impulse and never with an intention of becoming a successful band. On "Seven Inches for the second Attack" we made a next step forward. The band got more professional in playing together, the songs had more maturity and we had our first big success. So Iron Glory Records offered us a deal and one year later we recorded our first full length album "The Apparition".

One year later, the band records 4 songs, "Bernardo Gui", "Daze of Avalon", "Get Down" and "Zombie Driver". Was this CD commercially available or only sent to labels in search of a contract as I don't remember it being mentioned much back then...

This tape has had just the sense to give it to Iron Glory before doing a contract. They did not trust us if we had the skills to do another step forward. I heard that many people like that demo a lot.

Was it before or after this promo-CD that you decided to get a second guitar player? How did you find him?

Coinciding with the onset of METAL INQUISITOR, we had also started a cover band to life. At that time, many Metal musicians in various bands were employed. They knew each other and so it was also shown that T.P. and Havoc later came to METAL INQUISITOR.

Another line-up change took place as drummer and founding member, Witchhammer was replaced by Havoc? Knowing that you still play with him in METALUCIFER (Germany), I guess there is no bad blood and it was a matter of time as he also plays in DESASTER?

No, not at all. He said from the very beginning that he just plays for 1-2 recordings. To play a whole album it's a lot of work which he couldn't find time for. So in 2000 he couldn't stay in the band anymore. If I remember right we asked Havoc just in advance to make it.

Iron Glory Records released in 2002 your debut album, "The Apparition", a brilliant album. Are you satisfied with the job they did for the band in terms of promotion and distribution?

These guys were ok and it has been relaxed to work together with them. But Iron Glory was a small label and had no big budget for bands. So the promotion





wasn't much.

What was the response? In my opinion it's one of the best albums of the last decade, very powerful and diverse Heavy Metal with excellent songwriting and catchy as hell songs.

The response was positive but nobody was so much enthusiastic. We did a step forward again but no quantum leap! Looking back, I must say that each of our albums really took time to be accepted. But now in 2012, I may say that "The Apparition" is our "Kill 'em all". The first album is always the cult album. Maybe the main reason is that you just play clueless and don't think about the response.

On that album you covered a track by Polish band, OPEN FIRE, "Twardy Jak Skala". How did you choose this particular song/band?

I was at that time in close contact with Bart Gabriel. He traded original Polish

metal LP's for "The Apparition" LP's. Among them was just "Metalmania Live 1987". I was incredibly impressed. I thought only of the political oppression at the time, but the band has given everything. I knew that the cover song would be something special. Therefore, I have also learned the Polish texts and sung them on "The Apparition".

Another 7" single with the name of the band was released in 2003, this time with another German band, RITUAL STEEL. Italian-based Dream Evil Records was responsible. First of all, how did this co-operation (with both RITUAL STEEL and Dream Evil) happen?

The guys from Dream Evil were at that time very often in Koblenz. Somehow, they had already asked RITUAL STEEL and after them, us. Because we knew all the guys we agreed. However, the cover artwork is not particularly successful. It is unfortunately bad, but because of that fact its somehow cult.

How did you choose the songs that you participated with?

I think that the choice of "Eye of the Storm" was made because of continuing lack of concern. One funny thing I remember: As SWEET SAVAGE played on H.O.A. some years back I was supposed to play this song with them. But I was but totally drunk at the time and slept in a tent hä, hä. Fuck, that opportunity never comes back.

What is your opinion for the RITUAL STEEL track?

Well, I'm not into the style of MANOWAR. I'm really sorry but it's not my thing. Later that year (or maybe it was before the 7" and I don't remember well???) Afterlife Productions released a tape compilation including the 1998 demo, the 1999 single, two of the four 2000 promo tracks and a live version of "Four by Four" under the title "Commencement".

How was this arranged?
This is an area in which CD's are difficult to afford. At that time even "The Apparition" came out on tape in Thailand. So it turned out that even there our music could be heard.

The band's second album was released in 2005 under a new label, Hellion Records. The title of it, "Doomsday for the Heretic" and once more the band delivers killer Power Metal. This time I get the feeling that the band's influences come more upfront than in the previous release. Would you agree with this?

I think that's a good idea to say we have got upfront. We made a further musical development, and in my opinion this has become the accepted norm in us and is firmly established. Even the new material I'm writing now is in the way of "Doomsday for the Heretic".

Why did you change label? Were you not satisfied with Iron Glory, or was Hellion's offer better?

I remember that before "Doomsday for the Heretic", Andy Preisig told me that they are not able to do another album with us. I really can't say what has been their main reasons. Later they broke up anyway so I guess they have been maybe bankrupt. I'm sure they regret it to this day to let us go.

Brazil based label/distro, Hellspike Records released in 2005 a compilation of your songs under the title "Resistance is Futile" in tape format with the 1998 demo plus the two 7" singles. Another tape release! Are you fans of this format?

It was actually the same reason as above in Southeast Asia. The people there have simply no money for CD's and LP's. However, Hellspike Records was a fucking rip-off. So I don't think that we will do such releases again in South America.

The "Doomsday at the HOA" LP was released from Hellion Records in 2007 and I would characterize this LP as pointless since it came off kind of weird to many fans to have a live album after only two studio LP's. A single would make more sense in my opinion.

Yes, you are maybe right! I had just in mind that SAXON released "The eagle has Landed" in their very beginning. Perhaps it was presumptuous to believe that we could just be that way like SAXON in 1982.

"Garage Nights (Bootleg)" LP was released from 2008 by Kneel before the Master's Throne. How did this release happen?

We had done over the years a few rehearsal recordings. At some point we decided to use that material just for an official bootleg. After we had bad experience with labels from overseas it was advisable to release it with somebody from the Hellbangers Club in Koblenz.

This LP included demo and rehearsal recordings of the band, a total of 12 songs. Did you choose the songs to be included or was it up to the label?

He was totally hot on the promotional demo of "The Apparition". I think it's really not succeeded so well but he wanted to have it there. So we just grabbed all the rehearsal room recordings in one package and called it what is has been: recordings in a garage at night.

We can find some pretty interesting cover songs in this LP. Would you care to comment on them?

I could tell every song a long story but I just leave it on the song "Legacy" from IMAGE. When I played in Chicago in 2003 with METALUCIFER, I saw this band live. I thought they were great and as you have noticed by now, yes I'm a sucker for completely unknown but brilliant bands. So it came as with OPEN FIRE. Another (last so far) line-up change took place, as KronoS was replaced by Dutch G.

It was very unfortunate that KronoS had left the band after so many years. But he did not have much pleasure in making music anymore. And G. Dutch, I think it was just a big misunderstanding. It just did not fit together. So now we got Cliff Bubenheim (METALUCIFER/MIDNIGHT RIDER/DEATHFIST). I can say he is the right successor.

The last release of the band is the "Unconditional Absolution" CD/LP released last year once more from Hellion Records. I think it's your weakest effort, but at the same time the more accessible without this meaning you softened or anything.

I am not of the opinion that it is a weak album. But we had to recognize that you reach as a band a certain development. I like "Kill 'em all" even better than "Master of Puppets". It is just another type of Metal. One cannot really influence how we as humans evolved musically! This is a realization we had to do.

What was the response? I guess the best an album of yours had, judging from reviews and fans' opinions, right?

That's it. This album has celebrated the biggest success of all. I know there are fans that think like you do. I can understand that. But you know what I mentioned before...

Being an underground band, but Metal fans above all, how do you see the resurgence the Classic Metal seems to be enjoying the last few years? Is underground still a healthy environment, or the many labels and people unfamiliar with Metal in general ruin it in some ways? People (and fans) seem to care more about the number of copies, the vinyl color and how "die-hard" their copy is, instead of supporting the bands.

I guess you can't call it anymore "Underground". A new scene was born and bands like BULLET, SKULL FIST, ENFORCER, PORTRAIT etc. present the music for this new subdivision in the Metal scene. But it's astonishing that nobody has given a name to this scene yet. Personally I have never been the "super die hard" guy, that I would necessarily have any of the red vinyl of cool bands. No matter how it comes, we must remain true to ourselves and concentrate on the most important: the real Metal. (e.note: so correct...)

How do you see the mp3 thing? What is your opinion, does it help bands since if the album is good fans will most probably buy it, or does it hurt sales for both bands and labels? My opinion is that people that would only download, would never buy a CD, so it's good for fans, but maybe the prices don't help?

As a band you never get rich by selling a lot of CD's or LP's. So I really don't care if with our next album, we sell considerably less than before. On the other side, technology develops on and on. It makes no sense to complain about that because the things will always change. Changes are something good. They caused anew the appreciation of LP's!

Which were the bands/releases you distinguished the previous year (2011)? What are you listening at the moment?

I listen a lot to STEEL HORSE from Spain. It's an impressive live band. I was told that they are going to release a new album soon and go on tour. About what I listen at the moment...well, mostly the classics. Right now an untitled TYGERS OF PAN TANG bootleg from Japan. Even in the classics, you can discover often new recordings/things

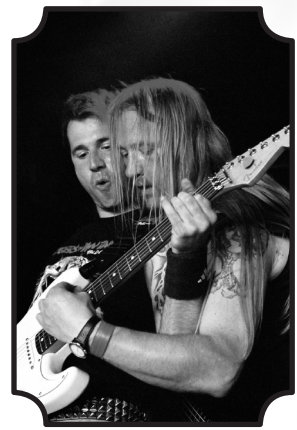
What are the future plans of the band? Should we expect a new album/single soon? What about more extensive touring? Is it completely out of the question to see the band supporting a bigger act on a European tour?

Our primary goal this year is to complete our next album. We just don't play a lot of gigs in 2012, so its well-timed to work on it now. Besides METAL INQUISITOR, I'm playing in a cult German Punk band, called TOXOPLASMA. We will release a new album soon and play at some Festivals. About doing a tour with METAL INQUISITOR; this is something really difficult. I mean it's not only about us and our jobs but we don't get any offer to do this. And to support a bigger act it's impossible. When you're at a small label you have no chance to get trough.

Thanks for the interview Blumi and for devastating our necks in UTH recently. The last words are yours, end this interview any way you like! I enjoyed Up the Hammers a lot. There was a special atmosphere in this place! Hopefully we come back to Greece soon!

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Kostas Kailiazis



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USA and Canada in the 90ies

PROLOGUE:

Classic heavy metal, power and speed, that's the great metal of the 80ies I grew up with. I suppose a lot of metal freaks were somewhat disappointed at the beginning of the 90ies (covering the years 1991 to 2000) when the magazines featured death metal and funk „metal“, grunge and black metal was the next big deal, then ... you name it. Classic metal was rarely seen on the cover of the magazines – and even some of the fanzines – unless the bands were established and had a “name”. With this in mind the perspective for the decade was anything but good.

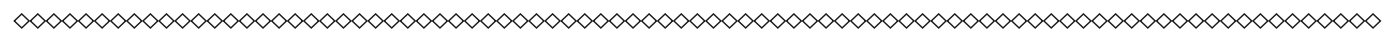
Countless bands in the US and Canada were forced to release demos and cassette albums in the 90ies, since talent and taste were not the first properties when labels signed another promising act. Obviously there still was a demand for the traditional metal sound, with small labels like Sentinel Steel, Massacre or Siegen Records that supported young bands with a preference for the classic metal style. And we're not counting the numerous private releases. Thinking of all the great 80ies releases it's hard to believe that the output of classic metal almost came to a halt at the beginning of the new decade. Our guess is there is a lot more stuff to be discovered. Probably not all releases are good the way we expect them but we are sure there are some hidden gems in the 90ies.

On the following pages we're having a short look at the 90ies scene in the US and Canada. The intention is:

- not to present the common releases that are easy to find
- not to present the well known rarities
- not to present the ultra obscure stuff.

On the contrary we'd like to introduce you to bands and releases (on CD) that people rarely talk about although the bands surely deserve more attention. In some cases different editions may exist, we provided info where available. Of course it's all a matter of taste: if you'd like to check another opinion have a look at the references. So, enjoy the following pages with our selection.

M.



Agressor - say your prayers GD

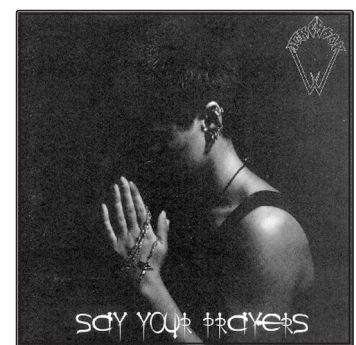
(Private, 1997)

Agressor released a CD titled "say your prayers" with a nice b&w cover after two demos. At first glance the band name/logo appears to be unreadable, which actually may mislead to think this is a black or death metal band. Without a review in mind I don't think I would have bought it: the picture shows a band with a 90ies look (short hair) but music is said to be 80ies style US/power metal.

Agressor has a four piece line-up with one guitar. "Say your prayers" lists 7 tracks and I would consider this a CDEP (although playing time is ca 32 min and longer than some 80ies albums). Song titles like "born to kill", "in vain", etc set you in the right mood for classic hm with touches of power and speed. The band is very energetic, double bass drums are frequently used without moving Agressor to thrash grounds. Occasionally I think of Exciter when listening, all songs are on a similar level which makes this a great CD. Most of the tracks could be rated as highlights, how about "death before dishonor", "assault attack" or "born to kill"? The last song "nightfall" includes an unlisted track after a few seconds of silence and there is no cue on the title. The sound of the bonus cut is a little different, it could be taken from an older demo. "Say your prayers" has the right ingredients and is a must-have in my book. The booklet has four pages with lyrics (except for the bonus track, of course) and a band photo. There were no later releases using this name: Agressor changed the name to Magus Beast and is still active these days with a different line-up.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: That's It #12 (German), Heavy Oder Was #32 (German)



Apocalypse - same GD

(Private, 1994)

Obviously Queensryche did something right in the beginning. The band gained major success in the late 80ies, but increasing success quite often goes hand in hand with a decrease in musical quality. Nonetheless Queensryche became a kind of reference and a lot of bands were marketed as "sounds like old Queensryche" in the first half of the 90ies.

It was a similar case with Apocalypse. When I bought the CD a few years ago I vaguely remembered a review so I bought it without having listened to a song before. Apocalypse has a four piece line-up with one guitar and no keys – which is definitely a plus in my opinion. The packaging is very simple, just a single inlay card (no lyrics), the tracklist, line-up and a thanks-list is all that is offered. The CD features 7 tracks (ca. 52 min), the first 6 tracks are in the 5 – 8½ min region, the last track clocks in at 13 min. Apocalypse deliver an album full of great songs that are actually reminiscent of early Queensryche. "Losing the future...to the past" opens the CD and as soon as Jerry Keyzer hits the first real high notes you know you're in for something special. Apocalypse are very smart to avoid simple song structures and still the songs flow smoothly. There is no reason to highlight a single track since all songs are on the same level. The key words are talent, songwriting & diversity. All songs are well arranged, filled with acoustic parts and long instrumental sections that leave enough room to present the technical abilities without ending up in egotrips. As a band effort this is an excellent release. Just a word of warning: if you are looking for straight forward stuff only this is probably not the best choice. Everyone else should at least try to locate a copy of this album. This is an amazing CD in all aspects and sits comfortably on the shelf with your Lethal, Crimson Glory and Heir Apparent CDs. Essential.

Different editions: not known

Further reading: Sentinel Steel #3 (English), That's It #9 (German), Heavy Oder Was #23 (German)



Carbide - spiral termination GD

(Private, 1994)

I found a positive review in the 90ies and ordered it from the band directly. The first song "total impact" left me speechless. I stopped the CD and listened again. The CD was released in 1994, one of those years where you could count the great underground releases on one hand. Ok, if the first track is a representative of what was to come then this will be a great CD. And yes, "spiral termination" is a great CD in 80ies style. Carbide is a trio with guitar, bass and drums, the vocals are credited to the guitar player and the drummer. It's great to see a band that sticks to the old sound and plays power/speed metal without any modern approach. Influences could be old Flotsam & Jetsam, Whiplash or Intruder, although it is difficult to cite a certain band as reference. The guitars are doubled now and then and the vocalist uses his voice in medium range but with the occasional screams. The list of great tracks is long, recommended tracks are: "total impact", "roll the dice", "the headless horseman", "lost land", "nightmare" or "into the grave", a Sabbath cover adjusted to their own style. Most of the tracks are in the 5 min+ region and the listener will not notice this due to the diversified songwriting. This CD comes highly recommended.

The booklet has 10 pages including lyrics and various band pics.

Finally: when you look for some info on Carbide on the web you will quite often see this CD described as thrash but "spiral termination" has nothing in common with Slayer, Kreator or similar acts. The only reference here – in my opinion – is the use of a shout chorus at times. Carbide also released a CDEP in 1998 ("product of the real world") but they changed style, this CDEP is thrash for sure.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Iron Pages #42 (German), That's Metal #14 (German), United Forces #6 (German), Heavy Oder Was #36 (German)





Defyance - amaranthine GD

(Private, 1997)

"Amaranthine" is the first full length release for Defyance, after a demo ("voices within", which was rereleased on CDR later) and the following "time lost" CD in the 90ies. The reason for picking this CD for an introduction is simple: I don't have the others yet. The information is few and far between, the CD has a single inlay card and doesn't even mention the year of release. My guess is early 1997, since the first reviews showed up in spring of 1997.

Defyance has a five piece line-up with two guitars, bass, drums and vocals, no keyboards are mentioned. "Amaranthine" features 10 songs most likely to be recorded in three sessions since three different bass players are listed. Some of the tracks appeared on the demo in 1992, but I don't know if the same versions were used or if the songs were rerecorded. The general direction is somewhere between classic HM and progressive power metal with twin lead guitars and the occasional high pitched vocals. Defyance obviously are influenced by bands like Iron Maiden, Queensryche or early Fates Warning, the guitar harmonies even resemble those of the 70ies masters like Thin Lizzy or Survivor (the Texan Survivor - "all your pretty moves" LP, if it is justified to cite this album as a reference). Some of the songs are pretty melodic using acoustic parts while others are uptempo tracks and almost power metal. Onto the details: the heavier tracks like "your love lies", "running free" or the galloping "seize the day" will have you love this album, while a song like "wings of angels" shows a different side of Defyance along the lines of the mighty Heir Apparent. Now wait: "amaranthine" is not a perfect album. A minor point is the voice of Brian Harrington as he sometimes hits the higher notes in a shrieking way. Nonetheless this is nothing serious - "amaranthine" is a well balanced album and should be respected like a classic.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: That's It #12 (German), Heavy Oder Was #34 (German), Steel Conjuring #2 (English)



Eidolon - zero hour GD

(Genocide Rec., 1996)

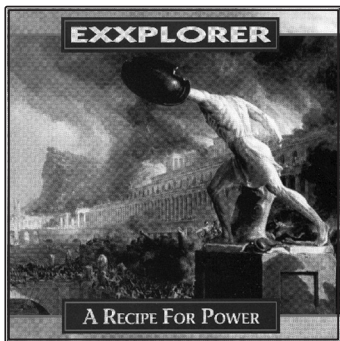
Eidolon is another young band - this time from Canada - that has the guts to release a metal album in a time when grunge, stoner rock and alternative sounds were the big deal. "Zero hour" is their first release on CD after two demo tapes. Genocide Rec. is a band own label, so looks like everyone is sleeping at the A&R departments. Yes, I can only say so since Eidolon did not get a deal with this CD and the following album also was released on their own label.

Eidolon has a five piece line-up with two guitars, bass, drums and vocals. All songs are credited to the Glover brothers who later joined Megadeth. The music on "zero hour" is power metal, carefully arranged between mid tempo tracks and galloping power metal. References could be Riot - "thundersteel" LP/CD or Powermad - "absolute power" LP/CD. Glen Drover and Slav Simanic on guitars are a great team, easy to hear on the solo parts in "blood rain" or the title track. Brian Soulard has a good voice in the medium range and rarely reaches the higher spheres. Two minor points: to me it is strange to see a band including three instrumental tracks, two of those are on acoustic guitars only, and a cover (Black Sabbath - "hole in the sky") when "zero hour" features only 10 songs. Eidolon should have enough material as they released two demos before. But maybe it's a part of the band concept in their early days. The last song "fortune" includes a short hidden track: it is a reprise of the title track, partly with growling vocals. Another unusual idea if you ask me. Despite these two aspects I hold "zero hour" in great esteem. If you'd like to try a few songs: "when will it end", "in memory", "eye of the storm" and the title track.

"Zero hour" is a professionally packaged CD, the booklet includes 6 pages with lyrics and band photos.

Different editions: „apostles of defiance" 2CD (Metal Blade, 2003), includes „zero hour" CD as a bonus

Further reading: United Forces #5 (German), Heavy Oder Was #30 (German)



Exxplorer - recipe for power GD

(Chatterback Rec., 1993, slim line case)

A lot of people love Exxplorer's first album "symphonies of steel" and that's for a good reason. The album was widely distributed and Black Dragon and Metal Blade copies are common.

Now that I hold a "recipe for power" CD in my hands I noticed a few suspicious details: Ed LaVolpe on guitars and synthesizers? Song titles like "rock the nation" and "rockin' bound"? So is "recipe for power" the odd CD of the issue? In my opinion: no. After the first spins I can say it's definitely different. I will start with the song titles I mentioned above: "rock the nation" is a pretty simple tune and I don't like the chorus. This track is far behind everything Exxplorer did on "symphonies of steel". "Rockin' bound" is another one that hides behind a cliché title, but at least it emerges as heavy metal. I could do without these two tracks compared to the great material on this CD and that's it for the bad news. Some of the other songs are in a melodic vein, like "smelling the roses" and "life's seduction". Best tracks for me are the heavier ones like "bible black", "ride the storm" and "beg, borrow and steel" - that goes back to a 1986 demo track if I remember correctly. Exxplorer also included a cover of "one", a 70ies pop song in a metallic outfit. Well done and it fits excellent with their own great compositions on this CD.

The conclusion is easy: it's not a consistent release, not in terms of musical quality and not in terms of direction. If you don't mind the more melodic tracks then this is a very good CD. Once you hold it in your hands in a store and don't know what to do: buy it. It's worth for the track "beg, borrow and steel" alone, which is a real anthem.

The Chatterback issue comes in a slimline case with a single inlay card and you already guessed it: no lyrics, no band-photo, as sparse as you can imagine. If you really think you need the lyrics to "rockin' bound" try to find the Massacre edition.

Different editions: Massacre Rec., 1994, 8 pages booklet, lyrics

Further reading: Mortal Sin xx (unnumbered edition, could be #13, German), Eternal Flame #1 (German), Dying Illusion #5 (German)



First Strike - same GD

(Private, 1995)

By just having a look at the cover I guess a lot of people are tempted to buy this without any info on the music. First Strike offer us a CD with 7 tracks that are located somewhere between melodic metal and progressive power metal. Don't expect the emphasis on power: the music presented here is influenced by bands like early Queensryche, Crimson Glory and Fifth Angel, and most of the tracks are mid-tempo.

First Strike has a five piece line-up with two guitars and the bass player also plays keys which are rarely noticed. The guitar section of Steve DeBlanc and John Fenol is excellent, especially when they stretch out over solo parts. Vince Garcia has a great voice in medium and upper range and also uses screams with a clear voice. All this will lead to high expectations. Still I guess something is missing to rate this as an all-time classic. A small additional amount of power would be helpful for the final kick. Don't get me wrong: this is a good CD and a very charming release. Tracks like "believe in a dream", "the end of time" and "I will not fall" should please all fans of the above mentioned bands and the genre in general.

The booklet comes with lyrics, a band photo is on the back. Where did First Strike go from here? I haven't seen any other releases, is there anything else?

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Sentinel Steel #3, That's It #12 (German), Heavy Oder Was #34 (German)



Killer Khan - kill devil kills GD

(Private, 1999)

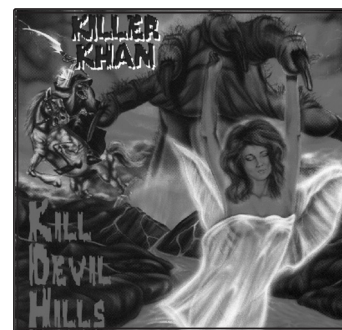
"Kill devil hills" is the third release for Killer Khan, including the CDs under the Holy Moses name. Killer Khan has a four piece line-up with two guitars, including rhythm guitar and vocals by Killian Khan himself who is the main character behind Killer Khan.

Once you push the "play" button you'll quickly notice the vocal similarity to Ozzy. And now for something completely different: musicwise the band is influenced by Black Sabbath and early 80ies solo stuff by Ozzy. Just imagine. Well, positively speaking this is traditional metal with a doomy approach, classic sounds give no reason to complain. On the other hand this is nothing new but we really don't want anything "modern, or "innovative", do we? The twin guitars add to the overall sound and Richard Downs presents some excellent leads. The oddly titled "computer icon" opens the CD and it's an strange choice to use this song as opener as it's the only one I would rate average. All other tracks are very good to great, with highlights being the powerful "dr strangelove", "supersonic masquerade" and the epic "wicked chimes of the southern bells". Some songs include decent keys for the atmosphere, yet there are no credits for the keys given. Despite the arguments mentioned above: it doesn't matter if a bands is close to their influences if the songwriting is done in a very convincing way. "Kill devil hills" is an excellent CD in my opinion.

The booklet has 6 pages and comes with lyrics.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: That's Metal #16 (German), United Forces #10 (German), Heavy Oder Was #50 (German), Steel Conjuring #3 (English)



Kratos - same GDEP

(Private, 1997)

Kratos from Ohio released the "iron beast" EP in 1985, then there was silence. Those who have listened to this EP know that the band plays melodic metal with happy sounding, singalong chorusses.....no, just kidding.

Gotta give these guys credit. Kratos return with another EP 12 years after the first one, this time on CD format. The line-up is the still same, if I remember correctly one of the band members joined the army for a while which was the reason for the long hiatus. It's fair to say that nothing has changed: Kratos plays very raw speed metal bordering on thrash. The CDEP features 4 tracks and the band sounds very aggressive. Exceptional songwriting? Technical Aspects? Production? No, just pure energy. The first song "hunter" is a killer tune and sounds a bit hectic as if the band was in a rush to record the tracks for this EP. There is a bridge in this track that sounds pretty sloppy but who cares if that song completely destroys? While "hunter" is full speed ahead, the other tracks "fatal blow/open fire", "guillotine" and "born in flames" actually include slower parts. Well, slower parts according to Kratos standards: i.e. mid tempo parts. Bernie Hanzel screams his lungs out which adds to the effect that this CDEP sounds a little chaotic. If you like speed metal this CDEP is highly recommended.

The cover shows the band logo, slightly modified to that on the "iron beast" EP. The CD has an inlay card, no lyrics and a band pic on the back. It also comes with a sticker: ":Caution: - may blow speakers". I see...

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Iron Pages #44 (German), That's Metal #14 (German), United Forces #7 (German)



Master Fister - third prophecy GD

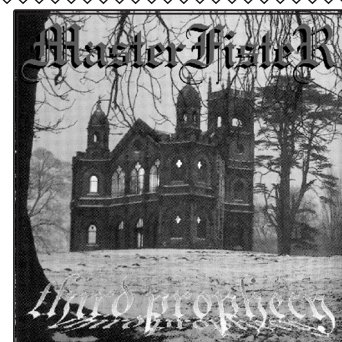
(private, 1998)

I remember when I bought it someone mentioned "oh, that's a thrash album, didn't know you like thrash". Hm, maybe I bought something I don't like. "Third prophecy" is the first CD release for Master Fister and to my knowledge the only one yet. With reference to the title "third prophecy": maybe the band released two demos/CDs prior to this one? I don't know. Master Fister plays classic metal with various influences: a nod to hard rock and maybe even a nod to psych. To me this classic hr/metal with lots of doom overtones - maybe with a small Black Sabbath touch - as far as the slower songs are concerned. The uptempo tracks even incorporate elements of power metal. At first listen the opening two tracks sounded a little strange to me, but the band easily caught my attention from the third track on. "Well of doom" starts acoustically and the later vocal melody reminds me of early Candlemass. The songwriting is great, the band shows a lot of variation. Shayson V. Clay is a riffmaster for sure and also shines on the solos that in some cases bring 70es hard rock to mind. Matt Casali has a fine voice in the mid range, when he uses the upper range he sounds a little strenuous. One song is a little different: "come to the sabbath". Matt sings in a very whiny way which is not for everyone I guess. Looks like "come to the sabbath" and "light the fires" are connected as the chorus of "come to the sabbath" is repeated at the end of "light the fires". For a first listen I recommend the following tracks: "galaxy of halos'98", "well of doom", "gather around the circle" and "can you hear me?".

Conclusion: "third prophecy is a very good CD for me. And if this is thrash then I must be a die hard thrash metal freak.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Metal Invader #50 (Greek)



Mr Sinister - this way to hell GDEP

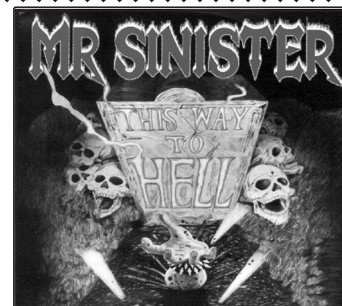
(Everest, 1997)

Mr Sinister from Texas released a CDEP featuring six short tracks after their first full length "screaming blood murder" the year before. "This way to hell" was released in 1997 but the first listening was a real surprise: it brought back memories of the early 80ies. Mr Sinister is a power trio (guitar/vocals, bass & drums) that sets your mind 15 years back to the glory days of the NWOBHM. I didn't hear the finesse of classic early US metal, instead of that Mr Sinister sometimes makes me think of hard rock. The songwriting is rather basic but the everpresent guitar makes up for that. All six tracks are midtempo and I can't think of a good comparison, maybe a less energetic Tank with clear vocals or early Holocaust could give you an idea of the Mr Sinister sound. As NWOBHM can be a label that is used too often I'd like to mention the following as a bonus: no hints of rock'n'roll, boogie or pub rock to be found here. Recommended tracks for a first try would be the "longer" tracks (if you could see the smile on my face right now...): "this way to hell" and "state of rage".

Booklet comes with lyrics and the packaging looks professional. As far as I know all Mr Sinister CDs are on the Everest label which could be a band-own label since I am not aware of releases from other bands.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: unknown



Nightcrawler - revelation genocide GDEP

(Private, 1998)

Nightcrawler from Ohio released an album in 1989, it was a local release although a few copies made it to Europe. The band contributed a song to Metal Massacre vol. XI that helped to spread the name but did not lead to a deal. So another demo followed until - finally! - Nightcrawler came back with a mini CD in 1998.

Again, this CD looks like a typical private release and provides very little information. "Revelation genocide" comes with a four page booklet, but it has no lyrics, not even a band photo. Nightcrawler easily managed to conserve their sound of the 80ies, classic US metal to power metal: in my opinion more Armored Saint than Vicious Rumors. The line-up on this release features Jim Hamar on vocals whose voice fits very well with the mid-tempo oriented material. The title track opens the CD with a great memorable riff and sets the pace for the next 20min. "No faith in tomorrow" is a slower tune while "walk in the dark" almost borders on power metal, well done. My favorite though is the closing "war torn" that begins like a ballad at a slow pace and speeds up into metal territory. "War torn" has an epic touch and leaves the listener asking for more.

Unfortunately this release again did not result in a deal. To the best of my knowledge I have not seen any following release. I asked Bill Peters (Auburn Records) about the current status of the band back in 2007 and he told me the band is still active with Jim Hamar on vocals. Another CD would be welcome from my side. Maybe I should be a little more patient and the gap between two Nightcrawler releases is getting bigger? Who knows?

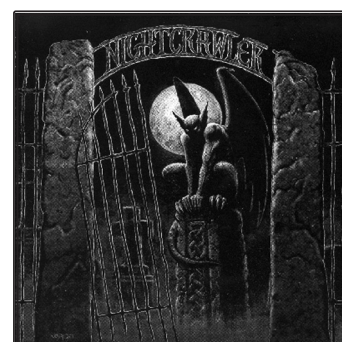
So far I noticed two different editions, easy to spot is the difference at the CDDA logo on the disc. I'm not exactly sure which edition came first, I'm waiting for additional info.

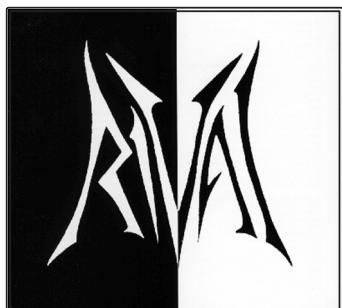
Different editions: one edition with CDDA logo ("compact disc digital audio")

another edition with different CDDA logo ("compact disc digital data"), slightly different colour of

CD print, different matrix, slightly different spine)

Further reading: Iron Pages #46 (German), Feast Or Famine #3 (English), That's Metal #14 (German), United Forces #7 (German), The Circle #5 (German), Heavy Oder Was #41 (German)





Rival - same GDEP

(Private, 1998)

I don't want to spend too much time before I state my position: this is an amazing CDEP and a must-have if you are into power metal. Just the facts in short: the untitled CDEP is the first CD release for Rival and was available in 1998, although the origin of the songs may date back to the early 90ies. Rival has a four piece line-up with two guitars. The band plays power metal that reminds me of Tension or Vicious Rumors on the faster tracks. "Strangler" starts the CD with a double bass track in great fashion. "Verge of destruction" and "the last rebellion" are excellent power/speed metal cuts. "Cry out is a semi-ballad, that switches to a mid tempo track towards the end. The final track "beast of the night" again is crushing power metal. Highlights: five out of five = all tracks.

John Johnson has a darker voice in the medium range and sounds like J.D. Kimball of Omen.

Find this..... Now..... You need this.....

Final note: if you saw the band on stage at Bang Your Head festival in 2002 and did not buy the CDs your hopelessly lost.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: unknown



Rude Awakening - silent cry CD

(Missing Link, 1993)

When having a look at the cover it doesn't look spectacular, but it was a real pleasure to listen to this CD. I first noticed a Rude Awakening demo in 1991 and the band continued to release 3 CDs in the 90ies that I know of. "Silent cry" is way better than the others in my opinion, that made the decision for a review easy. Rude Awakening has a five piece line-up, with two guitars, bass, drums and vocals. The style is close to Queensryche ca "the warning" era, most obviously heard on tracks like "requiem" or "dreams must die". Vocalist Robert Gaston uses the mid to upper range and also hits the high notes in a great way. Robert Gaston is also listed as keyboard player, but keys are rarely used. All songs are based on two guitars (by Jim Hill & John Goodwin) and the keys are added for the atmospheric parts only. Although the sound of the guitars occasionally is at a lower end the overall sound is definitely that of an 80ies style band. The songwriting is nothing less than excellent. Highlights on "silent cry" are the opener "powers that be", "silent cry", "the bell", and the last three tracks "requiem", "dreams must die" and the closing, almost epic "the gate". If I had to compare this to the above mentioned Apocalypse CD (which has a similar direction): the songs on this CD are a little more compact and less experimental. By all means "silent cry" is highly recommended.

Missing Link may be a band-own label, still the packaging looks complete in my eyes. I.e. the 8-page booklet has lyrics, a band photo and even a nice comic style drawing of the band, what more can we ask for? The year of release is not exactly known, different sources on the web state 1992, 1993 and 1997. My guess would be 1993 with the help of the following set of arguments:

the sound is closer to the material of the 1991 demo than to that of the later CDs ("headbutter" CD, 1995 & "scaring the paper people" CD 1996)

Rude Awakening have a different vocalist in Mitch Urban on the later CDs

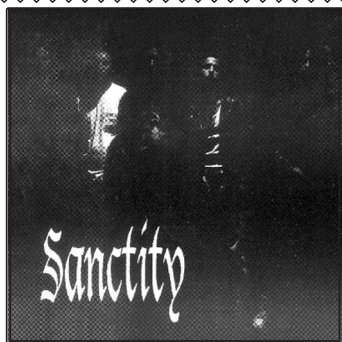
catalog number is MLR 001 indicating the first Missing Link release

CD is manufactured by Disque America and does not have an IFPI code (that was introduced in 1994, as far as I know)

PS: there are more Rude Awakening CDs on Nidus Productions. I only had a glass mastered CD but I've yet to see a completely packaged product (including booklet and back).

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Iron Pages #40 (German), That's It #10 (German)



Sanctity - same GDEP

(1996, private)

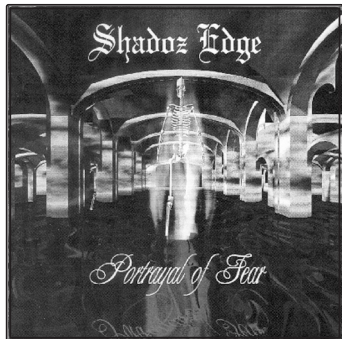
Sanctity? A cover with a band logo and a photo of the band members who are barely visible, all drenched in violet, what is this? It could be anything from independent pop, new wave or alternative rock to funk, jazz or electronic music. But hard rock or even metal?

Yes it is heavy metal and real good at that, too. A look at the backcover shows the tracklist with song titles like "martial law" or "dragon's fire" that could be an indication of the content. Sanctity from California has a five piece line-up with two guitars, bass, drums and vocals. Their style is somewhere between US metal and progressive power metal. The opener "escape from time" is a great tune with dual guitars - riffs and leads - by Michael Blair and Mark Wickman. Vocalist Christian Blair has a pleasant voice in the midrange, he occasionally hits the upper range but avoids screams. All three tracks are at medium speed, and all are on the same level. Song credits are given to Christian and Michael Blair (could be pseudonyms, by the way), looks like they are the main characters in Sanctity. It's hard to pick tracks for a recommendation if there are only three but my choice would be "escape from time" and "dragon's fire". This CDEP is not a must-have but a great addition for everyone into 80'ies metal, thumbs up.

I couldn't find more information on Sanctity, to my knowledge this is their only release. The CDEP comes with a four-page booklet with lyrics included, and the inner pages are....empty. The booklet is not properly cut, at least my copy is like this. Maybe that's another hint for a homemade release. But who cares if the music is great?

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: Iron Pages #40 (German), That's It #11 (German), Heavy Oder Was #32 (German)



Shadoz Edge - portrayal of fear CD

(Private, 1995)

Shadoz Edge came out of nowhere, a friend of mine sold this CD and his description just said „power metal“. So I bought it, not knowing what lies ahead.

The band is from Illinois and "portrayal of fear" is the first CD after a tape album two years earlier. Shadoz Edge has a four piece line-up with two guitars and Dave McCormick also handles the vocals. After the first spin I didn't know what to think, I immediately liked the music with it's 80ies sound but I couldn't really get into the vocals. After repeated listening I can assure you that the CD grew on me. Musicwise I see influences from the late 80ies US metal/power metal with bands like Helstar or Powermad, maybe a little bit of Metallica, too. The major part of the songs are mid tempo oriented and the band sounds best when Dave McCormick and Pat Cassidy (both on guitar) step on the gas. Dave McCormick has a rough voice in lower to medium range and his voice shows similarities to that of James Hetfield (who actually is not a great vocalist in my opinion). On the first track "majority rules" he reminds me of Kenn Nardi since he quickly switches from singing to shouting. When I use the word shouting I don't want you to understand this as a warning: I cannot hear any 90ies influences on "portrayal of fear".

I wanted to use a song for a compilation and ended up listening to all of the songs. I had difficulties to pick one since I like em almost all - the only song that sounds a bit basic is "dead and deceased". Whenever I thought this could be the one to use I checked the next track and start to think again. This alone should give you an idea on the quality of this release. If you'd like to get a taste of this CD try "the rage within", "assisted suicide" or the "portrayal of fear" for a start.

The booklet has lyrics and a band photo is included too. No barcode or catalog number, as expected.

Different editions: unknown

Further reading: unknown

EPILOGUE:

At this point you have read a few reviews or maybe even all of them. You will have noticed that I rarely address the production of an album. A lot of good material of the 80ies was released as demo tapes and the budget usually was not very high. So my ears are used to a production which is not perfect which occasionally adds to the charm of a young band. Therefore I wouldn't rate the sound as that important as a few others might do.

Of course, feedback is welcome, please steer your comments to the editors. As you can see from the references the releases have been noticed and the information was spread at the time. So we think at least a few copies should be circulating. Current prices or price ranges for most of the items are not exactly known - at least not to me - and may vary but several items could be located eg at recent KIT metal markets at low/reasonable prices (20.00 EUR and less).



TUNGSTEN AXE

TUNGSTEN AXE is a new band hailing from (where else?) Sweden, a country that seems to be leading this "race" of new bands into the Classic Metal sound of the 80's the last few years. Despite having recorded only a demo-tape so far, the band sounds a lot like Swedish bands did almost 30 years ago, without sounding dated, or bringing some specific bands to mind, at least when you first listen to them. Both me and Thanos liked the demo of the band a lot (thanks for sending it guys!), so an interview with Andy (drummer of the band) is a logical consequence.

When was the band formed and by which members?

TUNGSTEN AXE was formed in late 2009 by Andy the drummer (myself) and Dick who handles rhythm guitar and lead vocals. We knew we had to get a really good guitarist. Dick knew Johan who is a real master on his axe and he was recruited. The fourth and last to complete our band is a skilled bass player by the name Sir Robbin.

Did you play in other bands before TUNGSTEN AXE? Any recordings? How the name was chosen and is there a meaning behind it?

No bands worth mentioning. I think the cassette we made are the most serious release since we began playing instruments. The word Tungsten is a former Swedish word and means heavy rock. Strangely, today in Sweden we use the German word wolfram when we refer to the elemental metal. Axe could refer to guitar if you like. Since Tungsten is a very heavy metal we thought it would fit us well.

Is "Tungsten Axe" your first release? Tell us a few things about the recordings.

Yes, it's our first release. We recorded at Studio Tvåtakt which is a small private studio run by another Sir Robin. We didn't have a bass player at the time so we got helped out by a friend. "Tungsten Axe" was the first piece written and will probably be the only survivor of the four tracks onto our next release, which hopefully ends up as a full-length vinyl. "Portrayal of Hell", the darkest track, is lyrically about what the title describes. Some lives have to end up the way it goes in the lyrics. The track "Anon" is a rocker and the lyrics deal with personal issues about an ex-friend who sometimes haunts my mind. "7:44" is a slow number written in our mother tongue.

Why did you decide to have two songs sung in Swedish?

It's actually one song at the moment but there are more to come (e.note: my mistake in asking the question). "7:44" could not be written in English. It's full of metaphors and ambiguous sentences.

Why did you decide to release your first demo on tape and not a CD-r?

I was very late in the 90's to join the CD-revolution. So I stuck with the vinyl and the mix tapes. CD-r for me is a bit of unreadable plastic junk laying around. The cassette lasts longer and compresses the mix in a nice way. If we would've had the chance to choose an alternative we would've released it as a vinyl EP. But that would have cost us too much.

Yes, but what about younger fans that don't have access to analog formats like vinyl or tape? Or people that for various reasons listen more to CD's? Maybe if you uploaded your songs...

If somebody asks for a CD-r we'll send it. In the future we wish to print CD's as well. About uploading, feel free to share. You know we're only musicians and not very good at creating websites and so on.

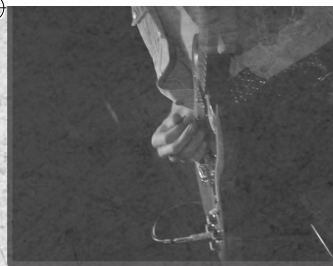
Did you send it to labels in search of a possible contract? What have been the responses so far?

Yes, but unfortunately we haven't got any response. But we're not totally pleased with the result ourselves. We should have worked a little more on the arrangements and with the production. The new songs are well crafted and will make us proud. Heavy as tungsten and sharp as an axe!

What's your opinion on the current underground Metal scene?

It's getting better! For me real Metal is not a contest about who's playing faster or who's got the fattest triple dubbed guitars. The best Metal was forged when the bands were young and limited concerning recording, equipment and so on. Like Metal in the early stage we have today the true underground labels, zines and bands who are in it for the real spirit and I hope it will last for a while. New bands I can think of now which I like are REALBUILDER and ELIMINATOR (UK).

Do you think that the recent



vinyl craze helps in the long-term? Sure, it's nice to get great looking LP's, but the prices seem to be very high these days, for new releases I mean. On the other hand, most underground labels seem to play it safe and rather than investing a few money in new bands, they release almost everything recorded in the 80's in limited quantities for a quick buck...Your opinion please.

Good point, but there are labels such as Heavy Forces, Heavy Artillery and I Hate who invest in mostly new bands as far as I know. High Roller has a fair balance between new and older stuff. But you're right. I see these unreleased demos and reissues all the time. Some people are a bit conservative and are only interested in old obscure bands and that doesn't help the scene. To be honest, your reasoning made us think more in the direction of a budget vinyl. But different colored vinyls and such things have never been on our minds. We're not in it for the money.

What bands influenced you to form a band? what are your favorite bands/releases?

Early SAXON is superb and SCORPIONS in the mid/late seventies were good. SEVENTH SON (UK) is quality all the way. SAMSON, LOUDNESS, MANILLA ROAD, TWISTED SISTER, NAZARETH and WITCHFYNDE are good bands. Solid releases I can think of now are: TRANCE-"Power Infusion", CIRITH UNGOL-"King of the Dead", BURN-s/t (Moonshine records & tapes 1983), WOLF-"Edge of the World", RAVEN-"All for One", SAMSON-"Before the Storm", SINNER-"Wild'n'Evil", SYAR-"Death Before Dishonour", DARK QUARTERER-s/t, VENOM-"Eine kleine Nachtmusik", JAG PANZER-s/t EP, MANILLA ROAD-"Open the Gates" etc.

What about Sweden? Many new bands come from your country. Why do we see so many bands the last few years? I mean, almost always Sweden is producing many bands, but the last few years there is almost the equivalent of an explosion. Could this be related to the success of bands like ENFORCER and WOLF before them? really, what do you think for the above bands?

Yes, that is true. TRIAL, NIGHT, INSANE, THRILL WARRIORS and JACKHAMMER are a few new bands I come to think of. And those times when I watch bands live I see more and more people who are really into the scene coming to the shows. I think it's been easier to live as a musician in Sweden, compared to many other countries. Social welfare, fair wages for more unskilled jobs, municipal buildings with youth culture and a long time of representative democracy have contributed to our music export largely. And yes, I guess existing bands strongly influence others to form bands. I know Johan likes ENFORCER a lot. To be honest I'm not so familiar with WOLF. I'll check them out. They've got really charming cover art on their debut album.

Has the band performed live yet? Do you play any covers or only originals? Any bigger bands you shared the stage with?

We've given one concert so far. JACKHAMMER was the opening act of the evening. We have a few gigs planned, but no dates yet. So far we have only originals in our repertoire. If we include a cover it will probably be something quite uncommon.

What are the future plans of the band?

We will enter the studio as soon as possible. We are in the starting blocks of creating a smaller analogue studio but if we can afford it we will record the new stuff professionally with a producer. But I think we'll carry on the way we do now and would be more than pleased with the help from a small indie label.

Thanks for your time. End the interview any way you like.

Thank you.
www.myspace.com/tungstenaxe

Kostas Kailiazis

AXE BATTLER

The last few years we see a bigger number of bands from Latin America getting more known to us ignorant Europeans. Most of the times we are content with the bands we know and talk with other fans, forgetting one of the best places for Metal the last decade. The number of GREAT bands/releases coming from Latin America is unreal in my opinion, but the distribution problems and the fact that most bands seem to be satisfied with their local fans/acceptance (as in almost every country) doesn't allow us to appreciate and support bands that really create excellent albums. It was originally intended to focus a little more on Latin Metal, but we must wait for the next issue. Below you can read what JP Battler, singer of the band had to say about his band and not only.

When was the band formed and by which members?

The band started with me and Chris at mid 2008, when we started composing and arranging the first songs.

Was AXE BATTLER the name of the band since the beginning? What inspired the name?

Well, we thought about the name after starting the band, when we got more sure about the direction our Heavy Metal was taking, we decided to have a name that represented our epic and traditional sound, we thought about a warrior with a heavy axe made of steel, so that's why the band is called AXE BATTLER.

What brought you together in the first place? Common friends?

I met Chris, AXE BATTLER main axeman, after getting introduced by a friend of mine who is his cousin, both also play in a great US style thrash Metal band called FASTTER and I knew he was the right person to be the lead guitarist of the band because of his guitar playing skills and his passion for traditional Heavy Metal. Manuel, the drummer, was my band-mate when I was part of the Heavy/Speed Metal band BAD JOKE, so for the same reasons I thought about Chris, I told him about my band's idea and he immediately accepted.

What would be your favorite bands/influences and bands you all like/state as influences for various ways as a band?

The bands that we listen and inspire us to make what AXE BATTLER is, are IRON MAIDEN, SAXON, JUDAS PRIEST, CLOVEN HOOF, ANGEL WITCH, SAVAGE, SATAN, JAGUAR, TANK, MANILLA ROAD, OMEN, ARMORED SAINT, and many, many others that would take many pages to mention! We all like these and other traditional Metal bands! We listen to a lot of Metal styles, we like to listen to thrash Metal, doom Metal, speed Metal, death Metal and some black metal also, some bands of these genres influence us in various ways, but not directly in our music.

When did the band started recording the songs that would later be included in the "Wrath of my Steel" release? Were these all the songs you had or you made a selection?

We started recording the songs in mid 2009, in that time we had 6 songs, so we left 2 that we never played again for different reasons, but I think we delivered the best songs we had on that moment. Maybe later we will re-take and re-work on those songs.

I guess the feedback for your debut EP was more than great, can you tell us more please?

Yeah, much better than what we expected. We received lots of mails and comments asking for the EP, people from many countries like Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Japan, Thailand, United States, Mexico, Peru and so on, lot of feedback from fanzines and webzines, we are very satisfied for what we achieved with this EP, but not 100% satisfied, so, we surely will deliver something better on our next release.

"The Wrath of my Steel" has been released on all available formats, with the last being the vinyl version. Why doesn't the vinyl include "Fight the Fire"? Also why so many bonus tracks? Isn't it unfair for those that have bought the CD or tape?

Well, the truth is that we just wanted the vinyl edition to offer something different for those who never heard the band or for those that already had the mini-CD or tape, but wanted to listen some more, besides, the bonus tracks are 2 advance tracks of our future album to be released sometime on 2012.

So far the band has covered songs by bands such as WITCHCROSS and TYSONDOG, showing clearly its' preferences for 80's Metal. Do you play some or more songs like these live? How do the fans react?

Yeah, we always play one or two covers on our live set list, we also played songs like "Gates of Gehenna" (CLOVEN HOOF) and "Medieval Steel" by MEDIEVAL STEEL beside others. The truth is that we play these songs because we love those bands, most of the stuff we play is pretty unknown between local bangers, there's no special reaction.

You are a new band, playing 80's Metal. Perfect for the following question. How do you see the underground scene nowadays? Too many bands, labels, releases, in the end is this good or in the long term will harm the scene?

Well, as far as bands are doing this in a honest way, it's good to me. There are many bands of the underground



scene that are doing things the right way, I see a strong movement in Europe and there are many bands that have all my respect and I personally listen a lot and enjoy, but sadly there's also those who take this as a joke and do this only for getting recognition and get famous.

You come from Chile, a country that (like almost all Latin America countries) is shunned by fans and press alike, due to distribution problems. What is your view? Why don't we know of more Chilean bands? And why do most bands play extreme Metal there?

Well, Chile has a strong scene strictly speaking about bands, specially on death, thrash and black Metal, many underground bands are very appreciated by die hard bangers around the world, so with lots of metal heads from other countries with whom I have contact, think our scene is great and one of the strongest in the whole continent. I think, and only speaking about more traditional Metal is a bit weak, because the Chilean 80's scene was more about thrash, death and black metal and that influence still endures in time, heavy metal in those years was looked as "gay and hippie music" by many bangers at that time, and still, by some "bright minded" posers, so, when we play there's many people that really don't understand our Metal, that's the reason most of the people that buy and like AXE BATTLER stuff comes from outside the country.

Do you know/like some bands from your country to recommend to us that play traditional Metal? How about older bands?

Well, if you want to hear newer bands, I recommend you METAL GRAVE, great Heavy Metal, they have released only a single but soon they'll record their album. CONDENADOS is also a great Doom band, for sure you've heard of them. BAD JOKE is also a very good Heavy/Speed Metal band, ACERO LETAL is a great Heavy Metal band with lyrics in Spanish, but I think they're dead now. For older bands, you should check out FEEDBACK, PANZER, CHRONOS, VASTATOR! Also some recommendable thrash/death/black metal bands are FASTTER, TERROR STRIKE, INSANITY, ANAL DESTRUCTOR, VENGEANCE, FORCE OF DARKNESS and CANCERBERO among others.

The last few years bands like BATTLEAGE and PROCESSION have signed deals with foreign labels and have become more known followed by bands like CUERVO, INQUISICION, RADAGHAST and now you. How do you see this?

I think bands like PROCESSION and BATTLEAGE are one step ahead of many bands in Chile. You see, PROCESSION has toured Europe two times already, they have a great record deal and this is because of only one thing: hard work. Taking your band seriously, taking Metal itself seriously, perseverance is the key, I think many bands in Chile have talent and good ideas, but many of them just sit on their lazy asses, or play with shitty bands and on mediocre gigs, or just release shitty rehearsals instead of releasing something more developed, like a mini-CD or full length. I've seen many good bands falling for their lack of vision and lack of seriousness, and there's of course, the posers that get bored of Metal. There's also the problem of the typical backstabbers and posers that talk shit behind your back, or can't stand that your band get some type of recognition.

What are the future plans of the band? A new album is supposed to be released in 2012, right? Some more info about it?

Right now we are in composition process, I hope that we will record the album on May/June 2012, the idea is to have 6-7 more songs so we can decide which ones will make it into the record. The new songs we have so far are in the same line of the EP, so, you can say it has traditional sound with some epic moments, but maybe a little bit more developed, as you may know, we're not trying to re-invent the genre and we are not going to play modern stuff, we just want to play what we want, which is traditional Heavy Metal.

Have you talked with labels for a possible release? I guess the band has had some proposals, right? Could you tell us a few things?

Yeah, we have an agreement with Panzerkommando Records for the vinyl version of the full length, we worked with the label at the very beginning, when "The Wrath Of My Steel" was released on tape version, the label was the first one to show interest in us, so we want to work with Franz again because of it and the very good job he did with the tape version.

End this interview any way you want, the last words are yours.

Thanks a lot for your support and interest in AXE BATTLER, I hope this interview to be very informative about the band and our thoughts. Never step back in the Metal battle, always be proud to be a Metal head! I hope someday we can do a tour on Europe and play for the Greek Metal maniacs! Bottoms up!

www.myspace.com/axeattler

Kostas Kailiazis



TRIAL

TRIAL is one more Swedish band that impressed me with their first and new album, "The Primordial Temple", even though I was prejudiced when I first heard the news and the tune the label used to promote the band. However, it took me more than a couple of spins and I realized this was another treasure that should have been unearthed. And their label The Coffin's Slave did the dirty work! So I mailed drummer Martin Svensson to clear out a few questions that I had and he gladly did. Enjoy!

Hi Martin, congratulations about your fantastic album! Everything seems to move fast for TRIAL, as it was not long ago that you had released your first demo and now, it's been a few months that the band has its official offering in heavy metal discography out! So, who's on TRIAL and who are the accused in this case?

Hello Thanos! Thanks a lot. Well, not so fast actually. Prior to the release of the demo we had been active for a little over three years already, but since the demo everything was turned up a notch. In the beginning we stood without a vocalist, and therefore the process of recording and playing live was delayed. A few years back we finally found Linus Johansson, an old friend of ours, who was willing to commit to the task and the TRIAL lineup was complete. TRIAL now consists of five devoted members, A. Ellström (Lead Guitars), A. Johansson (Rhythm Guitars), A. Olsson (Bass), L. Johansson (Vocals) and M. Svensson (Drums)

Is there any specific story behind the naming of the band under the TRIAL moniker?

The name was taken for the reason that it fitted the band. It is a memorable, in-your-face kind of name that easily sticks to ones' memory. The fact that it salutes a lot of great older bands and songs that has inspired us was nothing more than a bonus.

Did you go through any line-up changes before stabilizing to the one found on your CD? By the way, can you expand on if any of TRIAL's members played with other bands before joining?

As I said earlier, the only so called lineup change that was done was when Linus joined our ranks as a vocalist. Other than that we have had a consistent lineup throughout our "career". We all have had some prior experience with bands, playing live and recording, but that's something that we wish to leave to the past. I think I speak for everyone in the band when I say that TRIAL is the main focus of every member, although a few of us have projects on the side as well.

The first signs of TRIAL are traced in late 2010, were you release your first demo and make yourselves known to the heavy metal world. It seems the demo had quite an impact, since both your self-financed CD-R and the Australian's The Coffin's Slave Records limited press on tape was gone in an instant! Are you happy with this demo, now some time after it "infected" the masses?

Yes, I would say that we are happy with it. Of course, a lot of things could have been done in other ways, but in the end it represents us in an unspoiled way. As a first release, we are completely satisfied with it, as it gave us the opportunity to record and release our full-length album.

To be honest, when I saw The Coffin's Slave ad about your demo and listened to the sample they promoted, I was a bit skeptical, as there were already several bands into this MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND style and everything showed that a new trend has broken out. Later on and when I bought your album, after a careful listen, I knew TRIAL had nothing to do with this trend, other than an obvious preference to the music that IRON MAIDEN and MERCYFUL FATE (and I would also add WOLF from Sweden) had created, adequate to exempt TRIAL from



TRIAL

HEAVY
METAL



MERCYFUL
FATE

THE PRIMORDIAL TEMPLE
OUT NOW



a copy band. How do you view this apparent turn to MF/KD sounds and the avalanche effect on how bands in the underground get carried away by every trend that turns up?

There is a lot of discussion about these so called trends that pop up now and then. We wish not to be categorized by this, and it's good that you have acknowledged that. Everyone in the band is big fans of both MERCYFUL FATE and IRON MAIDEN, and why wouldn't we? These are great bands that have made a huge impact on us. The fact that a lot of people recently picked up interest in especially MERCYFUL FATE and KING DIAMOND is only an evidence that there is a revival of the interest in the Heavy Metal scene. A lot of these insinuations that all new, especially Swedish, Heavy Metal bands "worship" MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND is mostly made out of the press who constantly keeps asking these questions about trends and "copy bands". We do what we feel obliged to do, and what feels right for us. If that is a trend, then fine, we don't care.

You are probably asked several times already about it and maybe it has become irritating to you, but was your purpose to revive the legend of MERCYFUL FATE with your music? As I said before, I don't hear a copy band in TRIAL, but was it a goal of yours to sound like the Danish masters or it just came about naturally?

As a continuation of the last question, it was never our goal to sound like another band. Our influences and inspirations come naturally, and we have not forced ourselves to sound like anyone else. If someone's opinion is that we sound like another band, then OK, but it has never been our intention.

What are your influences as a group or those of each band member separately?

We all have different backgrounds and therefore different musical roots that we originate from. And that's the reason we sound as we do. There are many big influences we share with each other, but the ones that stand out are probably the ones that gives us our special sound. The others is the foundation. We are influenced by music with heart and soul, and not what falls under the moniker "Metal".

Needless to ask how your demo did regarding sales, but was it the sales that led The Coffin's Slave "sign" you to their roster? Do you think that success of your country mates PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE had something to do with it indirectly?

I don't think sales had anything to do with us being "signed" to The Coffin's Slave, since the demo was only released in a few copies. The Coffin's Slave was one of the first labels to receive the demo and showed instant interest, and we are very happy with that. Indirectly, PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE may have had an impact on this, I don't know really. That's something Hushy of The Coffin's Slave will have to answer to.

Did the arousing interest in TRIAL's name contributed in the demand for the band to play live? Were you restricted to only playing within the Swedish borderline?

We have got some inquiries about doing a few gigs, but nothing has been confirmed yet. Hopefully we will make a few appearances later this year. Sweden has not showed that much interest, often it's harder to get "accepted" on home field than abroad.

Not long after your demo, your debut CD "The Primordial Temple" is unleashed and I have to admit it was one of the nicest surprises to these ears. I wasn't much impressed at first, but after a careful listen I knew it is one of my recent favorites. Would you like to expand on the recording process and the differences from your demo material? Was enthusiasm the reason to make you act so fast between your two releases?

Most of the material for "The Primordial Temple" was already written when the demo was released. We had been working on some of the songs for several years. Our first thought was to release a mini-album with 4-5 songs, but the label convinced us to go for a full-length right from the start, and we are happy that we did since it turned out so good. The recording was far more "professional" than the demo, which was recorded in our rehearsal. The demo contains songs that shows how we sounded when we first got together to make music. I think it reflects that perfectly both musically and lyrically. When we started to record our full-length album we added a few newer songs to the mix and we think that they really show our growth. Songs as "The Primordial Temple" and "Phosphoros" are examples of what's to come from the more evolved TRIAL. What really separates those songs from the earlier stuff is the lyrics. They're more personal, well-written and have more depth than the ones we first put together. "The Primordial Temple" was recorded in about a month, including a lot of trying out solos and different parts of the songs, as we wanted to make sure that the album was going to turn out exactly the way that we wanted, and it did.

Two tracks were left off your demo sessions, with "From Beneath The Waves" being a great and suitable to the album's tone (I didn't have the chance to hear the other one, "The Procession" sadly). Any particular reason about that?

The reasons these songs were, as you say, left out was that we thought that "Opener of the Way" and "Witches" deserved a second chance. We felt that it was important to include some earlier songs to show who we were in the beginning. That's why we also chose "The Sorceress' Command" to be on the album, which is actually one of our earliest songs. The mix of the old meeting the new was the recipe for "The Primordial Temple". We were convinced that they would fit perfectly on the album, along with the other songs. "From Beneath the Waves" and "The Procession", which actually is one of my favorite TRIAL songs, will possibly be re-recorded for some other release in the future, who knows? Only time will tell...

Do you have a view on how the full length is doing regarding sales? What is the feedback you get from the press and the fans really?

I think it is doing pretty OK. The CD was released in a first pressing of 500, and we'll see if the demand is greater than that after it is sold out. We've got a lot of good feedback from both the press and fans, and hopefully that will gain us some more interest in the future.

Was there any criticism on the style that you chose to play by press and fans again? Fans of the underground scene react sometimes you know, especially when some fuss is made around a band and when it appears that this band may no longer stay with the "true underground" moniker or supposed "ideals"...

As we haven't been exposed that much prior to the release of the demo, no such claims have been made. As we have only released a demo and a full-length, not that much difference in the style of music has been made. Maybe for the next release, people will start complaining, as they usually do. We don't care about the "true underground moniker" as we only make the music we want to. If someone doesn't like it, then fuck off to them.

You seem to be interested in the occult in your lyrics and the overall atmosphere of the album. What stimulates such inspiration?

The lyrics are an important part of TRIAL, and the topics we wish to write about is what "lights our flame". We feel that the lyrics should not be discussed all too much, as what is written stands on its own. It is up to the listener to paint the picture of the song, to weave together the lyrics with the music.

Now that the album is released, what are your tour schedules? Is there a possibility to play abroad?

No tour is planned for the time being. There are chances of us playing abroad, but as I said earlier, nothing is for certain. We are looking to perform more live shows in the future, but nothing interesting has been brought to the table yet.

Are you interested in the underground metal scene in general? What are some new coming bands you are currently fond of and which bands would you suggest to the people from your local scene? Also, how do you view that almost every single band of the 80's is back not only to play live, but with a new album as well. What is the success rate in that, according to the new releases by old bands that you have heard yourself?

I would say I am, yes. In one way or another you have to be. Not a lot of new bands are that interesting though, at least not in the heavy metal genre, and for local acts there is nothing at all to discuss. But a few bands that I would like to mention particularly are VORNTH & NECROCOURSE from Uddevalla, others are GUST, ENSNARED, MORBID INSULTER, THE CUNT-MOLESTERS, KILL, KARNARIUM and so on. The older bands that are coming back usually make some not-that-great-at-all "reunion-record", play some live gigs (mostly based upon their earlier material anyway) and then go back to sleep.

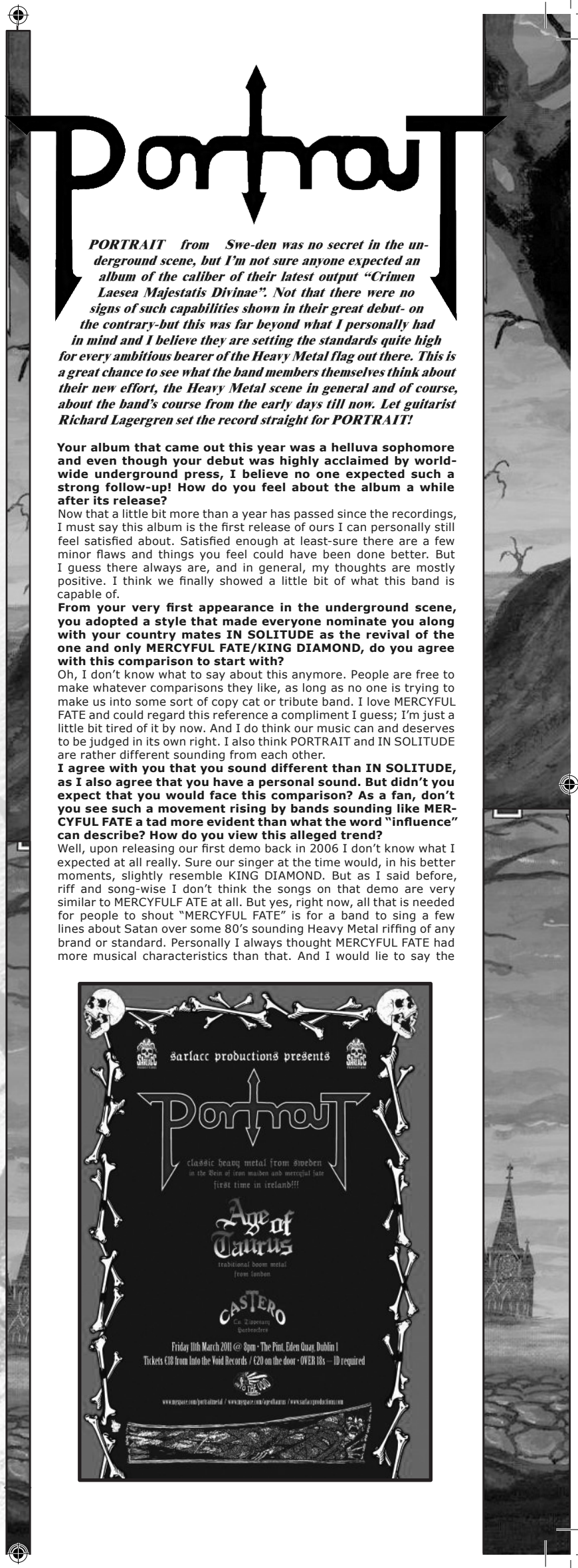
Can you please reveal some of your future plans? Judging by the promptness that you have acted so far, should we expect a new album anytime soon or is it too early to talk about that? Would you care to share a few details about it, regarding the lyrics, the musical style or any possible surprises or changes in your sophomore album? A release date scheduled or estimated?

I don't think a new album will surface in the nearest future, but maybe some other release. Nothing is planned for now, but we are constantly working on new material and ideas and we have a few new songs that already show a lot of promise. One thing we can reveal is that "The Primordial Temple" will be released in LP by Unborn Productions under license from The Coffins Slave in the near future.

Thanks for this interview Martin, good luck to the band and hope to hear from you soon and for long! Last lines are yours.

Thanks a lot Thanos! From the veil of the stars... Martin & TRIAL
www.myspace.com/trialheavymetal

Thanos Stafylarakis



PORTRAIT from Swe-den was no secret in the underground scene, but I'm not sure anyone expected an album of the caliber of their latest output "Crimen Laesea Majestatis Divinae". Not that there were no signs of such capabilities shown in their great debut- on the contrary-but this was far beyond what I personally had in mind and I believe they are setting the standards quite high for every ambitious bearer of the Heavy Metal flag out there. This is a great chance to see what the band members themselves think about their new effort, the Heavy Metal scene in general and of course, about the band's course from the early days till now. Let guitarist Richard Lagergren set the record straight for PORTRAIT!

Your album that came out this year was a helluva sophomore and even though your debut was highly acclaimed by worldwide underground press, I believe no one expected such a strong follow-up! How do you feel about the album a while after its release?

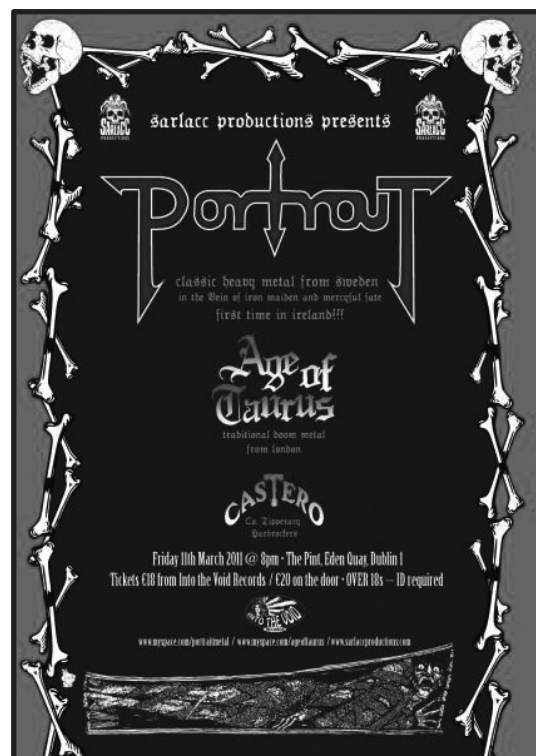
Now that a little bit more than a year has passed since the recordings, I must say this album is the first release of ours I can personally still feel satisfied about. Satisfied enough at least-sure there are a few minor flaws and things you feel could have been done better. But I guess there always are, and in general, my thoughts are mostly positive. I think we finally showed a little bit of what this band is capable of.

From your very first appearance in the underground scene, you adopted a style that made everyone nominate you along with your country mates IN SOLITUDE as the revival of the one and only MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND, do you agree with this comparison to start with?

Oh, I don't know what to say about this anymore. People are free to make whatever comparisons they like, as long as no one is trying to make us into some sort of copy cat or tribute band. I love MERCYFUL FATE and could regard this reference a compliment I guess; I'm just a little bit tired of it by now. And I do think our music can and deserves to be judged in its own right. I also think PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE are rather different sounding from each other.

I agree with you that you sound different than IN SOLITUDE, as I also agree that you have a personal sound. But didn't you expect that you would face this comparison? As a fan, don't you see such a movement rising by bands sounding like MERCYFUL FATE a tad more evident than what the word "influence" can describe? How do you view this alleged trend?

Well, upon releasing our first demo back in 2006 I don't know what I expected at all really. Sure our singer at the time would, in his better moments, slightly resemble KING DIAMOND. But as I said before, riff and song-wise I don't think the songs on that demo are very similar to MERCYFUL FATE at all. But yes, right now, all that is needed for people to shout "MERCYFUL FATE" is for a band to sing a few lines about Satan over some 80's sounding Heavy Metal riffing of any brand or standard. Personally I always thought MERCYFUL FATE had more musical characteristics than that. And I would lie to say the



trend you talk about, or the bands submitting to it, interest me very much.

Did any of you play with other bands before the formation of PORTRAIT? What's the story behind the birth of this new (then) act?

I used to play in a band called EIDOMANTUM, Christian (Lindell, guitar) and Anders (Persson, drums) had something called BLOODLUST. PORTRAIT and some of the early songs begun its existence as a brainchild of Christian in 2004 or so I think, but never managed to assemble a full lineup until I joined in the spring of 2006. I had by then recently moved the 500 km from Linköping to Kristianstad in southern Sweden, for no other apparent reason than moving. So I met up with Christian, who I knew briefly from concerts and festivals, and joined him and Anders in the rehearsal room one day. We started to rehearse regularly, things took off and we recorded that first demo in the summer.

Your first 3 track demo was released in 2006 and none of the songs appeared in any of your subsequent releases, how come? How did the press react to your music, as the MF/KD trend hadn't burst out yet with the

original purveyors of this majestic music (MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND) having either health problems or keeping the bands on hold?

Well, we had enough other songs that we would rather record. Those demo songs feel rather immature today, at least to me. But we sure got some very enthusiastic response, and even gigs abroad based on them. And yes, MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND comparisons were raining down already back then. I must say I don't think those songs sound much like MERCYFUL FATE/KING DIAMOND at all, spare the vocals maybe. Riff and song wise those references were more far fetched than ever to these ears.

Were you afraid at all of being charged for copying these bands or being thrown into the retro/caricature bin? I mean both press and fans are cruelly strict at times and pardon me, but "how dare you touch the divinity of such bands"?

No, since that was never our ambition at all.

So two years later another blast from Sweden, PORTRAIT's self-titled album is out! Dark, powerful and MERCYFUL FATE-ish Heavy Metal with a raw sound and great compositions! Random outcome or was it on purpose to sound like that?

To sound like what, MERCYFUL FATE? Zzz... Please see previous answer. The songs were written to sound the way they do, minus the vocals perhaps, which in my opinion were below all standards on that album. Can't even listen to it, which sucks, as I still like a few of the songs themselves.

What changed in the band's camp after your debut was finally out? Was it then that everyone started to look at you in a more serious way and believe that you have something to offer to the metal world? What about the local and worldwide press, how did they confront you?

It's hard to say if and how people's perception changed. The album was as positively received as the releases before it I think, both by the press and others. **Why did you have to change your singer? What led Sven out of the band and why did you go through several changes in the bass player position? When and how did you recruit Per?**

Simply because our first singer wasn't good enough; a fact that is, like I said, unfortunately very audible on that first album of ours. After having fired him and spent a few months looking for a vocalist, someone tipped us off about Per Karlsson. I and Christian went to see him perform with his other band OVERDRIVE and decided to try him out. As for the bass player position, here are the turns for the interested ones, hang on now: David Stranderud, up until then playing the guitar, in the end wasn't able to play the songs on the first album (and hardly those before it either). That soon was clear to everyone when he tried to record them. Thus I, who had been writing some of the songs and arrangements, would record his guitar parts instead. And we solved this dilemma by switching instruments, so that he would go on playing the bass instead. The bass tracks however were already recorded by me, having previously been the bassist. So in fact he does not play on that album at all, although credited as such. A year or so later David left the band and was replaced by Erik Jansson, who, when we were to record the "Murder..." 7", didn't even show up. So he doesn't play on it, although credited as such. Needless to say we needed to find someone else, and we did. And we had to again, for other reasons, and we did, and now we have this fine guy David Olofsson on bass.

Next comes your pact with High Roller records for a two-track single with two brand new kuts and there you introduce your new frontman to your fans! The new songs are totally different from what you had showcased this far nonetheless! How did these songs come about?

Totally different I don't know, but in hindsight I realize that the material on this single was partly a little bit odd to be us. I don't dislike it though; what I do dislike is the production on that recording. It's very shitty sounding, and would neither give the songs nor our, by then, new singer much of a chance. A shame, for neither of them was really bad in my opinion. Maybe we shouldn't have released it like that.

After this single, the band is signing with once glorious-lately notorious Metal Blade. Viewing PORTRAIT as a fan-and as many of the fans



that had heard nothing from your latest material-I had the impression that you would change your sound to something similar to what your last single sounded like! Luckily you didn't and "Crimen Laesae Majestatis Divinae" is deservedly acclaimed as one of the top nominees for album of the year and in my opinion, one of the few albums of timeless grandeur in a mass of retro/80's mediocrity of releases! In combination with the previous 7" output, one would think that you've changed your minds regarding your musical direction in this next album, especially considering that the final result was surprisingly brilliant...

No, we changed nothing really, and had no intention to. A few of the songs on the "Crimen Laesae Majestatis Divinae" album were already in the works long before that single was recorded.

How is your cooperation with Metal Blade so far. Of course they've focused on more traditional bands lately, as it seems it is profitable enough as a new trend, but what about a band like PORTRAIT, how do they treat you and help you move on? Is your deal on

for a next album?

I'd say things have worked fine this far, and the promotional and distributional channels of such a label are good to have. Metal Blade has an option for one more album, so we'll see what happens. I believe the album has sold reasonably well this far.

Would you care to expand a little bit on your lyrics. Which are the dark scribes and issues that inspire PORTRAIT?

The lyrics in general deal with different aspects of Satanism and religious strife. **The report goes like this, two full length releases and two singles are in the band's catalogue. How do you see your sound or style change/ evolve throughout the years you are around?**

Yes, we have released two singles ("Into the Nothingness" in 2007 and "The Murder of All Things Righteous" in 2009) along with our two full length albums. Where the debut album had songs sprawling in several directions, I would say "Crimen Laesae Majestatis Divinae" is at the same time more consequent and more varied than anything we did before. Plus it's much harder, heavier and darker.

I can understand how irritating a constant and stubborn association with a specific band can be by some malicious people out there, so in a clarifying fashion, which bands would you regard as a main influence for PORTRAIT? What are the bands you fancy the most at the time?

Well, I/we listen to an ocean of bands and albums, not only Heavy Metal either, and I'm sure influences from everything we like could possibly find their way into the music. If I were to namedrop a handful of influences it could be obvious ones like BLACK SABBATH, MOTORHEAD, JUDAS PRIEST, VENOM, ANGEL WITCH...

I assume you are a fan yourself, so can you please name some new coming bands from Sweden or everywhere else in the world that impressed you recently?

Tough one as I am rarely impressed by new bands these days. SKOGEN BRINNER from Sweden is good, as was the pre-band RATS. I heard some cool tunes by BLACK TRIP, also from Sweden, which is soon to become the next Heavy Metal hype I'm sure. THE DAGGER stuff, another Swedish newcomer act with old veterans in it, sounds promising as well.

You've played both small venues and crowded festivals all over Europe throughout your short career as a band. Has the band added any stage show for your gigs?

Not really. We'll see what happens in the future.

So, Richard, what's next for PORTRAIT? Are you working hard for the successor of a highly acclaimed album? How is the album doing regarding sales and general feedback by press and fans by the way? Any surprises in sound that we should expect? First album was apparently influenced by MERCYFUL FATE while the sophomore sounds a bit more like KING DIAMOND to my ears!

The next album is in the works yes; this far three songs are ready. You can expect a PORTRAIT sounding album. I don't hear much MERCYFUL FATE on the first album really. Maybe in a song like "Hell" or "The Adversary". Otherwise, if we ever sounded one bit like MERCYFUL FATE, it would actually have to be on the latest album in my opinion.

At which stage are you at the moment, recording, touring?

We just got back home from a month long European tour and are going to play several festivals in the coming spring and summer, so, touring you could say.

Richard, thanks a million for giving this interview, please give your message to the readers of PORTRAIT!

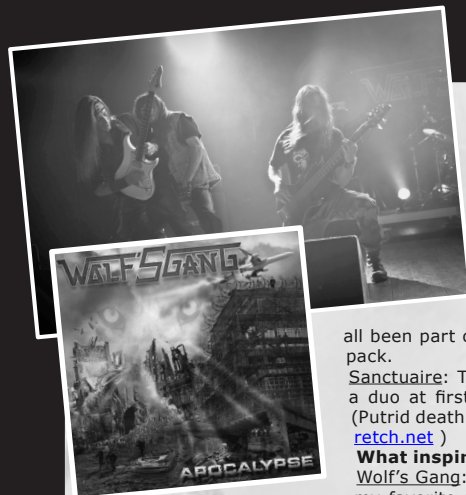
Thanks for the interview. We hope to return to Greece soon; then you shall all burn. Hail Sathanas!
www.portraitband.se

Thanos Stafylarakis





A "split" interview... Both bands hail from France, they released their debuts this year (2011), both on Emanes Metal Records. They even had their demos released on the same year (2008)! I thought it would be a good idea to ask the same questions to both bands and see what will come up. Take notice, as we are sure both bands have MANY things to offer. Congratulations to Laurent for doing such a passionate work and above all to the bands for having released these great albums last year.



When was the band formed? Did any of you play in other bands before?

Wolf's Gang: WOLF'S GANG was born at the end of 2005, we started with a cover's register and made a lot of gigs in France and abroad until 2008 when we decided to get our own message through our compositions. We have

all been part of local bands before being in the pack.

Sanctuaire: The group was formed in 2008 as a duo at first. I play along with Necrowretch (Putrid death metal) as a bassist (www.necrowretch.net)

What inspired the name?

Wolf's Gang: I found this band name because my favorite animal has always been the wolf, he is the brute force, fascination, and acts only in packs. WOLF'S GANG therefore means the "Gang" or "Tribe" of Wolves. It's also a nod to the precursor of classical music and base of all: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Sanctuaire: The horror film "La Chiesa" by Michele Soavi, which in France was released under the name "Sanctuaire"!

The band recorded and released a demo in 2008. Could you tell us a few more things about it? Recording process, feedback from the fans/press etc.

Wolf's Gang: We recorded "Larmes fatales" in 2008 at the "1001 Notes" Studios with our friend Rémi Soudan and the recording process was the same of "Apocalypse" (live recording). We chose this type of recording because we wanted to have the opportunity to make our songs come more "alive" and didn't want to have a "click" at the recordings. This also requires a certain rigor in the recording because the battery was therefore not modifiable. We then dubbed guitars (replaying parts of an identical manner to "grow" the sound of them), lead and backing vocals, arrangements, solos and effects. No title has been recorded with a "click" to keep the live and human side of music. "Larmes Fatales" was out in April 2009 and we released it by our own means. Feedback was really good and opened doors for the band, resulting in today...

Sanctuaire: The demo was very intimate, distributed to some webzines and a few friends. It was recorded at home, very traditionally! The feedback has been encouraging, the sound was still damaging, a lot of people praised the quality of compositions and waited a better quality recording to make a better decision.

When did Emanes Metal step into the picture and offered the band a contract?

Wolf's Gang: I met Laurent through Raskal from Metal Intégral after the release of "Larmes Fatales". Laurent contacted us to play to his Festival, "Long Live Metal" in Belgium in May 2010. He offered us a contract from the moment he knew that we were working on an album project.

Sanctuaire: I sent demos to four labels and Emanes was the second to react (quickly). I was honored by the proposal, I knew several outputs of the label, such as HURLEMENT, RESISTANCE, EXCALIBUR. Great bands. I focused on the label that can get groups singing in French. I think it's the best choice.

Are you satisfied with the work they put so far in the band concerning promotion etc.?

Wolf's Gang: Yes, absolutely, Laurent and Emanes Metal are making a true monitoring and work hard to promote their groups! Emanes works with passion like we also like to do!

Sanctuaire: Yes, Emanes has served the underground in the most beautiful way! Our CD is distributed in a lot of places around the world, we have a lot of reviews, we are present on various platforms. Emanes offers a nice springboard for SANCTUAIRE, the label is fully behind us, always listening.

When did the band start working on your debut album? was it before or after you signed with Emanes Metal? I mean, was it in your plans to do a full length even if you would release it yourselves had no labels proposed you a deal?

Wolf's Gang: We started working on it in 2009, after our demo. It was be-

fore we signed with Emanes Metal. Absolutely, we started working on "Apocalypse" for us firstly, If we had no labels, we would have release by our own means as our demo. But it was not the case

Sanctuaire: We signed after recording, the album is the result of our 100% commitment.

You chose to sing in your native language, something very common for French bands. First of all, why?

Wolf's Gang: Because our English is bad!!! (haha) Seriously, many bands are singing in English and we wanted to differentiate ourselves on this point too... The French language is very rich and interesting, what would have been better for us than singing in the language of Molière?

Sanctuaire: I am a long time fan of French HEAVY METAL particularly when sang in French. I'm also not very good in English, haha.

Could you please refer to your lyrics? What are the subjects you deal with?

Wolf's Gang: "Apocalypse" discusses various topics but nevertheless related at the destruction of man by man, through progress and abuse of technology, its irresponsibility, possessions and wars, disease and the "destructive" side of the human being ...

Sanctuaire: These are fantasy stories, dark poems, a parallel between the real and the imaginary

How is the French scene nowadays? What's your opinion for old bands like SORTILEGE, STEEL ANGEL, LUST, DER KAISER, NIGHTMARE etc.? What about the newer bands like you, LONEWOLF, OVERSTEP, LAST PROPHECY etc.?

Wolf's Gang: We have many good bands in France and the French scene is rich and varied. However, we don't know very well these bands and I don't think we should be able to give an objective opinion about them. Public itself would be better able to judge us.

Sanctuaire: These are very good bands. NIGHTMARE and LONEWOLF are located not far from home and there is a mutual support between the two bands. SPELL is really one of the leading French bands, a reference with very little criticism. Currently there are new bands that sing in French, as HURLEMENT that are really worth it!

Do you play live locally? How is the scene by the way? Any new bands you would like to recommend to us?

Wolf's Gang: We work actually on many concerts projects to promote WOLF'S GANG and "Apocalypse". After recording "Apocalypse" our line-up changed and our new guitarist and us are ready to hit the road again!

Sanctuaire: So far, we only played one gig. It was in Lille (France) at Long Live Metal!!! Festival, chapter 5. In May we will play close to home with CAUCHEMAR (Canada-DOOM) and will begin to work on a small series of gigs through France for 2012. Locally there is a very nice little scene in the Rhone Alps (my area), with some venues suitable for the underground. As for some Heavy Metal band. I recommend you ELVENSTORM, pure angry Heavy Metal.

How is a typical concert of yours?

Wolf's Gang: You would have to ask the people that come to the shows ... But we play on stage with all the passion and energy we have. We try to do our best to build an auditory and visual "show". In general the public is not disappointed and wanting more, returns are very positive so it's a good sign, not!

Sanctuaire: We made only one concert, hard to say ... I'm on the wrong side of the stage to judge.

End this interview any way you like, thanks for your time.

Both: Thanks to you Kostas and Thanos at Steel for an Age for the opportunity to talk a little here and most of all for your dedication and passion. See you!

Kostas Kailiazis

FRENCH METAL ASSAULT

So, I understand the band was formed in early 2002, which were the founding members?

Yes, we started our journey though the spheres of Metal back in early 2002. The band was founded by me out of my desire to pursue the way of traditional Heavy/Power Metal. I was looking for guys to start a band with and after some tries, the first real line up was born. This line up featured Michael Petrick (vocals/guitars), Christian Flindt (bass), Peter Hennen (keys), Till Oberboßel (guitars) and Martin Weber (drums).

What inspired the name of the band?

I wanted a fantasy like name for the band but without sounding too cheesy, avoiding terms like "dragon", "steel" or "fire". Plus it should be a positive sounding name and I always liked the idea of bands naming themselves after a song of their favourite band. Well, I guess some people find ELVENPATH more than cheesy, haha. But after all I'm happy we came up with this name which of course was taken from the NIGHTWISH song with the same title. I love NIGHTWISH although this didn't really have much effect on our music. And we liked the idea of having a link to the creations of the mighty J.R.R. Tolkien, his elves being the fighters for the good side. So all the pieces just fell into place and fitted the fantasy, the positive and rightful power and our admiration for our own influences. The name sounds good and is easy to memorize although people keep mistaking us for Elvenking, haha.

Was this the lineup that recorded your debut demo?

Yes, the line up mentioned above can be heard on our first demo "2002". Peter left shortly after and we never got a new keyboard player again. So we were down to a four piece band and continued this way until 2004.

What were the influences of the band at the time?

We had different favourite bands but there was some common ground. We all loved bands like IRON MAIDE, HELLOWEEN and BLIND GUARDIAN and this was (and still is) clearly audible in our music. I also was strongly influenced by epic bands like MANOWAR and BATHORY and brought this element into our music. All in all, ELVENPATH was destined to be a band dedicated to Power Metal, mostly the European way i.e. very melodic and maybe anthemic. But we had some US influences too as especially Michael liked bands like TITAN FORCE, JAG PANZER and FATES WARNING.

Your debut CD, "Gateways" was released in 2004. What would you say were the differences to the demo and the improvements you as musicians saw in this one?

When comparing "2002" and "Gateways", the first thing people will notice is the fact that all the songs on "Gateways" were pretty long. The songs run between 7 and 10 minutes-something we only realized after the recordings, haha. We didn't intend to write more complex songs but apparently we had the urge to put more parts and more details into our songs than before. And we continue to do so-we actually take care of the small details in our music very much and even in those old recordings one can hear this. Or at least try to...as the production is just plain horrible and all the fine details are buried somewhere in the mix. We really liked the sound then, incredible, haha. But we were a little more experienced than in the beginning and knew what direction we wanted to go. I still like the first two CD's very much as I believe the compositions were really good, but looking back at them today I realize how little knowledge we had of arrangements and production. The songs deserved a much better presentation than they actually received.

The band supported SKYCLAD on a tour in 2006, right? More info please!

That was such a fantastic experience! We hadn't been on a proper tour before and I was so happy when we received this offer. It was the work of Jose Costa of the band SACRED SIN. Back then he ran a label that distributed our CD and he also booked tours, so when he set up this SKYCLAD tour he gave us the chance to come along. The tour wasn't very long (a week and a half) and not really well promoted which resulted in mostly rather poor attendance, nevertheless we loved it. You know, I've been a SKYCLAD fan since I was 15 and being on the road with them was a dream come true. They were really nice to us and treated us very well,

I understand this is where many of our readers will protest for the inclusion of a "happy-power" Metal band in Steel for an Age. I understand, I would have a similar reaction if I didn't happen to listen again to the band's earlier stuff motivated by the great album they released in 2011 (and were kind enough to send us). I am sure Metal fans that have a soft spot for the early-mid period of BLIND GUARDIAN, but with more US influences will find a constant player for their steers. Till, guitarist of the band is a very honest and dedicated person, something that also makes this conversation interesting to do and (I guess) to read as well. So, before or after proceeding with this feature, listen without prejudice to "Elvenpath" and judge for yourselves.

we became friends quickly. This was our first possibility to play abroad and establish contacts in Belgium and the Netherlands which would help us very much for later shows. And we had some good fun with the SKYCLAD guys and their crew. Besides this, the guys really lived up to their reputation concerning chaos everywhere, haha. Their bus suffered several accidents and breakdowns on the tour, they played most of the shows without an intro as the sound guy had forgotten their only intro CD after a few gigs, they even forgot a guitar along the way...and a few days after

the tour I received an e-mail from the merchandiser who told me that on the way home a door in the bus had opened, allowing the possessions of the guys to spread all over the motorway. Well, should you hear a rather odd story about SKYCLAD someday; you can bet your ass that it's true, haha.

So, your 2nd CD, "Spyrol" is released in 2008. It took the band four years for this one, but when it was finally released did it satisfy you first of all?

That was quite a demanding time for the band. Plans for a new album were made quickly but as often things work out differently than intended. As I already mentioned, the first singer we had after the 2004 split left after only a few shows and we had to look for a new singer. Tim joined the band literally a few days before the recordings of "Spyrol" began. Most of the recordings were done in the winter of 2005/06 but then the offer of joining the SKYCLAD tour popped up and we couldn't refuse. So work on the album was abandoned and we prepared for the tour instead. After the tour there was a change on guitars as our guitarist Heiner fitted his role less and less which became really obvious on the road. We then got Anastasia as the new guitarist and with her work the album was finally completed in 2007. We intended to release "Spyrol" on a good label and sent out a lot of demos but unfortunately this was not to be. We received some offers from labels but these were uninteresting at best, clear rip-offs at worst. So we opted to take the law into our own hands and release the album by ourselves again. Which meant additional work concerning the layout etc., therefore it didn't see the light of day before 2008. Looking back on it nowadays, I still like the album very much. The production is very strong-after the dissatisfying sound of our two previous CD's, we spent a lot of cash to record in a professional studio and it was worth it. And I'm satisfied with the songs, the vocals, the musicianship, nearly everything. Some songs like "Late at night" and "Act the innocent" are a bit different to what we'd normally do, in my opinion it adds a new but fitting colour to the music. There is not much I would change on the album.

What has the band been up to now ever since the release of "Spyrol"?

As usual, line up changes were our fate. Our drummer Markus left even before the release and we had difficulties filling the gap. We played some shows with a stand in drummer but then Anastasia and Tim left too because they were busy with their other bands and projects. So, just like in 2004, Cris and I were abandoned and had to face the question of burying the band or trying to establish a new line up. We decided to give it one more go and look for new musicians. And after several months the line up that now can be heard on "Elvenpath" was complete. We played a good deal of shows, playing new songs along with the songs already released. And in autumn 2010 we went back to the studio to record the new album which was released in March 2011.

The new album, "Elvenpath" is once more released on your own. This means that you couldn't secure a label deal or you wanted to do it on your own? It looks fantastic, most CD's from labels don't look as professional as yours!

Thank you for your kind words. I believe it's important to have a good visual presentation along with the music. Being a huge fan of countless bands myself, I regard our CD's with the eyes of a fan. I want a nice cover artwork and a large booklet with lyrics, photos, credits etc. Value for money, you know? An album is not just for your ears but also your eyes should be able to enjoy the feast. Actually we would have been interested in releasing the album on a good label, but again the story was the same. No serious label wanted us. The offers we received were nothing that we couldn't achieve by ourselves. So we preferred to stay in control of



everything and release the album by ourselves. These days you don't need a label for a release, so why sign a contract that will not bring you any advantage. No matter how idealistic their words may sound, any label, big or small, is more interested in sales figures than the music (e.note: Have to disagree here Till, there are very few but bright examples). Therefore the underground surely brings more quality than you will find on a label. There are exceptions of course but they will only prove how true the rule is.

Although the style of the band remains the same, melodic Power Metal the European (mostly German way), I got the feeling this time the music tends more on the heavier side, am I right? Was this done on purpose and for what reasons?

I agree with you. Well it just came naturally; we didn't plan to become heavier. But we hardly use keyboards any more these days, we just enjoyed listening to heavier bands more and this influenced us. But I'm sure that our melodic roots will always be present in our music, I've listened to too many HELLOWEEN songs in my life to abandon this completely, haha.

The new album also has guest appearances by Quimby Lewis (SKULLVIEW) and Uwe Lulis (ex-GRAVE DIGGER, REBELLION). How did these happen?

Uwe also lives in Frankfurt, I've known him for a few years and we often run into each other at shows or the Speak Easy (Frankfurt's best Metal bar). He's a really cool guy and a totally underrated guitarist. I simply thought it would be a nice idea to have him as a guest on our album, and when I approached him he immediately said yes. I absolutely love the solo he did-it just sounds so much like GRAVE DIGGER in their glory days! Quimby...that's a funny story. I had written this small intro for "Guardians of the underground" and I wanted a native speaker to do it. If possible, the guy should also be a kind of cult figure in the Metal scene-and Quimby definitely is! When SKULLVIEW played at Sword-brothers festival in 2010, the guy was standing outside and talking to fans. I approached him and asked him about my idea. He immediately agreed, we just walked over to my car, I handed him the sheet with the lines and held the tape recorder (yes...old school recording!) under his nose. He quickly got it into it and the third take was perfect. Made me enjoy the SKULLVIEW show later that day even more! I'm really proud to have both these guys on our album, to me their participation is a testimony to their friendship and Metal Brotherhood and that's why I value it so much.

Is it too early to tell me what the feedback from press/fans and sales of the CD have been so far?

Generally the feedback has been very fine. Most reviews were positive and it was often mentioned that some of our obvious influences (MANOWAR, IRON MAIDEN etc.) weren't able to write music on this level any more. Which is arguable of course but made us proud nevertheless, haha. Some negative reviews showed up too of course but they were few. And reactions of the audience have been satisfying as well. I'm thoroughly pleased seeing that people truly appreciate our music. I can't name any exact sales figures, simply because we delivered a lot of copies to different mailorders and distros, often on a trade basis, and I have no idea how many they sold. But I guess all in all a few hundred copies made their way to the fans.

You have songs in the new album dedicated to Metal, like "Guardians of the Underground", "Into the Future" and the "Truelogy". What motivates you to write such "cliché" lyrics?

It should be noted that there are two sides to the coin here. "Guardians of the underground" and "Into the future" are serious lyrics that speak of our love for Heavy Metal. We're simply dedicated Metalheads who are terribly mad about this music, the greatest kind of music ever to grace the planet earth. So we felt the urge to express our feelings with these songs. "Into the future" is like a trip back in time, meeting the bands that paved the way for the scene we have today. And "Guardians of the underground" is a tribute to the sacred thing which is the Metal underground; the bands, the distros, the fanzines and most important: the fans. They all dedicate their time, their passion and their money to the scene without thinking about any profit, united by their love for Heavy Metal. To me the Metal scene is like a family, a worldwide brotherhood and this had to be put into a song. And then there's the so called "Truelogy" which is actually a parody of people who take these "True Metal" clichés very seriously. I mean, we certainly love Metal but we like a good joke too and always found it amusing to see people in the scene with apparently no sense of humour at all. We wrote "Metalwar" back in the early days to make fun of them, the song is just a joke actually. Although I admit that I love it and it's really good too-whenver we do this one live, the audience is banging their heads as if they could never do it again in their lives. A sequel wasn't intended but one day we jammed in our rehearsal room and ended up writing "War of steel". There and then we decided to make it a trilogy and write another song called "Metalsteel". It took some years before it was actually done but then those three songs were complete and ready for being recorded. Don't take these lyrics seriously-no sane person would, haha. But have fun with them, that's what it's all about.

Seeing that you are a dedicated Metal fan yourself how do you see the current underground scene and the renewed interest in Classic Metal?

The scene is larger than ever which means there is an incredible amount of good bands but also plenty of rubbish. I really enjoy going to concerts and festivals and discovering new bands all the time. There are plenty of festivals popping up everywhere that dedicate themselves to bringing traditional Metal to the audience which is generally a good thing, but unfortunately these promoters seem to book the same bands quite often. I really have nothing against OMEN, MANILLA ROAD, DOOMSWORD or METAL INQUISITOR. I'm a fan of them, but it seems that every festival tries to book them instead of looking out for some bands that haven't had the same chance. And especially in Germany, festival promoters will prefer to get the shittiest fifth rank US Metal band that nobody needed back in 1986 instead of rewarding unknown but dedicated bands of today with the chance of playing their festival. More than once I thought about spreading a fake ELVENPATH biography that tricks people into believing we're from Texas and recorded a cult demo 25 years ago which is so rare that nobody has ever heard it-we would have been all over the festivals by now.

Do you think that all these labels do help because in my opinion most of them play it safe by reissuing old stuff in tons of different versions instead of helping new bands out.

Finally somebody says it! As I already mentioned, a lot of "fans" are only interested in how "cult" a band is and care less about the music. If a band put out a rehearsal tape in the 80s, they must be great, if they're Americans they must be even greater. People tend to overlook the fact that there is an underground beyond the bands present at Keep It True. And one doesn't have to look to any small label to find good underground bands-there are plenty who aren't

signed because they refuse to compromise with their music and they're certainly worth checking out.

Now that the year 2011 comes to an end, which would you state as your favorite releases of the year?

Just to name a few and in alphabetical order: BATTLEAGE-"True Metal victory", CULT OF THE FOX-"A vow of vengeance", FAIRYTALE-"Rise of the twilight lord", FIDDLER'S GREEN-"Wall of Folk", FIREFORCE-"March on", GERNOTSHAGEN-"Weltenbrand", KROMLEK-"Finis terrae", LUSTKIND-"Spieltrieb", SIGN OF THE JACKAL-"The beyond", SOULSTEELER-"Defenders of Valeda". And of course our album, haha.

The band is nothing but original, but that doesn't seem to bother you, right?

Not really. These days it's really hard to do something that hasn't been there before, especially in what might be called Power Metal. Therefore we always focused more on the quality of the music instead of the originality. If somebody tries to find a band that is incomparable to anybody else, he won't find it on our CD, but if he's interested in good Heavy Metal, he'll find some satisfaction here. Nevertheless I believe we've developed a few trademarks over the years, for example the lengthy songs with many different guitar parts and harmony solos. This might not be exclusively ELVENPATH but it sets us apart from most other bands in my opinion.

I also saw on your website that you play live very often. Describe us a typical ELVENPATH show and name us some shows that have been most memorable for whatever reasons.

We absolutely love playing live, it's really the very best thing about being in a band. Nowadays you can see a lot of bands on stage that play their music but don't move around much, not putting much effort into their performances. I'm afraid they forgot that Heavy Metal is purest power and that's what you get when you go to see ELVENPATH. During our gigs we freak out completely, delivering a really dedicated Metal show with plenty of running, headbanging, sweat and mayhem-the music just gets into the blood and we go crazy, it just comes naturally. And we want the audience to freak out the same, banging their heads, screaming along, going wild. If both the band and the audience are completely exhausted after the show, only then it was a good show. We're not exactly DREAM THEATER, haha. As for memorable shows, there are some really carved in our memory for various reasons-sometimes the feeling is just right, the band plays well and the audience is in the mood, this can really make a memorable night. But as this is probably not very satisfying to the readers, let me share a story from a festival we played at in our early days. It started with an accident on the way which fortunately injured nobody but damaged our cars. The festival was good and we got pizza for catering although the schedules didn't seem to be compatible-every band got their food the moment they had to go on stage. When it was our time I realized I had forgotten our intro CD so we had to start without the intro. In the very first song a string on Michael's guitar broke and he grabbed his second guitar-only to break a string there shortly later. So he took my second guitar in order to continue but apparently I had made a mistake when changing the strings a few days before as there was a wrong string on that guitar. Well, we somehow got through our set and when removing our gear afterwards the bass amp got damaged in some way. The only thing that was missing was the drummer exploding on stage in true Spinal Tap fashion...but we really enjoyed the day, haha.

What does the future bring for ELVENPATH?

The biggest wish at the moment is a new drummer as currently we have none. Yes, our perennial line up problems...We now want to play as many shows as possible and prepare the next album which will probably be recorded in 2013. So far we haven't played much outside of Germany and we hope to change this in the future. Promoters who are reading this: Get in touch and get us to your show! We simply hope to be able to continue playing the music we love, always improving along the way and making every album better than the previous one. We believe in quality and hope to make it a trademark of our releases. Somebody who buys an ELVENPATH album must be sure that he will get top quality in every department. And as we love gigging so much, we're always hungry for more.

End this interview any way you like.

First I'd like to thank you for your interest in ELVENPATH and allowing us this space to present ourselves to your readers. I hope it was an interesting interview for everybody and I'd like to invite everybody who read it all the bottom to visit our website and look out for our CD's and gigs. Furthermore I want to seize this opportunity and appeal to the fans to support the real underground. This is not about attending Keep It True and Head-bangers Open Air and praising every US band you can find. The Metal underground is everywhere-even in your town there will certainly be some bands who aren't given the chance of performing at festivals or a good distribution. Support them, buy their demos, go to their shows, wear their shirts, they need it. Stay Metal!

www.elvenpath.com

Kostas Kailiazis



LONEWOLF



LONEWOLF is a French band known to most fans I guess. They have been around for many years, overcoming hardships, serving their (and our) passion for HEAVY METAL like few bands did the last (many) years. Have they stopped? Hell NO, they are still around, releasing albums, touring more than ever and finally getting, piece by piece, day by day a small part of the recognition bands like them should have... But, I guess this is not a "lecture" on the way the Metal business works. May I present you Jens Börner, singer/guitarist of the band...



Hello Jens, nice talking to you again. Let's go back in time, when the band first started, as early as 1991 when the first line-up of you, Walkyr (drums) and Chris (bass) was assembled. How did you find the other guys at the time? What were their last names if you remember?

Walkyr and I met in the bus. We often took the same bus together coming back from

school, and wore Metal shirts so one day we began to talk and decided to create a band. He had a drum kit, I had a guitar, so it all started. He brought his drum kit to my house and we started to rehearse in my room. We baptized our band WALPURGIS NIGHT, found a second guitar player and a female singer. To be honest, I don't remember their names and don't remember if we had a bass player. But we had two songs we played, one I don't remember, and the second one was "Walpurgis Night", which would appear a bit later on our second demo "The Calling". The line up didn't last long and here we stood again Walkyr (whose real name is Renaud Backmann) and I. We were a bit disappointed, haha. We searched quite long for another female singer (the aim was to have a band mixing WARLOCK and RUNNING WILD). I guess we tried three but it never worked out to something concrete. Then we tried singers, but it didn't give something either. I mean, back in those times when you talked of RUNNING WILD, MANILLA ROAD etc in France, it motivated no one, haha. One day at least Renaud found Chris, (don't remember his last name) the bass player (I guess it was a friend of him) and we went on as a trio. We decided to change our name and I came up with LONEWOLF. Everyone agreed. This was early 1992. But still no singer and time moved on...and at least Walkyr and I were really motivated. So one day I found myself behind the microphone. It was absolutely not planned, but it still is so today, nearly 20 years after, haha!!! I'm sorry for the things I don't remember, but it's sooooo long ago, I was still nearly a child.

In late 1992, "The Dark Throne" demo tape was released. Please give us some more info. Recording details, feedback from the scene/press at the time etc. I guess it must have been really limited since Pure

Metal was on the low ride..

It was recorded on a 4-track Fostex by a friend of Walkyr. The sound and result is...what it is, let's say it so, haha. But back then we were really proud!!!! But it was no real demo in the common sense, we didn't distribute it to fanzines or so. It was just sold hand to hand and in a few shops of our hometown Grenoble, for metalheads to notice that there's a new band here around. So I cannot really tell of feedback anyway. Not a single review has been written for "The dark Throne". But our aim was reached, as some metalheads noticed our name. Yeah, pure Metal was dead in France. I guess there must have been 50 copies, not more.

Soon after the demo release, Chris left the band and was replaced by Roland a little later and the band became a quartet in March with the addition of Felix as a second guitarist. (I guess that Felix was not your brother, or maybe he was and later switched to drums? Please what were the last names of these two new members?)

Felix is my brother indeed. The guitar player of "The Calling" is the same who plays drums on "Made in Hell" for example ;-)). So it's easy, his name is Felix Börner. Roland Cucciarra joined, and still today he's one of the greatest Metal brothers I have. Today Roland lives in Germany, has family and stopped playing music altogether.

The band released "The Calling" demo tape with this line-up in late 1993/January 1994. Please provide some more info about the songs, recording process etc.

This demo was recorded on a 8-track studio this time. We rehearsed a lot for the demo, but the playing isn't really good and tight. We recorded everything in two days, and this was not enough for us, with stress etc...but in the end it doesn't really matter, as there are some songs on it I really still like today, when I lay sound and playing beside. The step towards "The dark Throne" was huge anyway and for the first time we included this melodic lead guitars like we still love to do today. Many people think that I came up with this style, but in fact it's my brother Felix who came firstly up with those melodies in LONEWOLF. He really branded the style back in those early days, he had a much higher musical level than I had and taught me really a lot in the way of composing riffs etc. The demo had 5 songs and an intro, but it was originally planned to include 6 songs and an intro. But one of the recorded songs was soooooo awful that we decided to drop it from the demo. It was a song called..."March into the Arena", which had nothing to do with the song giving it's title to our first album (as well musically as lyrically-I just liked the title, that's why I'd write new lyrics with

same title a few years later ;-))

You mention in Singing Swords #2 (1995), that the tape was released in November 1993, but only two months later it was available widely. What were the reasons?

Sorry, I cannot remember.

What were the reactions once more? Had you sent any tapes to labels for a possible co-operation? If yes, what were the responses?

It sounds incredible, but we really had some good reactions of some fanzines and metalheads. When you hear the bad quality of the recordings...but as pure Metal was rather dead, it may have pleased some people that some bands still play this style. Of course, we had also some very negative reviews, but we were really impressed by some positive feedback, and not only in France and I remember that it really motivated us 666%!! As far as I remember we didn't send it to labels, as we knew that it didn't sound that professional and that we had to increase our musical level. The aim was to get noticed in Metal circles and honestly, I guess that this aim was reached back at the time, as reviews, good or bad, came from all over Europe and even America if I'm not wrong. Also, we made our first gigs thanks to this demo, which was a great experience of course and helped a lot for later activities, recordings and song writing.

How did you arrange to re-release this demo in 2002?

Bart Gabriel came up to ask us if he could re-release it, with new cover, liner notes etc....We agreed of course. But we're absolutely not at the origin of this re-release.

The band seemed to find its way and this resulted in the classic (for me) single from 1995, "Holy Evil". You decided to release it on your own. Was this a deliberate choice or was it because of no label interest?

I think that since the beginning of the idea to do this 7" it was clear that we'd record and release on our own. We could have tried to release it as a demo and then find a label to release it, but this never came to our mind. It was totally a deliberate choice. To do a vinyl was my idea. Everyone told me that vinyl was dead, (remember we are in 1995 and...in France!) but I wanted a vinyl ;-)). I have always been a vinyl freak, and I wanted LONEWOLF to have its own vinyl. The recordings to this vinyl were some of the best sessions I ever lived: only two tracks (and an intro) to record, so not much stress. Also, for the first time something really "magical" happened during the recording session, as the more we went on, the more we felt that the result would be even better than what expected, and that "The Calling" would be far, far behind. The intro "Dark Ages" was inspired by "Chamber of Lies" from RUNNING WILD and the two other songs were inspired from what worked best during our first live shows. I remember Felix came up with the main "Holy Evil" riff, and everyone knew "Wauuh, that's it"!!! Concerning "Buried Alive", I remember that I composed it in something like 20 minutes. We wanted some mid tempo/heavy stuff, as we noticed that "Walpurgis Night" or "Sorcery" from "The Calling" were songs that worked pretty well live, but we simply wanted it a bit more heavier. "Holy Evil" remains perhaps THE LONEWOLF item of which I'm the most proud of, honestly. I love it, songs, cover, atmosphere etc...and I'm damned happy that back in 1995, against what everybody said, we released it on vinyl. This was a great lesson for me: do what YOU think is good and not what the others say; you might be right. And even if you were wrong, well, what's the problem? You thought for what YOU thought is right and that's what matters.

Who came up with the idea for the (killer) cover? How many copies did you print?

It was me. I took the cover from an ancient book about witches and sorcery I have, then made everything around, the lay out etc...Back at the time, I used rather well informatic, so it was great fun for me. Today I couldn't do this again haha, 'cause I'm really not good using computers etc. But at this time I used it a lot for my job, so this explains that. 1000 copies were printed if I remember well.

In 1996, the band was working on their debut that was supposed to be released from a French label that eventually ceased business and left the band with a big debt. What was the label? How did you come in contact with them?

Yeah, the darkest period of the band...which would be a helping experience, but only years later. So back to what should have been an album called "Legions of the Unlight". So, with "Holy Evil" in hands, we sent it to some labels. And even if we had no positive answers, I remember two European labels taking time to answer us with a letter (no internet at this time, haha) and telling that the 7" was good, that with a bit more work, production increase etc. they might be interested next time. At this time, two motherfuckin' bastards of a label called Flip records (already the name should have inspired us to stop every contact with them...) contacted us, saying they were a new French label searching for bands and they heard of us. So, we were sooo young and still inexperienced that we were very interested of course. I remember we didn't sign immediately, we met them 3 or 4 times before, and of course they seemed "cool guys". Also, two other French bands had already signed, which for us was another good guaranty. I don't remember the name of those bands, but I remember that I knew one of them and of course said to myself "If they signed, why should WE hesitate..." So we didn't sign blindly, but this helped nothing in the end of course. This was the beginning of the bitter end.

The CD was supposed to have the single songs, three songs later on the debut CD, "Walpurgis Night" from the second demo, "Children of the Unlight" (later on the Goi pressing of "March into the Arena") and "Medieval Witchcraft" (an unreleased song so far-or maybe it was released under a different name??), a total of 8 songs. Is that correct?

Correct brother. So, if I'm right (I don't own this recordings no more as I hate it) there was: "Dark Ages/Holy Evil" and "Buried Alive" from the 7" single and "Walpurgis Night" from the demo plus 5 new (at this time) songs: "Pagan glory", "Towards the light", "Children of the Unlight", one song called "Medieval witchcraft" (The riffs have nothing to do with the same titled song of "Unholy paradise", but the lyrics are the same) and "Morbidity beauty".

What were the reasons that the band split after the debut CD fiasco?

Many things came together. We were honestly on a little cloud after the response to "Holy Evil" which was-to say the least-incredible. And then everything crumbled down in one week...the week we recorded "Legion of the Unlight". We recorded the album near Paris, 500 km from our hometown Grenoble. It appeared that as we arrived, in contrary of what had been said (but

not signed (!!!) we had to pay our Hotel for one week!!! You imagine what this already was for us, as we were students, or in school etc...This was the first sign...something was wrong. And of course, no way to reach the label. But nevertheless, we started recordings...for more "professionalism", we had decided to hire a "studio drummer", and Felix played guitar. We were three to record: Roland on bass, Felix on lead guitars and me on guitars and vocals. Another thing the label didn't pay despite promises, we were absolutely down. Our luck was that the studio guys and the drummer were really cool guys, they saw our desperation and helped us as they could, for example the drummer got nearly no money since he knew that WE had to pay and that we already paid hotel, food etc...At this time it was, as I said, already impossible to reach somehow the two sons of bitches that own the label, the phone number was valid no more...We knew already during recordings that the album would never be released by the label. Another thing that I didn't mention is that before recordings, we paid to the label money to cover promotion etc costs, things that we should have got back after release...Of course, we should never have signed a contract where we had to pay, but we were so young, inexperienced etc...and thought it was normal. We lost so much money in this story, and came back to Grenoble totally de-motivated. The recording itself is also not good. As we knew already that we were ripped off, our heart was somewhere else when we recorded. There's absolutely no magic on these recordings, no feeling, nothing. You hear it on the bonus of "March into the Arena", "Children of the Unlight". I like the song itself, but I HATE this recording. Bad recording, bad memories... All in all here we were, back in Grenoble. We had recordings we hated, no one wanted to release it as a demo as it would have been a huge step back towards "Holy Evil". Felix anyway left France for studies in Germany, and only Roland and I were left. At the time we decided "ok, this is the end".

I never liked hypothetical questions, but this may be close to the truth. If the band had stayed together until releasing a debut in 1996/1997, would you think that things would be different? I mean, with HAMMERFALL in 1997 there was a sudden interest for Classic Metal and maybe you would also be positively affected by it. Have you ever thought "what if we had never split in 1996?"

Honestly, never. Or better said, I remember loving HAMMERFALL's "Glory to the brave" and being happy to hear some old stuff and telling myself "shit, we split and now Classic Metal comes back, haha" but never in the scene "what if". I mean, we had no label, impossible with "Legions of the Unlight" (if we would have released it as a demo) to find a label, and with "Holy Evil" we didn't find at that time. So we would have had to record a new time etc. and simply hadn't the money, and anyway lost the will.

I remember another song being mentioned at the time, "The Fall of Kronos". Whatever happened to this one? Really, are there other unreleased tunes from the first period of the band like the above mentioned or "Medieval Witchcraft"?

"The fall of Kronos" is in fact "Morbidity Beauty", just with different lyrics. The music is exactly the same. The only unreleased tune remaining is what should have been "Medieval Witchcraft" on "Legions of the Unlight", but several parts of the song were used later in the song "March into the Arena". And this song also had a beautiful acoustic intro written by my brother felix. A bit in the "Dark Ages" vein, but only acoustic guitar, nothing else. If I find this again, perhaps we'll use it one day. I really loved this one, very melancholic, medieval stuff.

"March into the Arena" was released in 2001, once again as an independent release. How many copies of it did you print?

It was released in 2001 and 300 copies were printed of the demo.

How did the band come in contact with Goi Music for the reissue of "March into the Arena" in 2002? The Goi pressing included one bonus track, "Children of the Unlight". Did you choose to add this bonus track or was it a label request?

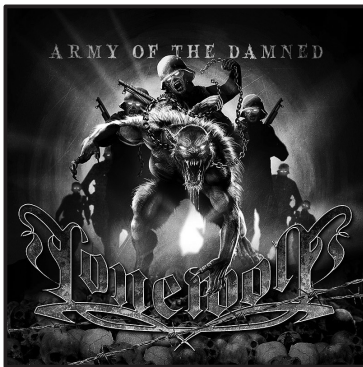
A Spanish journalist who wrote a review about the demo and loved it knew the guys from Goi Music. He told them "you should sign this band", so they contacted us. The bonus track came on the label's request, if it would have been my choice you may imagine that I'd never put this song out, for the reasons I already mentioned!

With the "proper" release of "March into the Arena" the band was finally back. What was the feedback for your debut CD? Were you satisfied with your efforts first of all and then by the reactions?

The feedback was good, it was something like "we didn't forget you since the single" and we were really pleased by this of course. Of course, there were also a lot bad reactions, but we cared about the good ones. We were satisfied by the recording in the sense that we couldn't have made better in this time. There are many "youth errors" on this album. Production, sound etc. are not that good, but in a whole "it works". There is some magic in the recordings, I guess that you feel that we had pleasure to record it. And when I say the sound isn't that good, it does not mean that I don't like the sound, very old school, rooted in the 80's. There's a special atmosphere on this album I don't find again in any other LONEWOLF album. Perhaps it's because it was our first album, and of course this album and the reactions after are a bit like a revenge for us. Hard to describe by words, but I find this album very special and it has a special place in my heart. We still play today sometimes stuff of this album, because people still want to hear it, this proves to me that the album is not that bad. And personally it's still one hell of a pleasure to defend it during live gigs. Recording this album was more for pleasure than knowing where we went. If nothing would have happened after we would have said "Ok, was cool, but let it be now". The album is absolutely no perfect album, but it gave us the possibility to be back in the Metal underground, a very important step for all that will come after 'til today.

In early 2003, the band visited Greece in a show that remained timeless for both the Greek fans that were there, but also for the band. Could you please refer to that?

I have to say that since "Holy Evil", we had a special and strong support from Greece. And as "March into the Arena" was released, some of the best reactions came again from Greece, where we have true Metal brothers and sisters we'll hail forever. Greece has a strong part in the fact that LONEWOLF is still alive today, we never forget this fact. The support always pushed us on and motivated us, even more since "March into the Arena" was released. Then came this offer to play in Greece...for the first time a French band would play



on Hellenic ground, you imagine the honor for us!!! It was fantastic to meet the people there, to put a face on people we were in contact with etc. This weekend remains one of the best I ever lived with LONEWOLF, it was amazing. We were really impressed by the way you people live and breathe Metal, and it's great honor to have such strong support from such true metalheads.

"Unholy Paradise" was released in 2004 and in my opinion it's a great CD but a step below what the band proved it was able to do on your other three CD's. your opinion on this?

I totally agree. "Unholy Paradise" is the least good of our albums. A big part is our own fault! In fact, after "March into the Arena" and the reactions and the gigs, we were motivated like never before. We went in studio thinking "now we know how it goes and works", thought to make all better but made all worse, haha. For the first time, we recorded with a "click", what went out to be rather stressful, as we never tried it before entering a studio. Then, concerning the songs themselves, we sometimes went into a bad direction-we hadn't enough experience to pick the best out of melody ideas that we recorded at that time. And some songs were simply not enough "worked" before entering the studio. That would become a great lesson for us, as since then we never worked again without doing a pre-production, to hear and analyze the sound. To play songs during rehearsals or to listen to it on CD is sometimes completely different, as on CD you can hear some passages that might be too long, some other riffs that are not enough exploited, some choruses that could be better etc etc...In fact, we were simply not prepared enough to record this album, which could have been much, much better. To this, you add a mastering that was a catastrophe and a sound that hasn't got the warmth it had on "March into the Arena". Even if it was the same studio, some recording errors have been made since the first day. To sum up: there are some songs I really like on it, like "Behind the cross" (we should have opened the album with that one!!!), "Spqr" (Which became a live favorite) or "Erik the red" and "Unholy Paradise", but there are some songs we should really have worked more on before recordings like "Snake in Eden" or "Medieval Witchcraft", because I feel that they could have been much stronger. I was absolutely not satisfied with the album as it was released, but strangely, after we released "The dark Crusade" and that time made it's work, I really started to like "Unholy Paradise" more and more. Perhaps because in my eyes, "The dark Crusade" is very close to "Unholy Paradise" concerning the ideas, the melodies etc...but this time we had the experience to perform it in a much better way. This album also opened us the way to European festivals and to play with some famous names. So, if it wasn't a big step forward, it absolutely was no step back and gave force to our position in the underground. Quickly said: "Unholy Paradise" is not the best album, but it isn't shit either. And, what surprised me very much, I know people who's album of LONEWOLF they preferred until "The dark Crusade" was released was "Unholy Paradise"!



This CD marked the end of your cooperation with Goi Music as well as JP Fournier that had (masterly) painted the covers for your first two CD's. What were the reasons?

Concerning the ending of cooperation with JP Fournier, it has more to do with personal things, we knew each other well as he's from Grenoble also, and as life is: sometimes your circle of friends changes for good or bad reasons, doesn't matter anyway nowadays. I met JP again not long ago, and I guess we were both happy to meet again. Concerning Goi Music: We never saw one cent of royalties, and since "Unholy Paradise" (which came out with ONE year of delay!!!!) we

didn't have very good relationship anyway. BUT I have to say: Thank to Goi Music we came back in the underground, they always paid everything concerning releases, (pressing, covers) and back in "March into the Arena" times they did not do a bad job anyway (appearance on compilation, promo etc...), so... ok, they fucked us with money but in the end, we're still here and that's what matters. Don't know if they still exist, I wouldn't recommend them but will not say too bad things about them either today. Some years ago would not have the same slight sentences, but time heals wounds as you know....and today I simply don't give a fuck.

Later in 2004 you released a 7"single, titled "Hellenic Warriors" on Eat Metal Records, thus also starting a collaboration with them (or it wasn't a thought at the time and it was just the single?). Please give us some info about the two songs that were featured in this single.

I'm not sure if a collaboration was really sure immediately, but in our minds perhaps. Anyway, Eat Metal asked us to release "Unholy Paradise", but we were still under contract with Goi Music at that time. And as they showed this interest, we asked if they wanted to release this 7", "Hellenic Warriors". "Hellenic warriors" will remain one of my eternal LONEWOLF faves, for several reasons: Of course it is very special, 'cause I wanted to show our gratitude towards the Hellenic metalheads for their incredible support. I remember this song and lyrics came as one out of my heart, directly after we came back from our first gig in Greece. The A side, "Hellenic Warriors" is, in my eyes, really a good LONEWOLF song. One of the best if I'm going to be honest. The B side, "Child of Oblivion" could have been much better. There's a little DIO feeling in the main riff, brought by Damien. But in the end, I have this little taste of "something missing". But that's not very important, as only for "Hellenic warriors", I'm really proud of this 7". It shows our eternal hail and respect for Greece.

4 long years pass until the band releases its third CD, "Made in Hell" from Eat Metal Records. Why was this delayed? Was it because of problems with Goi Music (I am under the impression that you had signed for three CD's) or something else?

Exactly. We had to break this contract first, what took time. Then, we really wanted to take our time to make a good album with good sound. We worked rather long on the pre-production. We used all negative experiences of "Unholy Paradise" recordings into positive ones. And then...time passes so quickly that four years (in fact around 3 and a half I guess) went away 'till the release of "Made in Hell".

Please tell us a few things about this CD.

"Made in Hell" is one of the most important steps we ever made, it is a very, very important thing in the life of LONEWOLF. For the first time, we had a good and strong/powerful sound. The songs also are more straight, less technical than on "Unholy Paradise", this is what we did the best at that time. We also

found back the dark atmosphere of our 7" "Holy Evil", what fits perfectly to the songs. I cannot say another thing that : I love this album!! It shows the raw side of LONEWOLF. I guess also that it is to be heard that we had fun recording it. Another thing I'm really proud is that it came out on a Greek label, Eat Metal owned by our brothers. Never problems or stress with them. We never had such a cool relationship with labels before, haha. This album contains some really good live stuff, we still defend this album on stage as much as we can. It was also the first time I wrote lyrics 'bout other stuff than legends, sorcery but rather social themes, life etc....and I was really satisfied with it. "Divine art of lies", "Host of the dark" or "The new Inquisition" are some of the best lyrics we have.

This album was also released on vinyl from the collaboration of Emanes Metal, Jolly Roger and Eat Metal Records. How did this came up?

The vinyl actually was done after "The dark Crusade" was released, but Laurent (Emanes Metal) came up with the idea long before. It took some time, but when he had the time, the money, and 3 other labels interested who had the time and money, the vinyl was released. It is beautiful, with a cool inlay, a poster and one bonus track, a cover of HELLOWEEN's "Murderer" we originally recorded for a tribute CD that was never released.

The Polish Hard Rocker magazine included a LONEWOLF compilation CD in late 2008 in their October issue. How did this deal came through? Do you think that it helped the band in terms of promotion and recognition?

Hard Rocker magazine was owned by our manager Bart Gabriel at that time, so, the deal was easy ;-)). It helped in Poland for sure, as the first time we played there, we were amazed by the number of people singing with us.

"The dark Crusade" was released from Karthago Records. First of all, what were the reasons for leaving (or not continuing if you like) with Eat Metal?

I think it was clear since the beginning that we'd make only one album with them. It was, how can I say this...You know, it was a brotherhood time. Something very special, fantastic, that remains in my heart forever. (And in the heart of every band member at that time, believe me). But in order that everything remains at it is and should be, one cooperation (two with the single) was the best. Hard to describe in English, but I guess you understand what I mean. Also, Bart, our manager worked a lot back this time with Stefan/Karthago. So he brought the deal with Karthago, what was more easier for him to work concerning promotion etc....Also, to be honest, our next step was more professional work within and outside of the band, and Eat Metal are friends, at least for me it's hard to imagine this business work with true friends. I have very rare friends in the business, I didn't want trouble with Eat Metal. I want to hold them in my arms when I meet them, I want to drink with them, to party.... everything but no business. This is my opinion, simply. "Made in Hell" was the perfect time for a cooperation, and I'm proud we made it.

Share with us more info concerning the songwriting, recording process etc. of "The dark Crusade".

If you look at the credits, you see that Alex, "new member" at the time, is very involved in the song writing. He's an IRON MAIDEN maniac, so brought a lot of typical melodies, like twin guitars, melodic leads etc. We wrote 80% of the album together, his NWOBHM style fits perfectly with my German-influenced style. Production wise it is the

strongest album we ever made, Bart Gabriel helped us a lot in this way, taught us a lot during the pre-production. We worked very hard on the songs, songs like "Hail victory", "Hour zero" or "Heathen horde" demanded a lot of work. We are very, very proud of this record. It shows a more melodic side that "Made in hell", but not less power. It is different, it was important not to make the same album twice. We also took time to work a lot on the choruses, one of the things that makes, in my eyes, songs like "Viktoria" or "Hail Victory" so strong. The rawer songs, like "The Wolf division" or "The dark Crusade" fit perfectly to the other songs. We recorded near our hometown, in the same studio we recorded "Made in hell". Then the mix and mastering were made by Andy LaRocque in Sweden. The sound is one hell of a blast, very powerful, very "Teutonic". I love the drums and the bass-the rhythm section is killer and gives a great basis for the whole sound.

There is a song, "Legacy of the Wild", that consists of song/album titles from every RUNNING WILD album and it even starts with a similar to "Riding the Storm" riff. How did you decide to honor this great band and not by simply covering a song?

Concerning the lyrics to "Legacy of the Wild", it's a funny story. This was the only song left where I had no real lyrics, but recording sessions were close to begin. Then one day felt the news: "RUNNING WILD stops, last show in Wacken". As the song is RUNNING WILD influenced musically without doubt, so this news immediately gave me the idea to the lyrics-and I made them in 10 minutes, haha. I'm really happy with the result, I think it's a better tribute as if we would have covered a song, honestly. When I write that RUNNING WILD is the big brother I never had, it's really the case. The music helped me through good and bad times, you cannot imagine what the music means to me. Live we anyway play "Under jolly roger" from time to time.

How about the lyrics on the other songs of the album? I know that some good and bad things happened before the album and this was evident in some of the songs you wrote. Would you care to comment or is it too much to ask?

On "The dark Crusade", we also have my absolutely favorite LONEWOLF song, "Viktoria". Lyrics are very personal, as it is a tribute, a hymn, a love song-call it how you want-for my daughter. She's the most important thing in my life. We had much problems with my ex-girlfriend to have a child, and after four years of fighting with medical process etc...our little princess saw the light. She isn't called "Viktoria", but I chose this title because it's my greatest victory in life. And I used a "k" and not "c" just as a little joke towards my, and so her, German origins, were "c" is spelled "k". I guess you talk of "Winter Farewell" when you talk of bad things. This song is a tribute to the hero of my youth, my grandpa. He died already in 2001, but I often think of him, and even more since I'm father. I imagine how he would have been proud to hold my daughter in his arms....I had a very close relationship with him, we often sat hours and hours together when I was young and I was fascinated by him. I know things



he endured in World War 2 (He fought in the Wehrmacht) that no one knows in the family for example, he taught me lot of things about life that I didn't understand when I was young, but it's strange I still hear or remember his words today and I understand what he meant and it helps me to go on. Just to tell you how close we both were. I still miss him very much. I simply like to think that he's somewhere around, looking at my child and protecting her. It may sound stupid-but the love I have for this old man makes me think this. And always when I'm in Germany, I go to the cemetery where he's buried, and one winter day inspired me the lyrics to this song. "The Wolf division" is the typical true Heavy Metal song, with lyrics full of clichés...we love this. It's our middle finger to those who say "LONEWOLF...those losers lost in the 80's that no scene needs?" We say nothing, ...but just answer with lyrics, to show how we don't give a fuck 'bout narrow minded bullshit. If you don't like LONEWOLF, that's totally ok of course. If you don't like LONEWOLF and make fun 'cause we wear studded belts & leather is ridiculous from people who don't understand that Metal is not JUST music, but a way of life. "The dark Crusade" and "Words of the Witch" deal with religion. The first with Islamic, the second with catholic. Funny thing is that people had no problems with "Words of the Witch", but "The dark Crusade" was a little problem for some. What the fuck?? Both deal, basically, with the same problem: religion!!! But nowadays if you talk of Islamic problems, there's some people immediately pulling you in the racist section-often the same who applaud criticism of the church!!! There is a problem with radical rise of Islamic integrists-that's the truth, just look at the world, nothing to do with racism. Would be the same to hate every catholic man, just because you hate the church!! That's ridiculous. In the end, these reactions make me laugh. People think there's a problem, but don't dare to say it. "Heathen Horde" is about what history calls the first attack of heathen Vikings on holy ground, a raid on the monastery of Lindisfarne, seen nowadays as the beginning of the great Viking era. "Warrior Priest" is a historical tune about the Teutonic knights, a fascinating time of mystery. "Hail Victory (Pagan Glory Pt.3)" takes the symbol of heathen men whom won on the churches tyranny as a fact that, like I said, you have to fight to be free. Nothing's easy, nothing's for free, but in the end it may be worth the fight. As I ended the lyrics, I saw that it could easily be the third (and last!) part of "Pagan Glory", so I found it funny to put "Part 3" in the title. On "March into the Arena" we had "Pagan glory", where heathen men are persecuted by the church but they manage to escape by going farer and farer away, in "Unholy Paradise" we had "Stronger than Evil (Pagan Glory Pt.2)" where the heathen men grow stronger, and now face the holy men, and finally with "Hail Victory (Pagan Glory Pt.3)" the (real) good triumphed on the (real) evil. "The hour zero" is an anti-war song. The world is destructed after a nuclear war, few survivors go on how they can live in pre-historic times, through ruins and debris. Thousand of years the last men surviving, the embryo of a new humanity gave birth after generations and generations to a world like it was just before the nuclear devastation-and all begins again, nuclear technology destroys the world again. It's like an evil circle, again and again. "Burning the Icons" symbolizes the icons of religion. If we could burn them all and forget them, the world would be in a much better state.

Why did you decide to include different bonus songs on the CD and LP versions of the new album? I have to tell you that I was a little annoyed at first. Was it your choice or the label's?

Yeah. I cannot say something else, it looks a bit strange. This happened originally because with "The hour zero", a 11 minutes track, the album was too long to be released on vinyl, there was more playing time than it is possible to put on a vinyl, simply. So "Hour Zero" was omitted from the vinyl edition and in its place came "Burning the Icons", a leftover from "The dark Crusade" recording sessions. Not our best song, but the chorus and the solo are really strong. Not a bad song, but in no way it replaces "Hour zero" of course, which is one of the most epic and strongest songs we ever wrote.

Once again the Church gets its "treatment" in your lyrics. If something is expected from this band (other than Hellish Power Metal!) is very intelligent anti-Church lyrics. Your comments please.

Thanks a lot ;-)). I always took the church, or religion in general (as since "Made in Hell" I also wrote about Islamic integrism) as a symbol of people who want you to think or do how THEY want you to think or do. For me, the Islamic fools of today are the same than Christian fools centuries ago. Church has lost some power, but the danger is still there. Only one example that makes me sick: each week we see new scandals of pedophile priests...what in my eyes has only one sentence: they should be hung, drawn & quartered. No mercy!!! A man who touches a child and abuses of it only deserves death. And the Vatican "condemns" but in the end does nothing. And the church has still some sly ways to get people in their rows...I hate this way of vicious search for new lambs. I always tried not to say simple

things like "fuck the church", but to explain why I cannot agree with such things. In earlier years I put some legendary topics around the lyrics, today rather social themes, but in the end it's the same. It's a metaphor to say to fight what you believe is right, and that no one should tell you wrong or right. This opinion of freedom is very important for me. It's a pretty difficult theme 'cause I don't forget that religion can be (and so it should be!!) a good thing. If you believe in something or someone, if it helps your life, if it guides you, that's absolutely ok. This is your choice, your freedom. But you don't have the right to tell to other people "think like me". For example, someone very old who knows he will die, who's really scared, if to believe in god helps him to go, it's a very good thing. Or if you have a beloved one who dies, you like to think that something may take care of him now. But in the end, religion is the root of most evil on this earth. Sad, but true.

You were also featured in a compilation LP from Killer Metal Records, "Metal or Death" where you participate with two unreleased songs. How did you arrange this and what's your opinion of this compilation as a whole (please comment on the other bands/songs)

Jens Häfner, owner of Killer Metal records who released "The dark Crusade" on vinyl told us of a true Metal compilation he wanted to release and asked us if we had some unreleased stuff to put on the compilation. We had two songs left from the "Dark Crusade" sessions, a speedy one called "Beyond the grave" and a heavy, mid tempo one called "Iron Religion". The sound is not as good as on "The dark Crusade" as they were not mixed and mastered by Andy (Not enough money allowed). But the two songs are really strong, absolutely no B-side songs. The other bands are rather true Metal oriented, I love RITUAL STEEL who gave two very good songs.

What's your view on the underground Metal scene nowadays and also compared with some years back? I mean, you have been an active member of it for almost 20 years now.

Yeah, it's almost 20 years since we started...man, I was still a child, haha. We didn't really know the underground in the first years, between 1992 and 1996. We didn't travel that much, and didn't know that much people. It begun with "Holy Evil", more contacts in Greece and Germany, but as we split up not very long later all stopped of course. But since 2001, it changed, we travel a lot, play in different countries, meet hundreds of people...It didn't change that much nowadays, things simply increased a bit. But this underground feeling I love is still there. You know, one example: The feeling we met in Greece the first time we played there (2001) is the same than last time (ending of 2010), and this is fantastic. There is a strong underground scene in the Metal world, and we have a strong support that always helped us to go on. We never forget that it is thanks to such underground Metal maniacs that the wolf still howls and is stronger than ever today. We are the wolf division and we are rooted in the underground!!))

What are your future plans as a band? What should we expect from LONEWOLF in the future? What about a new album?

"March into the Arena" and "Unholy Paradise" have just been re-released on one CD through Skol records. They are re-mastered, the sound is more clear and powerful. The booklet is completely new, with lyrics (more easy to read) and lots of old pictures. We are now under contract with Napalm Records and our new album, "Army of the Damned", will be released in March 2012 (e.note: see reviews section). The production is darker than on "The dark Crusade", the sound is Metal Power, the songs are forged in Steel. We tried to increase everything on this album: sound, song writing, production...I guess the result is our best album. Yes, everyone says that, but brother...I really think it so much. We are SO proud of this recording. Napalm will also re-release "The dark Crusade". Then, end of March we go on a European tour with POWERWOLF, MYSTIC PROPHECY and STORMWARRIOR. The bill also plays the PPM Festival in Belgium with great names like ACCEPT, BLIND GUARDIAN and plenty of good bands. Other things are in preparation, but nothing's confirmed yet. But be sure of one thing: the wolf's not dead yet ;-)))))) A lot of things are to come!

The last words are yours, end this interview any way you like.

Thanks a lot for this interesting interview brother. You know LONEWOLF better than I do haha. Sometimes it's hard for me to remember the old times, I hope I answered well to the questions about old times. I want to say again our gratitude to our Hellenic brothers and sisters, we value this more than you may know. We're really sad to see and read about the crisis in Greece, we hope that you have it soon behind and often think of you, stay strong!! And we hope to see you for the "Army of the Damned" album, stay as you are! Forever we hail Hellenic Warriors!!

Kostas Kailiazis



WRATHBLADE

"Better late than never". This is how I feel listening for the (lost the count) to "Into the Netherworld's Dream". Having been a fan of the band from day one, I was sure that when the time was right, they would unleash a Metal-bomb upon the suspected and unsuspected Metal masses. BUT, this LP exceeded my expectations. I will repeat what I said in the review. This is the 2012 equivalent of "Doomsword" and certainly one of the best albums I have heard in a very long time. Due to time restrictions of the other band members, it wasn't possible to do a more detailed and diverse interview. Here's what Nick Varsamis, singer of the band had to say...

Hello Nick. First of all, give us a bio of the band.

Okay...the principal idea was to form a Heavy Metal band consisting of group of friends sharing mutual interests on how a Metal band should be and perform, and all of that through the concept of "having good time". In that perspective, at first, Chris Mosalos (guitar) came in contact with me and shortly thereafter George Koumbaroulis (Bass) came in and that's was the base from where we started. You know, Chris and I were friends and that was the basic factor to start with the band. I was very reluctant at first, cos I thought I wasn't the right person to fill the slot, but anyway, Chris enjoyed it, and I loved it eventually. I knew George since we were/are both in LITANY, he is a nice person to work with, a great fellow and musician as well, so we thought that was the right person to come to the ranks and he proved he is a valuable asset and great contributor to the band's sound. So, in the beginning, me, Chris, George and a drummer (I can't recall his name, sorry) rehearsed for about two months. That was late 2003, with 1 or 2 songs from Chris' previous band RAGING STORM plus "Titanomakhia"-untitled back then and "In Metal we Trust". Soon this project declined cos the drummer failed to meet our expectations-he proved himself to be a true asshole even though a hell of a drummer. After some unsuccessful attempts to find a drummer, eventually we teamed up with Nick Papadopoulos (BATTLEOAR) and we soon started to rehearse our material on a regular basis-songs were included back then: "Titanomakhia", "In Metal we Trust", "Triton the Trumpeter". "Defend the Metal Faith". Pretty soon, Nick Sotiriou came in (mid of 2004), thus, we ended up to a five-piece act, actually that was the initial plan-two axemen with the same background will contribute more to the band's sound, song-writing and live acting. More songs were added to the play list, "God-defying Typhoeus", "Dragonwolf" and "Warlord's return" to name a few. Unfortunately, Nick Papadopoulos couldn't keep up the pace with the band due to time restrictions and BATTLEOAR commitments, so in the beginning of 2005 we joined forces with John Alexandrakis (ARPYIAN HORDE. FOREDOOMED) and the band took its current form into a more dynamic and sharp-pointed approach. New compositions and live appearances were on the schedule and as you already know, in 2006 we released our first official effort named "War of the Titans". New songs were composed and many live gigs were made during all these years (SACRED STEEL, LONEWOLF, BROCAS HELM, DOMINE, DEATH SS, DEMON, AT-LANTEAN KODEX to name a few acts we shared the stage with) until we recorded the "Reins of doom" demo CD (November 2011) and finally, on the first of March (2012) we released our first album named "Into the Netherworld's Realm" by Eat Metal Records.

Could you please tell us a few things about the other bands you were/are involved?

Me and George are both in LITANY (Doom Metal-check out "Aphesis: the Sapience of Dying" CD), I sing also for MACEDON HARRIERS (Speed/Heavy Metal-soon to release their debut). George is currently playing drums for INFERNOS IX (experimental heavy rock), and as I've been told, ARPYIAN HORDE (check out "From Olympus" 7"single) are planning to reform and John is in for the kill. Chris played in RAGING STORM in the past, as well as DEPRESSION and the legendary PANIX.

After a few shows in the band's early stages, you release a 7"/CD-single, "War of the Titans", from Eat Metal Records in the summer of 2006. How did this release/co-operation happened?

Yes that's true, we released the "War of the Titans" single (2006) in both formats, 7 inch vinyl piece plus in CD format including 2 live video tracks from our live appearance at An Club ("God-Defying Typhoeus" and "Defend the Metal Faith"). Actually, we thought that it was time to release something official and give it to the public, we chose the best tracks we had at that time, and those two songs were available for immediate use as well. In that perspective, we entered the studio and recorded them.

Moreover, we had the support from Eat Metal Records, both Jim and Greg, were very keen to release something from us since they were both fans of wrathblade music. By the way, the Eat Metal Records owner is my brother, lol

This release is sold out and helped the band become more known. What has been the response so far? How do you, as a band, view this release now that some years have passed?

The truth is that the CD is sold out, but there are still copies of the vinyl, not so many though. The single made a good impact on the underground scene; metalheads became familiar with the band and its music. People were often telling us how much they did enjoy the single and were encouraging us to record much more material. The press and the media were very enthusiastic about and quite supportive to our music, in fact, we didn't receive any bad feedback and personally haven't seen any bad comment/review yet concerning the single. Personally, I still enjoy the music on it and I think it was the best we could do at that time.

What are the reasons for the two songs you decided to record?

As I said before, they were the stronger cuts and the easiest to record back then. I still believe that was the right choice-all members were consented to that.

Around that time, the band was supposed to participate in a split single, covering a song by the UK TYRANT, right? Is the idea abandoned, or is it something that has simply been delayed?

I am not sure if we have abandoned the idea, in fact, I don't like to break promises, but, a promise is always a cloud, fulfilment is rain, if you know what I mean. It's not entirely up to us though, I don't think that this split will ever happen, but maybe there will be another option in the future to come, who knows!

As 2011 was ending, you finally released a demo, "Reins of Doom", a 4-track affair. How were sales, feedback etc. for this release?

Aye, at long last! Actually the decision was made in a hurry, you know, there was 10 years Anniversary live of Eat Metal Records to be held on November, so since we were/are at E.M.R roster we thought that it would be great to record something official and give it that day, plus we considered this as the calm before the storm, something that will clearly state to the metal world that we are still alive and kicking since we didn't record anything for 5 years. We wanted to prove to ourselves and those who followed us from the beginning that something good is happening and something great will follow shortly thereafter, and I mean our debut album. Considered the limited time we had I strongly believe that we did our best and the product is eventually eminent. One thing to add is that the fans and friends wanted something from us, they knew the songs but there wasn't a proper recording, so that's another reason for doing this. Thus we picked up four songs, we entered the studio and in a couple of days (4 if I remember well)

we recorded, mixed and mastered the whole thing. I don't know exactly the figures, but I think we 250-270 copies were made and we sold most of them - few items are still available from the band. As far as the reviews are concerned, these were positive to great, both media and fans referred to our music with encouraging words. Having in mind that this is actually a demo CD, we are very pleased with the reactions we get/got from the fans and especially from the underground.

The moment we have been waiting arrived in March 2012, when the "Into the Netherworld's Dream" album was finally released. First of all, let's talk a while for the recording sessions, the songwriting procedure etc. before the album was finally available to the public.

You know after the demo sessions we decided that it was time do something about the full-length album since we got the songs, so we planned to do it soon in order to be released in 1st of March 2012 just before the UTH fest (have in mind that we were on the UTH's warm-up bill-ideal moment I guess). So we entered the studio (Entasis) in the first days of January 2012 and we followed the usual procedure I guess: Drums, bass, guitars and vocals were recorded in this order-it took us almost 2 weeks and finally we mixed and mastered the whole thing during late of January to early of February period; Master-man Nick Papakostas (CONVIXION, STRIKELIGHT) along with George (bass) took care of it in the best possible way. I personally enjoyed every moment of it and I am sure that the rest of the guys felt the same way as I did, of course we were little of bit stressed concerning the final outcome, but in the end we were and still are very happy and pretty satisfied with it.



Maybe it's too early to tell, but what has been the response of the fans and media to your debut so far?

So far so good, to tell you the truth the response is really great and the comments are encouraging, I truly did not read any bad review concerning the album and I hope this won't happen (laugh). But as you said, it's too early, time will tell!

What are the lyrical subjects you deal with? You are the one responsible, right Nick?

First of all, I would like to state that lyrics are very important for WRATHBLADE and are not just complementary to music. I am the one responsible for the lyrics; most of them deal with ancient Greek Mythology and related stories ("Titanomakhia", "God-Defying Typhoeus", "Reins of Doom", "Triton the Trumpeter", "For You"), Heavy Metal ("Defend the Metal Faith", "Epinicion", "In Metal we Trust") and epic-heroic fantasy/science and fiction stories ("Met in Hades", "Warlord's Return", "Dolorous Shock", "Flee to Freedom", "Dream Trap"). Of course, we are not restricted to themes like the aforementioned ones, for instance, "Signs of Wrath" has to do with the tricks and wiles that Religion and especially the clergy performs in order to deceive people and engulf them to their sinful but not hidden society. Have in mind, that we are not simply narrate stories by singing that are belong strictly to our ancient past or fantasy mind-these stories also mark our present and future, so there is a social flavour/approach to them corresponding to the present day.

Despite the fact that someone can trace influences from some bands, your sound is really unique and stands out. Was this a deliberate choice or it came along the way naturally?

I think it comes naturally, nothing is done on purpose but we try to get improved sound-wise and progress to desired levels. We don't try to be imitative, although always there are some things reminiscent to others that you can't avoid. I am not one to tell that, but I strongly believe that we have a distinct sound, you know what you will hear from us it will be WRATHBLADE, and I think all the members have contributed to that. We all came from the same background regarding Heavy Metal (George is the exception to that), but we're different somehow in the way we approach the music itself and this adds more to variety which is reflected upon songs and makes our sound worthy of note

You are a band that apart from a great band is consisted of Metal fans. The way I see it, this is something very important, since I can not understand how you can play Classic/Epic Metal and not being a fan by going to concerts, buying CD's etc. What do you think?

I don't really know but it happens. They can reach a certain point though and not beyond that, nevertheless I believe that it has to do chiefly with open-minded people rather than people are just fans of classic/epic Metal music. For me it is important to support underground in the way you mentioned, to be a good musician and to improve yourself (that's an axiom), to have an underground fan base as a group (that requires to be a Heavy Metal fan who searches beyond big supermarket groups) first and then to move on to bigger audiences if possible, supporting your beliefs and ideas from beginning till the end.

Which bands could be named as mutual influences among you? Some bands you personally like?

Too many to mention, but we will try... I guess, RUNNING WILD, MANILLA ROAD, OMEN, early MANOWAR and CIRITH UNGOL are the outfits that 4/5 of the band like the most, personally I also adore WARLORD, SOLITUDE AETURNUS, HEAVY LOAD, CANDLEMASS, SORCERER, PAGAN ALTAR, SCORPIONS, STYX, BLASPHEME, MARTYR, early STORMWITCH, SLAUGHTER XSTROYES, HELSTAR, DENIAL PRICE, PENTAGRAM, early STRATOVARIUS, BROCCAS HELM, LAZARUS SIN and the list goes on.

Greek Metal scene. A big issue. I personally think that right now Greek Metal has many great bands/releases, be it demo or official recordings. Why are the Greek fans (and foreign ones) so prejudiced against these bands?

I don't know (I do know some though, lol) and I don't care a brass farthing! I assume the problem is general one, I mean, read the comments on different fora or web pages regarding for example, the last ACCEPT opus or the new SAINT VITUS album, most of them are exceptional or grandiloquent, actually, in fact as both of albums may be highly praised or seem great to majority, but in reality (or in my reality if you prefer) are the least average. Concerning the Greek Metal scene, is growing fast and furious, I mean, in all genres, there are bands that offer well-done products and especially some, give something valuable and not repetitive to fans. For instance, BATTLEROAR, WISHDOOM, WAR DANCE, REFLECTION, CONVIXION and the list goes on. I suppose WRATHBLADE or LITANY are doing that too. Some claim that the Swedish or German scene is the best one regarding the classic/epic/power/doom genre, personally, I doubt it-I know, we aren't in the centre of the Metal World, I also know we've been preoccupied in a bad sense regarding our past actions and offerings (albums with poor production, bad vocals, inadequate English, etc) so, most of times for the right reasons Greek Metal bands received bad reviews and in general, Greek Metal got no glory. But the tables have turned, Greek bands in their majority worked harder, have acquired a more professional attitude over the years and all these for a brighter future I guess.

Staying on the subject, which are the bands you distinguish from the Greek Metal scene, old and new?

There are lot of bands that deserve our full attention and support, my personal favourites are: DENIAL PRICE/SHADOW AXXIS, SARISSA, VICE HUMAN, VAVEL, CRUSH, DREAM WEAVER, MARAUDER, BATTLEROAR, RAGING STORM, HEATHENDOM, SORROWS PATH, AIRGED L'AMH, STRIKELIGHT and many others.

In the last few years we see again (after the 1996-1997 period) a "turn" that labels and fans seem to take towards Classic Metal bands, be it the huge quantity of new releases/reissues, or the fact that big labels after years focus again on this sound. Is this an actual need or marketing?

Life's doing circles so does music. There are some major factors that contributed to the "rebirth" of classic Heavy Metal and its branches (power/speed, even doom). First and foremost, the fans; "we were few but strong and loud", that is, traditional Heavy Metal became underground which means that bands of that genre received full support from the fans on the basis of buying their records and attending their shows intensively, moreover some people were fed up with fads and trends so they sought their pleasure to the classic Metal sound. But, you know, nothing would happen if bands couldn't be innovative/creative or didn't try to get improved substantially over the years. Thus, it was a matter of quality and not quantity. Small companies also participated in that, and that became bigger. Big bands (in terms of sales and fame) from other genres also incorporated the classic Metal sound to their sound in a greater extend than before, so that gave a strong push to traditional Heavy Metal to expand-and marketing came later. There is a growing demand for traditional Metal so big companies are trying to capitalize on that in terms of increasing their sales and gaining profit. I believe ENFORCER on Earache, HELL on Nuclear Blast or IN SOLITUDE on Metal Blade are some examples that justify my saying.

You have never played a cover song live, something that I agree with 100%. What would the reasons?

So is it morally permissible or impermissible? Actually there is no reason to work on a cover version of a song you love when you have plenty of your own material to arrange, so mainly for this reason we haven't perform a cover on stage...yet (lol)

How do you see your live appearances, as it's definitely one of the strongest qualities of the band.

Oh man it's a great feeling especially when you don't have acoustic annoyances on stage, lol. Speaking for myself, merely it's a give and take situation, where you give the best of yourself in order to satisfy the audience, it's also a self-satisfaction situation-I really enjoy these moments and I don't act solely as a performer but as a fan as well. I believe we always do what is necessary to be focused on our music and to give "ourselves" to the crowd-we certainly don't act/pose, what you see on stage is what we really are.

Are there any special shows (for whatever reasons) that you think are worthy to mention?

For me this doesn't make much sense, all our live appearances have a special meaning to us. Certainly there are some gigs that inspire us more than others, but there is really no big difference.

What are the future plans of WRATHBLADE? Have you set some goals as a band now that you have a debut LP out?

Set goals...ok, what will try to do is first, to use any workable and feasible way to support and promote the album so that to reach as many people is possible, and I basically mean the lives sector-we have already started working harder and rehearsing our material both old and new in order to exhibit the true power of the band to the audience here in Greece and in rest of the Europe (we have already been confirmed for Hammer Of Doom Fest in Germany, 2012-04-19). We are also planning to do a professional video on a song of the album-I assume this will help somehow. We are currently working on a new project along with CONVIXION; we are going to release something pretty soon and that will be a real surprise for true metalheads. And of course, there is plenty of material available and lot of fresh ideas for the next album, we are working on these too. As you can see we are very energetic and passionate this time and I promise you it won't take long again to see something really good from the band in a short time.

Thanks Nick, may your debut be a sign of faster work from you lazy bastards! Metal on, end this feature any way you want...

Thank you very much for doing this interview, I hope you got what you wanted (laugh). I wish you the best regarding the magazine and good luck to your personal seeking (for pleasure). So anyone who would like to communicate with the band or to seek info about our current and future projects can contact us either through e-mail (flashesofsteel@hotmail.com) or visit us on the web (myspace, facebook...). Defend the metal faith!

www.wrathblade.com

Kostas Kailiazis





It is a fact that bands with English written lyrics are always the most widely appreciated amongst worldwide metal fans. As a result, hundreds of bands that choose to sing in their local language are overlooked, leading to not getting what some excellent acts coming from non English speaking countries deserved. Even though East European countries showcased some remarkable pieces of steel, there are more than just a few that can't even imagine the number of gems hiding in smaller or less popular countries! RAMPART is another female fronted band hailing from Bulgaria that chose to use English lyrics in their songs, in an attempt to break the local barriers and help people see that music is a product of genuine passion, no matter where you're coming from, as long as the feeling you get is the same, the message is sent. We had RAMPART's main girl behind the band, vocalist Maria D.S., shed some light to what's going on with her band and the Bulgarian scene in general...

When was the band formed and by which members?

RAMPART was formed in the middle of 2006 by Me, Myself and I (in other words: by me, the guitar player Yavor Kamenov and the drummer Bobby Glavev). But two of these components left the battle and now my bandmates are: Vili Neshev (guitars), Svilen Ivanov (bass) and Petar Svetlinov (drums). Our line up has always included people devoted to the Metal and loyal to its ideas!

Did any of you play in other bands prior to RAMPART? Which bands and did they have any recordings released?

The guitar player Vili is an emblematic figure for the Bulgarian metal scene - he is known from Metal acts as VELVET PROJECT, EXHUMATOR and PROJECT ARCADIA. The bass player Svilen participates in plenty of projects from jazz to death metal. The drummer Petar is known from bands as DEMENZIA and CIROZA. Most of these bands have albums that are self-released. Before building a rampart I had a thrash metal project named REZISTANCE and a female Heavy Metal band-VIPERA but from 2008 till now I focus all my efforts in RAMPART.

What inspired the name of the band and what are the issues you mainly capture in your lyrics?

RAMPART means a fortification, a stronghold, and it presents our philosophy to be a bastion of the timeless Heavy Metal for Bulgaria. Lately I focus on the power of the will in my lyrics. I usually write and sing about battles because the Life itself is an everyday battle. And Heavy Metal is not only a style of music, but also lifestyle, religion ... For me it is a source of power. You are not becoming a metalhead-you are born to be a metalhead! We will always say "NO" at the moment! I feel the whole Metal as a support. It is not enough to say that it inspires me and it makes me believe. I do the things around myself with no false and without selling myself. When I write lyrics I do not make compromises as well. Metal is a combination of culture and a system of values.

What are your influences, both as an individual and as a band? How would you describe your music to someone who hasn't heard of

the band and which bands would you call as a comparison?

Kai Hansen and Ronnie James Dio are my singer gurus. I endeavor my vocals to be good for the listeners and to be in harmony to the music, to the lyrics and to the message. As a band I think that you can hear strong echoes from RUNNING WILD in our first album but now I believe that the inspirations are more like early HELLOWEEN and early QUEENSRYCHE. I have always believed that Heavy Metal is a road ahead. Every musician who chooses this way should give something to enrich the style. We listen to different music in wide range. I "steal" diamonds from Heavy and thrash Metal. Vili is a progressive fan who believes that if you catch the rhythm of a song from the first time this song is not worth the attention. Svilen is a strange eclectic from punk negligence and precision of a studio musician. And Petar could sink into everything from heavy to death metal. We have set that our place is the contemporary classic Heavy Metal. You cannot create anything of value if you have no restrictions. I will leave the listeners of our music to find the comparisons just because it will be very interesting!

How did you seal the deal with Inferno Records in order to release your debut CD "Voice Of The Wilderness" and this recent EP, "A Tale To Cold"? Does this also mean that we should expect a full-length released by this label?

We released our demo "Warriors" in 2008 and Inferno Records helped us with its promotion. After that we signed a contract for our first album "Voice of the Wilderness" which was released by the French label in 2009. Inferno Records helped us a lot and I am very grateful to Fab for his great support! Our EP "A Tale to Cold" (Released this year as Cassette-Single) has a special mission: the tracks in the EP will NOT be included in our sophomore album planned for to be out in the spring of 2012. The first release of the EP in tape format is devoted to all Metal maniacs who still remember the times when we were collecting hundreds of tapes. Later the EP will come out in CD format with bonus tracks. So "A Tale to Cold" is special from each point of view to the fans. In early 2012 you can expect a strong and powerful second full-length album from RAMPART. It will be a concept album which reveals the battle between two armies: The Army of the Perfect and The Army of the Craftsmen. This is a story of a new onset dedicated to the striving for perfection and victory.

What were the reactions so far to the demo from press and fans (most importantly)?

Our debut album has an excellent feedback from the underground Metal community. We are a band with a clear style of our own. We did not become a sensation, as it was for example the debut of HAMMERFALL, but according to our label we are one of his strong titles as far as sales are concerned. Our debut was a step ahead for us and... I hope for Heavy Metal as well. I expect support from the Metal circles for our new EP as well. Till now it has a great feedback. I am proud with every fan who judges our music on its merits.

Can you say a few words about your local scene there in Bulgaria? Any new bands that you play with and/or would like to recommend to all thirsty metal fans?

The Bulgarian scene is small and underground. Even our legendary Heavy

Metal bands after decades of activity have only one album. Because of lots of circumstances it is a tendency the good bands to stop playing after their first release. The power Metallers SJK fell apart after their debut. It is great to hear the active PROJECT ARCADIA-they play quality power-progressive Metal! We hope in the future to overcome the obstacles in front of our Metal scene.

Although Bulgaria was never known for a quantity of bands coming from there, some of them made a name for themselves, leaving a cult status among the fans worldwide. How were local heroes as AHAT, ERA, CONCURRENT, ER MALAK, IMPULSE, HADES or ICEBERG received in their own land?

I am glad that you know a part of the Bulgarian scene. The obstacles in front of the talented musicians to grow are the economic instability of the Transition and the lack of understanding how good music should be presented, both by the business and the bands themselves. It is remarkable that you ask me only about bands which sing in Bulgarian language. I know each of them and that is why I will mention them chronologically. IMPULSE have a cult status, because they are the first Bulgarian Metal band recorded legally Heavy Metal. Their album "The Gladiator" (1989) is highly respected among the fans. After the fall of communism the band released only two weak albums based on our social problems. The publisher of "Autopsy of a State" (1998) was not from Sofia and the album did not receive the necessary distribution. The band sunk into oblivion. In 2008 they had enough material for an album when suddenly the main composer and the founder of the band, Iliya Kunchev passed away. The rest of the band members played only one show in 2010 and presented mainly cover songs of DEEP PURPLE. Today IMPULSE are appreciated by the old fans, but because of the naivety of their music and old-fashioned lyrics they are not popular amidst the young fans. The music and lyrics genius of AHAT Bojidar Glavev became an Orthodox priest. He denied the social life. In fact this left the band with only one real album "The March" (1989) which will remain as the most loved Bulgarian Metal for all times because of its messages and original music. AHAT periodically releases live albums which now are more than their studio releases. "Made in USA" is a great misapprehension and demonstration of the lack of creative potential without Bojidar Glavev. In their shows the band concentrates on "The March" and some cover songs. ICEBERG: this is almost an unknown band at the moment! They were a burst of Supernova in the small Bulgarian town of Ihtiman. One of the last LPs released by Balkanton Records before the label has been sold and before its bankruptcy in 1990. The cover artwork is a Xerox copy stuck on the paper body of the LP!! "Iceberg II" (1992) is an album in which most of the songs are passages from foreign bands but it is rather pleasant for listening. After the release of "Heretic" (1994) the band falls apart. But because of its existence at the moment we have an awesome rock club in Ihtiman and respectively a stage (in the face of the band LAVINA-Heavy Metal band with two albums). ERA: the founders of the Bulgarian thrash Metal! The creative engine from the early period of the band, Liubo Malkovski continues the tradition with his band ER MALAK. Without him ERA released the rather good EP, "Suicide" in 1992 and an album "Point of View" (1994) and then began to work in the promoters' business. Today the bass player of ERA "The Ameba" joins ER MALAK and we are waiting for their new album. ERA are making only benefits shows. Both of these bands are popular not less than AHAT! In the beginning of their career (around 1987) CONCURRENT (a forbidden word during communism!) have been making only big show-spectacles and playing heavy/speed Metal. With time they lost the inertia. The good instrumentalists are participating in other bands and solo projects. The founder Emil Anchev left the drums and comes out only as a front-man frequently changing the other musicians. The band lives with its old works. The several attempts for commercial success weakened their positions. Now the metalheads in Bulgaria are not benevolent toward CONCURRENT because the band is a shadow of itself. Their last project in 2011 is a song with a guest rap-performer...HADES is a band for which until recently many people have not heard. Their re-recorded old songs were released by Stormspell Records, an American label with a Bulgarian owner. At the first show of the festival "Thrash Bash" this CD was a gift to every fan from the audience. Now they have a second album in their 26 years long career. Their aggressive thrash Metal has lots of admirers when having a glimpse of the top places of the charts in our rock radio stations.

Being a new band, how do you see Heavy Metal nowadays? You see this resurgence in the traditional Metal sound and the adjacent styles as a hopeful message for the scene, or the circle goes as vicious as it did in the late 80's and the "trend" will go down sooner or later?

There are some that hear the sound of the 80'es, other that hear modern influences. Everything is a question of interpretation. For us is important our product to sound good, and the sound of the 80'es is a part of a good sound. But we also build up in a way that will keep the idea of Heavy Metal. The rebellion of the 80'es today may sound as reconciliation but this does not make it bad. No one could run away from the time! But everything has its basis. Styles created as atavism like punk, Norwegian black metal, stoner metal, achieve new horizons without rejecting their roots. We are a classic Heavy Metal band that wants to sound contemporaneous. Our message is a revolt toward the false values and we want this to appear in our sound. According to us the "trend" is eternal. Some people may claim that this tendency is dead and even to believe this but these are only words. The true fans will always feel Metal in the right way!

Would you like to talk about the lyrics of the EP more extensively? "A Tale To Cold" sounds more personal I assume, would you like to expand? What issues would you consider worthy to attract and stimulate RAMPART's lyrics?

Inferno Records gave a real chance to our Heavy Metal to pass the boundaries of Bulgaria. We have exceptional relations with our label and we highly respect its help. You may visit their website and enjoy the stuff offered there. Metal for BeerDrinkers and HellRaisers!!! Indeed "A Tale To Cold" is very personal to me. It is devoted to a very brave friend of mine who fought with cancer for two years and passed away in February 2011, Beatrice Lasne (R.I.P.). She was the founder of the French webzine Metal Heart. She was also working in our label, Inferno Records. Bea had a real passion for Metal music. She was a great person and a real Metal Queen! The main idea of the title "A Tale To Cold" is that we live in a world where we often meet cold and death. We have no real weapons against events of this range but we always do have tales and dreams! This EP is our tale against the cold! It expresses disagree-

ment with injustices in our world!

There is an interesting story behind the lyrics of the forthcoming full length. Shed some light....

At the moment the issues of war and conflict are the main inspirations for my lyrics. The new album "War Behest" is a concept. If you want to know the story, here it is:

The Army of the Perfect Warriors

Made of steel and darkness the swords in their hands are as harps of death. The thunder of their arms is like a storm. Every man who heard it knows that this is like the symphony of the Apocalypse. Their perfect battle skills turn them to surgeons and painters of the fights. Their leader is covered in silver mist and mystery. No living man has ever seen him fight. Some warriors have seen him amongst mountains of fallen enemies after battles. He possesses the magic of the fight. Devoted to aggression they live to shed blood. Attack is their only tactics. Nothing could stop them!

The Army of the Craftsmen

They forge weapons for ages. Every sword is a masterpiece. Their will for great deeds leads them. When necessary their faith for victory is unbreakable. Every warrior is good in his own field. Their leader is in golden armor. He displays his army strategically in battle. His belief in the common will has mystic forms. Under his leadership the warriors appear as if from the ground. They are silent. Every stroke with the weapon is full of respect.

Devoted to construction they are feeding with their own will. The offensive is their only tactics. Together they can stand up as a wall. Nothing could stop them!

The Battle

The fate sets the Army of the Perfect against the Army of the Craftsmen. These are two irresistible forces: the perfect killing machines against the perfect weapons. Thirst for destruction against the will to contemplate...

The longest day in the universe has come. Hurricane of the orchestra of Death breaks the air but as if the enemy is irresistible. The swords bend under the height of the bones. Blood drowns the battle. The mist of the silver general falls over the Army of the Craftsmen. The bright sun of the golden knight grows dim.

The Army of the Perfect is initiated to the battle. Its faith is the most important thing for these warriors. They vindicate it to the end-it is their only chance. Their feeling of supremacy and excellence will never die. Even Death could not stop them!

A wall of craftsmen is like pieces of a wound. The anguish is burning in their breasts. The blood of their general-golden knight is so much that his armor turns to rust... Alone amidst the few survivors the silver knight is unable to kill them and to save them from the pain. The Perfect remain only a memory. The hurricane turns to morning mist. A few warriors saw the new day. They refuse to accept defeat and it seems that everything is a dead lock.

The Army of the Craftsmen in union calls the silver general to become their leader. A new age forecast brilliant future and never-ending power. Faith in success again is a common feature!

Initiated to victory their fate leads them to new glory. Success is their only fortune. New perfection is their common goal. Nothing could stop them!

I believe that in the real nature of the conflict there are no positive and negative heroes. The contradiction is born from our free will. But often we have no choice which side to have a preference for. This is a story about the restrictions of the man and the decisions which he could take on his way to perfection!!!

What are the plans of the band, regarding gigs and future releases?

When our new studio album "Follow the Behest" is released by Inferno Records in the spring of 2012 and we plan a mini-tour to present it. We intend to play in Thessaloniki in the late April. We will be happy to visit your country. On July 7th, 2012 we will play at Taunus Metal Open Air in Oberursel, Germany, with bands like WITCHHAMMER (Germany), LONEWOLF (France), ELVENPATH (Germany) and many, many more.

End this interview the way you want Maria, thank you!

Stay heavy and spread the Metal flow!

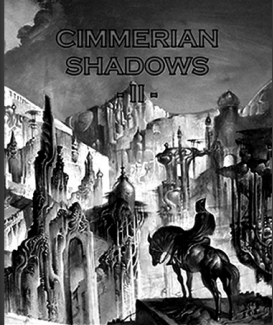
www.myspace.com/rampartbg

Thanos Stafylarakis

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HEAVY METAL ZINE FROM ENGLAND

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GRAYSON, MANILLA ROAD, WRATHBLADE, WYTCHE HAZEL



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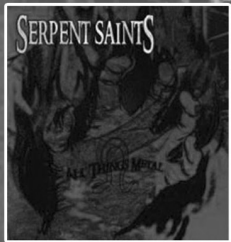
METAL033
JUMALATION
The Church Of Isaac
LP - Thrash Metal



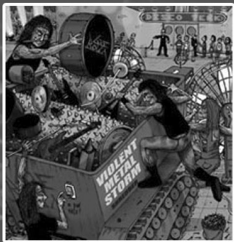
METAL032
LETHAL SAINT
Saint Strikes Back
7" - Heavy Metal



METAL029
ARMAGEDDON
Necromantic Celebration
CD - Blackened Thrash Metal



METAL030
SERPENT SAINTS
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Devil Worship Reckoning
Digi CD / LP - Doom Metal



METAL031
NOMAD SON
The Eternal Return
LP - Doom Metal



METAL022
RÉSISTANCE
A Tale Of Decadence
CD / LP - Heavy Thrash



METAL025
CHILDREN OF DOOM
Doom, Be Doomed or Fuck Off
CD - Doom N' Raw



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Apocalypse
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METAL034 - June 2012
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CD - US Metal Assault

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REVIEWS

ON THIS ISSUE WE DECIDED TO MINIMIZE REVIEWING RE-ISSUES TO THE POINT THAT WE THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO BE REVIEWED! SADLY, LABELS WIELDING AN UNDERGROUND BANNER SEEM TO CARE MORE TO RELEASE A GIVEN BAND'S WORK THAT WILL DEFINITELY BRING GOOD SALES TO THEM. THIS SOUNDS FAIR UP TO A POINT, BUT WHAT HAPPENS IN FACT IS THE REPRINTING OF ALBUMS THAT ALREADY EXISTED AND WERE EITHER HARD TO GET DUE TO AN EXTREME PRICE OF ITS ORIGINAL ISSUE, OR DEMOS/ALBUMS THAT THE ONLY ONE THEY CAN HELP IS THE LABEL OWNER, SINCE THE BAND IS USUALLY INACTIVE IN THIS CASE AND MUSIC AND THE WHOLE SCENE PER SE ARE LED TO STAGNATION. NEW BANDS ARE OVERLOOKED ONCE AGAIN, WE ALL KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS IN HEAVY METAL SOCIOLOGY TERMS! IT'S A SHAME REALLY, THE WORTHWHILE RELEASES ARE SO NUMEROUS AND DIVERSE TO COVER THE NEEDS OF THE MOST DEMANDING OR STUBBORN FAN. WE WOULD LIKE TO STATE ONCE MORE THAT MOST OF THE REVIEWS ARE ALBUMS WE BOUGHT, SO THIS MEANS THAT THERE ARE MANY RELEASES MISSING, AS WELL AS THAT MOST REVIEWS WILL BE POSITIVE ONES. THANKS TO ALL BANDS AND LABELS THAT BOTHERED TO SEND US THEIR MATERIAL.

New Releases

3 FOLD PAIN "Into Your Depths" 7" single

(Lighten the Underground, 2011)

Another offering from this newly established label, after re-issuing POWER CRUE's debut on vinyl, presenting another local act, 3 FOLD PAIN. This was initially released as a promo CD-EP with 4 tunes, the label picked 2 of them and issued this single. I assume this is not the fanzine's average reader cup of tea, unless you consider yourself open minded and savor diverse musical dishes. This is definitely not the music I fancy, too modern for my stubborn ears to take! The band is solid and tight, the players do not molest their instruments whatsoever, but somehow I never got into this kind of heavy-distorted guitar sound. I don't know exactly where to rank this single as far as the style goes, but if I had to I'd pick, a sufficiently polished QUEENSRYCHE of the "Empire" fame with a lot more of EVANESCENCE incorporating a male vocalist! If you think this applies your taste, go for it, but I'm not the one to say if this is good or not. I am not keen into that kind of stuff at all (un)fortunately, but I guess the adept ones will like it!

www.myspace.com/3foldpain

Thanos Stafylarakis



AGRESIVA "Eternal Foe" CD

(Private, 2012)

After their first demo in 2010, which they eagerly sent to us for review in our first issue and we thank them for that, the quartet from Madrid recorded their full length in their own funds. AGRESIVA play a mix of vigorous and robust rhythmic power/thrash that everyone into the likes of TESTAMENT, MEGADETH and post-Baloff EXODUS will definitely enjoy! This is not because there is something that clearly stands out in their album, but the overall result per se is way beyond what you would simply and casually call just another decent album in its style, with good clear vocals, remarkable guitar work and a tight and solid rhythm section in this well produced effort. Find some time to check songs as "If", the opener "Pale Horse (Red D'Eath)" or "Sent To War" to see what this band is all about and you won't regret it at all. If there's any of you having second thoughts because you think you don't like Heavy Metal when sang in a language other than English, apart from your obvious ignorance of non-English singing bands (you have no idea of the treasure you are omitting really!), these dudes do the job in your accepted language, so there's out, hehe!

www.myspace.com/agresivametal

Thanos Stafylarakis no other excuse, left for not trying this band!



AIR RAID "Danger Ahead" mini-CD

(Stormspell, 2012)

Ok, this came out of nowhere. Sweden, to be precise, but you get the point. I was told of the band's existence by my friend Greg Baxevanides and checked two songs they had on youtube and really liked them. And a little before we went to print, Iordan from Stormspell sent us a digital promo of this mini-CD. This is a very new band, they only had a two-track demo in 2011. Their sound is rooted in NWOBHM but with a more Power Metal edge, mainly due to the production and vocals, these guys really nailed it. The vocals (courtesy of Michalis Rinakakis, singer of EVENT HORIZON X) are excellent and very powerful and really are a vital part of the band's sound. All 5 songs of the CD slay, I really can't stop listening to "When the sky turns red", "The Metal Cult" or "Midnight Burner". Their 2011 demo is included as a bonus, a total of 7 songs on this must have CD. I can't wait for the official release! It blows away almost every new band coming from Sweden into an 80's Heavy/Power sound. Well done!

www.myspace.com/airraidswe

Kostas Kailiazis



ALPHA TIGER "Man or Machine" LP/CD

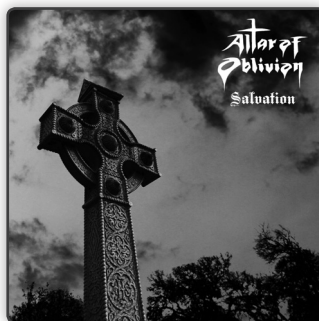
(Sonic Attack-CD/Metalizer-LP, 2011)

Now this is something I had utterly missed! Living the age of regression and reversals in our music, everybody wants to sound downright 80's, neglecting at the same time a prolific and prosperous underground wave that didn't last more than a short while, starting in the late 80's till approximately 1995, when it died at the place it was born, the States. Everybody but these German maniacs that looked closer back and thought that so many great bands were out during that period! With an excellent vocalist reminiscent of an ideal Tate/Arch mixture and a young Ronny Munroe on his PALADIN days, the accent problem solved (hey, they are a German band in the first place) and their straight-forward Heavy Metal songwriting, you barely notice any correlation with any other present German act, as they sound like the typical US Metal

band active in 1990! This album is great and surprises you from the very first second it starts spinning, I had really missed that style and up to a point I truly believed only Americans could play like this. As mentioned previously, outstanding vocal performance of Stephan Dietrich is the highlight of the band and along with the sheer lyricism provided by the songs and the awesome atmosphere the guitar solos create, ALPHA TIGER offered a record to be remembered for a long time from fans of the genre! It is not until the last few songs that you start to notice a few insignificant European influences in the guitar melodies mainly, that would rather remind of a less "happy" VIPER's "Theater of Fate", this is as US sounding as maybe the second PAN RAM album. Definitely worth checking out; unless you are a fan of LETHAL, PALADIN, EP/"The Warning" QUEENSRYCHE era, early FATES WARNING and the style demo bands such as LEGIONED MARCHER played, and if you are not one of those that hear any high pitched singer as an overstretched Halford misprint, you will fall to your knees begging for more. The TIGER is on the attack!

www.alphatiger.de/en

Thanos Stafylarakis



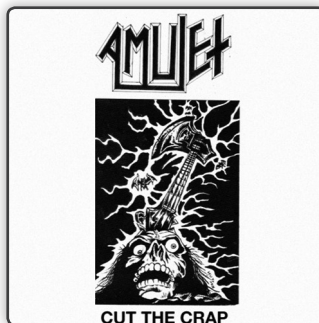
ALTAR OF OBLIVION "Salvation" EP

(Shadow Kingdom-CD/Cyclopean-12", 2012)

Thanks to a review found on the pages of On the March (a fanzine that is missing from today's scene, are you reading George?) I became familiar with this Danish Doom Metal act, but it was some time after that I got to actually listen to their music, when they released their debut album, Sineus of Anguish, a very good effort worth buying. Their new release, "Salvation" is brilliant. I don't think other adjectives will do the job describing it. Epic Doom Metal of the finest kind, I haven't listened to something so inspired for quite some time now. The opener, "Narrow Gates of Emptiness" was the track I had heard from Cyclopean Records' website some time and loved it, but I couldn't believe that all three other songs would be on the same levels. If you haven't heard this band before, it's never too late to do it now by buying a copy of "Salvation". If this is indicative of their upcoming full length scheduled for release sometime later in 2012, I am sure many fans will be left speechless. I will be in the first row...

www.myspace.com/altarofoblivion

Kostas Kailiazis



AMULET "Cut the Crap" demo tape

(Private, 2011)

Wow! What a great surprise from England. Another very good demo coming out of nowhere. These English guys play classic Heavy Metal, which brings to mind early BLACK SABBATH at first and the similar sounding bands of the early 80's coming from UK plus more contemporary NWOBHM bands of the first years of the movement. The sound is a little weird, making it sound stoner at times... This has also to do with the "loose"

approach that can be heard throughout this 4-track tape. I really liked all songs; maybe "Sign of the High Priest" is the weaker on offer, but nevertheless a very good track. This is a band to look out for, I really enjoyed all 4 tracks and hope that a new, more complete recording will soon be released.

www.facebook.com/amuletmel

Kostas Kailiazis



ANGEL WITCH "As Above, So Below" CD/2LP

(Rise Above, 2012)

I don't know about you, but I've been waiting for this one with much anticipation. The first ANGEL WITCH LP ranks very high in my list of favorites of all time and I have been very curious to see what has Kevin Heybourne hiding up his sleeve. The latest formation of the band seem to be faithful to the what the original ANGEL WITCH was, so there was a breeding ground for a glorious come back. And that's what this album is. Like a criminal returning to the scene of the crime this album takes over where the eponymous album left and ANGEL WITCH are back with a vengeance. Eight killer tracks, all future classics, this is how Heavy Metal must be played and it simply shows that no matter what, the resurrection of the genre must come from England. Check out the dynamic opening track "Dead Sea Scrolls", the energetic "Gebura", the fantastic melodies of "Brainwashed", the dark double lead guitar parts that are all over the album and you will realize that this is the big return we've been looking for. Last but not least listen to "The Horla" and you will be surely speechless. The most insane thing about this album is the fact that there were so many classic riffs still available... It was about time...

www.myspace.com/youanangelwitch

Michalis Bakoulas



ASGARD "The Seal of Madness" CD

(My Graveyard, 2011)

It took this Italian band seven years and two demos to finally release their first full length in the form of this modernly produced CD! They were often referenced as Italian AGENT STEEL, which is an unfortunate comparison if you ask me. Not that there's nothing in common with the US speed masters, but the only actual reason for this comparison is: some speedy songs combined with the vocal tricks and endings ASGARD's vocalist incorporates, which are often met in John Cyriis' singing! If I had to find a similar sounding band, it would have been more precise to match them with a more melodic and European sounding DESTINY'S END. So we have here a blend of melodic power/speed Metal with high pitched vocals and convincing guitars, all through the prism of a modern production. I wasn't thrilled to be honest, good album, although nothing groundbreaking, but there could have been a little less of this neo-Euro trademark double bass drumming, which

can be admittedly annoying at times to these ears! If they obtain a more discreet use of their influences they will become absolutely a better band, as this is even at this stage an enjoyable release. Try it, but not a hands down recommendation, so, till next time...

www.myspace.com/asgarditalia

Thanos Stafylarakis

ASOMVEL "Stare at death & spit" EP
(Miskatonic Records, 2011)

ASOMVEL suffered a big tragedy when bassist and singer Jay Winter lost his life in a car accident. This release is tribute to him and most probably the best ASOMVEL release. For those unfamiliar with ASOMVEL, they owe a lot to MOTORHEAD but are no copycats. After all they play what MOTORHEAD should be playing but have stopped some 20 years ago... Apart from that, they are straight in your face Heavy Metal rock n' roll with spitting vocals and raw lyrics suitable for parties, fast driving and making your neighbors search for a new neighborhood... Lenny Robinson's guitar solos are a great feature to the whole thing as he knows what and when to do it. Tracks like the opening "Fast women (& slow horses)" make this album a must buy if you like raw music with a punkish attitude and Metal sound. I know I do!

www.asomvel.com

Michalis Bakoulas

ATTIC "Attic" mini-CD
(Private 2012)

This is the latest shock I have experienced, this time by a traditional heavy metal band hailing from Germany instead of Sweden! Their debut EP is actually so potent that can make you forget for a while the absence of the one and only KING DIAMOND; this is the album the King should have released right after "Abigail", "Them" or "Conspiracy"! No kidding, they recruited a fantastic vocalist bringing memories out of the best times of the King. The stories narrated in all of the 5 songs of the EP (there's one intro also) create a horror scenery and take the listener into the dark depths of ATTIC's music. There's not much to say really, except that this EP kicks ass and apart from the great vocals recommended to anyone who digs the theatric tones and impersonations and falsettos KING DIAMOND uses, you can hear some energetic heavy metal songs, loaded with harmonies and vigorous guitar riffs and MAIDEN-esque twin leads! It needs much more to play anything like MERCYFUL FATE or KING DIAMOND did and be accepted by their fans than just write a few dark songs and sing using the King's vocal tricks. These Germans here seems they've got what it takes, never doubt about it. Anyone into KING DIAMOND, or simply anyone into pure and great heavy music should buy this.

www.facebook.com/atticfuneral

Thanos Stafylarakis

Ps. There is also a vinyl release from Sex, Drinks and Metal and a tape one from MetalPunxRecords.



BATTLERAGE "True Metal Victory" CD
(Metal on Metal, 2011)

The Chilean Metallers strike back after their previous "Blood, Fire, Steel" with another CD in the same vein. Furious, raw Power Metal that draws influences from bands like GRAVE DIGGER, MANOWAR and SACRED STEEL. I am puzzled why it didn't work on me since I worship these bands, plus the early works of

BATTLERAGE...Maybe I am becoming weirder day by day??? I don't know the answer, but the people that like the above mentioned bands most likely will find another great CD for their collections. The production is excellent, very fitting and the vocals spit fire in every sentence.

www.myspace.com/battleragetruemetal

Kostas Kailiazis



BETRAYER F.T.M. "No Life Till Fury" CD
(Violent, 2010)

What else could a band coming from Colombia play, other than standard old school thrash metal? So do these dudes here! In their third official release, BETRAYER F.T.M. delivered a decent speed/thrash album, with a similar sound and style as "Kill 'Em All" by METALLICA or early EXODUS, reminding me a little bit the demo of the mighty Brazilian THOR, "The Living Side of Death". To avoid any misunderstandings, I don't compare it with THOR's demo, but the overall feeling I got while listening to this album gave me the impression that these two bands had a similar songwriting style. All in all, the album is quite good, not the best thrash album I have heard the last few years, but certainly one that I can listen to without moaning from time to time.

www.myspace.com/betrayerftm

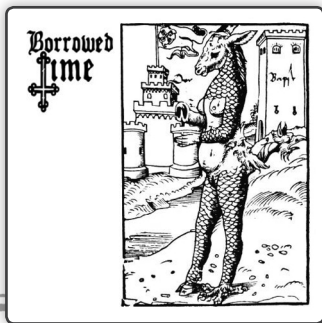
Thanos Stafylarakis

BLACK SWORD THUNDER ATTACK "In Hell's Reign" demo tape
(Private, 2011)

I was given this demo by our friend Stelios in last year's Up the Hammers Festival (2011) and as soon as the Festival was over I rushed to play this 3-track tape since a close friend that had listened to it already commented very positively. And what I heard was nothing less than pure Majesty! Had LORDIAN GUARD opted for a more heavy sound, this would be the final result. The melodies stick to your mind and there is only one thing to do as soon as you listen to the tape (for the first time and not only). Push the "rewind" button and enjoy it again and again... Let me make this clear, this is **NOT** a WARLORD/LORDIAN GUARD rip-off, this is PURE 80's Metal from all aspects. All three songs overwhelm you with emotion and the vocal delivery only adds to the final result. One of the best releases I have heard this year, I really wish the guys the best since such feeling is hard to be heard nowadays. I know this may sound cliché, but those that care about polished productions, excellent musicianship will be disappointed. This is METAL forged from Metal fans and is STRICTLY addressed to Metal fans. Period. Contact the band and get a copy of this demo (for a very low price) soon.

steliosgourou@yahoo.gr

Kostas Kailiazis



BORROWED TIME "Arcane Metal Arts" mini-CD

(Sarlacc Productions, 2011)

Newcomer from the States into 80's Metal. So, what makes this band stand out? In my opinion, they capture the feeling and sound of the era like few bands can while at the same time they don't sound like an "80's for the sake of 80's" band. The same with their compatriots CHRISTIAN MISTRESS I would say. This is a CD reissue of their 2010 demo tape, with the same songs included, 3 tracks of their own (1 is a small instrumental) and a nice "Necropolis" cover by MANILLA ROAD. "Burning Mistress" and "Sailor on the Seas of Fate" are excellent songs (with some DEEP SWITCH tones on the vocal delivery) with the latter being a mini-classic, traveling you back in the mid-80's in a way only US Heavy/Power Metal bands could/can do (excellent use of dual vocals by the way). A very good release (I don't know if it is still available), check the "Fog in the Valley" 7" single (reviewed elsewhere) as well. I guess a full length album will be recorded/released shortly, which I highly anticipate. Excellent start!

www.myspace.com/borrowedtimemetal

Kostas Kailiazis



BORROWED TIME "Fog In The Valley" 7" single

(Dying Victim Productions, 2011)

These Americans here really dig the old school spirit and a while after their praised and applauded demo, they strike back with a 7" vinyl release and two brand new kuts. Well, "new" is just a word utterly inapplicable and discrepant with BORROWED TIME, whereas entitling them with a mere "old-school" moniker is an understatement. This offering proves that raving reviews were not a random pick and BORROWED TIME were not yet another shooting star. Starting with the first impression you get as soon as you grab this gem in your hands, the harmony in sound and vision is portrayed in the brilliant cover art, followed by the early US Metal music infused by your speakers, exactly as the original US masters did, with a traveling melancholy and nostalgia smoldering in both songs. NWOBHM elements are also dominant in the music as much as it is in their lyrics, this single will downright cover every intrinsic gap you might have had from that era. Again, they are so good at what they do that they've taken care of every possible detail including their sound, production, recording, cover art and layout in general; I believe they have obtained a reputation sufficient to keep them working harder till a full length is complete. Loads of bands show up stating they are the next old school sounding sensation, but give it some time and think about it, how many can really achieve it, especially with a fidelity so effective that the only sign that gives the timing in, is the release date on the sleeve. So don't be hasty enough to say they do another tried 'n' true task 'cause it's not that easy really. There are so many people that state they do not listen to new bands in advance, with the lame excuse that they don't like them (!?!), as if they have ever heard of every new band (go listen to the fuckin' "vintage" demo you just downloaded prick). I have high hopes for the guys, that of course bear high expectations, but I'm not worried as I'm sure they do it with love and the best of mood, they are keen Metal fans anyway and that's what matters. Some of you will wait for it to become rare and call it a gem, others will wait for it to become rare just to buy it, what the hell, at the end of the day the situation will clear out and the few dedicated will still be there. Cheers!

www.myspace.com/borrowedtimemetal

Thanos Stafylarakis



CAGE "Supremacy of Steel" CD

(Music buy Mail, 2011)

A long awaited CD for me, since I was really addicted to "Science of Annihilation" (2009), the previous album of the band. Don't expect big changes, the style of the band hasn't been altered a bit, apart from the improvement in the production department and the vocal delivery of Mr. Peck which seems to be more high-pitched oriented than before. I really liked the CD, as some absolutely fantastic songs are included, like "Flying Fortress" (catchiest tune, great choice to do a video for it), "Annaliese Michel" (maybe the song of the album, US Power Metal with KING DIAMOND elements. And am I the only one listening to some MANILLA ROAD as well?) and "Hell Destroyer vs. Metal Devil" (the guitars slay). The negative "highlight" of the album is "Brainedead Woman", but this is one song, so... I also have the same complaint as last album. For me the band really shines on mid-tempo and relatively fast tracks and sounds tiring and monotonous on the ultra-fast ones. Weird as it may sound, at times I feel like Sean Peck is hitting the high notes more often than needed in the songs. If for one could do with less high-pitched vocals. To wrap it up, "Supremacy of Steel" is a great CD, a highlight for 2011, but in my opinion it's not as good as the MONSTER album "Science of Annihilation". If you like your Metal sounding like "Painkiller" on steroids with a more Epic and diverse sound, check CAGE and this latest offering of theirs. If you have been tempted to listen to this band but never did for whatever reasons, "Supremacy of Steel" is a great start, but once you get "Science of Annihilation" and "Darker than Black" you will understand why this band is not another random US Power Metal band, but a serious force in US Power Metal of the last years.

www.cageheavymetal.com

Kostas Kailiazis

Ps. I almost forgot to mention "Blood, white and Blue". Really?

COLOSSUS "...and the rift of the pandimensional under gods" CD

(Killer Metal, 2011)

This is a reissue of the band's debut CD from 2007, but I guess for most of us this band is new, so I saw it more fitting to present this release here. COLOSSUS hails from USA (North Carolina specifically...) and they also have another LP released in 2009. This is classic Heavy Metal with melodic guitars and vocals, but I wasn't impressed by any particular song. Nice and fun to listen to, but I wouldn't suggest it for purchase, especially when so many great releases are being "thrown" upon us so often and I guess most people's pockets don't generate money at will...

www.myspace.com/thecolossuswillcrushyou

Kostas Kailiazis



CONVIXION "Black Magic Night" 7" single

(Eat Metal, 2011)

Hell yeah! CONVIXION strike back unleashing a short but extremely effective bolt of Metal mayhem from the depths of your worst nightmares! This time the loud gang of Metal Muthas showed their evil face to the world with two hellish tunes far from their usual Heavy Metal lifestyle lyrical approach, they are now occupied by the occult and horror movie themes. I can't say whether these two songs are my favorites from the band yet ("Night's Mare" definitely has a place in my CONVIXION favorites), though I deem they do great in this specific style and it seems it fits them like a glove! Both tracks show thrasher preferences, with "Black Magic Night" being a bulldozer heavy speed holocaust, while "Night's Mare" meets the standards in anyone's daily head banging regimen. This ode to the "night" is not going to fail any enthusiast of the fast and loud regime!

www.myspace.com/convixonband

Thanos Stafylarakis



CYANIDE SCREAM "Unfinished Business" CD

(Killer Metal, 2011)

Seeing the cover and band name, one's mind goes to a modern thrash Metal band. Maybe not, but this is what I thought when I saw it. How wrong I was! As soon as I put the CD in the stereo, pure Heavy Metal flowed through the speakers. CYANIDE SCREAM is the band of guitarist/singer Steve Cone that has released some solo efforts in the past according to the bio, which I was not aware of. There are many songs (14) with a total duration of an hour, something that proved to be a minor negative for the band, since some songs didn't excite me as much and prevented me from rating this CD higher. The songs in question? The more hard rocking ones like "Let you go", "What I am", "Left behind" or "We must be strong". I have nothing against hard rocking stuff, it's just that I feel the strongest songs are those more to a heavy/power Metal style the US way. I would say that there is a musical "connection" between Steve Cone and the works of David Neil Cline (harder though) and Killer Khan through their personal bands/releases. Don't be fooled by the name/cover and the fact that this is an unknown band, it's a very good, though diverse release that shows great potential. I don't know which "path" Steve would like to follow, but I am already looking forward to more from this talented guitarist.

www.myspace.com/cyanidescream

Kostas Kailiazis



DAMIEN THORNE "End of the Game" CD/2LP

(Private-CD/Killer Metal-LP, 2011)

Last April, I had the chance to see live one of my all-time favorite US Metal bands, DAMIEN THORNE whose debut, "Sign of the Jackal" I consider one of the best (and most underrated) US Power Metal LP's ever! I was really disappointed at that show, both for the fact they played only two songs from that album, but also that I was really let down by the new songs (and singer). Getting this CD, I had a hope that my opinion would change. It didn't. The album goes nowhere, some good ideas here and there spread throughout a 63 min. CD...As for the vocals, I wasn't expecting a new Justin Fate, but they are average. The band didn't manage to motivate fans with their previous CD, "Haunted Mind", so I really doubt if they will with this one (truth be said, it's better, but again...). This CD goes nowhere, you just wait for it to end. The very modern approach the band has chosen doesn't help either. The final nail in the coffin is the new version of "Escape or Die 2011", a reworked song recorded 25 years after the original that doesn't sound not even close in terms of Power and intensity as its "poor cousin" from 1986. Maybe the title applies to what the band should consider? I really hope they can come up with a great album next time, but I doubt it...The hour of the Jackal has come (as stated in the back of their debut LP), but unfortunately has gone...

www.damienthorne.com

Kostas Kailiazis



DARK NIGHTMARE "Beneath the veils of Winter" CD

(Iron on Iron, 2012)

Talk about a last time review. Thanks to the Iron on Iron team, I was able to listen to the new opus of this Epic/Heavy Metal band from Grevena, a nice little town in Greece. Those that know the band from the demos will be happy to know that there is an intense "The Blood Land" scent throughout the CD, instead of the more Power Metal influenced "The Human Liberty". Great melodic lines and guitars, excellent vocals full of melody and a rarely heard passion are the main characteristics of this band that unfortunately hasn't become more known. DARK NIGHTMARE is one of the best Greek live acts (it's been a while since you were in Athens, return soon) as well and I long to see them every time. 8 great songs plus a URIAH HEPP cover of the timeless classic "The Wizard" (performed excellently) are included in this CD. I haven't had the chance to listen to it more, but I am sure that it will only get better after the first two listenings. There is a discreet use of keyboards that adds to the epic/dramatic atmosphere. Get this CD when you have the chance, I am sure you will not regret it. And don't forget their previous album as well, it's a must have!

www.darknightmare.net

Kostas Kailiazis



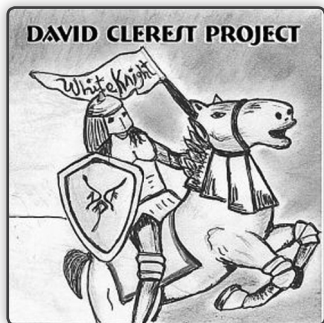
DARKEST ERA "The Last Caress of Light" CD/LP

(Metal Blade/High Roller, 2011)

Another pure Metal band in Metal Blade's roster? What's going on? I can't answer and as long as quality bands like these Irish youngsters get the chance to make their music more known to the people, I also don't care. I had high expectations from this album, that were fulfilled after listening to this CD more carefully. Let me start with the stunning cover, beautiful! The album includes 8 songs, with the 4 of them being known from the bands' previous releases, which leaves us with 4 (I am good in math!) new ones. I have to say, at first I was a little disappointed from the new songs. It turned out they needed some time to get into, as they are as great as the "old" material of the band. I guess the people that will get first acquainted with DARKEST ERA through this album will like this from the first spin. Having liked the band since their early recordings and being lucky to see them live, it took me some time. A great release as a whole despite my "complaints". Fans of DOOMSWORD, late PRIMORDIAL and CANDEMASS with a more Irish scent and personal touch throughout every composition will love this one, as this another top Metal release for 2011.

www.myspace.com/darkester

Kostas Kailiazis



DAVID CLEREST PROJECT "White Knight" demo-CD

(Clerest Records, 2011)

It was sometime this summer when a friend of mine suggested to me this band through their Hymn "White Knight". At first I thought this could be an unreleased THUNDER RIDER songs, had the Canadian Legends decided to play faster. This is one of the closest things to THUNDER RIDER I have heard, something that for me is great, for others not. Epic Metal with proud, almost hymn-like vocals and lyrics dealing with Good vs. Evil and the destruction of the environment. There are 5 songs in this release, one of which is a small instrumental. The last two songs show a more "hard rock" side of David, very good, but I prefer the first two, heavier songs. Note that everything is handled by David Clerest, and it literally is everything. Songs, instruments, artwork, production. I know I will keep an eye for future recordings, I suggest Heavy/Epic Metal fans to do the same.

www.davidclerestproject.com

Kostas Kailiazis



DECEPTOR "Soothsayer" mini-CD

(Private, 2011)

This was the greatest surprise for me this year, the hapless scribe of this review; it usually happens so whenever I have to confront with the music from a band I hardly knew of, nor did my metallic environment! Combined with my utter ignorance, I would add their British origin and there you go. I was introduced to the band by their drummer James, when he visited Athens to attend a couple of gigs and although we had an e-mail exchange before his visit, I had no idea that he was playing in a band. Partially aware of his musical taste, got the CD and listened to it in query, that instantly turned to awe! Top notch technical power/speed/thrash from the land of U.K. that could easily be mistaken for US metal of the likes of CORONER, DEATH, HELSTAR, ATHEIST and a dose of SABBAT (UK)! How can all these fit the Power Metal description is something I can't explain; in fact, I can't rank them neither in the Power Metal nor the Thrash Metal league. Rough vocals and hellish screams attire the technical prowess of this trio and all four tracks could leave you with a smile in your face and your neck in a collar, no doubt about it! They started out as a raging Thrash Metal act and throughout the years they have evolved to such worthy successors of the past techno thrash legends without sounding modern but not at all outdated, just like VEKTOR do! Actually, meaning not that these two bands have a significant resemblance with each other, I am convinced that fans of VEKTOR will love DECEPTOR nonetheless! The songs' duration ranges in almost 4-5 minutes each so they never get excessive or tedious, as is the case with many of their "competitors". From ballistic speed, they slow down in a perceived transition while they have escaped the couplet-refrain monolithic approach and the "compulsive" participation of guitar solos, even though they do it successfully once they put a solo up! When I asked a friend who doesn't like thrash at all and another one who doesn't even like Power Metal acts and they both agree that they indulged in DECEPTOR's music, this is a proven case of a winner mini-CD! I listened to it with frequency when I first got it and so I did a while later, easily on my top list for this year! 500 copies aren't too many, so first come first served!

www.myspace.com/deceptormetal

Thanos Stafylarakis



DEMOLITION TRAIN "Kill Your Boss" demo-CD

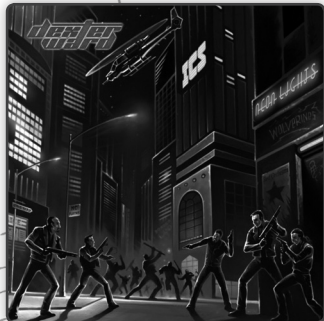
(Private, 2011)

It was about time for DEMOLITION TRAIN to unleash their first official release with the outstanding kinda wishful title "Kill your Boss". This dynamic quartet (appearing as a trio for the time being) had also participated in the CD compilation that had accompanied the first issue of Steel for an Age with an exclusive song and what they offer here is more of the same, that is loud and noisy

speed Metal in the vein of EXCITER, TANK, MOTORHEAD and early RAVEN if you like! All four songs are gonna rock you the hell away and cheer you up! You will not hear anything innovative here, just old school Heavy Metal for the nostalgic ones; who said 80's are gone really? I've watched the guys live and really enjoyed it, they didn't lose their 80's touch that you hear on this disc and they partied damn well! The only difference is that they sounded much more like MOTORHEAD than they do in "Kill Your Boss" demo, but over time they will manage to find their own sound on stage as well. Well done and played loud, you do the same!

www.myspace.com/demolitiontrain

Thanos Stafylarakis



DEXTER WARD "Neon Lights" CD

(Iron on Iron, 2011)

A year after their first EP "Antarctic Dream" was released, DEXTER WARD strikes back with their full length CD and a good dose of US Heavy Metal made in the same forges used for Metal three decades ago (it's 2012, remember?) across the States. At least this is what they sound and play like. Of course, you can hear in the production the modern means of recording used, but the spirit of the music played in this continent at this period of time is all over the album, loud and screaming! The album consists of straight forward in-your-face Heavy Metal kuts, epic coated call-to-arms beckons, Mark Dexter's passion for video games and a decent percentage of clichés, the way the nostalgic ones perennially call upon them! Fortunately, in contrast to loads of past US releases, you will not meet any fillers or vulgar commercial tunes. Very pleasant album to listen to, as it flows smoothly and not a moment you will hesitate banging at the rhythm of all 8 (plus intro) catchy and "digestible" songs.

www.myspace.com/dexterwardband

Thanos Stafylarakis



ELVENPATH "Elvenpath" CD

(Private, 2011)

I admit that I wasn't so into the band, after listening to both their older CD's at the time they were released once or twice. So, when I'll sent us a copy of their latest one (thanks!), I was pre-occupied. It turned out to be a mistake, since "Elvenpath" proved to be a great album. So great, that an interview was easy to think of and arrange. The band seems to have found a way to successfully blend their US influences in order to "macho up" the basis of their Music, which is melodic European Heavy/Power Metal. So, this would mean, a heavy dose of early HELLOWEEN and BLIND GUARDIAN with a great sense of catchy melodies but HEAVY songs and influences from US Metal bands here and there, The Euro-ZANDELLE in a sense. Great melodies and songs, without sounding too happy that could turn off someone not so much into this sound. The packaging is su-

perb and really better than most of the label pressed CD's I bought last year, congratulations! Personal tastes aside, this is an excellent release, fans tempted by the description will worship it.

www.elvenpath.com/

Kostas Kailiazis

ERASE "Heavy Metal Maniacs" demo-CD/tape

(Private/Underground Forces, 2011)

Generic Heavy Metal in this first demo CD (later released as MC in 100 pieces) by ERASE which includes two songs. "Every Saturday Night" is the best one in my opinion with some nice parts and ideas, let alone the good guitar work throughout the song. "Metal Force" follows, which starts with a promising theme but then comes through as a rather mediocre and unnoticed number. Another hymn to Heavy Metal whose structure gives away their intentions of writing a "live favorite", but you don't come with "live favorite" just like that, you end up with one and it's someone else's choice eventually. Vocals are handles by George "Innervoice" Stavropoulos (also in STRIKELIGHT), so you know what to expect from ERASE on the matter. On the wait for another output...

www.myspace.com/erasegreece

Thanos Stafylarakis



EVIL-LYN "The Night of Delusions" CD/EP

(Iron On Iron, 2012)

Finnish traditional Heavy Metal attack that turned up out of the blue, after a friend's suggestion and suddenly they have their first mini-CD (soon on 12"EP as well) released! This wasn't enough for the band apparently and when they were asked to play in Up The Hammers Festival in Athens, they promptly accepted and reaped the hall! This is what their EP is all about actually, a female fronted Euro-influenced Heavy Metal reaper with a very strong Doro-like vocalist and killer guitar parts! All five tracks are vivid and robust scorches that even the most demanding and hopeless fan will enjoy. This album may not establish them as a leading force in the Heavy Metal pantheon yet, but it will surely generate the necessary fuss to motivate the band and quickly launch another quality release! Do I sound too greedy?

www.evillynband.com/

Thanos Stafylarakis



EXPLORER "Vengeance rides an angry Horse" LP/CD

(Pure Steel, 2011)

The return of EXPLORER to Heavy Metal is something that will please quite a few fans, as the band is very popular mostly due to their "Symphonies of Steel" debut LP. There were dozens of better albums released in USA (and not only) in the 80's. In my

opinion, the same applies to this brother of "Symphonies of Steel". There are many better albums that deserve attention than this one. I wouldn't want to be unfair to the band and end the review here, although it would make sense. Almost every song in this CD has something to offer, but the problem is apart from a few memorable ideas, riffs, vocal lines, whatever, after it ends I didn't rush to play it again. I seem to be the minority though, since most people I know have liked this album. As always, listen and judge if it is worth the buzz.

www.explorer.net/

Kostas Kailiazis



FIREWOLFE "Firewolfe" CD

(Private, 2011)

Paul Kleff and Nick Layton, both known musicians within the guitar player circles, decided to form a band and for this purpose they recruited renowned singer David Fefolt (ex-VALHALLA, ex-HAWK, FIFTH ANGEL, MASI etc etc etc) for the neurgalic singer position, who is always a good and tested pick! This is their first CD where their ideas were set to music, creating a pretty good melodic heavy metal album, which will definitely satisfy fans of simplicity in music combined with high class performance from all musicians participating in the album. Each player stands on his own high above a mere very good level, but I'm not a fan of the DIO style songwriting, which FIREWOLFE represent. The album is fine, I just do not see something outstanding in it that will convince me and "absorb" me. Within the ten tracks the album consists of and the 52 mins of running time, you will hear killer tunes ("Unholy", "Air Attack", "Tempter", "Firewolfe") among others that are simply good or even average. As said before, fans of the specific style will probably hear a very good CD, I liked it also, but it's something I could do without at the same time. I can't understand though the tribute to their country's "Armed Forces" some bands tend to pay really and whether there is a purpose on doing that at all...

www.firewolfe.com

Thanos Stafylarakis



GODS OF FIRE "The Phoenix" 10" single

(Black Thirteen, 2010)

I was introduced to this NY band once I heard this single, whereas I later found out they had two more CD's out, which unfortunately didn't have the chance to listen to. This peculiar act recorded two exclusive songs that see the light of day in the not so common form of this 10". Why I call them peculiar? Well, "The Phoenix" is a great powerful Heavy Metal cut, simple and straight forward, while "The Dying Wizard" generates the suspicion that GODS OF FIRE are not just another Heavy Metal band that you meet across the street. Eastern melodies, rhythm changes and arrangements with their personal mark make one more fantastic song to complete this

work. I can only say for sure this is enough to motivate me and spend some time checking them out and especially anticipate their next effort anxiously...

<http://godsoffire.bandcamp.com/>

Thanos Stafylarakis



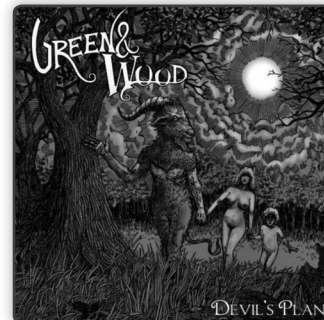
GODS OF FIRE "Nightmares" mini-CD

(Black Thirteen, 2011)

The US freaks strike again with a three track EP that overtly demonstrates their capabilities as much as the diversity of their music! All three tracks are so different one from the other, yet never omitting a powerful performance. "My Evil Arms" is an old song, originally appeared in their first 2002 demo, which excuses the different implementation compared to the rest of the two songs. For the latter, you can imagine something like a KING DIAMOND kind of Metal, nothing similar to the dark/occult wave of bands that have recently emerged everywhere, but with a theatrical approach and a vocalist that boosts the dramatization to another level! You can take KING DIAMOND as a reference, more because of the stylistic similarities to the music than any other common features. This EP has nothing in common also with their previous one, "The Phoenix", as this new offering is quite erratic to be confined in any comparison. I like the band a lot, I find their "abnormal" sense of musicality alluring enough to check on whatever they do regularly.

<http://godsoffire.bandcamp.com/>

Thanos Stafylarakis



GREEN & WOOD "Green & Wood" LP/CD

(Cyclopean Records, 2009)

I was not aware of this US band till I got their record from Jason and Cyclopean Records in this beautiful gatefold cover (with a poster!) and I admit it was a huge surprise to me! All of you living with the reminiscence of the very first days BLACK SABBATH surfaced the earth, keep your eyes and ears peeled, as what you are about to hear in this LP is probably some of the most promising stuff you have recently heard. I'm not an avid fan of 70's sounds, but these guys and girl blew me the hell away. This pagan oriented outfit do not hide a single bit their adoration to BLACK SABBATH having the lion's share in their Book of The Honorable Greats, whereas BLUE CHEER are also manifested through GREEN & WOOD's music, with the more powerful parts reviving memories even of SAINT VITUS and PENTAGRAM, or even a discreet stoner touch that you can sense at times! With such a thundering bass hammering onto your head, you can imagine the fidelity to the 70's roots, fucking heaviest music! I'm not too keen on bands of a similar style, so I'm not an adept in terms of the available variety and quantity, but I haven't heard anything that good recently in this very genre, I estimate that it won't be long

...We hear from them again. Check the label for availability, as it might still be up for sale, maybe not for long!

www.myspace.com/GreenandWood

Thanos Stafylarakis

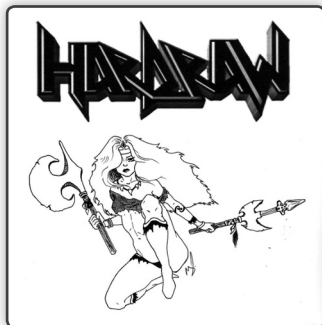
GREEN & WOOD "Light of Lune/Siren" 7" single

(Cyclopean Records, 2011)

A while after their self titled album, GREEN & WOOD return stubbornly stuck to their assumingly pagan orientation and their deep rooted 70's influences. Fans of early TROUBLE, SAINT VITUS and BLACK SABBATH will pee on their pants immediately when they get this single! The OZZY-era SABBATH element is so blatant and evident both in the songwriting style and the recording in general, performed in a yet more powerful endeavor. I'm not following this genre and the amplified popularity it gained the last few years puts me off, but GREEN & WOOD not a moment leave you thinking their music is fake, or even worse, that this single was recently recorded. This is some of the heaviest shit you have ever heard with a vocalist reminiscent to a mundane Eric Wagner and the guitars tuned according to Iommi's personal sound. Special mention to the brilliant black & white sleeve with a hand-made drawing; Jason, the man behind the label is a fan himself, which explains why he is so much concerned and successful consequently in his own business.

www.myspace.com/GreenandWood

Thanos Stafylarakis



HARDRAW "Demo 2011" demo-CD

(Private, 2011)

First recorded appearance from this outfit from Cyprus incarnated in this demo CD-R. "Heavy Metal Union" and "Strike 'em Down" are the two cuts featured here and immediately after a BROCAS HELM melody, the first impression that the listener gets is the same that you get with almost every Greek/Cypriot band playing this specific Epic Heavy Metal style, which is that they were too hasty focusing more in releasing their first completed songs rather than working on them harder till they get the desired result. I am not referring exclusively to the production job, it's a demo anyway, but this isn't always an excuse, especially when we hear dozens of totally professional demos. This is most probably a home-studio recording and hell does it sound as such. There are definitely good ideas here and there, the lyrics are cliché as expected (but we all love this cliché from time to time in our Heavy Metal diet, don't we?), hence I guess the songs would sound way better when they achieve the production result they want to. I can hear a lot of passion in these songs and when they finally find their personal style, I deem better things will come...

www.myspace.com/hardrawband

Thanos Stafylarakis

HARDRAW "Night Of The Wolves/Strike 'Em Down" 7" single

(Private, 2011)

...Which unfortunately won't happen with this single either. "Strike 'Em Down" is again included in the track list and the production is obviously different, as this is an official attempt for a breakthrough. Guitars are improved here, the vocals are still very good, but this time equalized with the rest of the music. My only objection is the chorals they use, they sound more like an effect and this ruins the final picture. "Night of the Wolf" comes next with a typical-Greek melodic theme, but a randomly eventuating sloppy break makes it obscure and somewhat charming, evading the generic labeling. I like it more than their demo and I still feel they are not quite where they want to be yet, so keep it up guys, I'll check their next efforts for sure. Thumbs up for the great b/w cover hand drawing with their trademark Amazon depicted in this 300-copies single!

www.myspace.com/hardrawband

Thanos Stafylarakis

HARVESTER OF SORROW (H.O.S.) "The Beginning" CD

(Punishment 18, 2011)

I got acquainted with these Italian crazy thrashers after the editor-in-chief of the Polish Hard Rocker Magazine, Vlad Nowajczyk, suggested the band to me. All they have released so far apart from some demos is a split album in 2009 with VIOLENCE SPREAD and despite the rational connection you will make judging by their pick of a name, they sound nothing like METALLICA. On the contrary, the band recorded ten songs of raging standard thrash metal in the vein of KREATOR, SODOM and DESTRUCTION and brought it out to the world. Nice attempt admittedly, it starts in a very promising way with 4 strong tunes, somewhere in the middle a couple of quite dull songs show up but then they thrash up to the max again, concluding with introducing themselves with "We Are H.O.S." and an album most of the old school thrashers will presumably enjoy. I can't promise you will end up stunned, but this is one pretty good effort.

www.myspace.com/hoshrash

Thanos Stafylarakis



HELL "Human Remains" 3LP/2CD

(Nuclear Blast, 2011)

Ok, I guess another late review for an album that has been released a year ago and most people have made up their minds and/or bought it. Either way, here it is, a HELL "review" for two categories of people. First, we have the "true" fans, the ones that learned the band from tape-trading and NOT from mp3 downloads (sarcastic smirk) and now they pretend to be "judge and jury" on internet forums of everything NOT recorded in a basement in the mid-80's. If you like 80's Metal, because it's "in", or because HELL had a "cult" name and a rare 7" single, stay away, you are better off saving your money to gather enough and buy whatever the experts will suggest as great Metal. Let us enjoy our "emo", "goth", "modern", "over-produced" Metal band that is HELL according to you. You will not understand this album... I guess the title of the anthem "Save us from those who would Save us" fits perfectly here. Now for the second category, METAL fans. If I had listened to the single only, I would give this album a chance at a very later point, I admit it, since it's not indicative of the band's potential and song repertoire. Don't shun them because of the updated production, or their image. LISTEN to the music included and I bet there is no chance people that have grown up with a more or less clear mind of what HEAVY METAL was/is about, not to like

this album. "Human Remains" is one of the best things that happened in Classic Metal the last few years featuring excellent guitars, amazing vocals and great atmosphere. I was lucky to see the band when they played here last October as part of the CANDLEMASS/TROUBLE/HELL/LORD VICAR/GHOST tour and was amazed at the way they managed to deliver the songs live. If HELL plays somewhere near you or in a Festival, do not miss them! There is a special edition of the album released in 2CD or 3LP (a real beauty, but expensive) sets with the "Human Remains" album and the original versions of these songs from the 80's demos in restored/re-mastered versions. THANKS to the band for this Masterpiece! Looking forward to a new album including newly written songs as well.

www.hell-metal-band.com/

Kostas Kailiazis



IN SOLITUDE "The World the Flesh the Devil" CD/2LP

(Metal Blade, 2011)

I never expected that this young Swedish band would amaze me that much. I had gotten their debut and saw the band live when they played in UTH 2010 Festival, but I was not so much into them as other people, despite enjoying their material quite a lot. I was a little hesitant to get this one, but as soon as I did, I was happy I did. This LP is a real grower, once you get into this album, there is no turning back. I will not mention any specific songs, since this album kills from start to finish, an hour of Metallic mania. It's a good thing that MERCYFUL FATE are getting more recognition (not all the times in a good way) the last few years, since their first releases belong to the Elite of Heavy Metal. IN SOLITUDE is one of the few bands that doesn't copy riffs here and there, or is content with an occult image/lyrics. They have accumulated the music and most importantly the feeling these Monuments transmitted and present us something that is very close to this beloved band not only in form (seems to be easy nowadays) but also in content (this is the tricky part). Well done guys. Definitely a recommended purchase, I am sure this will be considered a Classic album in the years to come.

www.myspace.com/InSolitudeHeavyMetal

Kostas Kailiazis



INNER AXIS "Into the Storm" CD

(Coast Rock, 2011)

A relatively new band, INNER AXIS has "risen" from the ashes of MIDGARD, a band that has released three demos so far, but I was unfamiliar with. This is their debut CD, released in co-operation with local Coast Rock Records, which was sent to us by the drummer, Zack (zack σου πατριώτη!). "Into the Storm" is so pleasant to listen to, but after a while I started noticing that something was missing. Something that would make me put this CD in my stereo again. I guess it's the style of the band, I was never so fond of the more "typical"-sounding German Power

Metal bands. Those that have a softer side for German Metal in the vein of bands like GAMMA RAY, BLIND GUARDIAN and RUNNING WILD, will love this one and should contact the band very soon.

www.inneraxis.de

Kostas Kailiazis



JAG PANZER "The Scourge of the Light" 2LP/CD

(SPV/Steamhammer, 2011)

"The Scourge of the Light" proved to be the farewell album of the Colorado quintet. I will surely miss their live shows, but I can't say the same for their studio albums, despite the fact that I have bought and enjoyed them, others more, others less and they get the occasional spin now and then. But this is/was the problem of the band in my opinion. None of the albums they released after their reunion managed to re-create (or even approach) the feeling that was transmitted through the 80's works of the band, be it the divine METAL of the EP and "Ample Destruction" or the more melodic side of the band as heard on the 1986 demo and "Chain of Command" demo/LP. The album is good, personally I enjoyed it, since it flows very nicely, has great melodies and that's it. After a few times nothing stays in your mind, despite the small duration of the album other than a few songs. If you like the recent JAG PANZER albums, this is a great buy, since you will like it. In case you haven't been tempted by their post 90's releases, then "The Scourge of the Light" is another release you can avoid spending your money on.

www.jagpanzer.com

Kostas Kailiazis



KRUX III "He who sleeps amongst the Stars" CD/LP

(GMR/High Roller, 2011)

I have to admit that I have almost forgotten about KRUX. I really enjoyed their debut album (even bought the DVD with the EPIC intro, cheers Leif!), but somehow "missed" that they did a 2nd CD, until I saw this one being advertised last year. As soon as the LP begins, there is an intense "King of the Grey Islands" sense that doesn't wear off until the end of the album, which is more than fine with me, since I didn't like so much "Death Magic Doom". Heavy/Doom Metal with epic touches and a space/70's feel in most of the songs (through the use of keys and some melodies) that works excellent. Mats Leven signs his socks off (I doubt if someone expected something else) and the entire band does a great job. Recommended to Doom Metal maniacs, but I am sure fans that are a bit more selective (like myself) in their doom Metal repertoire will like the third album of KRUX a lot.

www.kruxdoom.se/

Kostas Kailiazis



LETHAL SAINT "Saint Strikes Back" demo-CD

(Private, 2011)

LETHAL SAINT is a Heavy Metal band hailing from Cyprus and have already released one demo and their self titled full-length before this promo/demo CD, releases that unfortunately didn't get to hear yet. Their music is basically generic Heavy Metal looking up to JUDAS PRIEST and ACCEPT, with decent guitars/riffs, very good vocals and satisfying overall performance; in my opinion this is the problem with them, I can't see anything outstanding here that would separate them from the batch of the bands arising daily. I mean, opening "Saint Strikes Back" is a very strong track with a great up-tempo guitar theme, but production job doesn't help at all making the backing shouts sound too light-weight extracting from the overall power the song is supposed to convey to the listener, this is the general picture in this demo. Next comes an average "Hung By Your Balls" with the same backing shout problem, this is the worst song in this demo. I'm not sure if this is a home-recorded demo, at least it sounds like one, but witnessing many of the recent 80's oriented releases have thankfully turned their backs to the digital "lie" production-wise, this fact only made me more demanding a natural sound and anything other than that is taken for lower standard by me! "Out For the Kill" finally saves the day with 2 out of 3 crossing the acceptable finishing line, there's nothing that could be characterized as unlistenable definitely in this demo, but racing in the big boys league is always hard and it takes a lot of effort till you establish yourself there, especially with so many bands worth checking and a huge selection problem by fans that have to choose some among the numerous good releases that pop out daily. The band slays live admittedly, so I think they have something to give in the future. Worth the shot, but it's only a shot.

www.lethalsaint.com

Thanos Stafylarakis

LITANY "Promo 2011" demo-CD

(Private, 2011)

There's no doubt that any band Nick Varnis will front will be a reason for controversy, mainly for his one of a kind way of delivering the vocal goods. This is exactly why I like the bands he sings for, because of his unique tinge and style, which is quite hard to come across nowadays, considering that the number of guys who sing or try to sing is countless! Although I adore WRATHBLADE and I can't imagine them without Nick's voice, I am convinced he is a perfect fit for a doom band. So here enter LITANY with this three track promo as a "threat" to what's next by them. I was stunned by the powerful doom assault "Aphesis: the Sapience of Dying" had unchained and this is probably the reason I didn't like their new direction at first. Listening to it more carefully, I utterly changed my mind and saw this "direction change" as natural evolution. They are simply not so evidently influenced by SOLITUDE AETURNUS, there's just a disproportionate quantity of the US godz compared to their debut. I actually hear a British 90's doom/death touch, in the likes of PARADISE LOST/ MY DYING BRIDE for instance. Songwriting is way more mature with a decent dose of intricacy, where each player unfolds his undisputed talent, promoting it to a point of reference. I was blown away by the massive riffs and if my clairvoyance proves me right, their full length will place them in an upper echelon in the Doom Metal status quo, where they'll stay there for good! One of the not so many totally professional bands in Greece, judging by what I hear in this promo, with an undisputable personality. Well done once

again!

www.myspace.com/litanydoom

Thanos Stafylarakis



LONEWOLF "Army of the Damned" CD

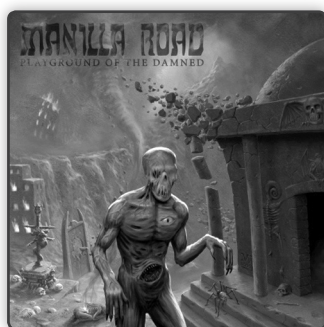
(Napalm, 2012)

I don't hide it. I love this band A LOT. Ever since their debut I have been a proud fan and supporter of this French Metal band and I was never disappointed by them, be it their albums, their live shows and their attitude most of all. "Army of the Damned" is the new, 5th studio album of the band after the great "The dark Crusade", which I think is their best album after their debut. At first listen, I was a little let down, since I got the feeling that the band got more euro-power sounding than before. It proved to be (partially) wrong, since this impression was created from the choruses mainly. As soon as I listened to it more carefully, I paid attention to the killer riffs, which sound very influenced by the "Pile of Skulls"/"Blazon Stone" LP's and the overall songwriting which impressed me. Yes, there is a more intense Power Metal feel throughout the album, but the band did it once more. This CD will certainly draw new fans to the band, as it's more accessible than before. In a sense it's the equivalent of "Unconditional Absolution" by METAL INQUISITOR in terms of approaching a bigger audience but remaining Metal as hell. I resent beforehand all stupidity that LONEWOLF have sold out as some may say. This band is one of the most REAL METAL bands out there. A last comment for the defenders of music originality. I have NEVER heard you complaining when hundreds of bands copied/copy IRON MAIDEN or METALLICA. Listen to them or your "original" monkey bands and leave Metal alone. And before someone dares say about the return of Rolf with a new album, for me there is no competition. The German galley has been sunk for years now, "forever we hail LONEWOLF!"

www.myspace.com/metalonewolf

Kostas Kaiilazis

Ps. Sorry for the abuse of space, but the promo department of Napalm Records should focus a little more on doing their job, promoting their bands. After e-mails, registrations etc. I am still NOT able to listen to this CD from the label. The solution? One of the dozens of downloading websites. If this how Metal labels promote their bands in times where information is so easy to share, so be it.



MANILLA ROAD "Playground of the Damned" CD/LP

(Shadow Kingdom/High Roller, 2011)

I have the opinion that the last great MANILLA ROAD album is "Atlantis Rising" and after this, some great songs here and there with the best as a whole being "Gates of Fire". This said, I guess I can proceed with the presentation of their new (13th!!!) studio

album. The production of the album is once again average, which puzzles me since Mark Shelton proved himself in the first albums of the reunion and especially on "Atlantis Rising". Truth be told though, people shouldn't judge from the rips "floating" online, since they don't do justice to the final result coming from the LP or CD played in your stereo. For me this may be the weakest album since the band's return in 2000. Excellent guitar work (did someone expect something else?) but the songs seem to go nowhere despite the relatively small duration. With each album, I think that the band (Mark Shelton) is losing its' inspiration, the magic that was evident throughout entire albums is now given in small doses, in some songs/parts here and there. I have the sense that there is a number of people that like the new stuff of the band, so as long as the band's efforts achieve their goal, I am fine with it. Is there someone reading these lines unfamiliar with this legendary band? I highly doubt it. MANILLA ROAD fans (like me) have already bought (and have their opinion) the album, as for the others that have heard of this band, or still haven't explored their discography, better check ALL past works of the band until 2001 and then should give the following albums a chance. The fact that Mark Shelton is still on the forefront making Heavy Metal music, is something that is beyond criticism (and totally admirable), but this doesn't change the idea I have for the album. Up the Hammers!

www.manillaroad.net

Kostas Kaiilazis



MELIAH RAGE "Dead to The World" CD

(Metal On Metal, 2011)

Doing this review was educational for me in a way. I never knew this power/thrash outfit was actually always active and I was left behind when they had released their first two very good albums. This said, it was hard to me to stomach the radical change in the band's style, maybe it would be easier for me if I had followed them throughout their entire career, but since I didn't, I can't face the gradual change as a fact and I can only compare the last album I had heard from them ("Solitary Solitude") with this one and believe me, the difference between them is huge. Those who had followed MELIAH RAGE might not notice anything from what I did, but this sounds way too modern for me. There are some good tunes, but overall I hear heavy distortion in guitars, effect on the vocals at times and useless growls at others and a totally modern American production, if you know what I mean. The songwriting sounds like commercial thrash and I don't listen to bands of this style to give a precise example. It seems new young bands try and achieve to play the same way thrash was played in the past while legendary bands try to follow modern sounding techniques and technology, something I can't really understand why. Again, if you are fans of the band, you have any reason to check the album and judge for yourselves, it might be great for you. As of me, I'd rather stick to my pure and slightly less modern or up-to-date metal.

www.meliahrage.com

Thanos Stafylarakis

MENACE "3 Track Promo" tape

(Private, 2012)

Another band coming from a small Greek town that plays standard thrash the old school way. Well, I'm not bored of such bands at all, as long as they deliver the goods and the dudes from Chania do it big time. Being totally inexperienced, their first demo/promo tape brings a smile to the real

no-nonsense thrasher with this as-80's-as-it gets raging thrash attack! So far I thought that bands couldn't play this kind of Metal due to the use of modern apparatus while recording, but thankfully this wasn't an issue at all and lots of bands make you feel the 80's were never gone! MENACE belong to this category of bands; raw, raging, furious and rabid compositions will wreck your necks. My favorite hellish "Blacklist" sounds to me as if POSSESSED tried to cover ANNIHILATOR's "Phantasmagoria" in their "Seven Churches" sessions with an early SLAYER atmosphere (due to the song's production mainly), to give you a clue! But I shouldn't depreciate pounding numbers such as "Fatal Trust" and "Mentally Ill" at all, by not mentioning their raw and razor-sharp power, equal in class of a thrasher at its primal grandeur. Generally, they incorporate US influences, reminding of early WHIPLASH or RAZOR with Bay Area-like backing-shouts, but my favorite part is when Stelis unleashes his hellish screams... Pure evil! Razor-sharp riffing and pounding drumming makes it a potent head banger you shouldn't miss, unless you think the only and real thrash metal is too loud for you and that it takes long to comb your long bright hair after some serious banging! Now off to record your full length guys!

elytheria_th@hotmail.gr

Thanos Stafylarakis

METALIAN "Rock Solid" LP/CD

(Heavy Artillery 2011)

It's very hopeful to see labels supporting new coming bands by releasing their recorded work both in CD and LP. Heavy Artillery has been a stepping stone for several such bands and led them in a way or another to signing a much better deal eventually. First that come to mind are ENFORCER and I believe some of their roster will do the leap anytime soon, with VEKTOR as the surest runner up! Anyways, this is a Canadian group that call themselves METALIAN and chose to be in the traditional Heavy Metal direction. They have some demos and a split album along with their first full length out of which I have no awareness thus far, so this is their third official output. Unfortunately, it didn't live up to my expectations. As solid and strong it may be as an album, no matter how blatantly clear the production is applied, the songwriting didn't do much for me. Even their strongest card which is the opener "Conquest" or the fast and furious "Motor Maniac" can't overcome the wall of mediocrity. The band is tight and their sound massive, yet the killer tune is missing from this album. I'm not trying to discover the most groundbreaking band or sound, by no means, but this will simply be another addition to the Great Book of Heavy Metal Releases along with the bunch of disinteresting albums. Vocalist reminds me so much of UPPER ECHELON's frontman (so you understand the Dickinson correlation) and the whole band pounds really hard indeed...I'll have to wait for their next step to form an integrated opinion, so far, their looming potentiality only arouse my hopes for a remarkable follow-up.

www.myspace.com/metaliantheband

Thanos Stafylarakis



MIDNIGHT PRIEST "Midnight Priest" CD/LP

(Stormspell-CD/The Forge-LP, 2011)

After the very good "The Priest is back" demo (2008) and "Rainha da Magia Negra" mini-CD (2009), the Portuguese Metallers return with a full length, once more from Stormspell Records. "Midnight Priest" is no different from the band's early works. I would say this time the IRON MAIDEN influences are

less (but still very obvious, check for example "Cidade Fantasma"), but there is a more personal touch in the songs which I hope to expand in the future. It took me two listenings to fully appreciate this album, but once I did, it ranked as one of my best for 2011. Mostly mid-paced with powerful riffs/vocals and sing-along choruses, along with some fast rippers found towards the end of the LP, namely "Triunfo do Aco" and "A Boleia Com O Diabo". 9 songs, 37 minutes, the way it must be, excellent and effective all the way. I can't but notice that "Feitiço Do Cabelado" sounds like an updated version of "Say it Again" by MARAUDER, the chorus melody is so alike! You must check this band if you haven't already done so. One of the best newcomers, they managed to impress us once more, well done guys! There is also a vinyl edition wonderfully done by The Forge Records. For further info, read the band's interview in this issue. Well done Portuguese bangers!

www.myspace.com/midnightpriest

Kostas Kailiazis



MILITIA "Strength And Honor" CD
(Scythe, 2012)

I had no idea Texan legends MILITIA were around. I was aware of the keen interest fans and collectors had shown over the years to "The Sybling" EP they had released back in 1986, which now reaches ridiculous prices on the premise you can find one offered and other than a few more recent European shows, I had no clue really that they were still active and in the process of recording a new album! At the sound of the news of a CD being released by MILITIA, to be honest, I was not sure what I should expect, as most of the past bands tend to record either crap or what they perceive as Heavy Metal music. Fortunately, MILITIA didn't actually change a lot in their style compared to the past; that much in fact that you could easily tell this is MILITIA from Texas by the first minute you play their disc! I'm not sure if the songs featured in it were written back in the 80's (apart from "Onslaught" which is an older tune for sure), I know though that the album is well worth the purchase! I've heard by some friends in the past-mainly those who never liked screamers or high-pitched vocalists- that they didn't like the otherworldly range of Mike Soliz's voice, I know others including myself- who have always liked the band. This is a great chance for MILITIA to appease the controversy on the vocals issue, since Mike's vocals still go sky high but with a rational moderation, while when he sings in lower ranges, he sounds like Halford more than he ever did before! The songs actually manifest some diversity overall; both speed Metal rippers and mid tempo power Metal crushers are included in the track-list and apart from a couple of songs that I consider different from the band's trademark style and diminish the final result a little bit, the whole album is a sheer pleasure! Production job sounds fine to these ears even though it is obviously more modern compared to their past and musicianship showcased along with the well written lyrics is something I should not omit; all these make me hopeful for an imminent appearance in Europe again and most of all, another killer album, just like this one. Your hats off and orders should be placed directly to the band's mail. I am glad they are back like that!

www.myspace.com/militiatexas

Thanos Stafylarakis



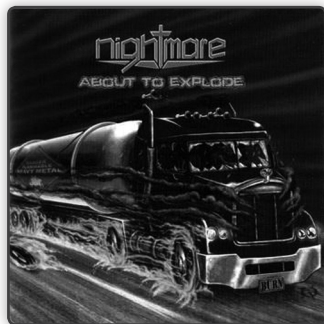
MORTAL THREAT "Psychotic Paralysis" CD

(Athens Thrash Attack, 2011)

I do not belong to those who say that Greek Metal bands are the best as far as traditional Metal goes, although the recent years the situation is so much improved that we are closed to that stage, however, when it comes to serious no-nonsense thrash Metal there's no fuckin' doubt the scene is packed with fantastic old school in your face thrashers that this whole Latin American and German beer drinking fun-thrash scourge can't even stand close! MORTAL THREAT belongs to the wave of bands that emerged almost simultaneously with the only purpose to wreck your necks! This is their debut CD after a two-track demo mixing their US/bay area thrash and early SACRED REICH influences with some inevitable German thrash elements, along with a discreet crossover feeling! All songs are arousing thrashers with great riffing and the storming drums of CONVIXION's own Manos K., whose participation permanence I can't verify at the moment. Lyrics again talk about always interesting social issues and if I had to find a flaw, that would be the vocals, that I get the feeling they sometimes lack or lose passion. I had seen the band in stunning action in the past and didn't get that feeling, so I guess it was recording inexperience or even chance? Overall a very good attempt that flows very smoothly due to its rather short length (close to 30 mins). Wait till you go to your next purchased CD when this one ends, as there's a hidden cover song on DISCHARGE's "Protest and Survive" stuffed in. All in all, a really good one guys!

www.myspace.com/mortalthreatgreece

Thanos Stafylarakis



NIGHTMARE "About To Explode" CD/LP

(Dirty Sound Records-CD/Heavy Forces-LP, 2010)

Another traditional Heavy Metal band has risen from the land that had been so hospitable for extreme old school thrash and death metal acts. Second attempt for these thrash-resistant Colombians that even though a good amount of speed is involved in their music, they never escaped the traditional norms. Six long years passed since their debut "High Speed Venom" was released and they come back delivering strong 80's oriented Heavy Metal, that sadly does nothing to me. I couldn't dig the album although I've listened to it quite a lot of times, I consider it merely generic and in a strictly approach uninspired. It has its moments, I enjoy each song when I hear it separately, but as a whole I think it lacks potency and that riveting touch that would apply duration in time to the album. "Friends of Hell" that starts the album is a sheer upbeat song and the track list varies from typical NWOBHM influenced cliché fillers to pounding head bangers, so you'd better listen before making up your mind.

www.myspace.com/111300107

Thanos Stafylarakis



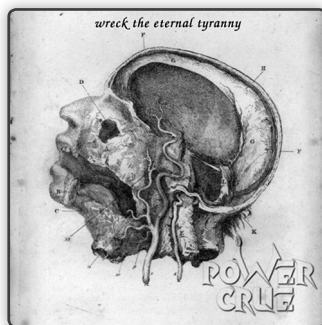
PORTRAIT "Crimen Laesae Majestatis Divinae" CD/2LP

(Metal Blade, 2011)

A few years ago and almost simultaneously, 3 bands emerged from the Swedish grounds, all dedicated to the 80's Metal cult and all started out with a remarkable debut. ENFORCER, IN SOLITUDE and PORTRAIT, all succeeded in making a strong name for themselves in the underground circuit and they all left promises for the future. If the timing was different, I'm not sure whether their route would be exactly the same, all I know though, is that the impact each one had in the underground separately helped the other with their widespread recognition and finally a deal with the big label! I'm the last one maybe to review PORTRAIT's album and there's probably nothing more to add to what's already been written. For those missing anything the music of MERCYFUL FATE firstly and KING DIAMOND afterwards conveyed, rejoice! Be skeptical no more and listen to a record that, I'll take the risk and make my prediction, will be the centerfold of any discussion in the far future, when fans will mention this album next to "Melissa", "Don't Break The Oath" and "Abigail". I would swear that this album will remain as a classic of the genre. Unlike their crushing debut, they appear with a new singer and this time sounding more like KING DIAMOND rather than MERCYFUL FATE. Consisting of eight long songs, this reaper is a guaranteed head banger! The atmosphere is haunting throughout the entire record and the inflammatory guitar duo never stops the dual axe attack, in the Denner/Shermann/LaRoque fashion. For those who got acquainted with this band by their 7" single last year, should still check them out, as this could be taken as an "adversity", not because it is a low quality single, but since it is not representative of their style and capabilities, I take it as an experiment or maybe leftovers that should be released and didn't fit their albums/image/style. As of now, I try to avoid thinking how the next album would sound like. Despite the blatant similarity with their major influence, this is the exception to the rule that combined with their personal touch, they are stripped off the "copy" band moniker, they don't deserve it really. Nevertheless, an album is granted with triumph when the fans feel that it can stand the test of time and rest assured, there will come a time that you will see yourself listening to this gem over and over again in 20 years from now, just like you do with the eternal classics!

www.portraitband.se

Thanos Stafylarakis



POWER CRUE "Wreck The Eternal Tyrant" CD

(Lighten The Underground, 2012)

This album was recorded in 2011 but released next year, thus it is registered with this different release date! POWER CRUE is no news in the worldwide Metal scene. Being one of the oldest active bands in Greece,

they earned legendary status more than a decade ago, when they had their debut album out after a couple of demo tapes in the early 90's. "Sign of Rage" is allegedly a no nonsense pure Heavy Metal rager and one of the finest tokens in Heavy Metal the Greek scene has ever offered! In this 16 year hiatus that intervened their debut and this new offering, the band had only 2 more albums out, in 1999 and 2005 respectively and although they were good enough to memorialize, they never reached the grandeur of "Sign Of Rage"! Musically they offered nothing less than well done Euro Heavy Metal with ACCEPT influences and a shot of early RUNNING WILD at times with drummer extraordinaire Aggelos Tsoukalas pounding hard and a killer imposing vocalist forcing you to bang your head! When I got this CD I thought I knew what I was about to hear, I had also seen them perform with their most recent singer but as he was a more high pitched and melodic vocalist, I never thought he was a good fit for the band. I was also warned for their new frontman, Kostas Tokas, that he is not of the rough-and-powerful type also, so I couldn't really imagine how they would sound like. Blast! Rest assured this is one of the best Greek releases that showed up the last few years! Everything sounds so professional, unlike many Greek bands, the production job, the new singer, the powerful riffs, new drummer is a true "animal" (exactly as his nickname indicates) behind his drum set, they seem to pull everything off! The album kicks-off in a rabid manner and won't cool off till it almost reaches the last songs, giving you a break for a short breath; you will bang your head like there's no tomorrow. Furthermore, it is not hard to hear that the band's playing is so much improved, the songs sound intricate compared to their straight-forward past without a single hint of progressive-ness whatsoever. All songs vary from great to killer, with my personal favorite being "Mental Slavery", which is one of the best songs ever written from a Greek band! A total Metal mayhem that will destroy you no doubt! I'm very satisfied the band could return to their "Sign of Rage" high standards and even though these two albums don't have much in common, I assume "Wreck the Eternal Tyrant" will rather please you nevertheless.

www.myspace.com/powercrue

Thanos Stafylarakis



PREDATORY VIOLENCE "Hate Nation" CD

(Killer Metal, 2010)

Things couldn't turn out worse than that! I love thrash metal, but only as it was played in the 80's and always with a natural non-triggered sound! These Germans here play the ultimate form of modern thrash metal the way it was played when a similar wave of thrash bands broke out in the mid-90's; which I do not reckon as genuine thrash metal at all, so I don't know what to call it. Distorted vocals, heavy distortion in the guitars and a too modern production job and a cool drawn (at least) cover art, which is everything that I disdain! I never listened to this kind of music, so there are no references that I can mention, maybe all the bands from the aforementioned wave of thrash would be a sufficient reference. Traditional guys should avoid it, if you have no such problems as my stupid head try it yourselves.

www.predatory-violence.com

Thanos Stafylarakis

PRIMORDIAL



REDEMPTION AT THE PURITAN'S HAND

PRIMORDIAL "Redemption at the Puritan's Hand" CD/2LP

(Metal Blade, 2011)

If someone told me a few years back that there would come a day that I wasn't only going to buy a new PRIMORDIAL LP, but I would also hail it as one of the year's best releases I would suggest him to go to a doctor. I was introduced to the band around 2008, after they played in Greece (bad timing since the one time I got to see them after 2008, some problems prevented them from giving a correct-if at all concert). I got their then "new" album, "To the Nameless Dead" after listening to a song and the recommendation of a friend. I was hooked ever since. So, I was very anxious to listen to this new album. And I was not disappointed, since the band delivered what was expected and maybe more. Those that have (heard) their previous two albums know what to expect. Epic Doom Metal, that to my mind brings "The Silent Enigma"-period ANATHEMA, CANDYMASS and DOOMSWORD. The Epic element is very intense, but through a more melancholic point of view. I have played this album so much during my summer time in the Army and in my opinion could be their best. I know most friends of mine rate their previous ("To the Nameless Dead") of "The Gathering Wilderness" (2005) higher. I don't know, maybe it has to do with the impressive number of times I have heard this album, time will tell. Now, this is how I see it. Some songs simply can't be rivaled, as the majestic "Mouth of Judas", the highlight of the album, a Hymn that is as good as "Coffin Ships" from their "Gathering Wilderness" LP, "Lain with the Wolf" or "No Grave deep Enough". The band's lyrics are once more very interesting, although I could do without "The Black Hundred" (what's the next step, nazi propaganda?! and the layout/packaging of the 2LP is fantastic. A necessary buy for fans of the above mentioned bands, the others can also check the band's previous LPs. Looks like listening to MANILLA ROAD, WARLORD and MANOWAR and writing lyrics about dragons doesn't automatically qualify you as Epic Metal. PRIMORDIAL puts to shame many of these so-called "epic metal" bands, simple as that.

www.primordialweb.com

Kostas Kailiazis



RAMPART "A Tale To Cold" tape-EP

(Inferno Records, 2011)

It's nice to witness the gradual improving of this band, from their very first demo CD-R "Warrior" to their full-length "Voices Of Wilderness" (again on Inferno records) to this cassette EP, they have advanced both as

players and as songwriters, a fact proving nothing less but hard work! Here is a three track MC only single (soon on CD as well) and all tracks are new and exclusive. All you are about to hear is very well conducted Euro Power Metal with references to GAMMA RAY with Maria's vocals better adjusted to the music and taking a leading role, bringing to mind at times the mighty Jutta from ZED YAGO! Guitar parts are awesome and in general I believe the band has found its identity and the direction they should follow songwriting-wise, compared to their previous efforts. "Stronghold Of The Sun" starts in a bit modern way, but don't be misled, after a while you realize the band is not at all a minion of The Established of the Modern Ones. All three tracks are worthwhile and the limitation of 100 copies of this tape makes its purchase even more urgent.

www.myspace.com/rampartbb

Thanos Stafylarakis



RAZORWYRE "Another Dimension" LP/CD

(Underground Power/Inferno, 2012)

Just in time for this issue's deadline, a link appeared in our mailboxes from our friend Helle. A link to download the un-mastered debut album of RAZORWYRE. They hail from New Zealand and so far they have released a demo-CD (also on tape) in 2010, which you can find and download through their website. The style of the band is diverse and ranges from mid tempo songs, to fast-paced ones (almost power/speed like) or epic-oriented tracks. Having listened to this album A LOT, I can say that it's a great album. Not all songs are as killer, but there is a certain (very high) level in "Another Dimension", which qualifies this album as a 2012 top albums contender. I can't wait to listen to the finished version and hold the LP in my hands. Congratulations!

www.razorwyreband.com

Kostas Kailiazis



REVENGE "Metal is: Addiction and Obsession" CD/LP

(Private/Floga, 2011)

What a scorcher! I was familiar with the band's name, but was under the impression that they were a thrash band, one of the countless that can be found in Latin America. I was sooo wrong. After the recommendation of a friend I gave this CD a chance. And I was happy to do so, since I discovered a band that I have been missing and delivers the goods in an excellent way, release after release. To my ears they sound like an "answer" to our own CONVIXION but with a less thrashy approach. This translates to relentless headbanging, fast and furious songs and a singer shouting with all his strength and heart. I know that this style seems (and most probably is) over-saturated nowadays, but I think REVENGE have a lot to offer. Don't make the same mistake I did, this is one of the best bands in this whole revival of 80's Speed Metal. I declare that I have "officially"

become a fan and will look more closely to the band. Well done!

www.myspace.com/revengecol

Kostas Kailiazis



RIOT "Immortal Soul" CD/2LP

(SPV, 2011)

Soon after RIOT's latest album, shocking news of mastermind's Mark Reale health problems followed by his untimely loss shook the Metal world. One of the prime forces in the creation of what was called NWOAHM is no more, leaving us with the sweet memory of what this talented and pioneering guitarist had the time to do and offer and the countless bands he had influenced, both as a player and as a songwriter, honor his offering with their music as the only genuine tribute to a great musician. This review has no purpose to turn into a requiem, but none was aware of his disease and the news came about suddenly. LONG LIVE ETERNALLY in our hearts with your music, the only priceless heritage left to your fans! Going to the album, I won't say much, at first I didn't like how the band copied and used almost unchanged parts off "Thundersteel", but after a while I really dug it. It is true, it is not very innovative and a tad repetitive, but getting back together with the "Thundersteel" line up worked fine for the band and released another fine album. Tony Moore is still in great shape and Mike Flyntz, who recorded almost all guitar parts due to Mark's disease, is a joy for our ears and for the ambitious guitar player to be! Structure of the album is so much relevant and similar to their 1988 classic, varying from power speedsters to melodic or even mellow and slightly commercial Heavy Metal reapers, exactly as you hear in "Thundersteel". What can I say, this album is great, life isn't always!

www.riotrockcity.com/

Thanos Stafylarakis

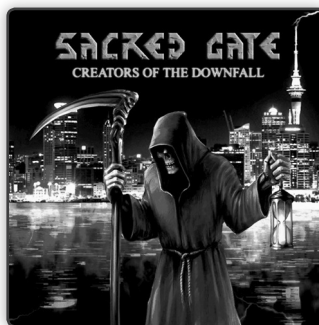
ROARBACK "Face The Sun" EP-CD

(Private, 2011)

This EP is registered as a demo by the band and it rather won't please the average reader of the 'zine. ROARBACK play a type of modern thrash/death metal with resemblance to the latest later SEPULTURA, "Dreams You Dread" BENEDICTION and DEATH or SLAYER at times. I can't stop surprising myself, as I found some good moments among the more dull ones. Not much impressed but not the appropriate one to talk about it as well.

<http://roarback.bandcamp.com/>

Thanos Stafylarakis



SACRED GATE "Creators Of The Downfall" mini-CD

(Private, 2011)

This CD was sent to us by guitarist Niko and we have to wholeheartedly thank him for showing interest in our zine! Reading the

song titles upon receipt of their CD (while listening to the music, I was sure there was something I was familiar with in this band. BINGO! Remember MADE OF IRON from Germany? Well, guitarist Niko Nikolaidis and vocalist Jim Over were both in MADE OF IRON and a while past their disbanding they formed SACRED GATE. What you are about to hear spinning this CD is robust traditional Heavy Metal with a "polished" production job and the necessary IRON MAIDEN influences that they carried along from their previous band appearance. The CD features 3 studio and 3 live tracks (with a very good sound, one of them also known from their MADE OF IRON days), dressed with lots of melodic riffs and solos and a powerful vocal performance by Mr. Over, who by the way is not trying to be another Dickinson copy! I think the band is worth a listen, they are definitely not the most innovative writers around, but they have several great ideas, especially in some bridges and choruses that come about catchy as hell! Songs like "Path To Glory" and "Burning Wings" are a delight for any metal fan. On the other hand, those who already liked MADEE OF IRON, doubt no more about SACRED GATE as the music recorded by both bands is more or less similar. Contact the band to purchase this mini-CD at their website, as they should be preparing their full-length "When Eternity Ends" at the moment...

www.sacredgate.net

Thanos Stafylarakis



SANCTUAIRE "L'Empreinte De Lucifer" CD

(Emanes Metal, 2011)

What the hell is this, haha, have mercy on me! Prepare to face a wicked nightmare from the fathomless depths of hell interpreted in the utmost musical outcome! This French armada displays a unique masterpiece of darkest steel that will haunt you forever. I mean, my French are worse than my Chinese maybe, but it's not hard to realize that this gem is a tribute to the occult. After the devastating news of MALEDICTION's disbanding, this is the next best thing, if not on par with them. There are a lot in common with the dark parts met in MALEDICTION and HIGH POWER, so if you add an amalgamation of a wide range of their influences and that you can hear anything from punk to thrashing riffs well hidden and mixed with otherworldly melodies, you know what SANCTUAIRE is all about. I would even risk saying that this will be mentioned among the best French heavy metal releases of all time. 2011 was definitely one of the very best years in Metal and this album is here to prove it. I look up to them for making a great album with the appropriate dark production that sounds weak at first, but with a closer "hear" you perceive it is perfect for the atmosphere and cohesion of this venture! As 80's as it can get, thank you Laurent for sending this disc to us, I hope people won't be fool enough to miss this one!

www.myspace.com/sanctuaireforce

Thanos Stafylarakis



SATAN'S HOST "By the hands of the Devil" CD/2LP

(Moribund Cult/High Roller, 2011)

I really can't get how Harry's past claims about Satan Patrick and his past with SATAN'S HOST in general justify this new release and the ones that may follow (without even mentioning how the JAG PANZER story ended). Time will tell, so I stop here, since it may get over a reviews' "boundaries". I guess most underground freaks will be familiar with "Metal from Hell", the band's debut LP from 1986. I guess no one expected a "Metal from Hell" part II, 26 years after. BUT, had this album been recorded nowadays, I guess this is how it would sound, with Harry Conklin in one of his best vocal deliveries for many years now. Songs like "Shades of the Unlight", "Black Hilted Knife" and "Fallen Angel" (sounds familiar? It is, at least parts of it) are instant Classics for me. Everything else is also on very high levels, production, cover etc. There is also a bonus track, "Norwegian Woods" from THE BEATLES with changed lyrics. LP maniacs will have the chance to listen to another bonus track as well, the ANIMALS (well, sort of...) cover "House of the Rising Sun", taken from the band's "Midnight Winds" demo/sessions. I understand that some fans of the debut may not like this album as I did, so listen and judge. If you like the idea of a little more modern sounding "Metal from Hell", or generally a black/power Metal mix with brilliant vocals, get this one.

www.satanshost.com

Kostas Kailiazis



SPELLCASTER "Under the Spell" LP/CD

(Heavy Artillery, 2011)

Full length debut for this Portland based quintet after their last year's promising EP that let me down in a way. It is very rare for me to hear an album in which everything seems to reach very high quality standards, albeit the performance of one member only could depreciate the entire venture, unless this member is the singer, which is one of the most crucial spots in a Power Metal act. I'm spoiled with all those fantastic US singers and I'm probably stricter with them than any other time, as I have high expectations. The band appears solid and tight and the robust production job seems to elevate their potent songwriting, this is why I believe the frontman should dominate the songs. He is better in the thrasher parts, but the majority of the Power Metal content is not given the justice they deserve. Of course, this doesn't make it a bad album whatsoever, not at all. There are some really ripping kuts in here that can only make me foresee a bright future to come, considering the young of their age. Since they are hanging in the balance between their personal sound and their influences, I can do nothing else than keep my fingers crossed!

www.myspace.com/spellcaster123

Thanos Stafylarakis

SKOGEN "Forbannet Inn Isolation's Stein" CD

(Private, 2010)

SKOGEN is a hellish Black Metal band from Greece and this is their first private release. I can't say much about it, nor can I evaluate or compare it with other Black Metal bands and suggest them to the likes of anyone, but since I was given this CD by my friend and drummer Nyarlathotep, I ought to present it here. The difficult part is not only that I know shit about this specific genre, but add my general aversion to it. So I'll restrain this given space to the band's salute to "old school black cult metal" which would give a token of their direction to the connoisseurs. Besides, many of you are probably more open minded and receptive to the extremes, unlike my stubborn self. The logo is unreadable also, if that helps! Positive should be considered the fact that I could listen to the whole CD without any serious problems, anyway, the use of natural instruments while recording the album should be a reason for praise. Contact the band to get a remaining copy of the total 500!

www.myspace.com/skogen666

Thanos Stafylarakis



SKULLFIST "Head Of The Pack" CD/LP

(Noise Art, 2011)

Get the fuck outta here! I never saw that coming! All of you sworn 80's Metal lovers go buy this album immediately. This is the Canadian fist-in-the-face answer to ENFORCER and anyone vintage wannabe out there. Seriously, this is one of the very best albums in this comeback style my ears have gladly received! I liked their previous effort but this was nothing I ever expected. NWOBHM influenced US Metal with a fantastic eunuch vocalist, pounding rhythm section and searing guitar work, the whole album slays from start to finish with only a couple of good tracks among the brilliant rest of the song list! Dominant Di'Anno era MAIDEN, JAGUAR and other early British elements mixed in the same bowl with an essential dose of US Metal songwriting potency, a necessary touch of old ANVIL and the appropriate commercial edge (as heard in GLACIER, LEATHERWOLF, OBSESSION and so on) US bands could only present without deviating a single bit from their power, imposingness, charm and pudence, unlike glam and sleazy sleaze bands of the time. Every single song is a sing-along fist held high hymn with backing shouts and catchy as hell choruses and at last, a production job perfectly suitable for the style. I'm not talking bullshit here, this is on par with ENFORCER's "Diamonds", at least you'll get the exact same feeling listening to it. There's so much energy deriving from this recording and the vocal melody lines are...Oh my, if they didn't steal the master tapes off an old Canadian band and released "Head Of The Pack" under their name, we are talking about an album that could be easily mistaken for a 1987 release! I even liked the cliché titles and everything, I mean, year 2011 was great! No false Metal, get the fuck away from me!!

www.myspace.com/skullfistfed

Thanos Stafylarakis



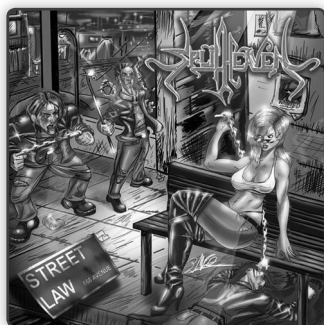
SPIDKILZ "The Ultra Demo" demo-CD/tape

(Private/Inferno, 2011)

Once a Metal head, always a Metal head. Of course this isn't de facto the case, but with Elisa "Over" it is I guess. After WHITE SKULL's split, she picked her fellow Italians and formed SPIDKILZ to continue doing what she obviously loved the most, serve her Heavy Metal lust! SPIDKILZ have nothing to do stylistically with WHITE SKULL, we are talking about a killer speed/thrash demo which is as "Ultra" great as it can get. All five songs constituting the demo transmit a kind of attitude and courage often met in the past thrash legends and is unfortunately missing nowadays! The backing shouts in the choruses will put you to the wall for good, they are so vigorous that you can feel it in your veins, you want to turn everything around you into a mosh-pit. I even sometimes get the impression I'm listening to a band similar to the great German WARDANCE. Just read the titles; "Fear Of Death", "I Will Crush you" insinuate the upcoming mayhem while my favorite "Fashion" is a head banger guaranteed! There's not a bad moment in this demo really and the coating of the cake is the Power Metal ballad-esque "The Distance" that leaves you with a promise of even better things to come with their imminent full-length. I will be definitely one of those who will lust for it. A huge thumbs up!

www.spidkiz.com

Thanos Stafylarakis



SPLIT HEAVEN "Street Law" CD

(Pure Steel, 2011)

Mexican sensation SPLIT HEAVEN strike back with their 3rd official release, establishing themselves as the most notable purveyors of steel from the land of the Aztecs, along with VOLTAX of course. In contrast to the latter, these guys here deliver more US sounding traditional Heavy Metal with speed outbursts and another eunuch frontman, whose screams can haunt you immensely! "Street Law" is a huge leap from "Psycho Samurai". Unfortunately I haven't heard their first album, but I can state with excess certainty that this is one of my favorite albums released in 2011 since the song-list includes several tracks of which equal I hadn't heard for many-many years! "Street Law" can be deemed as the transitional recording between "Only Time Will Tell" and "Digital Dictator", this is the feeling I get while the album spins on my player! Robust and vigorous vocals, guitar frets on fire and double bass drumming is what you get and an unmatched potency in an element that had vanished together with the use of complexity over simplicity in Heavy Metal music, which is transmissibility! SPLIT HEAVEN songs stick to your mind from the very first listen and it doesn't need more than that to understand songs as "Servants of the Night", "Time Warrior" and the ultimate speed Metal hymn "The Obscure" need more than talent and effort to be pulled off! I know this year's SPLIT

HEAVEN and SKULLFIST albums will torture my stereo and ears for a long time now and many years from now, what a wonderful torture indeed!

www.splitheaven.net

Thanos Stafylarakis



STONEWALL "Victims of Evil" CD

(My Graveyard, 2011)

Another new Italian band, another My Graveyard release. This Italian label seems to have focused a little more as most of their last releases are very good with the debut of STONEWALL being another example. Imagine a mix of very early (and killer) STRATOVARIUS (on the melodies) and HELLOWEEN, OMEN "filtered" through IRONSWORD (guitar-wise) plus US Metal touches and this is "Victims of Evil". Strange combination, I know, but these are the first bands that come in mind. The production is very good as are the vocals of the band. The CD includes 7 songs (plus a cover) with "Victims of Evil" and "Feel my Blade" being the best. The others are also good, with one-two fillers. STONEWALL shows great potential on this release and I am looking forward to their new album. Check them out, I am sure that most of you will not regret it. What I wanted was more songs in the vein of the two I mentioned above. Allow me a few comments for the cover which was originally written by Canada's SWORD ("F.T.W." from the "Metalized" LP), as I found it a great and quite unusual choice, congratulations for it.

www.myspace.com/stonewallheavymetal

Kostas Kailiazis

STORM WARNING "Storm Warning" demo-CDR

(Private, 2011)

This is the first appearance for these young Germans striking with a three song demo. Nothing impressive so far, the first track is a rather generic unnoticeable track with not much to offer. Second track, "Thunder in the Night" is my favorite and although you won't face an unexpected and unsurpassable surprise, there is something charming in this song that captured me almost at once! "Storm Warning" is the last song and this is also a pretty good typical Heavy Metal tune. Overall, the guys are obviously together for a while, so it takes some time to tighten as a band and working overtime can bring satisfactory results for them. Improved playing, maturity and the appropriate heavy metal passion can do wonders and simply boost their songwriting and eventually do this traditional metal outfit justice. Promising.

www.myspace.com/storm.warning

Thanos Stafylarakis



STORMHUNTER "Crime And Punishment" CD

(Emanes Metal, 2011)

Second full length for this German outfit and the first one I hear, but I wasn't really impressed. The album is well done, good songs, good playing and a nice production, but the style sounds a bit trite to my ears and I wouldn't care to listen to more bands of this specific style. STORMHUNTER play something similar to what LONEWOLF and early STORMWARRIOR had offered and this is why I'm not crazy about it. I like both aforementioned bands and I would lie if I say this album is not nice, but in some cases too much is enough. Fans of LONEWOLF, STORMWARRIOR and the RUNNING WILD and HELLOWEEN parts found in these acts, do not hesitate to check this album as I'm sure you will love it; personally I find it good but not outstanding!

www.myspace.com/stormhuntermetal

Thanos Stafylarakis

STORMWARRIOR "Heathen Warrior" CD/LP

(Massacre, 2011)

This is the latest recording of this popular now Teutonic Metal outfit and it's as boring as any other trite HELLOWEEN/BLIND GUARDIAN/RUNNING WILD sounding band. Actually, I see little relation to the band that once used the politically correct slogan "If it's not in your blood you will never understand". Record by record, I see they adopted a more acceptable and meretricious typical German Metal style, maybe they are aiming at the Japanese market, who knows. This slight gradual softness is minimal from one album to the next, but makes a huge gap in a first-days-to-today comparison. I didn't even like the production job. Not too excited by this generally useless release, boring and dull with a few good moments in it!

www.stormwarrior.de

Thanos Stafylarakis



STRIKELIGHT "Taste my Attack" CD

(Iron on Iron/No Remorse, 2011)

The Athenian NWOBHM-influenced quintet strikes back after a CD-single released in 2007. Some line-up changes and difficulties prevented their 2nd album to be released sooner, but here it is. Let me start by the cover, which I find average. Production is good but could have been better I think, but enough with the technical details, the most important thing is the music. STRIKELIGHT are dedicated NWOBHM fans and this shows in their music without sounding rip-offs or anything. My favorite songs are: "Taste my Attack", a very good fast-paced tune with excellent vocal melodies, "Youthful Fire", with a killer middle section/solo where the bass shines and "Asmodeus' Rage". One of the problems is that there are some fillers here, like "Heavy Metal Strike", "My living Hell" (the excellent solo sounds out of place on this average track) and "Hellbiker's Tale" that ruin the overall impression. My second complaint has to do with the vocals that sound very weak (something that is more evident on live performances of the band). Maybe the previous years had a negative effect on the band, but I am sure that they can come up with a greater album, more in the vein of the debut and even better. A resume: This new effort is way inferior to the debut in my opinion, which was a very good CD. If you are unfamiliar with the band, better get their debut CD and then you can decide if this 2nd effort is for you. Early IRON MAIDEN, TOKYO BLADE and NWOBHM fans in general should check this band, they are WAY better than most of the retro-crap out there.

www.strikelight.net

Kostas Kailiazis



TESTOR "Animal Killstinct" CD

(Killer Metal, 2011)

This band right here is supposed to be one of the most renowned in the later Polish scene, starting in the early 90's with a pretty long bio. However, they shouldn't have been so productive in terms of albums released and debuting in 1996, this is their 4th CD of modern modern thrash metal. Well, I don't count this style as thrash metal, this is well arranged and the players are more than fine, but what later TESTAMENT and early 90's METALLICA in their heaviest fantasies and PANTERA in their transition had showcased has nothing to do with the thrash metal that I know of! Labeling is vain anyway, so you got my point as much as you got theirs. This being said, I have to mention again that I can't write a sensible and objective review about the album, since the utterly modern approach in the production, in their playing and style really puts me off and wouldn't give justice to the band. I know for sure though that if you expect to hear some good old school music, this is not for you. I believe this should be a very good release for anyone who can stand a modern digital aggressive production and style; the players are great and everything is very well done in this CD, but only for fans of this style.

www.testorband.com

Thanos Stafylarakis

THE ORDER OF CHAOS "Burn these Dreams" CD

(Killer Metal, 2011)

I haven't heard the name of this female-fronted quintet coming from Canada, which also has a self released CD in 2009. Before starting looking for it, spend a few minutes to look through this review. It may save you some time. Their music is a mix of modern "thrash metal" and the more melodic sound of current US "metal" bands. The female vocals show a diversity, but it doesn't work for me since I don't like neither Amanda's angry singing, nor her more melodic delivery. I don't think this would be a CD most people reading this fanzine would enjoy, but you never know!

www.orderofchaos.ca

Kostas Kailiazis



THELEMITE "Slave To Desire" promo-CD

(Private, 2012)

Here we present a new Greek band that releases this promo disc as a precursor to their first full length, which is on the works I guess right now. This is also my first touch with this band and I have to thank them for sending us their promo material. The disc contains 5 originals and a cover on JUDAS PRIEST's version of "Diamonds And Rust", rather than Baez's original version; well, we have all more or less attached the song with the PRIESTS, so it's hard to avoid the connection!

Anyways, THELEMITE deliver a very melodic heavy/power metal mix heavily influenced by MALMSTEEN and his likes and despite their own statements in their bio that their music is "a mixture of classic heavy, power, doom with a modern gothic atmosphere and sound", I can't hear anything Doom in here, other than a few BLACK SABBATH riffs in a couple of their songs. However, if you take in mind the extensive use of keys throughout the entire album, the SABBATH influence comes about as odd, while keys fit better in their melodic direction. Vocals and musicianship are good in general, the first reminding of a later Ozzy at times, which makes it an enjoyable result, but I'm not sure I would stand listening to an entire album to be honest, not for several times, as this is not the style I prefer. Especially since it is not clear yet what to expect in a 12 song album; reviewing this promo, we have 2 MALMSTEEN-esque songs, 2 SABBATH-esque ones, a cover song and the totally modern "Razor tears" which makes the picture quite blur. I wasn't crazy about THELEMITE to sum up, if they change something in their production of the album, then we talk again.

thelemiteband@yahoo.gr

Thanos Stafylarakis



TRIAL "The Primordial Temple" CD

(The Coffin Slave, 2012)

I was quite apprehensive on the promulgation of the news of another MERCYFUL FATE worship album from Sweden. I never really liked the way "waves" inflated in music when the features of the phenomenon that led to procreation focus on country of origin, conducted style and the mass of this "wave". Moreover, the precocity of a movement may result in its early decadence and the same goes for the whole 80's tried and true movement that has lately erupted. Luckily, my falter proved wrong once I played this CD for the second time. Yes, they are from Sweden, yes they are MERCYFUL FATE influenced and yes, they came after the sensational PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE, but I have no problem at all listening to 3 fantastic albums either they come from the same band, or from 3 different ones, it's exactly the same for me, as long as they meet my quality standards! Of course, I mean no implication that they copy any of the aforementioned Swedish metal purveyors and all of you connoisseurs can spot the difference among them. Their IRON MAIDEN/MERCYFUL FATE influence is dominant and never taking over their personal style, but they didn't bite it and use another KING DIAMOND sounding singer, so I would rather make a WOLF (Sweden) comparison instead. Killer tracks come one after the other in a successive intensity, leaving you no time to rest, with the lyrics exploring once again the occult fields. This is a fucking grower with smokin' leads, this is how it worked for me, as I wasn't much impressed till I listened to it more carefully! I'm shitting my pants at the thought that if PORTRAIT and IN SOLITUDE released two monumental records after their fantastic debuts, what's to expect from these guys here in their sophomore? A MUST, hands down!

www.myspace.com/trialheavymetal

Thanos Stafylarakis

TUGSTEN AXE "Tugsten Axe" demo tape

(Private, 2011)

Obscure and weird traditional Heavy Metal by the Swedish act that decided to release their first demo on tape exclusively. This reflects how vintage they wanted to keep everything in the band, something which I eventually fancy! I mean, it took me a few

times till I really decided that I like their stuff and this alone adds a charming perspective to their music. The production job, songwriting and how songs are conducted manifest their underground intentions and references can be found in early GOTHAM CITY and other Swedish acts of the first wave, excluding anything too melodic, polished or overqualified. Commercial elements are present also in some of the four tracks included in the demo tape, but always in the underground and old school sense of the word "commercial", which is fine by me! Good and peculiar stuff all in all, nothing like what you have listened to before lately and strictly for the early 80's European sound nostalgic.

www.myspace.com/tungstenaxe

Thanos Stafylarakis



TWISTED TOWER DIRE "Make It Dark" LP/CD

(Cruz Del Sur, 2011)

Another one to add to the most expected list of albums by fans. TWISTED TOWER DIRE return after the untimely loss of Tony Taylor with Johnny Aune handling the vocs, with the hard task to replace one of the most respected singers of the NWOAHM movement. First of all, the vinyl press gives justice to the brilliant cover art, which is accompanied by a comic-like depiction of the band on the back cover, as well as an 8-page lyric sheet with a drawing representing every song's lyrical content, making the overall package look beautiful. But I'm afraid that's the most beautiful feature in this release. It's not that the album is bad, not at all, but it starts in the best possible way and when the listener reaches a climax, this is where a vertical drop of quality begins. The entire side A kicks ass, it's so vigorous, full of melodic twin leads, maybe a tad more melodic than they ever were, but that's not my main problem. Neither the short duration of the album is. What I found most irritating was that I got the impression that they turned to something more commercial and uninspired. Side B presents some out loud fillers, namely the tolerable "The Only Way" and the almost abominable "Torture Torture", ruining brutally an overall decent effort. I enjoyed the album, besides the ups and downs, but that's just about it, not more, not less, as there's nothing you will never forget other than some short and catchy melodies.

www.twistedtowerdire.com

Thanos Stafylarakis



TYRANEX "Extermination Has Begun" CD

(Inferno, 2011)

Another one from Sweden, this time not the common and expected MERCYFUL FATE remake but a furious speed Metal assault with rabid Linnea Landstedt handling the yodels and believe me, she is so damn convincing! Inferno records invested in this new-coming Swedish trio (quartet for the recording) and

I believe they've done the job right in return. Clearly impressed by the legendary German maniacs that ruled in the second half of the 80's, combined with a melodic riff-storm, this album breaks the speed limits and it won't stop till song No.5 ("None so Cruel"), where it pauses for a while, to burst out again with a head banging motivator heard on "Tortmentor". SLAYER and DESTRUCTION are abundantly honored as well as early METALLICA at times, "Extermination Has Begun" is overwhelmed by a vibe so strong, that you'll notice your leg shaking all the way through along the spinning of the disc! A delight to every speedster's ears!

www.tyranax.net

Thanos Stafylarakis

UNBLESSSED "The Devil's Fifth" LP

(Steel Legacy, 2011)

It only took a mere 19 year's time for the Nevada trio to release their second full length, as a quartet this time with the addition of young guitarist Brian Tharas. Of course, they had to cope with enormous problems and impediments throughout this period, but it's the result that matters, don't they say? The inaugural kick was the self titled private CD which is already known among collectors and has been re-issued both in CD and LP format, so it's available and obtainable for anyone to reach! The band got themselves together and even though they were separated in all four corners of the USA, this wasn't a desisting factor for the band to finally record this album. In "Devil's Fifth", which was produced by guitarist Chris Brekke, the band won't deviate from their trademark sound as heard in "Unblessed", but time seems to have softened them a little bit. The music is hardly reminiscent to the in-your-face Power Metal style of their debut, turned into a more melodic Power/Heavy Metal style, with a couple more ballads included in the song list, but I believe the guitar work is very much improved in this one compared to their first album. Don't get me wrong, this is no lounge music here, the songs are still heavy, mid-paced and atmospheric, besides, UNBLESSSED never were the typical double-bass drumming holocaust kind of band. But the increase in number of ballads included made the album sound milder! I shouldn't forget to mention the vocal performance of James Peterson who sounds as if time was so kind to him! The band is mistaken for a Xian Metal band, besides, their lyrics are not all about Christianity even though they never concealed their religious preferences! All in all, if you try to compare the sophomore with the debut, you won't be driven to a clear conclusion, they are two different albums. I would rate it below "Unblessed", but now that I hear it as a single release, I start to like it more and more over time. If you are more into the pure US Power Metal style, listen to this album first and then move to the debut, this one really deserves a chance on an equal footing. I think there should be a CD release as well sooner or later. Stay tuned!

www.myspace.com/officialunblessed

Thanos Stafylarakis



VALIDOR "In Blood in Battle" CD

(Eat Metal, 2011)

Last year we had a track from this new Greek band in our compilation. I would like if I said this was one of my favorite tracks in this CD. Things changed as soon as I decided to buy the CD and give them a chance hearing all these positive comments from friends. And as usual (haha), I was proved wrong, since "In Blood in Battle" is a great Epic Metal CD drawing influences from bands like BATHORY, IRONSWORD, AIRGED LAMH with a very

raw approach. The production could be better, but as far as the band's performance this is something beyond criticism as the driving force is passion and the goal to achieve the most Epic atmosphere possible. The great booklet is a bonus. If you have been tempted, get it at once, it will grant you hours of listening pleasure and headbanging!

www.myspace.com/validor_greece

Kostas Kailiazis

V/A "All fear the Axeman" CD

(My Graveyard, 2012)

Things are easy. This CD is BAD, one of the finest examples that prove that you don't have to simply like a band to make a cover version. Or maybe making a childish cover for our CD and hope OMEN fans and friends of the bands buy enough copies to make even is the trick? The production is also BAD, how did a self-respecting Metal label with some great releases so far and bands with official releases under their belt tolerate this? And I don't want to hear about "raw" productions to "revive" the feeling of the band, because OMEN had suitable/great productions in their Masterpieces. When someone pays a TRIBUTE, it is done out of respect to the artist, OMEN in our case. I challenge anyone to try and listen to some of these songs (piece of cake on youtube) and tell me HOW these bands pay honor to the band. Simple as that, if you can't make it correct, or at least decent, DON'T do it. It's not important to write down which bands made it (congratulations!) and which didn't, but I can't forget to mention the "slaying" one of Metal's finest EPICS got by a well-known band. As a whole, this CD is something that someone should avoid. This is just my humble opinion. One last point. A few years back, tribute albums to other US Legends like CIRITH UNGOL and MANILLA ROAD have been released. Both bands had a more difficult sound to re-create than OMEN. Listen to these tributes and then tell me (again) how this is not a DISGRACE to the band, but a "tribute"...

Kostas Kailiazis

V/A "WINTERHAWK/BIBLE OF THE DEVIL" Split 7" single

(Onslaught of Steel, 2011)

Legendary Chicago heavy hard rock act WINTERHAWK resurfaced with this split release with currently hot outfit BIBLE OF THE DEVIL anno 2011 loyal to their roots. "Dark Daze", the track they chose to represent them in this single, is a riff driven cut that I have to admit didn't blow me away. If you expect something close to the classic "Revival", think again! I just don't get why a player like Macarus wouldn't unfold his talent in guitar and perform a song focused strictly on the basic riff of this nevertheless good rhythmic song. Contrary to what I had beforehand imagined, I dig the B-side better. Vivid THIN LIZZY sounding melodic stuff, presented in such a way to fit in the whole package. "Valhalla, holla" is very catchy with a strong melody that even brought some HEAVY LOAD to mind. Generally, I would rank this single in the good, but not must-have singles of the bunch.

Thanos Stafylarakis



VEKTOR "Outer Isolation" CD

(Heavy Artillery, 2011)

What a comeback! Rabid technical thrashers VEKTOR unleashed their new installment of high class hyper speed thrash metal. Their previous effort "Black Future" made such a tremendous impact that shocked the still shaking underground world! Expect nothing less in this album than what you had faced

in "Black Future", stellar speed (and lyrics of course), unrivaled prowess that would apply to any jazz musician, these guys bring back memories of the one and only Chuck Schuldiner, something I considered impossible till now. In fact, I believe if the great Chuck wanted to play thrash Metal, he would have done it like VEKTOR did. I actually can't detect if I could rank them as an 80's thrash band. On second thought, they definitely fail this classification, but the modern stamp would also be a major mistake. In an attempt to set the record straight, I'd rather call them thrash Metal of the future or something, to avoid any constraints. The spectrum of the presented influences is so ample that would easily lead me to an ambiguity! The complexity of the songs in never tiring, yet enthralling and this is the success in a technical band! I won't get carried away and compare it with their previous album as it takes more than several listens to finally decide where you stand at. All I can guarantee is that this band is made for very big things and soon enough the time will come that we will place them right next to the big boys club in the Thrash Metal Hall of Fame.

www.myspace.com/vektor

Thanos Stafylarakis

VERITATE "The Chosen One" CD-single

(Killer Metal, 2010)

I had never heard anything VERITATE had released in the past and I don't think I will ever regret it, since their style of modernly produced symphonic heavy metal, as it is manifested in this CD single, is way far from my taste. They sound as a tight band and good players, but the extended use of keys combined with keen Eastern melodies (it can't be really worse than that, the Eastern/Asian sounding tunes that I like can be counted in one hand!) is what actually puts me off! I won't judge a band with 2 full-lengths from the one and only song included in this single (that's two if you also count the version in Swedish lyrics), it wouldn't be fair, but this said nothing to my old school ears. The open minded ones can try it.

www.veritate.se

Thanos Stafylarakis



VESTAL CLARET "Bloodbath" 2LP

(Cyclopean Records, 2011)

Needless to introduce Phil Swanson, as he is one of the most active vocalists in the scene and sung for or participated in almost any fuckin' doom or doomy release that has appeared within the last few years! I believe VESTAL CLARET is one of his very own children, as he was in the band since its inception and he actually is a founding member. The band was put on ice for a while and they come back with this double LP including most of their demo or EP songs that are hard to find anywhere, with a brand new outlook and alternatively conducted. For the latter to happen, they summoned up several friends form bands of ATLANTIAN KODEX, CAULDRON BORN, ALTAR OF OBLIVION, IRON AGE, LEGEND, FORSAKEN, SEAMOUNT, NIGHTBITCH, BLACK PYRAMID and PLANET GEMINI fame and re-recorded every song featured here, creating a horror show/book that will haunt you forever. Phil Swanson fans should already have this one, the rest of you who aren't aware of the band, they play a kind of Heavy Metal that I can't really call downright doom, but there's a heavy BLACK SABBATH influence overall and loads of doom Metal elements in the music. The horror/occult feeling is easy to get and to be honest, there's no similar match that I can think of, this is pretty original and very good stuff! There are several US and US only

bands that play something like that and that you can call similar sounding, so shall we hail the formation of another genre? Unless it is already out there (and it probably is) and I didn't know it!

www.myspace.com/vestalclaret

Thanos Stafylarakis



VIGILANCE "Steeds Of Time" mini-CD

(Haliaetum Records, 2011)

There are good news and bad news concerning this EP. Starting with the latter, the label had initially printed a tiny 100 copies of the CD, which are of course already sold out as expected! Good news though include the mini-CD's repress, so you can do yourself the favor of acquiring this short but extremely effective little gem! This Slovenian foursome unleashed a Heavy/Speed Metal missile with references to the great NWOBHM bands that had introduced the faster tempo in Metal such as SATAN, RAVEN and Di Anno era IRON MAIDEN. In fact, the mini-CD is so well done that there's not a single second that manifests to the listener it was recorded after 1985. Even the production matches their intended regression so much perfectly, unlike the dozens of 80's caricatures and wannabes that appear on a daily basis but actually miss the link between the genuine 80's feeling and their present being! Just listen to the vocals, full of youthful NWOBHM passion, thin yet vigorously nostalgic! Five songs, one instrumental among them, complete this trip to the past and if I really had to attribute a drawback, this would be the length of this recording and the sense of anticipation they left me with for their full-length. Overall, a worth praising effort, I hope they'll be back soon with equal impact.

www.myspace.com/vigilanceofficial

Thanos Stafylarakis



VULVAGUN "Cold Moon Over Babylon" CD

(Blue Freya, 2011)

The Australian Metal scene might not ring a bell to some (I doubt it, internet rules!), but even though it is not widespread away from the Oceanian region, there have been several worthy bands active in the past, locally gaining legendary status. VULVAGUN's line-up consists of members that had offered their services to bands like TARAMIS, NOTHING SACRED, AMETHYST and VAUXD:VIHL and several others but unfortunately the blending of their background in music couldn't convince me they could distinguish altogether in the same band. The production is near perfect, the players are all amazing, each one in his own field, the songwriting is good if you take each song separately, but all in all I somewhat couldn't absorb and enjoy it. Running at an overall 72 minutes and 12 songs, their power/progressive Metal isn't that much enthralling to keep your interest alive throughout the entire album and after a while you want to change the picture. Maybe things would be better if I listened to it in halves, I don't know... I don't want to under-

value the album, it is not bad, especially with such performance of all players, but I'm not sure if I would listen to it often and this is a crucial criterion for me when suggesting an album. So I conclude in a simply good album but...

www.vulvagan.com
Thanos Stafylarakis



WAR DANCE "Promo 2011" demo-CD
(Private, 2011)

What a pleasant surprise. Due to my military obligations I "lost" some of the Metal news during the summer when this Greek newcomer made a few live shows. But I finally had the chance to see them in January when they played with the Dutch Legends EMERALD. And I really liked the show, as the band is very tight and plays very powerful on stage, aided by an excellent drummer. Their music has many resemblances to MANOWAR and not only due to the vocals ("Prometheus" could be one of the best songs on the post-"The Triumph of Steel" albums), reminding a young Eric Adams. Some guitars brought to mind DOMINE of the first albums, while there are some personal elements that I would really like to see grow like some guitar melodies and drums rhythms/parts (like for example in the middle part of "The Thunder inside me"). Very professional effort from all aspects, production, performance and songwriting. This is a great demo, definitely one of the best recordings I came across in 2011. Given the time and more on-stage experience, I am sure this band can come up with a debut that will be talked a lot in the underground. Congratulations!

www.myspace.com/569286814

Kostas Kailiazis



WARDRUM "Spadework" CD
(Steel Gallery 2011)

Debut album from Thessaloniki based band WARDRUM and the outcome is rather remarkable, regarding we are talking about an act that counts a year together. Well, not exactly, as participants in this album belong to the already acknowledged musicians batch. Kosta Vreto, axeman of WARDRUM is known from his work in HORIZON'S END and his solo outputs, just like the rest of the players, while vocalist Piero Leporale is mentioned in Italian FIL DI FERRO and DRAGON ROUGE history, which make me not wonder about the high class playing showcased in this CD. The band plays a kind of progressive power metal which owes a lot to TITAN FORCE's "Winner Loser" as far as guitar sound is concerned. All of the songs stand well above the average songwriting level, although nothing that would awe these ears, I enjoyed each time I listened to it before writing this review. I can't say if someone would miss it if this escapes him, but I doubt people interested in this genre would carelessly surpass it either.

www.wardrum.gr

Thanos Stafylarakis



WOLF "Legions of Bastards" LP/CD
(Century Media, 2011)

I guess WOLF needs no introduction. One of the best bands coming from Sweden, they have proven that they are not an IRON MAIDEN rip-off (as many characterized them in their early days), nor they are just another Swedish band to add to the ever-growing mass. Those still under that impression, should listen to "The Black Flame" (their Masterpiece so far), "Evil Star", or this new, 6th album of the band. I was a little disappointed from "Ravenous", the band's previous effort (2009), since my initial enthusiasm cooled down a little after listening to the album again. But "Legions of Bastards" is a great album, all the elements that the band has developed and made them gain my (and many others fans') admiration are here in songs like "Vicious Companion", "Tales from the Crypt" (brilliant guitars and rhythms), "Road to Hell", "False Preacher" or "K-141 Kursk". The vocals fit the music perfectly with their somewhat ironic tinge and the guitars are simply stunning, while the band is very tight and seems to be in great shape. I still can't understand why this band has almost no fans (this is what I get) among our "breed" (underground Metal, that is). Could it be that they are on a bigger label than what we are "used to", or that they have never played the "underground game"? Whatever the reason(s), it's a shame mostly for the fans that miss on one of the best and most qualitative Metal bands of the last decade and not the band, since they seem to be doing pretty good. There are two bonus tracks, a Japanese bonus from the previous CD and a suitable for their music cover of "Method to your Madness" (by METAL CHURCH), which are also available on the LP version, since Century Media once more (as with "Ravenous") released it with a bonus CD. Congratulations for that move, maybe more labels should follow their example when CD's have bonus tracks. In case it wasn't made clear, this is a recommended release, so join the Bastards' Legion!

www.wolf.nu

Kostas Kailiazis

WOLF'S GANG "Apocalypse" CD
(Emanes Metal, 2011)

Another surprise from France. This is the debut of this newcomer, again from Emanes Metal, which seems to be establishing itself as a leading force in current French Metal, congratulations! I didn't know what to expect as soon as I received this CD, but as soon as it started playing it, I was in for a long day. And not only that one. This is one of my favorite CD's for 2011, fantastic melodies/guitars, drawing influences from classic Metal bands, but never repeating/copying old and played-to-death ideas, so any mention may distract from the point I want to make. "Apocalypse" includes 10 Heavy/Power Metal dynamites, sung in French (excellent choice!), the cover is ok (could be better) and I don't think why you should hesitate get a copy, or at least listen to some songs off it. This is an album that will also appeal to people not so much into the underground, since their sound is quite catchy and easy to listen to, without becoming commercial shit or whatever for a single second. Can't wait for the LP release of "Apocalypse", until then, read the interview with the band and contact them for more info...

<http://wolfsgang.monsite-orange.fr/index.html>

Kostas Kailiazis



WOTAN "Bridge to Asgard" mini-CD
(My Graveyard Productions, 2011)

New label for the Italian Masters of Steel and a new release, 4 years after "Epos". To those unfamiliar with the band, WOTAN is one of the oldest Epic Metal bands from Italy and one of the very few bands to be active during the "Ice Age" the genre passed before everyone started to claiming their dedication to steel, both before "Glory to the Brave" (1997) as well in the very recent past that we seem to live something similar. I wouldn't want to drag this for too long and distract from my goal, the presentation of this mini-CD, if you are fans of MANOWAR and more specifically of the period that THEY seem to have forgotten (yes, the years 1982-1984), there is NO chance not to like WOTAN. In my opinion the band tried (and for the most part they succeeded) in their previous CD to add some more personal touches, incorporate new elements and on one hand they ended with a CD that was below the expectations "Carmina Barbarica" had created, but on the other hand showed me (not at that time I have to admit) that they had the capabilities and goal to come up with something more personal, interesting and unique, while staying close to the sound they chose to serve as fans most of all. There are 6 songs included here with "Lone Wolf", an ok mid-tempo song that doesn't impress me as much as it did back in 2007, when we first got to hear it being the opener. The same titled is next and things improve for the better, since this is a great one, bringing to mind MANOWAR of the 1985-1988 years on their more ballad-esque moments. "Hagen", a storming song with excellent melodies and vocals is the third number, followed by "Ja Nuns Hons Pris", a folk-ish ballad that drags for a little longer than it should. "Goyatia (The Last Battle)" is the last song, another example of the approach the band has taken the last few years. There is also another version of "The Bridge to Asgard" in a more operatic way with female vocals accompanying Vanni's, which I could do without...The final outcome is very positive, a very good mini-CD, but I guess the best way to judge a band you love is through being strict and having higher and not lower demands with every new release, that's why I don't rate it as high I would if it was the debut release of a newcomer. It would be a major mistake not to mention the lyrical side of this effort, since WOTAN is one of the very few bands that take their lyrics so seriously and is not a "sword-blood-fire-Valhalla"-type band. Many times you will find yourself flipping through books to look up names etc. A necessary buy for Epic Metal fans, that's certain, but at the same time their weakest effort. I am anxiously waiting for their full length that I hope will be closer to the potential of our Milanese Brothers. Until, then, don't forget that the "fire of the anger" still burns!

www.wotanmetal.com

Kostas Kailiazis



WRATHBLADE "Into the Netherworld's Dream" LP/CD

(Eat Metal, 2012)

Kostas Kailiazis: This was one of the most anticipated albums for me. Not only for 2012. Ever since I got to listen to the band's early recordings, see them live or rehearse, I was constantly asking for more. The 2006 single proved to do me no good. The live shows the band has been giving all these years kept us "alive". But someone could notice a change song by song, gig by gig. Gone was the more "standard" Heavy Metal material of the early days. More parts, more changes, a more personal sound was starting to develop. And (for now, because who knows what the future holds for our poor ears?) this is what we get to listen on the 8 songs included on "Into the Netherworld's Dream". The result of a musical quest by 5 people that released this album not because they had to, but because it was the time to do so. I feel really "small" when faced by songs like these. But at the same time, I feel so proud for having supported this band all these years, because what I now have next to me writing this "review" is THE best album that I have heard for a very long time. This is as important as the debut of "Doomsword" was when it was released. It sounds exaggerating, but give this album a listen and listen for yourselves, what this MEGA METAL band is capable of doing! Congratulations to Eat Metal Records as well for standing behind these guys as NO one else and having the balls to release such an album from a band that plays PURE Metal, consists of Metal maniacs and doesn't spend its' free time in hair salons and malls shopping clothes in a time where the latter seem to be more important than the actual music. Subjectivity is not the reason me or Thanos have started this effort. WRATHBLADE and what they stand for IS. Uncompromised Heavy Metal full of passion, performed by METAL fans above all, not spandex-wearing wannabes that listened to IRON MAIDEN yesterday and with the "metal" flock's blessings are placed.

MARCH ON METAL CRUSADE!

Thanos Stafylarakis: PREPARE TO MEET THY DOOM! This is the most suitable title for this review and listening to the album (along with the experience of seeing them play live) can only verify the title! Once I heard a couple of their tunes even before they release their first single in 2006, I knew this was my favorite band from Greece and I was expecting this album ever since. Actually, I had given up hope that they would ever make it. I still remember how we beseeched them to go for a full length and they didn't for their own personal reasons. I guess they knew something more. Right after their first demo CD-R was released in 2011, they seemed to have gotten psyched up by the response to it and quickly rushed into materializing the album! The band of course has nothing to do with that band now and their tremendous potential transformed into pure devastating barbaric and chaotic Heavy Metal, a chaotic dimension that can come into parity with what CIRITH UNGOL could only convey. In fact, there are CIRITH UNGOL granules hidden in WRATHBLADE's music. What I had always liked about them was that they could play a style so much familiar with typical traditional Heavy Metal, yet any comparison with another band would be fruitless. Listening to their record now, mainly due to the production, I can definitely say the SLOUGH FEG and DOOMSWORD elements are clearly manifested, but traversed and filtered through WRATHBLADE's own original sound. What you are about to hear is galloping riffs rousing the barbarian horde to start their raid, a veil of wail covering the scenery, wrecking doom-ish heavy-weight Metal, medieval song structures, hymns to the quintessence of music, that is Heavy Metal, war-cries and Byzantine vocal influences and bulldozer rhythm section with their drummer G.A. being transformed into a war machine compared to when he started with the band. In fact, this is one of the few cases that come to mind that bass and drums are as important, crucial and leading as Zonder's drumming in WARLORD was, making you think that this would be a different band if they had inherited a mere and normal playing. A real powerhouse that is, leveraging the overall output to very high standards! This is much better than what I expected and I whole-heartedly and without being biased can state the supremacy of this album over almost anything European ever released.

past or present, when it comes to bands with personality and not run-of-the-mill copy bands. You don't want to miss this one!

Re-issues

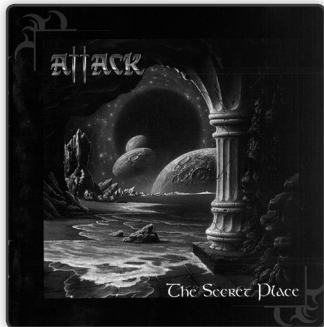


ASSAILANT "First Offense" EP/mini-CD

(Steel Legacy, 2011)

Some may remember the "Power of the Hunter" track from our compilation CD from last issue or even better, have heard the entire demo of this New York band. This great looking release includes the 5 songs from their s/t demo, re-mastered last year. ASSAILANT has similarities to LIEGE LORD (circa "Freedom's Rise"), which translates into US Heavy Metal with Power Metal elements and an intense Epic touch. I was always under the impression that the demo was recorded and released in 1985 (it's also stated on the original demo cover), but the insert says 1986. Strange...Whatever the year, this is a necessary release from the goldmine of New York, one of the best States for Metal in the 80's.

Kostas Kailiazis



ATTACK "The Secret Place" LP

(Lighten the Underground/Iceland, 2011)

ATTACK is a German band centered around multi-instrumentalist Ricky van Helden, that has released a bunch of albums through the years and gained a cult status through the years and satisfactory sales in Japan. To tell you the truth, I never considered them to be THE band, since none of their albums was perfect from start to finish. Maybe "Destinies of War", along with the album presented here a close second, have been their best and what some would label as "essential" buys/listens for a Metal fan. The music of the band doesn't claim originality awards. European Power Metal with many (but healthy) doses of HELLOWEEN (but with a more powerful edge) and an Epic feeling throughout may of their songs, both due to their lyrics and melodies. "Secret Place" includes some of the band's best songs like "Forgotten Dreams" (with the unforgettable rhythm), "Light in the Dark", "The Warrior" or "The Prophecy". On the other hand some very typical songs can also be found like "Mortal Energy" or "Heroes die Young". This proved to be the band's last album in the 90's, as the long awaited "Deadlocked" has been announced but never released in 1997 from LMP. Those unfamiliar with the band should definitely buy this LP (and "Destinies of War"), have they been tempted by the description. CD owners should buy this and replace their copy, since the (beautiful) cover finally gets the proper treatment and the lyrics are finally available. The last song of the original issue ("Warp speed. Now") is not included here for unknown reasons. Maybe it was a "bonus" in the first place, since it is a different recording? Whatever. Another quality release from Lighten the Underground limited to 525 copies.

www.myspace.com/attack.germany

Kostas Kailiazis



BITTER END "Have A Nice Death!" CD

(Metal On Metal, 2011)

I remember I used to have the one and only release of this Seattle band that was called "Harsh Realities" and released by Metal Blade in 1990. However I didn't like it back then and without giving it enough attention I had given it away, so I was surprised when I saw Metal On Metal unearthed the band and released their recordings that were about to be released as a second album but never did. Listening to this CD now, I realize that it wasn't a band to depreciate at all. Along with the unreleased material, the label included their 1988 demo "Meet Your Maker" and a few live tracks that gave me the chance to listen again to what they did in the first album, which is not bad really. Technical power/thrash with a powerful macho vocalist, where technical means not another intricate song structure, so the tunes are listenable and memorable. There is some jazzy playing as well, especially in the bass lines, which sounds intriguing when delivered in this thundering fashion BITTER END do! Some good lyrics can be heard in their songs, talking about social issues, something I really dig, it's about time fans take lyrics seriously to make their brains work and not constantly care about the gloss of their swords. Music is a great means to deliver the goods in that sense. Give it a few spins, I liked it in the end and I think every open minded fan or someone who wants to try hard to escape the "true metal" confinement he has set for himself.

www.myspace.com/bitterendmetal

Thanos Stafylarakis



BOSS TWEED "Die You Bitch!" LP

(Stormbringer, 2011)

Stormbringer Records hold a place in every vinyl freak's heart simply because the guy behind the label is a devoted fan and treats his releases with so much affection, scarcely met in almost none of the other labels. It takes no more than buying one of their released LP's only to experience it yourselves! So a while after their latest installment, they released the recordings of this Texas outfit that were known from their participation in the Iron Works' own "Iron Tyrants" compilation LP with the incompatible "Jacuzzi Murder" cut, which was the only song I had ever heard from BOSS TWEED. As I went through the music in this LP, I knew that this was another lost US Metal gem and an overt promulgation of their entire (?) song history was necessary and eventually deserved to see the light of day. Apart from the aforementioned number, which was far from merely promising, nothing was known about the band to this scribe and nothing close to what I heard was really expected. There's no point in expanding to the band's history, everything is written in deep detail in the 16-page booklet (!) accompanying this limited LP anyway, but rest assured that this record is worth every single penny spent, showcasing great US Heavy Metal pounding hard and

relentlessly, full of MAIDEN-esque melodies, screaming vocals and a decent sound regarding that this is an 80's demo! Not that BOSS TWEED were an innovative band, but somehow I can't find anyone else directly resembling them, but we always know that USA is full of unknown treasures that almost no one is aware of. Needless to say again about the amazing packaging, it's only the icing of a very exciting cake. All I know is that I will support this label, even though it adds nothing to the preservation of the scene, at least I get good value for money when I don't spend my money on a fancy and alluring wrap (the cover pic is discouraging actually, oh well...)

Thanos Stafylarakis



CHARTER "Turbo Metal" LP

(Fils Du Metal, 2011)

Fils Du Metal strikes again with another re-issue of a fantastic French band, this time one with no official release in their assets. There existed only one demo recording and a couple more songs that were supposed to be released in a 7" single format that somehow fell apart, as well as some more songs only recorded live! This is the content of the CHARTER LP featured here and all you get is great up tempo Heavy Metal, bordering with speed in the sense it was meant in the mid 80's in Europe, but this is only obvious in their live recordings, something that doesn't qualify them as a speed Metal band, most acts appeared and sounded more powerful on stage (remember THRUST's 1982 live recording). For those conjuring up the glorious days of Olde (that automatically mean you bear a lesser recording quality), this is highly recommended stuff (sung in French), while the tracks intended for the single are sung in English and would definitely make a 7" that many would have constituted an item to be memorialized by most Metal fans! "Hero of The Fight" can only justify my statement. Even though the sound is not the best around (at least it's the best possible), I'm glad to see such releases being available to the public, especially considering the scarcity of their unreleased recording material. As written on the back cover, "you want it loud... we want you deaf!"

Thanos Stafylarakis



CIRITH UNGOL "Servants of Chaos" 3LP/2CD-DVD

(Metal Blade, 2011)

Better late than never, right? Well, I have mixed feelings. Of course I am happy to add this jewel in my collection, but this LP for me is another proof of the way labels treat the bands that WE love and support (and us as a consequence). I mean, Metal Blade showed NO interest some years back (10 to be precise) to do a vinyl pressing and suddenly 1000 copies that will be gone fast appear in the market. I am not blaming Metal Blade entirely, where were all these hungry for CIRITH UNGOL-Metal "fans" a decade

ago? I forgot, Fenriz hadn't labeled them (CIRITH UNGOL) as a "cult" band and all those ex-black metallers now in classic Metal bands were still torturing our ears, since they hadn't 24mbps internet connections and obscure disco/demo-graphies with a "click" at their disposal so they could claim "true metal faith to the Heroes of Yore. CIRITH UNGOL was/is one of the most unique Metal bands we had the luck to listen to. 4 albums, all with their distinctive elements/sound, but still bonded by the creative force of their members and the characteristic, shrieking vocals of Tim Baker that brought shivers every time. Always untouched by trends, always on the fight for REAL Metal, their musical Legacy will (and can) not be forgotten. On to the musical side of this release now. Nothing is changed compared to the 1st issue of "Servants of Chaos". A total of 31 songs spread throughout 3LP's/2CD's, coming from old band demos (some as early as mid-1978!), live shows, plus the infamous "Paradise Lost" demos and sessions which have intrigued many fans ever since Robert Garven mentioned them in late 90's interviews, plus liner notes on each song by Greg Lindstorm and Robert Garven. This is a great looking LP set, that also comes with a re-production of a live poster from the early days of the band. I really wish Metal Blade had thought of maybe including a DVD in the vinyl, but I guess making copies is legal Metal Blade guys? Or do you expect us to also pay for the 2CD set in order to just get the DVD? That would be the answer, but I will not give you any extra money. I already paid twice for it, once in 2001 and now in late 2011. If any of our readers is unfamiliar with the band (I guess not), should check the albums of the band and then check this compilation.

www.truemetal.org/cirithungol/page.php?page_id=1

Kostas Kailiazis



CLOVEN HOOF "Cloven Hoof" LP

(Buried by time and Dust, 2011)

Quite known (and beloved) from Heavy Metal fans, I guess there is no need to review/present the original EP, released in 1982. A real Classic of the genre, this gem ended out for a reissue, since an original copy has been very expensive to get for many, many years. All 4 songs are included on the first side of this LP, while side B includes the 4 songs from the 1982 demo tape. In this demo we also find the first version of "Road of Eagles", later ending up on the "Dominator" LP. Ending, I have to admit that I was very disappointed to see such a release (the same goes for the ROBESPIERRE LP) after the marvelous SATAN LP some months before. Only a poster, no insert, no lyrics for a quite high price (20€). I don't know if this LP is still available but it sure beats out searching for an original despite being below the standards of the label.

www.clovenhoof.co.uk

Kostas Kailiazis



CROM "Earth Queen/Eyes of Fire" 7" single

(Full Contact, 2011)

CROM hailed from Finland and this vinyl single was their only claim to "fame" back in the day (1985 to be precise). I hadn't heard this release, only knew of its' existence until this reissue was released and motivated by Thanos I decided to give it a try. And it was not a bad choice. On the contrary. Fast-paced, with a melodic edge (mainly on the vocals) European Power Metal of the mid-80's that has so many fans among Metal fans and collectors. My personal favorite is the B-side, "Eyes of Fire" with the amazing bridge and chorus. The original single is very hard and expensive to get, so this reissue is essential for all underground Metal fans. As usual, it's limited to 500 copies and you can (and should) contact the label for availability and how to get your copy. An insert would be more than welcome, but ok, better than nothing.

Kostas Kailiazis



EMERALD "Iron On Iron" LP

(Iron on Iron Records, 2011)

Another album that needs no review for two reasons, one is that it has already been reviewed several times after its initial re-issue on CD some time back, secondly because this is one of the best Euro Heavy Metal records ever, unless you don't like high pitched vocals. Bert is a genuine siren and one of the best vocal melody line writers in Heavy Metal in general. However, there is a reason to review this new re-issue of the album, as this time in the original track-listing you can add two unreleased songs included here and both of them reap! I think they are both old songs, but I'm not 100% sure about that, but I remember they played "New Gods" in their first shows when they had re-united a few years ago. Anyway, there's nothing new that you can expect from these two songs, just effective Heavy Metal in the same style the whole album was written. The artwork they used is the one featured in the CD by Iron Glory Records, with the difference that it was repainted and also included in the form of a giant poster. 300 copies made of this gem, if you don't have the original press, go get this one 'cause you really need it.

www.myspace.com/emeraldnl

Thanos Stafylarakis



FRIGID BICH "Tyrants of a Generation" LP

(Stormbringer, 2011)

The first time I heard of the band was when OPM released a 10"EP with the band's early material. Having heard a few songs, I never bothered more, since I found it quite typical. Some years later, while reading an interview of the band in Snakepit I became aware of another demo, said to be heavier. And I almost heard another band when I finally heard these 5 songs. Fast-paced Heavy Metal, typical of the country and era, which in my book translates to guaranteed Metal mania. This is the case here as well. Fast forward to 2011, when Swedish label Stormbringer Records releases this AMAZING-looking compilation LP with songs from the later period of this New York Metal outfit together with a massive 20-page booklet (as in the BOSS TWEED album). Coupled with some live tracks (cover songs), this makes for a documentary of the band's second (and best for me) period. Fans of US Heavy/Power Metal, invest with closed eyes.

Kostas Kailiazis



ICE VINLAND "Masters of the Sea" LP

(Pure Steel, 2011)

"Masters of the Sea" was originally released in 1998 on CD format, as a private edition of 500 copies and is too hard to find nowadays. Pure Steel (who also helped in the European distribution of their excellent 2nd CD, "The Vinland Saga"-2007) decided to do a vinyl reissue of this late 90's Epic Metal gem. Epic Metal, yes (I know that most of the times it sounds very cliché), but with a very personal touch and unique atmosphere that vaguely brings to mind the Great Ones of the 80's like CIRITH UNGOL and MANILLA ROAD but with a high-pitched singer. There are similarities with the US Power Metal bands of the late 80's as well. Special mention to the lyrics, which center around anti-Christian themes but with a very clever and thought-provoking way and carried by Leif Jensen who sings like his heathen life depends on every line he performs. I hardly pick "God Bless You" (a chilling Epic), "Children of Sin" and "The new Best Seller" (what a title!) as the best tracks in this great album. A necessary reissue in my book limited to 333 copies with different song order and a new cover (I would like to see the original though). Reissues like this one remind us what a goldmine the 90's was when it comes to independent releases that still wait to be discovered. The band is currently working on their 3rd album and only schedule difficulties prevented the band from being featured in this issue. This will be done properly in our new effort...

www.myspace.com/icevinland

Kostas Kailiazis

Ps. Thanks to my friend Vassilis for introducing me to the band a few years back.



MANILLA ROAD "The Courts of Chaos" LP

(High Roller, 2011)

In my humble opinion, "The Courts of Chaos" is one of the best MANILLA ROAD albums, even better than albums most fans of the band rate higher like "The Deluge", "Out of the Abyss", "Metal" and on par with "Crystal Logic", "Open the Gates" and "Mystification". I know that it sounds like I am overreacting, but I will try to justify my "heretic" opinion. In 1990, the band seems like taking another direction and mixes the more Epic material of the 1983-1986 years, adding some more technical/progressive orchestrations (and keys!) while never forgetting their goal to be faster from album to album and remembering the almost thrash (and killer) "Out of the Abyss" here and there. The result, this beautiful album that has been shunned by the fans of the band. Don't ask me why, I really can't explain it. The reissue from 2002 was widely available, "solving" the badly distributed original LP (the rarest album of the Wichita trio), so "no excuses". The LP doesn't have the "hit" song, it requires more attention, but personally as soon as I "understood" it, I was hooked forever! Songs like the same-titled, "The Prophecy" and "Dig me no Grave" belong to some of the best the band has ever written with the others, not mentioned, being on the same high levels. On this album we also find the first and only cover the band recorded, "D.O.A." (from BLOODROCK), that fits so nicely with the rest of the songs; you can't make out this is not an original. Even if you have an original copy, this should be added in your collection for the great packaging (liner notes and a poster) and the fantastic bonus track, "The Books of Skelos". As Mark said in the interview we did, maybe this reissue will make more people to notice the music hidden in this gem. A trip to the Courts where Chaos rules has never been cheaper and easier, get this LP and re-discover one of the band's (and Metal's as a consequence) best-hidden secrets.

www.manillaroad.net

Kostas Kailiazis



MEDDALLION "Demo 1986" 7" single

(TMU Records, 2012)

I guess everyone who reads the title of this review already knows what this is about. Every Texas Metal Underground (TMU) release is a guaranteed purchase of quality Heavy Metal from the area of Texas. The one and only demo MEDDALLION had recorded in 1986 was absolutely obscure to the wide majority of Metal fans everywhere and now sees the light of day thanks to Scott's initiative to stubbornly unearth and release lost treasures from an area in the USA that was obviously a genuine goldmine. Getting to the music of this vinyl, you'll get a strong dose of robust, vigorous and energetic NWOBHM influenced Heavy Metal with insane vocals, heavy fast riffing with the band's simultaneous occupation with the epic! "Stormbringer" kicks off on side-A with the highlight screams

of a rabid Andy Lucio, bringing memories of the PATHFIDER's majestic "Fountain Keeper" from Metal Massacre series up to a point, with a more evident NWOBHM background and as energetic as bands in the likes of JAGUAR were! "Swords Of Steel" on side-B showcased an even more epic side of MEDDALLION with a highly potent Heavy Metal head-banging riff and vocal line and a neck paralyzing solo break amidst the song. Essential, addictive and absolutely made of Texan steel! All these go for everyone who cares about the music, the real thing. As for the rest who buy luxury cases, this one's also for you, the packaging is a work of art and very well taken care of, as every release TMU announces, including a 12-page booklet loaded with pictures, the history and an interview of the band made by TMU man himself, in a quantity of 500 copies that apparently will not last long. I was about to express the same notion Scott did in the inception of the history of the band in the booklet, there must be something in the waters of San Antonio...

Thanos Stafylarakis



MILITIA "The Second Coming" LP

(High Roller/Metaleros, 2011)

It was about time an anthology of one of the most popular underground acts in the US Speed/Power Metal scene to take place. MILITIA is well known within the underground circles for the monstrous status "The Sybling", the band's ultra limited, rare and only offering has acquired and due to the unbelievable range of Mike Soliz's voice, who's also known from his incredible work in OBLIVION KNIGHT and ASSALANT. US Metal fans that also love screamers should probably already have heard the MILITIA stuff, who had prevailed in the flourishing Texas Metal scene when it was at its prime. But MILITIA is not only about an unmatched scream of their singer! This LP in this fantastic deluxe packaging includes the band's lost demos, as well as their aforementioned EP and the icing on the cake is the giant poster with gig flyers and the 4-A4-page photo collage! The band plays a more straight-forward early WATCH-TOWER style of Speed Metal with powerful rhythm section with adequate frenzy to cope with the Texan masters of technical Speed Metal and killer tunes, making their music a lot more memorable, even though the intricacy also appears in MILITIA's material in a decent abundance. The sound is not perfect for sure, this is a collection of their demo tapes anyway, but it's always the music that matters, as long as you can clearly listen to it, so the content of the LP won't let you down. I assume they did not gain that cult status for nothing! Anyways, this is a great piece of steel that needed to be released and maybe this was an initiative that forced the band to re-unite; this can only double my pleasure!

www.myspace.com/militiatexas

Thanos Stafylarakis



OVERLORDE SR "Medieval Metal Too" CD

(Heaven and Hell, 2012)

This OVERLORDE hailed from North Carolina and they have added the "SR" (Still Rockin') in this release for copyright reasons I guess. Their only release was the "Medieval Metal" demo (1985), with 4 songs, one of which was "Keeper of the Flame", a fantastic Heavy Metal hymn. The demo overall is very good, a melodic Heavy/Power Metal affair with excellent guitars. There is also a cover version of "In the Year 2525", wonderfully executed. OVERLORDE also had their "Keeper of the Flame" track featured in the eighth volume of Metal Massacre (late 1986), but in a version weaker than their original one. There are three more tracks in this release coming from a later demo of the band (probably 1987, there is no date mentioned in the booklet). Good ones, but not something that could create a big interest in the band at the time. I thought that there would be a video included, since the CD was advertised with a short clip from an 80's show of the band, but this is not the case, disappointing, as the enhanced part only has some photos of the band. For me this is an important reissue, but I guess I have the "right" to be a grumpy since the level of current reissues/new albums is always rising and a single 6-page insert with photos and a small bio (almost) leaves me untouched. Add to that the short duration (31 mins) and the small number of songs (8-one of which is a cover and "Keeper of the Flame" is included twice) and judge for yourselves if you need this CD.

www.overlordes.com

Kostas Kailliazis

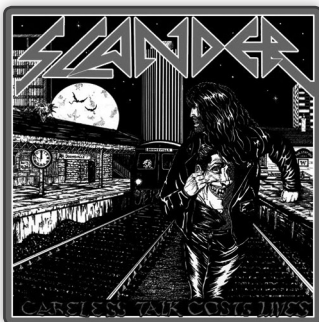
SARCOFAGUS "Live in the Studio 1979" LP

(Svart Records, 2011)

SARCOFAGUS, a Finnish band, was formed in 1977 and released an ultra impossible to find 7" single and three albums (one under the moniker KIMMO KUUSNIEMI BAND) before disappearing in 1982... Hailed as the first Heavy Metal band from Finland, they resurfaced and have reformed the last few years and with this resurrection of SARCOFAGUS came the reissue of their albums, in one form or another, plus this recording that was unearthed from the band's mastermind guitarist Kimmo Kuusniemi. First released as a CD, the real treat is this vinyl release made by Svart Records that is of very high quality, with a gatefold cover and accompanied by a book with notes and some amazing photos from the era. Musically the album itself is interesting mostly for historic references as it's one of the earliest moments of Euro Metal. There are some great moments too, but it mostly is of interest to fans of SARCOFAGUS like myself that appreciate their music. Very primitive sounding, naturally, this is not the best way to introduce yourself to their music but if you're already a fan you surely need this one!

www.sarcofagus.com

Michalis Bakoulas



SLANDER "Careless Talk Costs Lives" 2CD

(Stormspell, 2011)

One of my favorite UK Metal records is the only offering that SLANDER had originally released in LP format only back in 1991 and now re-issued by Stormspell. The band was active during the-what was called-post NWOBHM period, where most of the bands were better and more professional than the highly acclaimed NWOBHM era bands. The only reason this CD is being reviewed here is the bonus CD included in the typically beautiful packaging, which presents their material the way the band wanted it to have been released, as stated in the liner notes, replayed in 2011 and with a different production job, along with a few never released before tunes. In my opinion the new recording is better than the original one and the three unreleased tracks slay and easily stand right next to their anthems "Lonely Nights", "Fighting Talk", "Built To Destroy" and "Shadows (In The Night)"! There is no flaw really in all 12 songs; the original singer is more passionate in the new recording, as he sounds to me at times weak and soulless and the different versions and production didn't change the overall feeling of the album at all, as it not a second sounds as a modern album. If you had never heard the music of SLANDER before, this is a great chance, the LP is extremely rare and expensive, so don't waste your time with second rate albums and please yourselves with a masterpiece in Heavy Metal. Had this been an American band active in the mid 80's, they would have sold thousands of copies, their music is catchy as a pandemic without being infected by commercial lowlife hideous shamelessness, fantastic mundane hoarse vocals and remarkable guitar melodies! Try it yourselves, this album is a winner, wherever you view it from.

www.myspace.com/slandermetal

Thanos Stafylarakis



TAIPAN "Snakes" CD

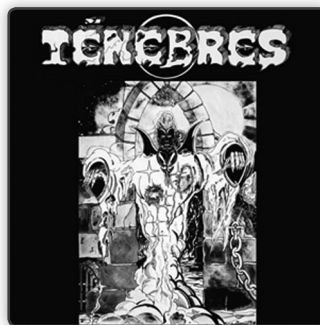
(Killer Metal, 2011)

Taipan is not only the most venomous snake found on the Australian ground, but also one of the very first Heavy Metal outfits to come from the land of Oz. They had released a 4-track 7" single (later re-released by Bullet records as a 12") and gained cult status among collectors with their energetic NWOBHM style! After another EP and a split up, they came back somewhere in the 00's and released 2 CDs, resulting in signing with Killer Metal label and releasing this sort of compilation CD featured here. Songs from both of their previous CDs are included, whereas songs from their debut fill the track listing in, replayed of course. For those who have heard their EP, the new versions (which also appeared on their comeback CDs), are obviously changed in terms of production, but the feeling and energy are still there and never deviate from their 80's origins. Hence, the difference in style in comparison with the

newer songs is blatant. There's something charming in their later material though, albeit the more modern style of writing, which makes it pretty hard to define, sometimes doomy, others heavier while at times they remember their early metal roots. Despite the very few boring moments I met throughout the album, it is a good and interesting effort in general, especially for those who would like another approach in their daily metal dish for a change.

www.myspace.com/taipan_metal

Thanos Stafylarakis



TENEBRES "Tenebres" LP

(Memoire Neuve, 2011)

This was by far the biggest shock I had in 2011, a shock of equal impact I hadn't had in years! The first spin of the record makes the tremendous capabilities of this French outfit evident and proves once more how the re-issuing of long lost recordings is somewhat imperative. What you are about to hear is the 1985 demo of TENEBRES with the addition of 2 live songs and 2 more tracks taken from a rehearsal in the same year. Surprisingly, the sound is not bad, considering the latter were never properly recorded. I'm an avid fan of the 80's French scene and I believe, in a qualitative comparison with what people tend to refer to as a "scene" when talking about groups coming from the same place with similar features, the French one could outmatch almost any European rival. TENEBRES would rather fit a SORTILEGE on speed description, with Eddie Lejeune skyrocketing the band's performance, he is a Zouille's screaming version and can prove how potent a singer he is in every single live recording included in the album. Seriously, if you swear you like music as it was played in the 80's, if you have no problem with non English lyrics and most of all, if you can evaluate good music without a necessarily perfect production or sound, then do yourself the favor and show your exorbitant appreciation to this gem!

Thanos Stafylarakis



TENSION "Epitaph" CD

(Metalgrind, 2011)

The original CD pressing was released in 1997 and limited to 500 copies and it's a great move on behalf of Jim Powell and Metalgrind Productions to make it once more available (of course in anticipation of the TENSION concert in KIT 2012). CD-nerds can still be looking for an original copy, comparing matrix numbers and bypassing such releases. On the other hand, "Metal collectors" can ignore it as well, since the original LP was released in sufficient quantities and it's NOT a 500 copies private-pressed LP with a childish drawn cover and ridiculous musicianship in order to be praised to no avail by their pack and have a reason to look for a reissue of it. In CD of all formats and not in a 137-copies-limited-splatter-boxed-vinyl-with-die-hard-limited-patch-and-thong .edi

tion. So, to whom is this review addressed? To METAL fans that for various reasons have overlooked this album. And as far as I can tell there are a lot, since I haven't seen this LP mentioned pretty often. TENSION rose from the ashes of DEUCE and after successful demo tapes recorded "Breaking Point" released from Torrid Records in 1986. For me, this LP is one of the finest examples of US Power Metal with excellent musicianship and intricate songwriting. The songs also range from slower, mid-tempo Epics like "Angels from the Past" to rippers like "Wrecking Crew" or "Downfall of Evil". A technical edge is heard throughout all 9 songs, without the band losing their power for a single second. "Epitaph", includes six bonus tracks, the three audio tracks that were supposed to be released as the "Epitome" EP back in the day and three live songs from a devastating show the band did in late 1987 in Baltimore where they played their LP (apart from "One Nation Underground") plus various older/new songs. Add a nicely done 8-page booklet with photos, a short bio and Tom Gattis' notes (but unfortunately no lyrics) and we have an essential reissue even for owners of the LP. I would like to see what the quartet could do in 2012, so what about a new album?

www.facebook.com/TensionMDmetal

Kostas Kailliazis



V/A "Echoes Of The Past" LP

(High roller records, 2011)

What we have here is a split album of WOLF and KRUIZER, both brainchildren of guitarist Walley Rumsey. While WOLF (not to be confused with the other NWOBHM band aka BLACK AXE) made a 7" single, KRUIZER never had a proper vinyl release. The WOLF tracks from this single open the album and are exactly what you would expect it to be, genuine NWOBHM! Especially the "Creatures of the night" track that stands out from the rest of the WOLF tracks and is one of the main reasons to get this release. A side ends with two totally bad sounding, uninspired tracks almost ruining the good impression made earlier. On B side, things get much better as the KRUIZER tracks are all quite enjoyable in a more Hard rock approach with some very catchy moments, a far better band than WOLF overall and a fine group with a good vocalist. The vinyl comes accompanied with a great book with photos of concerts and memorabilia from KRUIZER and is a great addition to any NWOBHM fanatic. Not essential but quite a good album!

Michalis Bakoulas



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LONEWOLF "Army of the Damned"
AIR RAID "Danger Ahead"
WOLF "Legion of Bastards"

Old/Demos:
MEDDALLION "Demo 1986"
SLANDER "Careless Talk Costs Lives"
HOLY TERROR "Terror And Submission"
HAMMERSMYTH "Awakened"
STAIRWAY "No Rest, No Mercy"
TENEBRES "Tenebres"
KHROM "Demo 1987"
ICARO "Icaro"
INVICTA "We live For Heavy Metal"

Kostas Kailiazis Thanos Stafylarakis



*Graphic design by Metal Queen, Eleni Papadea
A simple thank you is not enough*

We would like to thank:

ALL The bands that appear on this issue for their time and faith they showed in our effort. Above all, for their Music! The Metalheads that bought/downloaded our fanzine and helped us do another issue in any way. The labels/distributors that helped us in any way and especially Eat Metal, Steel Legacy, Cyclopean, Metal on Metal, Iron on Iron, Stormspell, High Roller, Metaleros, Killer Metal, The Forge, Emanes Metal, Underground Power and Sentinel Steel.



Friends:

Antonis Adamakos, Greg Baxevanidis, Greg "Heavy Load" Varsamis, Aris "Wargod" Kapasakalis, Jim "Tsipouro-drinker" Vagiannis, Litsa Trigga, Kostas Kounadinis, Manolis Karazeris, Vasilis "Sailor" Koutsomanis, George Theofylaktos, Michalis "HMRRM" Nochos, Ilias Tsilios, Eleni Papadea, Mike Bakoulas, Stella Atsali, Nikos Papakostas, Kostas "Tyrant" Pentidis, Dimitris Starakis, Kostas Kousiouris, Stayros "Armaos" Georgousakis, JP Fournier, George Grammatikas, Haris Vavalides, Themis Pamfilos & Elina, Manolis Stagakis, Matthias Wulf & Katrin, Roland Saager, Laurent Sename, Rik Koch, Rob Preston, StoneAge, Laurent Ramadier, Rowena O'Sullivan, Michael Vaucher, Brent Sullivan, Paul & Lisa Kratky and the entire Slaughter Xstroyes family, Helle Mueller, Rainer Kruenberg, Nuno, Paulo, Francisco and the Portuguese gang. And everyone else we might have forgotten, sorry...

Thanos Stafylarakis would like to thank:

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Kostas Kailiazis would like to thank:

My family, friends and comrades and all that have supported me in any way the last year. YOU know who you are, cheers!

Front cover Masterpiece by:
JP Fournier

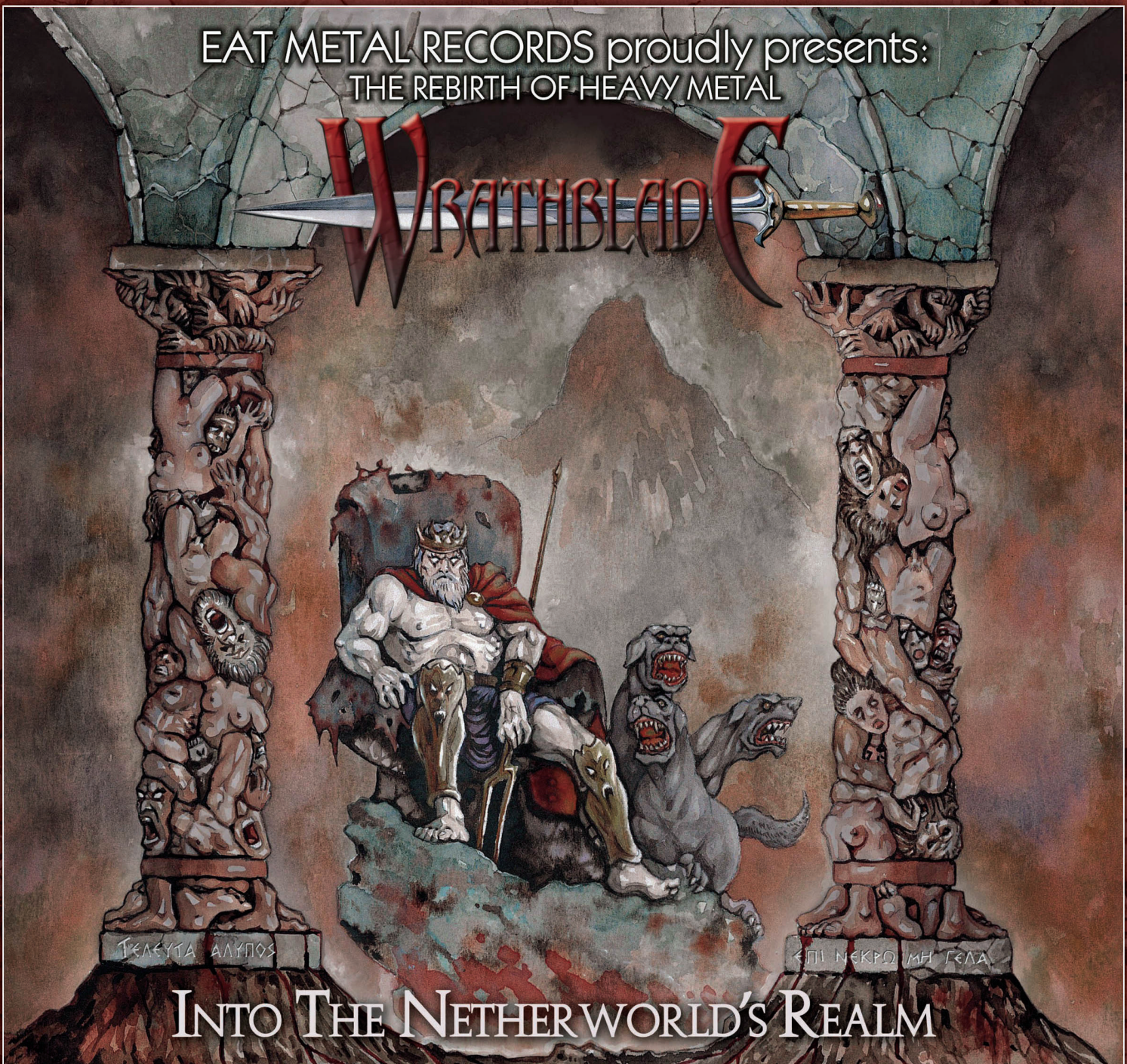
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