

Since 1995

# Kogaion

“Repetă că nu există pustiu.  
Există doar incapacitatea  
noastră de a umple golul  
in care trăim”

Octavian Paler

VOL.  
10

# 5 Special Evenings

organized by



A Story... A Real Story...

For Real Fans Only... In the Medieval Town of Brasov, Transylvania, Romania

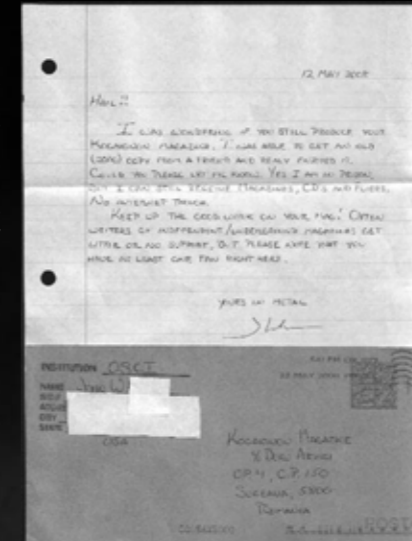
## SOLITARY WINTER GREETINGS!

The swan song from number 9 seems not to have been the last... a good few years had to pass in order to see a new number of this magazine. More pathetic than realist, in this night, full of fresh snow flakes, I am thinking of returning back in time...

The intention to publish the first issue came in 1994, after approximately 3 years of promoting the extreme underground music in a show held at a local radio station. Those times were, I can say, of glory, of camaraderie, the communication was made through hand written letters, with cut out stamps that had a special solution applied over them so that the customs official ink stamp wouldn't hold for too long, with money well hidden between papers and tinfoil, with the intelligent discovery of the IRC (international coupons that were replacing money)... I was labouring myself while daily writing dozens of letters addressed to different bands, labels, magazines or agencies, in hopes of getting noticed by anyone, in order to be able to promote the music I loved... I kept doing the same thing over and over again, for about 2 years, and with little or no results, I was only being sent rare cassette tape demos from Black Metal bands from the North, but no promotional CDs! It was an obsession of mine, to get original promotional CDs as well; to be inserted into the database of the big labels, to play at the table where the fat cats were playing... And so, around 1994, it seemed I had a pretty large promotional material baggage that I was already promoting in my "Antofagasta" radio show, but I kept wanting to do more, to help out... and that is how Kogaionon came into being! The first issue was created together with a new colleague I had at radio station, the magazine coming out during spring 1995. I remember the sort of work we had to put in back then, manually gathering all the copy, placing all the text into the pages/layout... huge amounts of work, painstaking, incredible! Fanaticism and passion were the key arguments of putting my chimeras into practice. My radio show went on until 2001 when, due to personal reasons, I had to make a major change, and I put it all on hold. I went on with the magazine though, on my own, with a few lighter issues, in Romanian, modest as artwork but with the accent placed on long interviews and a lot of subjective reviews. It all changed one again with number 6, when I chose the professional print and I went back to what I have started a few years back... And so I have released other 4 issues, until 2005, about one per year, all long sold out. I have then preferred to chose the easier path, meaning my webzine, that I kept changing, arranging and updating thanks to my old colleague Lus, without whom this name, Kogaionon would no longer be associated with music... but only with the Dacian mythology, with that sacred mountain... but you already know the legend and so, I will skip over this...

2008 arrived, a crucial year for me, I believe... another of my chimeras becoming palpable, organising Evenings with favoured underground bands, with those who have done something for the scene. And so, the ARCANA concert came, where, in an elegant hall, I've discovered the many readers of my work... a lot of them asking me why am I not publishing a new issue, that it is too bad to leave it all only on the Internet, that the aroma of the printed pages can not be replaced by anything... and I answered politely, both to them and to myself, that time does not allow me to do so, that there is no longer a point anyway... in this millennium of the virtual, of the online... But I was left with a pleasant feeling, I must admit it... but nothing else. Until the 22nd of May, when a normal, hand

written letter arrived, from the States... The family came around and assured me that I have won something, perhaps even the visa lottery... I opened the envelope and I found a simple sheet of paper, from a guy I have never communicated with before and who was telling me that he is in prison, that he does not have access to email or Internet, but wants to know if I have published a new issue of my beloved Kogaionon (see photo)... It was the drop that filled the glass... The rest? A sum of work filled months, of harsh labouring on all fronts, with the delineation of a beautiful collaboration with John Haughm (AGALLOCH), without whom this issue would have lacked its excellent artwork, also including here the collaboration with Velda Thorsson, whose unique photographs decorate the magazine, giving it a special feel; my friends Lucian, Andreea, Stefan and Dani who have helped me with putting together some very well made interviews and other materials... and not last, my family (Stefan and Loreta), who have managed to bear with stoicism my stubbornness of spending every weekend under the same roof, in the same room with them, only that I'd be sprawling on the couch, with a bit more alcohol on board than I can remember right now, with the earplugs on and the laptop on my knees, being completely absent from all that is normality... and perhaps reality... but this is my secret life and it seems that during these months, it has come first! The result? The BIBLE you are now holding in your hands!



2008 was a totally special year, as I managed to convince Richard Lederer, in Vienna, to play live, after a few years long break... even if not with SUMMONING or DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS, but at least with ICE AGES. And he finally came to Brasov, Romania, in June! Or that ATARAXIA blew me away with an 100% live show in September... to say nothing of the veterans of ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO and IN SLAUGHTER NATIVES... plus a very pleasant surprise with CASCADEUR... and only a few days after, for my birthday, to have ROME and SPIRITUAL FRONT play! Five completely different Special Evenings, where Andreea and Laura managed to transform simple concerts into special events, both for me, and for the fans... but also for the bands... I mustn't forget Camelia, without whom the entire merchandising and the sum of competitions would have never taken place... Or Leo, my complete logistical support! And... if for a second you thought you are at the Oscars, I'd advise you to sit back down. I am accepting no trophies, no thanks or congratulations, and I will hand out no handkerchiefs for those trying to wipe that stubborn tear!

So... yes, a successful year in some ways, disappointing in other... but one that gave me the feeling (the strength is too much to say) to believe that the time for living out of memories is still yet to come... despite the fact that my mountain hut is almost ready...

And, as only the fear of dying is not ephemeral, I am closing my retrospect right here. Be sarcastic, ironic, critical, "intelligent", and placatory or down right sycophant... whatever way you want to be like with this issue! You are free to do as you feel! Just as I am, heh...

Should we meet in this format again, or not, you now have the possibility of reading some atypical interviews, loads of reviews and some rhetoric's taken from my still indistinct obsessions... welcome to Underground! It will never die!!!!

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## BE TRUE

Because with every lie  
you murder some part  
of the world... as you  
are killing some part  
of yourself.

**SOPOR AETERNUS** has a history so impressive, even for an underground band, that there is no point of me insisting on it. It must be said though, that the Eternal Sleep or Sleep of Death was founded some 18 years ago, through the cooperation amongst two musicians that have met in a Goth club.

Varney and Holger have released a single demo, one that has drawn the attention of the newly borne Apocalyptic Vision label. Soon after, Holger leaves the band and one can say that, since then, SOPOR AETERNUS means Anna-Varney Cantodea ...and The Ensemble Of Shadows... about 20 of years of mystery, delights, contradictions, contentions, rumors and gossip but a multitude of sublime albums that have changed the whole Dark Wave scene. Last year an album of an incredible beauty, "Les Fleurs du Mal" came about, while this year brings us its sister album "Sanatorium Altrosa"...

And all the inspiration faults from ache, isolation, suffering and depression...

After years of reading, documenting and trying to get in touch with this band, I have finally managed to find the enigmatic character that is otherwise hard to track down, hard to make unveil any sort of information, one that doesn't appear on stage, who prefers to live away from the spotlights... and still, in their very light, one can distinguish forms, outlines, provocative references towards an universe seemingly intangible for the natural world we live in.

The only link here is the music...

And so, we are slowly, figuratively penetrating into an abandoned castle, through an immense and heavy door, with creaking sounds that would awake the dead, we enter a sinister room, we light a few candles in a dusty chandelier, we sit at a big wooden table, with a goblet of wine beside us, and we try to contact Anna-Varney Cantodea, not through black or white magic, séances or occult invocation but... directly.

*Greetings from Romania, lets better say, from the Bran Castle! The legend makes connections with Dracula, this local Count which, through Bram Stokers book managed to shock an entire world. Do you have any desires in visiting this castle?*  
"Not really, no."

*It would be my pleasure to show you around...*  
"Well, thank you. I might come back to that, if I ever happen to end up in your part of the planet."

*What is your opinion on this theatrically developed Hollywood-like concept entitled vampirism?*

"Funny enough, just the other day I was watching a documentary about Bela Lugosi. His son is quite cute, actually. He's got a huge hooter though ... - but that's probably not what you wanted to hear, is it?"  
"OK, vampires in movies ... hmm well, there are so many vampire film, most of them pure rubbish, if you ask me. However, there are a few good ones, of course, and the first one that always seems to pop into my head is Kathryn Bigelow's "Near Dark". But by far the best and most adequate performance was given by Klaus Kinski in Werner Herzog's remake of "Nosferatu". The film itself is rather boring, if not to say crap, but Kinski's performance is absolutely brilliant. In fact, it's the only time that the Undead was portrayed the right way, revealing all the depression and desperation, which forms such an essential part of this character."

*Do you believe in vampires?*

"Oh, I don't have to "believe" in vampyres, because I already "know" of their existence. After all I have met more than just a few of them ... - and they really piss me off. Seriously. Not so much the blood-drinking kind, but those psychic parasites."

*This is a first for you; the first time you are talking to someone from Romania. Or perhaps I am mistaken...*

"Umm, I am not sure. To be honest, I don't really care about what country people are coming from. That's of absolutely no importance to me whatsoever; which is why I tend to forget these things almost immediately. Where did you say you are coming from? Ah, no ... just kidding."

*What do you know about this country, about what is going on around here, in this East that is actually the West for many Asians?*

"Absolutely nothing. Well...except maybe... though this is actually more of a feeling, but... well, the more east you go - and Romania is very east from where I'm sitting - the more homophobic people seem to be.

But then again...the entire population on this planet is becoming more and more homophobic...which is quite a terrible and most scary thought."

*You have many fans; there are a large number of websites made by them, for example, in many different languages... Is SOPOR a brand?*

"Hmm, I think you can say that, yes. I have never thought of it that way before though, at least not consciously, but yes... I think, you are right."

*It seems that everything that is related to the name of the band, sells.*

"Ha! That's a good one."

*Every album comes in special editions, with a limited availability, with all sorts of personalized accessories that are found together with the CD, vinyl or the tape itself. The booklet is always different, full of sometimes strange details, interesting photographs, all sorts of certificates of authenticity, t-shirts and even...condoms. Where does the SOPOR concept end anywhere does the SOPOR marketing start? Or should I perceive differently these sorts of accessories? Am I in the wrong?*

"I am not sure, whether I understand your question, because...well...I have never bothered about marketing-strategies. All I want to do is...create. If it were up to me I would probably issue a lot more stuff, even t-shirts, simply because I just like to create them; well, at least occasionally...when the mood takes me. But Apocalyptic Vision is not interested in selling t-shirts...or posters for that matter. At least not on their own. That's why I have to include them within those limited album editions you mentioned."

*Throughout the years I have found available on the market illegal copies of your albums, even digipack versions. Once with Alex's (Trisol) re-releasing some older albums, this current has probably become diluted.*

"No, not at all. Unfortunately there are still loads of illegal products on the market exploiting the SOPOR-brand ... - and it IS a brand as we have just learned. There are tons of t-shirts available, CDs ... even vinyl bootlegs. Someone once suggested that I should consider it simply a compliment that Anna-Varney and SOPOR AETERNUS have reached such a high status, that people actually take the trouble of manufacturing pirate-copies of my work. But I heard this I couldn't help thinking: "Oh really? Well, I'll remind you of that the day somebody breaks into your house and steals all your possession. Let's wait and see, if you'll consider that a compliment to your sense of taste for interior design too!"

*However, the fight against the MP3s is practically difficult to be one. Having said that, there are positive outcomes relating to this, as now, you can listen to the new released materials prior to purchasing (and so you can decide if the music is worth to be bought). In the past, one would buy being guided by the feeling, cover and flair and perhaps after having read the reviews. Even if it could be interpreted as a lack of respect towards art and the artist, this MP3-like approach comes out victorious in the end. Is there an antidote?*

"Well, even in the past you could ALWAYS listen to the music before you bought an album. All you had to do was to go the record-shop and ask them to put in on for you. But I know what you mean, of course. For example there has NEVER been any independent record-store where I lived, so I always had to travel to the big bad city for that, which I thoroughly disliked. But even in the 80s there were only one or two shops that had a halfway acceptable selection of "independent" (whatever that means these days) music and, of course, they both have closed down in the early nineties. It's a shame really. But, admittedly, even those shops sometimes had to order the LPs that I were interested in, which naturally meant that I was forced to buy them even if I thought they were crap. So, yes... having the opportunity to pre-listen to an entire album (or just parts of it) via mp3 is just brilliant. I couldn't agree more. But unfortunately it doesn't stop there, because humans are all liars and thieves by nature. For example: three days after »Les Fleurs du Mal« was released you could illegally download the full album from at least five different internet addresses. So, seriously I ask you: is that supposed to make me happy?

Thing is, it takes me at least one and a half years to create a album. And it is not just the music, it is the concept, the trinity of music, word and image. What I create is an intimate act of magick. But when people are reducing the beauty of it to a sheer consumer's product, being content with a cheap mp3-sound, never appreciating the effort and energy that has been invested into it... then... sorry, they don't seem to deserve any better... - and it doesn't come as a surprise that this planet is dying."

*The mystery you surround yourself with, together with the rumours that travel through all the available communication paths make you a persona in demand, perhaps controversial, your transsexuality tempting some to make cheap speculations and not only. Even more so, everybody asks you about your look, about intimate things that belong to your private life. And you never answer.*

"Of course I do not answer to that. After

it is nobody's bloody business. But if you really want to stick a label on me, it should be "transgendered", not transsexual. There is a bit of a difference, you know. Oh... oops... is that a pun-alert I hear?"

*I find myself having to do the same, as a multitude of rumors will never frame anything real. I know (from your previous statements) that approximately 30 years of suffering, of continuous depression, of isolation and disappointment have made you what you are today. Should I conclude that you are now somebody else?*  
"No, people NEVER change. That's one of the many illusions people have."

*Happy, content with yourself, with what you wanted to be?*  
"Ha, that's a good joke."

*I tried to call 2-11-13-14 but you never answered! And it was a real emergency! What happened?*  
"Well, that's because you have dialed the wrong number, darling! But it wasn't really your fault, after all the number is actually printed wrong on the booklet. It should have been »4« instead of »14« ...which makes it one of those really interesting phenomena ...well, interesting for me, that is. You see, when I was doing the artwork for this page, I remember staring at the numbers, thinking: »OK, you better make sure that you get this done correctly« ...because 2-11-13-4 functions as the numerological equivalent to SOPOR. In other words, misprinting those numbers is the same thing here like mis-spelling my own name. That alone is already embarrassing enough, but because it happened within the context of the artwork of »Les Fleurs du Mal« there is an additional aspect and meaning to it... one that actually took me quite a some time to realise.

Well... when I first did the artwork for the limited box-edition of the album, I even printed the booklet to check for mistakes but I just didn't see it. Even though I was staring at the computer print-out, again thinking the same thing: »now, check it again and make sure that those numbers are correct before you send it off«. But did I see it? Nope! Then, when I received the finished product, I opened the box, looked at the page... and still I did not see it! A few weeks later I created the booklet for the standard CD-edition... same thing: staring, printing, staring... thinking all is OK, sending it off. Until I leisurely thumbed through the booklet of the box-set edition a couple of days later...and almost freaked out when I eventually realised what I had done. I immediately tried to stop the production, but of course it was too late for that by then. So I began to question myself

why this had happened. Why did I write »14« instead of »4« ...this makes no sense... or does it? I was contemplating on the question for about half an hour until I finally understood the message.  
Oh, and before you ask ... I am not going to tell you. It's a personal thing, and far more interesting to me than anybody else. I have corrected it for future edition...but the telephone-line is disconnected by now anyway. :)"

*Who owns the sedated heart from 1952? Am I to understand that it is yours?*  
"Whose heart could it be if not me, huh? There is no-one else around..."

*I find the booklet for "Les Fleurs Du Mal" very fascinating... The main element is the heart, labeled and stressed all throughout... Is it perhaps a novel way of showing your love towards someone? Although the heart is broken, dual...separated frailly... Should perhaps this conceptual and musical poem be assimilated as a romantic one? Even if it sounds, let's say strange, to declare: I love you so much, dearest dear, that I would die for you, right now, right here!*  
"No, you are confusing two different things here. What you just quoted is a line from »Consider this: the true meaning of Love« (taken from the upcoming album »Sanatorium Altrosa«) ...a song that is actually not about romantic love at all. But even the album »Les Fleurs du Mal« is not really about that sort of thing. Well, not in its essence, anyway... though it might appear to be ...to some people."

*Virgin Queen, Insigne Virgins, the royal crown, the scythe... the sailors and the soldiers... What am I to make of this story? You usually write about yourself in your lyrics. Which is the real face of the Virgin Queen?*  
"I have never stopped writing about myself. I still do. Exclusively. It is just that most heterosexual men have a bit of problem understanding the album...or, let's say: finding access to it. But that's all right, and perfectly natural."

*If in most of the photos the image is one that frames the feeling of despair and suffering, I have identified one that is somewhat romantic in its despair, perhaps with a hint of nostalgia, even melancholic... where you have a warmer sight, with more hospitality... Should I conclude out of this that contrasts are beginning to be details with some sort of significance for you? Until now, I assimilate you with a nihilist persona, misanthropic, disgusted by all that surrounds you, uninterested by things of beauty, let's say, ones full of colors, belonging to the life we live in... all having left out of your*

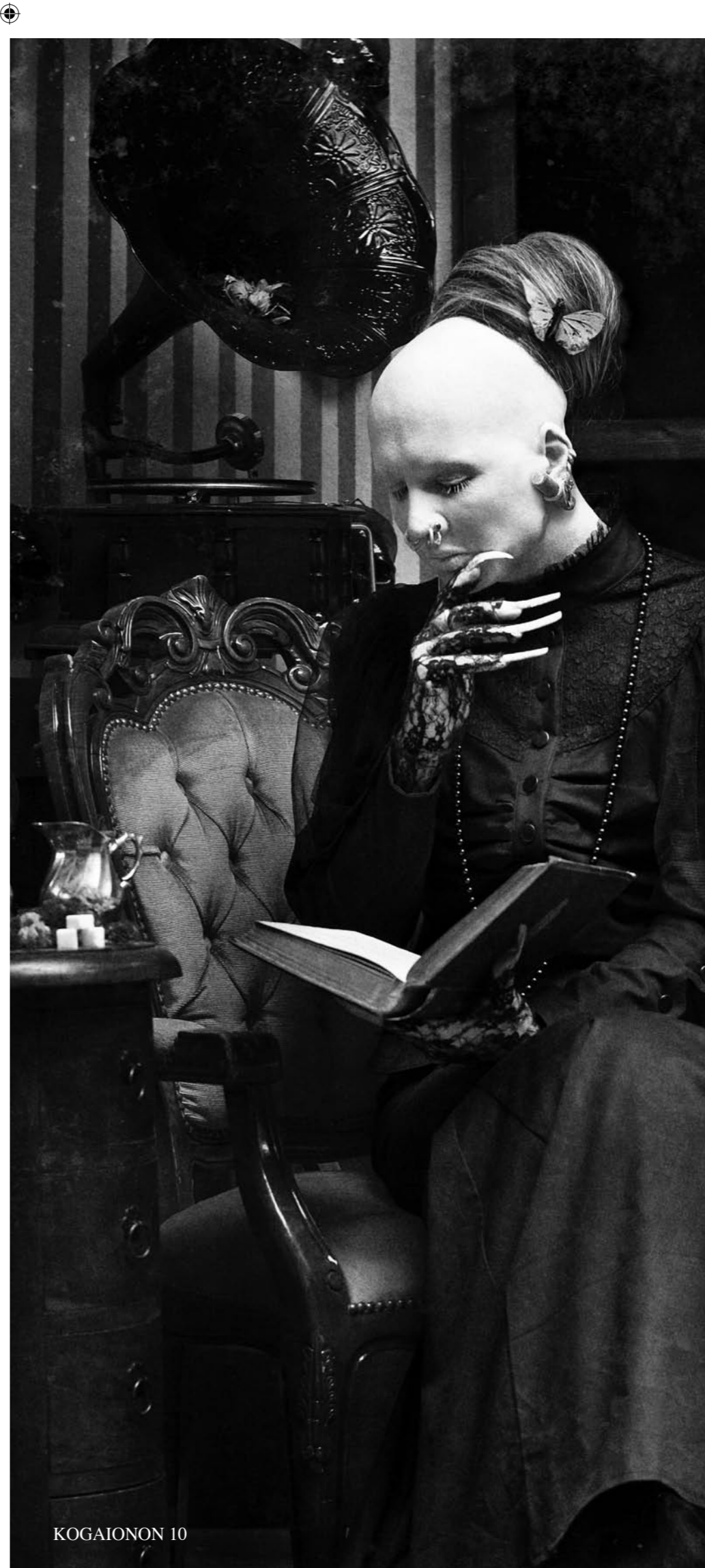
*disillusions/disappointments and not only so...*  
"Sorry, but I don't understand your question. Are you implying that I am opening up to the world around me??? Gods, that's an insult... and quite an awful though, really. :)"

*As a follow-up on the previous idea, what brings you joy? What are your benchmarks that would help frame joys of sorts?*  
"Music. The brief moments when all pieces come together and things finally make "sense". Alas...really just fleeting moments."

*What if I'd tell you that your music has now a visible melodic note, one that gets Goth club-goers to dance? Does that bother you?*  
"No, why should it bother me? It is a lovely thought that people are dancing to the music of SOPOR... - though, admittedly, I find it hard to imagine ...and I wouldn't want to see it. It's just that old insecurity thing... you know... always believing that your own stuff is just never good enough ... for whatever. Silly, I know, but still that's how I feel. Also... I make music for headphones, not for dancehalls so, to me it would be like someone reading parts of my personal diary to an audience. Yes, it's a very strange thought... but as long as I am not there to see it ... - go ahead. Have fun with it. :)"

*I noticed that there are a large number of instruments contained within your music. Together with the keyboard, analogue synth, cello or violins, there are more and more obvious, expressive appearances of trumpets, clarinets, oboes and trombones; as well as that, impressive choirs, that harmonize perfectly with the bass, alto and tenor... while your voice continues to remain unmistakable, full of multiple modulations, of tremble, equally sad... but in truth, a sad happiness, dramatic... What does the future hold? What new instruments would be added? It seems as The Ensemble Of Shadows is getting a stronger hold on SOPOR, even when it comes to the voices! Is this how it should be?*

"Oh dear, where do I start?! OK, first thing: The Ensemble of Shadows has nothing to do with the musicians whatsoever. That is something people often get entirely wrong. The musicians are just guests, session-players that I rent in order to record an album. That's all. As for the instruments ... well, I have used brass, woodwinds and strings from the very beginning ... so there haven't been any real changes either. It was only with »La Chambre d'Echo« that I introduced a more electronic side to my music ... and for »Les Fleurs du Mal« I have made use of a choir for the first time. Apart from that things are rather consistent.



But, of course, I do not know what the future might bring ... - if it going to bring anything at all."

*I noticed that the electronic side of the music has gotten diluted after La Chambre... you really created some controversy amongst the fans with that orientation... I mean, it now seems that you are back to the origins, to the initial music, in a different form, of course, more bombastic, more complex...*  
"Really? That's funny. After all there are still quite a few synths on »Les Fleurs du Mal«, though not as many as on the album before. On »La Chambre d'Echo« the classical instruments served like the icing on a cake, whereas with »Les Fleurs« the synth are reduced to mere basslines, and as far as I remember the occasional lead. Here the icing is obviously the choir, yes. But it has nothing to do with people having disliked the electronical side of SOPOR. I am actually not even sure if they did, but even if so who cares?! However, I have to admit that I do feel a certain desire... or rather, need... to return to certain aspects of SOPOR... something you might want to use the expression "back to the roots" for."

*The most homosexual thing...this is what I read somewhere about the album with references to Baudelaire. Although a reactive, provocative description, I find it interesting and suggestive. How do you see it?*

"I think that it's an absolutely lovely compliment when your albums is called »the most homosexual thing I have heard in years« - maybe I'll have that engraved on my tombstone - right next to: "Please, don't piss on the flowers, boys!"

*With you, a new album isn't just about the conception phase, the rehearsal and the recording. It's also a new photo shoot. Isn't this continuous expression through photographs tiring (not necessarily from a physical point of view)? Like you would be a starlet that has to stay hours/days on end in front of a photographer that takes thousand of shots and picks only a few, representative... Or is Wolfgang Voglhuber patient with you? Do you like Vienna that much?*

"It's a common misconception, but unlike other bands or solo-artist, I am in full charge of the photo-sessions. After all, I am the one with the concept. So, any photographer is basically just a hired hand. They are here to serve me, because I don't want to be bothered with technical aspects when I am performing. Wolfgang Voglhuber was hired for two photoshoots, »Es reiten die Toten so schnell« and »La Chambre d'Echo« and as for Vienna: I was only there because I was working with Joachim



Luetke, who happens to live there. In terms of architecture, Vienna is a lovely place indeed, unfortunately all the pavement is covered in dog-shit. Quite disgusting, really.

It is true, however, that I do find the need to do photo-sessions rather tiring. In fact, I don't even like them. I suppose, mainly because the preparation for them is so damn stressful. Yes, it is not the session as such, that is usually fine once I am "in" it...but the preparation is a real pain."

*I hope I am not wrong but considering how much SOPOR I have listened to, I will dare say that I can see even beyond the spotlights that are trying to blind me. "Les Fleurs du Mal" seems, in expression, a more feminine album, warmer and more choir-like, although the masculine voices are more present than in "La Chambre". As well, the duality that I have mentioned previously seems more persistent, the sobriety and melancholy balancing almost evenly the sound, while the contrast between pink and black shocks the eye. Am I wrong?*

"Well, well, well... after LA CHAMBRE D'ECHO I fell into a black hole, as I felt totally drained, and I had no idea what to do next or where to go. Then in October 2006 I did a extensive photosession for a new album, but I just could not find the music for it. It was like there were two entirely different things going on in my head, which just couldn't be combined. It was really frustrating, as I didn't know what to do, because both musically and lyrically I wasn't getting anywhere. I had a strong desire to combine black and pink, I even used a dusky-pink flowers doing the entire session, but Joachim, while doing a few test-images, rendered them all white, which made me really unhappy. I didn't know what it was, but I REALLY needed this strange combination of black and pink. Until

one night I decided to completely IGNORE the photosession I had done (and paid for), and instead start something new from scratch, something entirely different ... and the very moment I made that decision I started feeling a lot better. In fact, even though I didn't have any music then, I knew that this was the way to go, and that was going to be absolutely brilliant. Which it eventually did.

The idea behind LES FLEURS DU MAL was to basically hide all sadness underneath a veil of pink and superficiality. However, if you have ears to hear, you'll realise that the sadness is still there... in fact, it is overwhelming at times.

The interesting thing is, and that really came as a surprise to me is how very gender-healing the album turned out to be. That's an effect I really did not expect."

*How do you see "Sanatorium Altrosa", the sister album?*

"Well, it's a sister-release. It contains music from the same "period", mostly from the same session as »LES FLEURS DU MAL« ...but still it is an "entity" of its own."

*Let us talk about this last album. Why wasn't it done at the same time with the previous one? There are songs, some instrumental, some remixed that can be found, in a form or other, on "Les Fleurs Du Mal" as well... What was the purpose of editing this album? It doesn't seem to be a conceptual one, but more like one that is meant to express a different side of the previous one. The dual personality, the concept of TWICE is manifesting visibly amongst these two makes as well?*

"Perhaps you do not know what it is like to record and mix an entire album. So let me tell you that this is really hard work. And we only had 30 days to do it! Which is a bloody miracle that I got that far at all! Once you have heard it, you'll hopefully realise that

»SANATORIUM ALTROSA« has an entirely different vibration than »LES FLEURS« ...even though some of the tracks are the same. And that's the thing about recording a SOPOR-album. It demands your full attention, and that means that you become one with its vibration. We did record most of those three extra-tracks in the »LES FLEURS DU MAL« session as well, but they just sounded crap. Nothing like they do now. It is partially a vibrational thing, and partially also a matter of lacking studio-time. As a matter of fact, each time I have been in John's studio so far, I have always tried to record extra tracks for future projects, and it NEVER worked out! I always had to come back to it...always. Well, that should teach me a lesson."

*What else should we know about Sanatorium Altrosa? Where is this military aspect coming from (from all points of view)?*

"What military aspect are you referring to? The snare drums? Oh, they are simply part of the music. They have to be there."

*SOPOR doesn't do live shows. You never said you would not do it, but only that human presences do not create a psychical comfort to you. More so, you were saying that when you were in Slovakia someone asked about a possible concert and Alex responded (even before you got a chance to) that SOPOR will never sing live. How would a show like this look like though, virtually speaking?*

"Oh, if it ever happens you'll get to see it. Don't worry."

*How is your collaboration with Alex Storm going? It seems he got a winning ticket with the offer he made you years ago...*

"Oh, go ahead, tell him! I think he needs to hear that from someone!"

*Have you received any other offers in the meantime, more tempting ones perhaps? Are you content with what he does for SOPOR?*

"I am never content. How could I possibly be?"

*There is a sort of mystery between the two of you, both of you says that you do not remember how you met, or that it is a long story... one that it is never told.*

"Oh, nonsense. He remembers it quite perfectly. And after he told me, it all came back to too... - most of it anyway. The story goes like this: somebody recorded a mix-tape for him which also contained two SOPOR-tracks. He got totally thrilled, and bought SOPOR's first demo-tape. He was quite into American Deathrock back then, so he sent a tape to an American fanzine, which featured a local band from his area on the a-side, and SOPOR as an addition on the b-side, hoping that the magazine ("Aesthetics", later to become "Gotham" I believe) would make an interview with this band. But apparently the people in charge thought that the band was utter crap (if not to say »shit«), and instead they wanted to print an interview with that strange other "project", which was featured on the b-side...namely SOPOR AETERNUS & THE ENSEMBLE OF SHADOWS. So they sent a handful of questions to Alex.

Now that guy who sold Alex the SOPOR-tape in the first place apparently knew Holger (the bloke I was occasionally hanging out with at the time), so Alex's telephone-number got somehow forwarded to me ...and apparently I must have really called him up in the end, because we met on a vinyl-fair in Frankfurt, where he gave me the interview. And that's how it started with him."

*You already have made some videos. Should we expect more?*

"You should never expect anything from SOPOR. It prevents you from getting too disappointed in the end."

*Do you have a special passion for video?*

"Oh, I love them. If it is on film it is forever...well, you know what I mean."

*The Goat is one of your most popular songs. Perhaps even Chopin himself would have liked this SOPOR style Funeral March. What other classical music pieces fascinate you? Should we expect other musical fusions like the above one?*

"I don't know. We'll see ..."

*What music do you enjoy listening to?*

"That entirely depends on the mood I am in. It's funny, but whoever I meet, sooner or later that particular question always come up... and I honestly never know what to answer."

*You did a Black Sabbath cover. Do you like Ozzy and his family?*

"Well, I have never met them, so how am I supposed to answer. However, I always liked Ozzy's voice ...on his better studio recordings that is."

*There have been many associations made between your mysterious behavior and Devil Doll...*

"What is all this Devil Doll business about? I have heard that before but I honestly do not see the connection."

*As far as I know, you have no formal music education. Is that a handicap? Do you ever feel that? Do you have any desires to improve your aptitudes relating to this area?*

"Sometimes. But I am also the living proof that it is quite possible to compose absolutely brilliant music without a proper education. So, don't give up, kids. If old Auntie Varney can do it, so can you. Come on, be creative!"

*I noticed that John Rivers tends to become close to your band. Are you that satisfied with the collaboration with him? You even allowed him to arrange the choir of Architecture...*

"We were running out of time when recording, so we had to slightly re-arrange the choir-parts in »Architecture«. I accepted John's suggestion for it, which he actually was quite proud of, and wanted me to mention it in the booklet, which I did. But you are right, I do like recording in his studio, because it has such a nice atmosphere."

*I have never understood your statement that said that your music is one for dead children. Is this related in any way to your lost childhood? Death means loss, weakness maybe? I would greatly appreciate an answer because as a dad, and although I love and breath the music of SOPOR, I find this to be shocking and somewhat too far out. Or perhaps I am just not getting it the intended way?*

"It is actually music for dead children and otherwise wounded souls, which kind of suggests that there is more of a spiritual aspect and meaning to it. So, no...there is no need to panic! It doesn't imply that you have to slaughter your innocent offspring in order to listen to SOPOR...after all, I don't do Black Metal, you know. ;)"

*Hell, Heaven, Nirvana, Karma, Maya, religion, and belief... what effect do these things have on you? You once cited a great man that it is alright to be born in a certain faith but stupid to die in it. Do you still maintain this statement?*

"What I meant was, that you constantly have to question your believes, opinions, attitudes and ...well... "concepts", if you wish - in other words: you have to question yourself. Well, I have to anyway, hence the title of the first SOPOR album. Going through life without ever doubting the things you do is a bit...well...sad, really...and alarming, actually."

*Where do you get your musical inspiration? What about the lyrics? Is it all gravitating around your ego? Perhaps your individuality is so pronounced that it is a continuous source of creation?*

“Oh, I hope so. Mirror, mirror in my hand, who is the most beautiful in this land? It’s you, my Goddess, who else could it be. Anna-Varney is the sweetest thing I’ve ever seen!”

*What is your connection with the fans? How should it be viewed by the ones who worship your art? You are a lonely person, not very communicative, one that spends a lot of time at home. Do the fans have any chance of ever meeting you?*

“Gods, not if I can help it! Have I not made myself clear enough? After all, I don’t do personal interviews, I don’t perform live or do concerts, I am not appearing on television - doesn’t all that at least give you a clue about how I feel when it comes to meeting people and so-called “fans” in general?!”

*Do you think you will ever see yourself as a family oriented person (in this life, or another)?*

“Oh, I am very family-oriented. In fact, I am so ready to get married. You see, I am only waiting for the right man to come walking past my window. :)”

*Is suicide an act of courage or of cowardice?*

“That depends on the situation ...and also partially on what you believe comes after it. Like, let’s say, you have been raised as a Christian, or rather a Catholic, and they have told you all your life that suicide is a mortal sin, and that you go straight to hell for it and still, despite all that, you commit it...suicide I mean...for whatever reason, perhaps thinking that all else is better than this existence here...well, I believe that does qualify for courage. But actually this is a rather delicate and serious subject, and I really don’t want to discuss it superficially. So let’s move on, shall we.”

*Is life simply the prelude of death?*

“Oh, that’s what I call a change of subject! But to answer your question: yes, I think so ... in a way.”

*What other musical projects do you intend to develop? Do you keep in touch with Constance? A new Nenia album?*

“Oh, dear...definitely not.”

*Or perhaps the greatly awaited WHITE ONYX ELEPHANTS?*

“No, I don’t think so. I only created WHITE ONYX ELEPHANTS in order to bridge the gap from the first CD to the »Todeswunsch« album.”

*Are you up to date on what is going around the globe, with the power struggle, oil, armed conflicts, globalization... global warming, the environmental movements*

*and the issues concerning animal rights? Do you find yourself in any of these issues; do they affect or influence you in any way?*  
“No, I try to ignore all that as best as I can. It only depresses me. I am obviously not made for this world.”

*It seems like the morning is upon us, knocking at the doors of our castle. Dear Anna, thank you very much for the patience you required to answer my questions, a lot of them obsessed with finding something new, something intriguing.*

*I didn’t winkle out much so far, especially as, I managed to peeve her now and then, yet she kept personal details for herself and more than that, irony had a special place within this dialogue... Certainly, she prefers not to uncover personal stuff and once again proved that any discussion with her must remain related exclusively to music... at least for someone not having too much in common with Anna, except for the music. Maybe next time will show different...if there will be a future opportunity at all... Until then, I’ll enjoy “Sanatorium Altrosa” and the T-shirt found in the boxset...*

April 2008

# KOGAIONON Rhetorics

## Blue salutes!

Why blue? Out of skepticism towards the fact that winter could actually reach the needed patience and strength to fight back the new season that turns on these lands, even though its snow and blizzard entrances me still. Drop by drop the welcoming feeling will fade away and so will the environment I enjoyed devouring! It’s time for nature to revive and for all bohemians to pursue the dreams they have knitted and staged during winter time, while sticking their nose to the steamed glass of the window, sheltered by a lazy and melancholic fire; it’s time the isolation and loneliness of nature to transpose again in a cozy space, full of fatiguing vividness, noisy picnics and dirty surroundings; no matter if this trash is caused by wrappers, food leftovers or mental saturation! It’s springs time to claim its rights, to prove to me once again that everything follows a cycle, impossible to control or to change, that my only choice is to accept the sole limited predefined human condition... even though I still long within for (or naively hanging upon) the fact that one thing, one place, one time will happen and break this obsessive redundancy that no one seems to care about, due to the ignorance and submission required for a successful life! Or is it maybe just the religion that has already transfigured some of us into more optimistic, more realistic or more alive individuals? Beats me! This beautiful night in which only the Siberian snowstorm inspires the transcendence to the new SUMMONING sequences, and brings up remembrances of times long gone and full of Metal enthusiasm and unconditioned commitment. But never mind all that, it happened ages ago... I am joyful that I can still enjoy winter’s remains, even if these final traces are nothing but my sparks of hope that after a prolonged hibernation, the scent of dead leaves will follow, finally trumpeting my return... Until then, I have to bury myself again in the daily outfits, full of contaminating positivism, feverish empathy and epicurean living! Maybe this alternation has a meaning; furthermore, one could believe that being balanced equals surviving and this last achievement is often more valued than the true beliefs you are struggling to share in the most sincere way... despite it might sound like a cheap compromise... maybe even like a betrayal. I fear refusing to trust that I am stronger than the environment which usually dominates me in an uncontrollable way... and I delude myself that when I am all alone, without anyone else to interfere, I am independent, strong and self-controlled. No more rhetoric, end of the monologue, I have already started to get bored and that’s no good, especially when I have got one more hour left until the dawn breaks and shuts me down to sleep, in order to get the rest I need, to be up for a new stage of this transitory hope...

One of the most nonconformist and long-lasting bands of the label Cold Meat Industry is this particular duet. Throughout the history ARCHON SATANI transformed into ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO and for 20 years now it is functioning within a less media focused, less promoted scene but one that unveils a different musical universe. Since I have only positive words about ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO, I've decided to include an interview with Tomas Pettersson, the leader of this band, interview that is comprised of three distinct parts: one that dates two years back (taken by Stefan Raduta), a second one belonging to journalist Emmanuel Hennequin of D-Side Magazine and a more recent one, taken a few days before and after the Brasov concert.

## I

*Hello Tomas. How are you doing in these cold days of January?*

"Today, January 17th is actually my birthday. I am turning 34 and the weather outside is quite dreadful..."

That is how I started, but since I didn't pick up this interview again, until six months later, it is now June 30th, and the weather outside is quite the opposite. We are passed the summer solstice (June 21st), it is 10.30 pm and the temperature outside is about 20 and the sun has just stopped shining. I am about to go outside for a cigarette and a cup of tea, and life is actually quite fine despite too much work."

*Speaking of seasons, I'm quite curious, which one is your favourite? I know many Scandinavians who moved to warmer places... do you ever feel tempted?*

"Not really. I love to have four distinct seasons; I love the advent and anticipation of spring and the wonders of summer, the rainy decent of autumn and snow and cold that is refrigerating our lives for almost four months. I might move elsewhere for a short period; letting my son spend six months in Italy just for the experience itself, or moving to the US for the very same reason, but this is the way I was born, that is how I shall die."

*Cocktails, Carnage, Crucifixion And Pornography" was an absolute revelation to me, it is the album that finally gave me a chance to understand where you're going, but it also raised more questions than before. Please tell me your view on this creation of yours, why the title, what you wanted to express through it, and how do you see it now, three years after its release.*

"CCCP was my great change. I finally decided after years and years of hesitance to invest in some new equipment, and through the advantages that followed, it changed the entire process of creation. I had just quit my night job at the porn shop / strip club after some greater misunderstandings and for the first time ever, I got up every morning at 8 and started to work with ORE. Normally, my process of creation takes time; from about a year to three years depending on time, moods, ideas etc., etc., but this time I did the entire work in less than 4 months. I started in January and finished in April, so thanks to determination, structure and time, I managed to start new. What is interesting however, especially in retrospective, after the relatively recent release of "Apocalips", is that CCCP was never perceived as especially astonishing or received as any sort of masterpiece. But now, four years later, I constantly need to listen to comparisons between CCCP and "Apocalips", explaining how wonderful CCCP was. So you see, you can never win until after you are deceased."

*CCCP was followed by a very interesting and intriguing experiment with Italy's SPIRITUAL FRONT, named Satyriasis - Somewhere Between Equilibrium & Nihilism". "Two is Company, Three is an Orgy, Four is Forever" seems to be the main idea behind this split EP... Do you feel that it's the most sexual oriented release of yours, is this what you were trying to achieve? Could this be the most beautiful song you have ever composed? How did this union take place, why SPIRITUAL FRONT?*

"Making the content sexual felt very natural because of the thematic

itself, so it is possible that this is consciously the most sexual accomplishment I have ever achieved, and even more, that it IS the most successful song I have ever accomplished.

Why SPIRITUAL FRONT? Simone and I met at an orgy in Berlin. We recognized each-other since we had mutual friends in Italy, and between various "censored" acts of adult character we had some drinks and started talking about life, sex, death and music, and came to a mutual conclusion that maybe we owed it to ourselves and the world in general, to make something worthwhile together. It was an interesting and very rewarding meeting. We have met several times since, but a first meeting is always the first. I wish to believe that we were brought together by fate, and bound in blood by a mutual belief in sex, depravity and demoralization as the remedy to world salvation. Simone is a fantastic person, he IS the Armageddon gigolo. Girls love him, they swarm around him like flies are attracted to shit. I believe we think alike; we share a similar vision of irony and nudity, he brings out the best in me and makes me a better person, and since he doesn't really understand what I am saying, he wouldn't be able to tell that I am actually an idiot."

*"Apocalips" is a release that truly mesmerizes me, in every way. Yet again you come and hold captive the audience in a maze of desire, sex, depravity, destruction, the will to create and the temptation to destroy. It's all in there, lying hidden in your insane poetry... Please comment on this release, the message and thoughts behind it. Would you say it's the best thing you've accomplished so far, musically?*

"Between the "Apocalips" is where we were created, and it is where we were born. They are the lips I kiss and the lips I savour. They are the lips of lust and creation, the lips we seek to satisfy and the lips for which we suffer in desire. They are the lips that can start wars, and the lips that are able to end them. Who is kissing your Apocalips?"

Love: the deadliest, most lethal of all contractible symptoms.

Pain & Pleasure: how delightful, how deceiving, how consuming.

Lust: how a flame of all worldly desires burns inside every man and woman.

Life: I love to watch and be watched. I dream and I lust. I love and I hate. I laugh and I cry. But where does my testosterone take me?

Enlightenment: how everything suddenly can become so clear after failure, after failure, after failure.

Lies: what are truth and lies for those who neither see nor hear?

War: how a never-ending struggle started on May 14th 1948.

Three is an Orgy: four hands please better than two. Loving as three might be the salvation we all search for. Who is kissing your Apocalips?

Ignorance: not being able to see the forest for the trees. Are we really willing to accept the consequences of our actions?

Change: How the sun always sets and every day always ends. How everything ever changes, but still remains the same.

"Not saying and feeling that "Apocalips" is my BEST accomplishment ever, would be completely moronic, why else would I record something new if it was not the best material I have ever accomplished? "Satyriasis..." used to be the best, and "Apocalips" IS by all means the best accomplishment thus far.



It is superior in every way to all my previous releases. It is better orchestrated, more perfectly mixed and produced etc., etc. I am quite pleased about the outcome, but I am very very curious how the upcoming ORE work, "O.N.A.N.I—Practice makes Perfect" will be received. Time will tell."

"Sons & Daughters of Lilith and Cain" is such a fantastic song, next to many others on "Apocalips". I find it interesting that you'd still do the vocals on this one, although you are the voice of Lilith. Why not let your companion interpret it? It doesn't come as a shock that you'd use these characters as metaphors in your music, but I am curious to find out what you see in them. They were both denied something, and they both fought back, rebelling against the creator, against rules, seeking freedom. Lilith gave birth to demons and Cain murdered his only brother. What does Tomas Pettersson see in them?

"I am an egotistical son of a bitch so I do everything myself, for better and worse. Yes, what do I see? Damnation. Punished by the hand of the loving god. Determination. Liberation. Being cast into the shadow. Freedom."

You are very passionate by the Roman Empire. Who do you admire more, Caesar for his dreams and visions of grandeur, or Caligula, for his sadistic and murderous character? Which of the two do you think lived more intensely; whom do you have closer to your heart? Why does absolute power drive men mad?

"I admire Nero for having the guts to burn it all down. The beginning is the end is the beginning. Madness is so close at hand and in heart, every day every minute every second; just add one extra drop and the chalice stops being just full. Give a man total authority, give him the opportunity and the resources to make his every dream, every wish and every sadistic desire come true, and it WILL drive everyone mad. We are born and will never be capable to handle such omnipotence."

Your son was born in September. Who is Tomas Pettersson today, after the birth of Julius Tomas Nathanael Larsen? How has his life changed? What happens to his dreams, his views on life and death, his passions and obsessions?

"After I became a father to the most wonderful of men, I suddenly realized that all the time I once thought I had, was gone, dreams I possessed suddenly seemed harder to realize, and everything that I took for granted, was just an illusion. And this very diverse and sometimes ambiguous feeling of becoming new while still remaining the same, while becoming complete while feeling absolutely inadequate, has certainly

affected my personal "apocalypse" and forced me to look inside my micro cosmos for answers. But I am still searching. I do not know what I seek, so I will probably never know if I have found it. I have no idea what will happen to his dreams, his passions, obsessions and his views on life. Will I be there to guide him? Yes of course. Every day every minute I can. Will I try to change his mind and make it my own? No I won't. Whatever he decides is good enough for me, and I expect that there will be more than a handful of stupid ideas and decisions as we proceed onward towards an unwritten future."

I don't want to be nosey, but are you married? I would never dare asking personal questions, but if you'd like to share some things about your life with our readers, please feel free... Please tell us a few things about Rose-Marie, or who you're working with now... How far does other people's involvement into ORE go?

"I don't work with people I don't fuck. It is quite easy. So there is Rose and I, nobody else, but no, we are not married. But if we decide to fuck others more than occasionally, then maybe the line-up will extend..."

O.R.E has become a Neo-Folk project in the last years; it wasn't like this when you began. I can't help but wondering how you feel about the fact that fans of CURRENT 93, DEATH IN JUNE or DER BLUTHARSCH embrace your music as well. These are right-wing entities that embrace the same historical themes you embrace (Roman Empire), although sexual approach you bring to the table makes you different. I hear people come to your shows and give you that salute... How do you feel about all this? Do you nurture any nationalist-socialist feelings? Do you know these artists; do you have any kind of relation with them? Personally I'm really into DER BLUTHARSCH, and I think this is what artistic freedom is all about.

"I am not so sure that I agree with your assessment of ORE becoming a Neo-Folk act over the last few years, more willingly the opposite. We started out as something that was instantaneously embraced by the Neo-Folk community, and have ever since worked and worked our way out. I am willing to say that we have never been further from the Neo-Folk establishment than we are today. I could be wrong and mistaken, but this is what I feel at the time being. And honestly, I don't care. Many bands dread the notion of being associated with the Gothic scene, but I am not really that concerned. Not all Gothic's are superficial and not all Industrial /Neo-Folk listeners are enlightened. The primary difference between the two as far as O.R.E

is concerned, is that our average Neo-Folk / Industrial listener is male, and our average Gothic listener is female. They all dress in black, and depending on what you call a uniform, they all wear one. Corset, mini-skirt and high heels, or black shirt, black army pants and black tie; it is all pretty damn uniform. If you carry the ambition to remain true and exclusive to the Neo-Folk / Industrial scene, you are definitely not in it for the fun. I personally don't aspire to remain true and exclusive to anyone, I simply do this for me."

I've read that you're into Johnny Cash and Brigitte Bardot. That's amazing. What other 'famous' artists do you find pleasure listening to? What about underground acts, CMI type? How do you feel about SOPOR AETERNUS, DEAD CAN DANCE or THE SISTERS OF MERCY?

"I listen to all sorts of music as part of the same scene in which we coexist: IN SLAUGHTER NATIVES, SPIRITUAL FRONT, HEKATE, OF THE WAND AND THE MOON, HAUS ARAFNA and on and on and on. I think SOPOR AETERNUS is quite okay. The music is nice but after a while you get really really tired of Ann Varney's voice. DEAD CAN DANCE are also good, but dramatically overrated. „Within the Realms of the Dying Sun" is an unforgettable album, but aside from that there are occasional moments of genius and a whole lot of ethereal nonsense. SISTERS OF MERCY are a landmark. What they have done is amazing. Eldritch has done so many great songs over the years, but unfortunately it all seems to be in the past; he DID."

I once introduced you to the greatest nihilist that ever lived, E. M. Cioran. I would be curious to find out your thoughts on suicide, because I know you play a lot with knives, it must have crossed your mind to split open your wrists... here is what he feels:

"Those who maintain that suicide is an assertion of life are cowards. They invent explanations and excuses to mask their impotence and lack of daring for in fact there can be no willed or rational decision to commit suicide, only organic, secret causes which predetermine it. Any suicide is impressive. So I wonder why people still look for reasons and justifications, why they even deprecate it. Nothing is more ridiculous than to make a hierarchy of suicides and divide them between the noble and the vulgar. Taking ones life is sufficiently impressive to forestall any petty hunt for motives."

"I despise those who scoff at suicides committed for love, because they do not understand that, to the lover, unfulfilled love is the cancellation of his being, a destructive plunge into meaninglessness.

Unrealized passions lead to death faster than great failures. Great failures are slow agony, but great passions that are thwarted kill like a bolt of lightning. I admire only two types of people: the potentially mad and the potential suicide. Only they inspire me with awe, because only they are capable of great passions and great spiritual transfigurations. Those who live positively, full of self-assurance, content with their past, present, and future, have only my respect." Your view on the subject?

"Yes, what is my view? There are so many obvious reasons to slit our wrists or put the gun in the mouth; heartache, mental illness, social misery, pollution, terrorism, and on and on and on... more than any conceivable number to actually live and be merry, but I still don't pay homage to anyone's decision to end their useless and unproductive lives. Killing yourself for being happy and fulfilled is one thing. Killing yourself for feeling that there is nothing left to do. No more children to be conceived, no more bridges to burn, no more churches to arson, no more ass to investigate, no more cock to blow, then sure, I salute you: put the gun in your mouth, pull the trigger; slit your wrists and watch the blood pumping. But doing it for the sake of feeling miserable, not having any friends, not having anyone that listens, being unemployed and on the brink of personal decline, don't come knocking on my door for sympathy and understanding."

Will ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO keep exploring sin, murder and sexual freedom in the future as well? Would you be honoured if you're your music would be played at a fetish / S&M gathering let's say in... New York City?

"What is honour? How is it defined? I think it fun and gratifying anytime our music is being played for any given reason, at home, in clubs, on the radio; but going as far as to say that I am honoured when it is, is probably one step too far.

I am surprised anytime an S&M club plays any good music, so just imagine my surprise if would be ORE. As I have said before, I live O.R.E. and I constantly carry it with me. Everything I do can be embodied and all I dream I wish to include. I don't seek to go one way rather than another, it just happens. So maybe I will keep exploring sin, murder and sexual freedom for all eternity, maybe not. Time will tell."

You seem to be in a never-ending marriage with Cold Meat Industries, the no. 1 label in Dark Ambient/ Industrial music. Do you feel Roger Karmanik fulfils your needs as an artist? Does he support you with tours and performances? "I am quite content with being part of CMI. I can do what ever I want. Roger doesn't act

as either judge jury or executioner, and that is all I ask for. He let's ORE be ORE, without compromise. Does he support me with tours and performances? Not on a regular basis. I mainly handle those matters myself, but once in a while we are asked to participate as part of a larger CMI event somewhere, and consequently, he does assist from time to time."

What happens during an ORE live performance? I've seen some photos that got me intrigued, but I'll let you describe... how is the audience responding to the S&M scenes?

"It was a long time ago since I did any S&M acts on stage. It was back in the early days. It served a purpose back then, as a phase of exploring the possibilities of performing live, but I quickly realized that you wander along a very thin line of what is tasteful and intriguing, or just tacky and plain stupid. What we did back then was befitting. Very simple and to the point, but it wouldn't have been possible to keep it going for any greater extent of time. I try to make tour concerts as special as possible with the use of video-projections, live fire and additional participants serving a purpose as part of the performance, and sometimes all pieces fall into place and we have a great turnout, visually, audibly and technically, but do not expect anything and you won't be disappointed."

Rumours say you're a vegetarian. That's a little strange for an admirer of Rome, but nevertheless, what's your favourite food and drink? Would you indulge in robust, dark as coal Cabernet or let yourself carried away by a delicate, crimson Pinot Noir?

"Don't listen to rumours. I am not vegetarian. I eat pussy anytime. I don't murder animals by eating their food. I just murder animals to eat them. I would gladly indulge in a big rare sirloin steak; just bring it on and I will prove how much this seemingly small body can devour."

My favourite:  
Food - is Sushi  
Drink - is Tea  
Sexual Position - is the 69  
Invention - is the Hold-up Stockings  
Color- is Brown  
Serial Killer - is Ariel Sharon  
City- is Jonestown  
Family - is the Manson family

"I like to go for long walks in the forest, and I enjoy romantic candle lit dinners for two. I love all living creatures big and small, and my favourite colours are pink and brown. Baywatch is my favourite TV show and David Hasselhof is by far my all time favourite actor. I think Madonna is super, and when no one is around, I like to sing

and dance to Like a Virgin and pretend that I am her. How great wouldn't that be?

I think that all politicians do a great job; it can't be easy making all those decisions every day and always knowing what's best for people.

I think George Bush is a swell president and that America is the greatest country in the world. If only all countries could be more like America, everything would be so much better; people would be so happy having all those TV-channels to watch and all those hamburgers to eat...

And I think that if we all just tried a little bit harder, to understand each other better, and accept each other's differences, then the world would be such a cool place.

If anybody feels that they share my interests and my point of views, then please contact me on the following address tomas@ordo-rosarius-equilibrio.net. Maybe you and I can make the world a better place."

We're coming to an end... please tell our readers why prefer being lion for a day, than sheep for a lifetime. And one more curiosity... who is the girl that lives in your dreams?

"I rather rule in Hell than serve in Heaven. Yes who is the girl who lives in my dreams? Have you seen her lately?"

An honour and a pleasure speaking to you, my friend. I've waited for years to make this interview, and hopefully it's going to help spread the fantastic universe that ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO is. I hope one day you will come visit me either in New York City or let me show you the Transylvanian mountains and fortresses. Any final words, regrets or hopes?

"Two is Company, Three is an Orgy. Four hands does please better than two."

January 2007

II

Should there be a taboo around our relation to the body, masturbation could be its carry-flag, couldn't it? What brought onto yourselves to call on your fans through the Internet and ask them to take some pictures of their intimacy, their act of masturbation, all in order to illustrate the new ORE record "O N A N I - [Practice makes Perfect]"?

"I thought it was time to start interacting with the people who care; the people who are physically and spiritually interested in the sexual aspects of O.R.E. I revere integrity; it remains carved in my flesh. It is very important in the presentation of our accomplishments. And to utilize people without a factual interest and conceivable relation to O.R.E and our work, concept and spirit, would not do it for me; maybe



nobody would be able to tell the difference, but for me it would be dishonest and false. And for this very reason I asked for the assistance of our listeners. We could naturally masturbate ourselves on all the featured photography, but how interesting would that be?"

*How did you judge the answer, did you receive an important amount of pictures? Did fans sometimes explain to you why they gave you this substance? What did they say, if it was the case?*  
"People explained to me why they did this and why they wanted to partake; because it mattered to them, and because they appreciated the initiative and the entire idea. And I received enough material to make more than one release; video as well as photography."

*Do you consider your call to the fans like implying for yourselves (or not) some kind of voyeurism?*

"Suggesting that we do this solely to satisfy our own perversions and profit on the naivety and good will of our listeners? Of course, I have considered all conceivable aspects of this situation, and isn't that part of the thrill, to expose yourself completely to someone else in such an intimate and delicate situation?"

*Do you consider voyeurism like a natural tendency of the humankind? Is the territory of the forbidden something we've created to avoid the debate around our own nature? Does it not simply prove that we're afraid of ourselves?*

"No, I don't think voyeurism comes naturally to most people. Excitement itself however, is a turn on, and the act of voyeurism in this sense of exposing yourself to someone else, becomes exciting. The feeling of being discovered while having sex

in someone else's bed with the door unlocked, masturbating in public, touching yourself on the subway to work; they are all on the verge of taboo, and in THAT sense, from the excitement of almost being caught in the act, from committing forbidden acts, voyeurism becomes almost natural."

*What did you want to build/show through the use of these pictures given by the fans?*

"I wanted to show masturbation in different contexts. Me and Rose masturbating would be just one context, but handing it over to our listeners was a matter of letting them decide what to do and what to show."

*Have you photographed yourselves during masturbation? Yes or no, and why in each case?*

"Yes of course. Why? Because I felt it was justified. Why should I make everyone else masturbate for us unless we are willing and able to do it ourselves?"

*Is there not a non-erotic posture in the fact to show (if you've done it) the intimate parts of the body solicited by his/her owner? Where does pornography begin, where does eroticism end?*

"I think masturbation is fascinating and aesthetically appealing. Almost everyone does it, one way or another, often or rarely, but hardly anyone admits doing it; and I think that is the reason why many have such a hard time to see the beauty of the act itself – auto-eroticism. The definition between pornography and eroticism is in the eye of the beholder. What someone considers erotic is probably pornographic for someone else. But I suppose a ground rule by which most people define the difference, is in THAT which is NOT shown, in THAT which is left to the imagination of the beholder. Show all, and you are a pornographer, show some and you are an artist."

*Were you considering "O N A N I" like a way to expose the taboo, and so on to fight against it?*

"No. I think masturbation is fun. Practice makes Perfect; pleasure in the process. I simply wanted people to masturbate, take pleasure in doing so, and ultimately send us the results. The cause was quite simple and quite primal. Something that interested me however, was women versus men. Who would contribute the most, women or men, and how far would they go? I got my answers."

*Do you think that Iggy Pop should masturbate himself on stage nowadays? (And on television too, just before the add break?).*  
"Why not, the more the merrier."

*A question about the plastic of the new record's title "O N A N I": why did you put some spaces between each letter in capitals?*  
"Solely to make people wonder. And judging from your question, I guess I succeeded."

*Is there nowadays a chance to see you create something new with Spiritual Front after "Satyriasis"? Do you have some plans like this?*

"I have plans; we have plans, of various sorts. Some include Simone, some don't. But speaking about them and revealing them out loud, usually has an opposite effect, so I will keep my mouth shut for now. Time will tell, it always does."

*How has developed The Army Of Roses & Equilibrium, and what kind of exchanges do you develop with fans through this entity?*

"The Army of Roses & Equilibrium has come to an unfortunate halt. I lack the time to dedicate myself to the extent I would like to, and I lack the form and forum in which to interact with the

the people who are sincerely dedicated. But everything will be resumed as soon as the time and the form are right."

*Another record is coming for ORE this year apart of "O N A N I -[Practice makes Perfect]"; a second album known as "Songs for Hate & Devotion". First question about it: how do you judge which label shall release your works? "O N A N I -[Practice makes Perfect]" arrives at CMI (as far as I know) and the second record is released by the german label Raubbau. Have you completed the last two albums during the same lapse or were these works separated in time?*

"Friendship is a good foundation, but more important, I need artistic freedom; lyrically, aesthetically as well as musically. If my artistic criterions are met and the idea is interesting enough, then I am both willing and able to work with almost anyone. But for the past 15 years there has been no reason to involve myself with anyone outside the Cold Meat Industry cocoon; until now. Both albums have been created simultaneously, but separately. They do not belong together and one is not the cast off of the other, both are equally good and become individually unique in a conceptual and aesthetic context. I had promised O N A N I to CMI ever since the release of Apocalips back in 2006, and so it shall be, but Songs for Hate & Devotion which also was created in the process, had no obligations or promises to it, and because of this, I felt it was time to extend my horizons and see if something good can come out of this. Once again, time will tell."

*How do you explain this important level of creation for you nowadays? Are there some elements or facts touching your own life that explain this, or is it much more something non explainable, much more "magic" in a certain way?*

"This important level of creation?" I am not sure if I understand you correctly, but I suppose you consider me more creative than normal with the release of FOUR, O N A N I & Songs for Hate & Devotion, correct? Years have passed since I released my first O.R.E accomplishment through CMI back in 1993, and even more years have passed since Mikael and I started Archon Satani back in 1990/91. Over any longer duration of time, we encounter creative set backs, stagnation and regression, as well as sudden flows of unexpected and unstoppable creativity, one normally follows the other. Creativity conceives creativity. Practice makes Perfect. Work, family and music, in that specific order, they are the three pillars of my contemporary existence. And due to (thanks to) my lack of time, along with new ways to canalize myself; I manage to make more of the little time I have. And THAT I believe is why I have managed to accomplish more over the last year than ever before."

*I haven't listened to "Songs for Hate & Devotion". Can you please describe its content and what you have tried to achieve through it?*

"This is not the time to discuss "Songs for Hate & Devotion". Get back to me in spring and I will tell you all about it."

*Do you expect to release some other sort of formats in the near future, like you did with the FOUR 10" picture disc one?*

"Possibly. O N A N I will most likely be available on vinyl, and who knows what's next."

*How do you chose which label releases what? Is this based on friendship with the people in charge of these structures, or is it more based on the philosophy each label develops through its catalogue?*

"As I said before, friendship is a good foundation, but more importantly, I need artistic freedom; lyrical, aesthetic as well as musical. I don't like to be told what to do. When to make it,

what things should look like, how things should sound, or that what I conceive need to reflect a preconceived philosophical and ideological foundation. If these criterions are met and the idea is interesting enough, then I am both willing and able to work with almost anyone. But for the past 15 years there has been no reason to involve myself with anyone outside the Cold Meat Industry cocoon; until now."

*Listening to "O N A N I", I have the impression that your music, more and more, tries searching more "flesh" while keeping its "shadow appearance". And so, emotion is today more tangible than on old things like the very ethereal "The Triumph Of Light.... and Thy Thirteen Shadows Of Love".*

*How do you judge on your side the variation between your oldest works and what you do today, on the pure plastic aspect?*

"There is a vast difference between the past and the present. 11 years have passed since the release of "The Triumph of Light.... And thy Thirteen Shadows of Love" and 15 years have passed altogether since the establishment of O.R.E. So things must have changed, otherwise it would be very, very sad. The entire working process for example, has developed. In the past we recorded everything with basic home studio equipment. Limited 4 channel portable studios, old lo-fi samplers, budget reverbs and so on, and today I work with computers, unlimited multi layer, multi channel recording software.

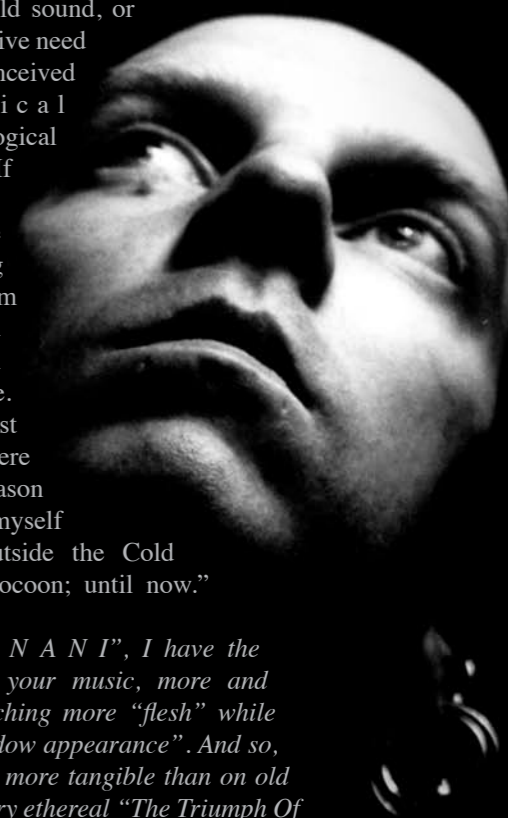
Both the differences and the possibilities are enormous. I have never carried a preconceived plan of what I want to create, or how I want things to sound. And I never enter the studio with a clear notion of what I want; I just make things happen."

I am still able to appreciate all that I created in the past, see it for what it is and recognize it as a reflection of the times in which I lived and worked, but I am naturally more satisfied with what I create today. And if I wasn't, there would be little meaning to continue.

So maybe all this has managed to give birth a more organic sound, something more tactile and perfected. This is how I work. This has not changed. But in the process, you need to renew yourself. Find new ways. We get older. We evolve (at least some of us do). And this I believe, I have managed."

*For you, what makes the essence of your relation with Rose, what does it make it unique?*

"What makes any relationship unique? What makes anyone stay with someone else and evolve, grow old and possibly die together? Is this, monogamy, the natural human condition, to choose one single partner and devote oneself to him or her for the rest of our lives; to remain committed and chaste? I don't know, but in order to make things work, within the relationship, we need the ability to compromise, the ability to support each others dreams and compulsions, to sometimes relinquish one's



one's personal needs for the benefit of one's partner's desires, to give unselfishly, and receive with respect, and also the ability to define, accept and realize lust, to let lust prosper and evolve throughout the years. It is always better to regret the things we do, than the things we never did. WE are relatively good at fulfilling these needs, and I do not know if this makes us unique, but it makes us stay together."

*How would you describe the way you've evolved through art with Rose, since the period where you work together?*  
"This is very difficult to answer. What would have happened to me if I had not met Rose? Would I have evolved to the same stage where I am now, even without the two of us meeting? I do not know, and we'll never know. But things have naturally evolved since we met. We are both older, wiser(?), at least older. And Rose contributes, she has an opinion of right and wrong, good and bad, and she dares to take steps and contribute in a way that wasn't possible before. And for this reason, we, the art, and what we accomplish, have evolved and become more organic. Don't you think?"

August 2008

### III

*Hello Tomas. What's up with you now, at the end of October, 2008? How is the weather in Stockholm?*  
"Hello there. Right now the weather in Stockholm is cold and rainy. We have about plus six degrees Celsius. Winter is seemingly closing in and we are preparing ourselves for close to six months of cold and darkness. How about you? What's the weather like in Romania right now, and what can we expect when we arrive in a month?"

*Here the weather is still ok, around fifteen degrees... In a month? I don't know what the weather will be like on an Apocalyptic Decadent Evening... Too hot, maybe? You played a few concerts this year. Could you be so kind as to offer me more details about them: the atmosphere, the feedback and the fans...? It would be great to describe each event, if is possible...*  
"In 2008 we have played in: Madrid (ES)

The same great people organizing our return to Madrid. Good, seemingly successful concert in the

18

city which never sleeps, had a really good time and I hope to return again. Third time's a charm? Wargem (BE)

Third time in Wargem. Same organizer, larger, better venue. Great organization, good concert. Mera Luna, Hildesheim (DE)

Small band performing at a big festival. Huge stage, famous bands, big organization, great catering. Outdoor concert on Saturday afternoon. Loads of people, all new to our music. But I think we succeeded in what we set out to accomplish. Vini Vidi Vici. Summer Darkness (NL)  
Probably last summer's best concert. Second time at SD. New stage, big venue, professional and good outcome. Accompanied by two bondage performers from Berlin (DE) Zamil & Maliz. Successful with great feedback."

*We are still waiting for the new album to be released. What happened with this big delay? Roger sent an official message and informed us about the new deadline for the album, January 2009.*  
"Yes, what happened? I am finished with O N A N I and have been finished since April / May 2008, and I have been waiting since for particular issues to be dealt with by CMI, but since nothing has happened, and I will keep waiting until all associated matters have been resolved. That is the current status, and that is why the CD has been postponed until January 17th 2009."

*Could you offer me some details about the new album? Is it a lot different from "Apocalips"?*  
"O N A N I is quite different in comparison to Apocalips. It is darker, more minimalist; and like someone said, a congregation of Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio and Archon Satani, a refinement of the past, making it present and perfected."  
How many people are officially in ORE now: only you and Rose Marie?  
"Yes, there are just Rose-Marie and I, no one else."

*You have a lot of guests while playing live. Do you work with the same people all the time?*  
"When performing live, we are at least 4, but sometimes more. It is normally me Tomas, Rose-Marie Larsen, Fredrik Bergström (No Festival of Light), Jouni Havukainen (In Slaughter Natives) and

Axel Menzer (Hekate, Cascadeur)."

*Have you received any other offers besides CMI? Are you satisfied with the Roger's work?*

"Yes, we have received other offers. And finally, "Songs 4 Hate & Devotion" will be released on German label Raubbau, on September 4th 2009. I have been satisfied with Roger's work over the 18 years we have worked together. I am offered aesthetic freedom in every aspect and that means a lot to me. But everything changes; things evolve, sometimes to the better, sometimes to the worse, and sometimes, just beyond recognition."

*What kind of music do you listen to now? What is your opinion regarding each of the following bands: ARCANA, ICE AGES, ATARAXIA, ROME, and SPIRITUAL FRONT? All these bands were invited to play here, in Romania, in 2008.*

"At home, and on my way to work, I normally listen to Combichrist, Kent, Leonard Cohen, Klangstabil, Panzer AG, Lustmord or Christian Death just to mention but a few.

Arcana – A very competent band with nice and competent musicians. The latest record was good, much more interesting than I had expected. I wish them the best.

Ice Ages – Never heard of. But as far as I know, Ice Age is an animated movie that I watch occasionally with my son, so I suppose Ice Age & Ice Age 2 becomes Ice Ages.

Ataraxia – Not so very interesting. Francesca's voice is painfully enervating after more than 10 minutes. But the music is sometimes nice.

Rome – Nice man making very good music. Good melodies and great orchestrations. Four CDs out already, but new in the game. He has a bright future ahead of him.

Spiritual Front – Very good. Rock star potential. Great songs, really great live. What will come next? Can he surpass the "Armageddon Gigolo"? Time will tell. But being Italian is rarely an advantage as Simone said himself."

*What do you think about the rising number of Neo Folk Dark Wave Industrial Neo Classical bands? Is a new trend developing, just as it happened a few years ago with Black Metal, maybe?*

"I have been part of this scene for the past 15 to 20 years. Maybe you see something I don't. I can't see the trend. Black Metal became popular, in the spot light, sold tons of records. I don't see any of this happening to this scene. Is the scene suddenly rising from obscurity into the light? You tell me."

*How is life now, as you are a big father, your son is 4 years old, am I right? Has his existence influenced your musical work?*

"Hahahahaha. Yes, me, the big father. What an influence. Of course he inspires me. The world shrunk, but the perspective expanded. The micro cosmos is currently more fascinating than the macro cosmos. In him I see hope; around me I behold despair. Maybe you able to see and hear this in that and what's soon to be condemned. Cum, join and witness for yourself, the orgies of Roses and Equilibrium. Two is company, Three is an Orgy; I am Forever."

*Do you make differentiations between the concerts? I am referring to the playlist choices or the imagistic and theatrical aspects... What tracks are you going to play in Brasov?*

"I make a difference every time. There is no reason to perform live and show yourself in public unless you are willing to give yourself fully to the audience. And this I try to do every time, everywhere. The songs we will play in Romania spans from C.C.C.P (2003) up until FOUR (2007) and O N A N I (2009)."

*That's all for now. Good luck with your great work and see you in Brasov. Are you ready for a long After Party together with the fans?*

*Do you want to prepare something special after the concert, maybe?*

"I am not sure what I am ready for. All of us are visiting Romania for the first and maybe the last time, and I hope to see something more than just the inside of the venue, and the ceiling of my hotel room. But I am sure there will be time for everyone to take a bit of my soul, one way or another."

October, 2008

*How was the concert in Brasov? Did you like the venue, the decor, the lights, and the atmosphere?*

"The concert in Barsov was very nice; very rewarding; the decor, the atmosphere, the interior, the sound and even the pizza back stage. It was not what we are used to, since people were sitting down and it was virtually impossible to create a "normal" intimate atmosphere. But I am very happy to have performed in Romania, and as far as I am able to tell, the outcome was successful. We had a great time, and people seemingly enjoyed the performances."

*How was the first (hopefully not the only one) visit in Romania? How does Romania look like from a Swedish person's view? What about the Romanian people? The fans?*

"Thanks to you, Andreea and the people / fans at the after party, we had a wonderful time in Romania. The "fans" were very nice and very kind, very courteous and very curious :), and I realized in retrospect that for them, this event was very important and very special. And sometimes in your own real world, between work and performing elsewhere, it is easy to forget this. Romania is very different to Sweden. You have existed under communist govern / tyranny for a long long time, so of course we are not coexisting on the same financial level or the within the same sociopolitical climate. Some things you see in Romania (people, construction plants, stores, machines) is like turning back the clock 50 years, but this is okay, everything has its charm and advantages; and your habitat has much more diversity than what we have here. In Romania you can see the difference between the rich and the poor; here you can not. But I enjoyed our stay Romania very much, I had a really great time, but I wonder if it would have been the same as a tourist; we'll never know, and I don't really care. I just hope we can do it again."

*Will we have the opportunity to see Rose Marie on the stage in the future, maybe?*

"Of course you will. Next time you bring us to Romania, next year :), she will be there. She is also joining for the upcoming concerts next year in Prague, Italy and Zurich."

*Do you now know what the Kogaionon name represents?*

I did not; not until I checked the internet and found out that it means "Holy Mountain". A good choice of name."

*According to Romanian tradition, in the following nights you could dream a Transylvanian vampire girl. And so if your blood is sweet, she might pay you a visit. How do you feel about that?*

"Sounds delightful. I will wait for her. And thereafter I will sleep during the day and work during the night, I just hope I have enough money to financially support myself as a vampire."

November, 2008

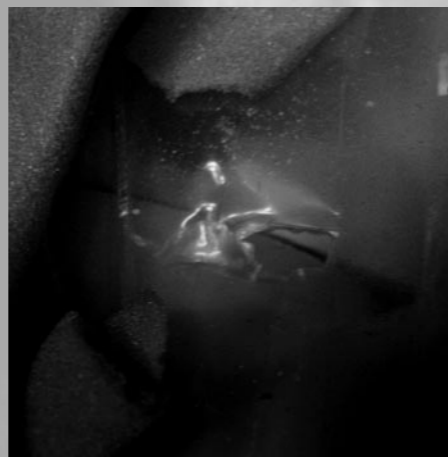
## ROME



One of the most expressive voices within the NeoFolk scene seems to belong to Jerome Reuter, who in only three years of activity managed to release a number of three albums and as well as that, a mini album, all very appreciated by the connoisseur audiences. His latest album released in 2008 was received very well and it probably got a lot more people interested into ROME. And so, let us meet the leader of this band.

*Greeting Jerome, how did you spend your summer? Have you been away, have you managed to recharge your batteries in order to perhaps be more musically productive in the months to come?*

“I had numerous things on my personal agenda this year. Summer turned out to be not that refreshing, actually. But I did go to Normandy in late summer/ early fall. There’s this little place on the coast I go to, almost every year, to write and forget about touring and studios. You can rent a room next to the sea. It’s a quiet little town. It’s virtually impossible to find cigarettes anywhere close. It’s cold, rainy



and windy. I am not the sunny type of guy, anyway. I believe I will have to wait a few more weeks – til the turn of the year – until I can really recharge those batteries, though. But we are back at work now and we will soon be recording again.”

*You live in Luxembourg, you very often have business to take care of in Germany, your lyrics are in German but also French and English, and one could say you are quite the multicultural and polyglot person. Could this interesting mix of cultures make you think in a sort of elitist manner?*

“I still live in Germany actually, but I will move out at the end of the month. I don’t like to stay in one place for too long. I don’t believe in ownership or anything. I will return to Luxembourg, but not because I was born there. It happens that there are certain individuals I like to be around, who live there. I don’t feel that connected to that country anymore. I see myself primarily as a European. I have lived in different countries of Western Europe and I spend a lot of my time traveling around the rest of Europe, because of friends, shows, labels, etc. I believe I am multicultural, in some way or other, but that doesn’t make me an elitist. However, I profit a great deal from the fact that speaking several languages makes traveling and hiding much easier”

*Speaking of elites... There are a lot of*



*bands from CMI and not only, that are promoting right wing politics. Some do it openly, others in an indirect manner, associating themselves with green or anti-globalisation movements. Are you not afraid that you could come off as an extremist? As perception, not necessary as concept. Or perhaps, in some ways, you are radical as well...?*

“I don’t really know what bands you are actually referring to, but ROME certainly doesn’t promote any radical or racial ideas. On the contrary. I believe our records are proof of that. Apart from that, most of the anti-globalisation movements can hardly be seen as right wing. I am certainly not afraid that we might come across as extremists, since ROME’s always been quite outspoken about the fact the we have a non-fascist outlook on things. We don’t promote violence either. So I don’t worry about such things. Love and despair are woven way too deep into the concept of ROME for us to believe in any type of elite.”

*What inspires you to write the music you do? I’m talking both melody and lyrics.*

“Numerous things. The trick is to keep breathing and to keep your eyes open. Things around me inspire me to do what I do. And if they don’t, I can always rely on books and movies. The great thing about this project is that it keeps us on the move. We are constantly dealing with different people from different places and, as much as I prefer to be alone, I can’t help but be inspired by that.”

*Working with somebody: the music is in your head, it needs to come out and so you have all the bits and pieces that represent your vision (lyrics, concepts, themes, titles, samples, loops, riffs and so on). Is it easy to share your inner creations with someone else? How do you make them understand?*

“Well, luckily I only have to share that with Patrick Damiani, who is the other member in the band. As far as the creative process and legal issues are concerned,

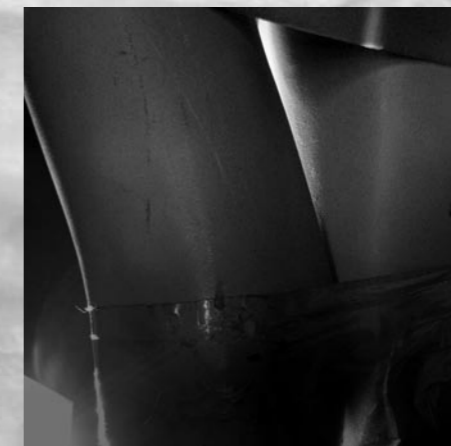
there’s just the two of us in ROME. We have live musician(s), but they may vary. I have worked with Patrick on various projects for more than 5 years now. He has always been the engineer and producer and I have always been the writer. We have become quite the team. I don’t really need to say too much for him to understand what I want. That saves a lot of time and sweat. Over the years we have developed our own language as well. And since I base most of the stuff on actual guitar riffs, vocal melodies and samples, it’s not that difficult for him to understand where I want to take the music.”

*You have said that you’re interested in art, photography and history. ... Has the name Rome had anything to do with your interest in history? Or have you been playing with your own name when conceiving it?*

“The name ROME came about by coincidence, not because of my interest in history. I couldn’t come up with a good name for the project, so I thought about how I would write my own name within the project...you know, for bios, booklets, etc. Not that it really mattered, since I didn’t think this would go anywhere. I came up with Rome, as a shorter version of my first name. I thought as a name for a singer it would be quite awful...but I liked it as ROME for the band/project. That’s the story. No magic. Since then it has shown to be quite effective. It certainly isn’t the best name to google, but what the hell. The internet is overrated anyway.”

*Expectations. Does your creative process get affected by thoughts of what people would expect from you?*

“I don’t believe it does get affected. I believe an artist should do whatever he feels like, and whatever he thinks will make his art great and worthwhile. I don’t want to be mainstream, so I don’t think too much about things like that. I am still surprised at how much people like what we do. But I believe people like what we do, BECAUSE we don’t care what people think. We have always written the kind



of music we wanted to hear. And we are glad people like it. But we get bored easily, so we keep writing and of course - over a longer period of time - things will change. But they will only change if we want that change to happen.”

*Your third album is more pop and less dark. If Rome reflects your inner world, what does this last album say about you? It is also pretty upbeat, but it is still Rome...*

“What does it say about me? Maybe that I am much more mellow than I would like to admit, haha, I don’t know. I like Pop music. Just not enough to really do it myself. I like all music, but I have always felt at home in the moody and gloomy underground tunes. M.M.M. is indeed a bit more upbeat, but records come to life in different moods, various seasons and different moments in life. Our records mostly take shape within days. This one was recorded in summer, maybe it was a sunnier day...”



*Pop means mainstream. The lesser dark sound and feel to it could mean “more accessible” and indirectly... more mainstream. Is pop something that would displease you? Categorising is something hard to control you have admitted...*

“Pop wouldn’t really displease me. Frankly, I don’t care as long as it’s good. There are some very great pop bands around that write great tunes and lyrics in a catchy kind of way. Why not. But I guess ROME’s outlook is just way too tinged with despair and atrocities to ever really be mainstream...but you never know. It’s not in our agenda, though. If we want to do a poppier album someday, which still would sound like ROME – why not. But we will cross that bridge when we get there. What I don’t like about pop is the business and the mainstream way of dealing with music as a product. I despise that. We all have to make a living, but we don’t need to sell our souls. I am much more concerned about trying to be a good songwriter than being on TV.”

What are the values Rome is built upon? Can you talk about some of the "Leitmotivs" that make it what it is?

"I reckon ROME was built on grief. Despair, loneliness and loss have always been the elements that held this thing together. I guess that's my fault, since that's what most lyrics seem to be about, haha. However, there's a second, vital force in ROME that is fueled by the want for love, knowledge and unity. I guess it's the contradictory relationship of the two that makes ROME what it is. But the listener has to figure out the rest. I don't like to dissect or explain my work that much."

*"Remember you're unique. Just like anybody else". These must be my favourite lines of yours. The very favourite. They seem to strike me in a very powerful way and they would always make me smile. Why this belief of yours? Are we all just as "special" as the next one?*

"Yes, I believe we are. In a way, it's all up to you. You can be special if you want to, and work. But don't believe that really makes you better than the one next to you. In the end, we are all dust and bones. Yet, we can make this worthwhile – with kindness and perseverance."

*Rome started as a solo project, with a live version supported by two friends of yours. You have now declared that you are two in the band. What made you transform the singular vision into something that sees you share everything with another person? How is work on new tracks going? Will you be making compromises in order to accept your colleagues' opinions? Could the number of band members' rise in the future?*

"Yes, we are a two-man-band now. In the end, it was just a natural thing. I was just too stubborn to make that step earlier. Patrick has always been a part of ROME in some way or other. But when he decided to be a part of the live crew it just got obvious that it was quite unfair to consider myself the only member in this project. Patrick is a real worker and he has always been of enormous help to me and has served ROME in numerous ways. His input has kept growing over the years. ROME wasn't planned to be this big when I did the first demo. But now that it starts to grow it can nourish the two of us. He has always been involved in the making of the records anyway. As far as the creative process and the actual production are concerned, nothing has really changed. The work on new tracks is going just as well as usual. No worries. I don't think the number of people in the actual band will grow. I won't say it will never happen, but chances are slim. I believe the number of live musicians will change, but as far as the creative process goes, I don't want more people to be involved. It would change things completely and make for more discussions, compromises and less productivity. I am not saying that I can't imagine collaborating with other people, but the work is just so different then. I know for fact that Patrick wants to keep it as a simple two-man-operational-unit as well. When he officially joined, nothing really changed for me, apart from the fact that he started to work and care even more for this project of ours."

*Who are the members of ROME in real life? Age, job, hobbies, families and kids...?*

"Well Patrick has his studio in Karlsruhe. That's what he does and that's what got us back together. We knew each other back in school. I was the replacement drummer in his first band. I think I was about twelve. Then we didn't see each other for ten years or so, and when we did, he had a studio and I had a band. So we worked together. And then came ROME. All other information are private. Well, maybe I can give you his date of birth: it's the second of August – like me. Yep, two lions."

*What's Rome like live? Are you happy with your live performances? What is lost when playing for... lets say... a fully packed stadium (if you could imagine)?*

"The live performances are improving. We are getting there. We have had some changes over the last season. We are still working on things. I guess the music was meant to be played in rather intimate locations, although some songs could work in an arena-rock situation, I guess. It's just the mood. I like to see the individuals we play for. It's not music for the masses. In a good way."

*How important is the visual concept for Rome while playing live? What shows up in the projections you use? Do you create them yourself? What are the messages they are trying to carry?*

"Yes, we create them ourselves and we do need them for people to have something to look at. I am not a stage monkey. I don't really dance around a lot. We are currently working on new visuals for the upcoming season, so I don't want to reveal too much. It's just very simple stuff, nothing heavy. But they go well with the feel of the songs."

*How does your interaction with your fans go? Do you have a fan base? What is its profile (if it can be profiled... there must be some underlining characteristics). Your definition as a loner transpires through your MySpace page as well. Do you find anything in communicating with perfect strangers who have some appreciation towards your art?*

"Well the underlying characteristics of our fans are that they are – as far as I have seen – very polite, well-read and open-minded people. That makes us really proud. There's an odd character here and there, of course, haha, but the ones that we have met and were able to talk to have been extremely nice. I don't know if we have a real fanbase. I believe that differs from country to country. I guess most of them are proud individuals. Certainly no fan clubs as far as I know. Maybe that will change. Who knows. Things are spread very thin over Europe and the world. But in every city we traveled to, there seemed to be fans who really appreciated what we do. There's not that much interaction going on with them on stage, because we like to focus on giving them a decent performance. But we like to hang out after gigs. For the most part, we sell our merchandise ourselves (we wouldn't want to pay anyone to do that for us anyway, haha) and that's always a good time to come and talk to us. I am a loner, yes, but not in a room with hundreds of people, haha. Especially if those people are there for us. I have all week to recharge my loner batteries and write. The weekends belong to touring and fans. I like talking to strangers. But, in a way, they are no strangers. There is certainly a connection. It is always great to see that you can touch people with what you do. That should never be ridiculed or frowned upon. My musical heroes have helped me through a lot and I would feel very proud and honoured to have the same role in other people's lives. We have received some very moving mails. We don't accept comments on myspace, because you only get spam junk like "I just bought you as a fucking pet" and stuff like that. But comments and mails sent are all read and if time allows we try to answer some of them. We have been in touch with various individuals that way and some of our fans have even helped me in my search for samples! I like the idea of people contributing to what they like."

*The samples most definitely make Rome. And so does your voice. Its one of those very recognisable types. Like Mr. Cohen's for instance, or Nick Caves... How aware are you of that?*

"Well, thank you very much! You just named some of my heroes... I feel flattered. I try to sound as pleasant as I can. I never learned how to sing and now that I hear that people like it, I guess I shouldn't take lessons – so that I don't ruin my crooning, haha."

*"Ne Me Quitte Pas" is a song full of desperation but in a strange way... also hope. I was pleasantly surprised to see Monsieur Jacques Brel amongst your MySpace "friends"... There is no direct question for you here... But perhaps you can share some of your other... likes... Or with the heck with it: what did you find in Brel? Les Carreaux...? :o)*

"I like the merging of hope and despair that you mentioned. To me that seems the most important thing. All works of art that have truly shaped the way I see the world are defined by that combination. You might want to check out the live version of Leo Ferre singing "Les Anarchistes" – an incredible performance made of angst, anger, hope and lust for life. But also the songs of Leonard Cohen, of course."

*Do you like all your songs? It might sound strange... it's not my question though, I must admit it. Monsieur Brel was posed this question as well. I think it's a fair question in an obscure sort of way? Do you have a favourite one...?*

"If I don't like a song it doesn't get released. It's that simple. We are not lacking songs, so I would rather write something else than including something I don't like. I always have one favourite or two on each album. Sometimes I really like a song because it turned out so very different from what I thought it would sound like. Sometimes Patrick adds some weird sample, or twists something around in a way that makes the song different and makes me appreciate it in another way. Like the loop in the background of The Torture Detachment, that was his idea, and it made me sing in a different way when I did the vocals an hour or two later. After that I really loved that song. I guess I like them all in a way. I love the work."

*Let's talk a bit about the projects you had before, some years ago. What were they like? I read you now want to concentrate on Rome alone. Most musicians prefer to experiment with different projects, all different in nature (manifestation of their wants/needs/desires). How come ROME is enough for you? No multiple musical personalities in Jerome? Or perhaps all your "demons" blend into ROME?*

"All the projects I had before were little steps to be taken to get where I am now. Most of them were punk bands, others ranged from singer-songwriter rock to black metal and ska. I was involved in numerous projects as a singer, drummer, guitar or bass player. Apart from that I was involved regularly as an actor in an independent amateur drama group, for which I also wrote classical and experimental scores. I did all kinds of work with all kinds of people. ROME has become my sole output because it unites almost all my interests and I can act freely, without having to compromise. I have had enough time to experiment. It is now time to create something decent and focus on that. ROME has been very kind to me and my demons, and I don't intend to worship anything else."

*I have heard that you had an on stage collaboration with Die Weisse Rose. How did that come about and how did it go? Do*

*you have any plans on extending this sort of collaboration with other bands as well?*

"Thomas and I met on a gig in Switzerland. I liked his work. We had a few drinks and soon after became friends. A year or so later we played in his hometown of Copenhagen and he joined on drums. That worked out fine and so he became part of the crew for the rest of the season. Everything went smooth and we had a great time. It was meant to be, I guess. We currently have no plans to extend that sort of collaboration to other bands, but who knows what will happen..."

*While here, you'll be sharing the stage with Spiritual Front and its main man, Simone. A review made by JudasKiss read "With a very rock'n'roll mentality that shares aesthetic similarities to that of Simone from Spiritual Front, Jerome Reuter, the man behind Rome, is always attempting to pilfer the core of the genre and then expose certain aspects of it to his ideas before remoulding them in his own vision". What are your feelings on this?*

"Well, as far as S.F. goes, I don't mind the comparison because I like Simone and I like his work. We get along well and I am looking forward to sharing the stage with him. We have some shows coming up together. I don't think there are too many similarities though. And as for the review, well I thought that was quite a good one. It is certainly not our intention to copy anyone, but we try to remould things in our own way. Glad that that came across."

*Can you give me some examples, or should I say, recommendations of "obscure music" worth looking into? Perhaps share some musical preferences, some interesting bands.*

"I am very much into French Chanson right now, some of the names have been mentioned already (Jacques Brel was Belgian, I know). And for the time being I like listening to Brecht's work in all its varieties. Well, I guess that's not that obscure... mmmh I don't know, I will let you know."

*Your music can have a heavy and "old", grave feel to it. Where is that coming from? Are you not too young for all this? Or age is irrelevant?!*

"Too young? Well, as far as I can see, I am too old for this. Most of history's revolutionary songs have been written by people of 15 to 25. I guess that's it for me, haha. People have thrown that you-are-too-young-for-this shit in my face all my life. I don't know what's up with that, haha. I am a grave person I guess. I don't think age matters."

*What/who do you read? Are you a realist? Will you allow yourself to dream of orcs and people with pointy ears or will you read Nietzsche's On Genealogy of Morals and debate about the faith of the world seen through the construct of its people?*

"I read everything. Well, not everything... nothing with orcs in it and I don't like to debate. I have done that for a long, long time. I have grown utterly tired of that. All I have and want to say about the world and the way it functions is in our music and in the lyrics. As for good reads, well they are too numerous to mention. I try



to read the originals. In French, German and English. But I don't want to narrow it down more..."

*No demos, no prepared stuff, other than what's going on in your head. Is it a courageous thing to go on your instinct? It seems a very... owned way of acting.*

"No, I don't think it's that courageous, it just works best for me. Demos have a tendency to make you expect things to turn out in a specific way. Sometimes you just end up trying to recreate the demo and lose sight of the actual song. That's why I prefer to write in my head, prepare the basic melody lines and chose the samples. That's all I do before going into the studio – well, I do write the lyrics before as well... or most of them. MMM includes tracks that have been written – both the lyrics and music – over night, inbetween recordings. "Das Feuerordal" came to life like that, and so did "Le Voile de l'Oubli" from "Confessions". I am still surprised it worked out. But usually I write most of it long before the recordings start. I believe the way I work creates a freshness that you don't get with demos. I like enjoying the creative moment in the studio, but it must be well-prepared. I guess that's why we can work and release things so quickly, because all I need is a pen and a quiet place to sit – preferably at the seaside. The recordings usually take about ten days for each album."

*How is Cold Meat to you? Are you happy with how things are going? Have you managed to meet Roger? I invited him to Romania, but he is not that easy to move...*  
"Of course I met him. I wanted to see the man before I signed. And we did several shows together, in Germany, Spain, etc. As to your other question: Well, we are on Trisol now...so much for that, haha. Just kidding. CMI have been perfect for us so far, but it was time to move on. Roger has managed to put us on the map. He put a lot of time, work and trust in us, and we will never forget. He was the only one who didn't think twice about signing us, no matter what. He believed in me and this project right from the start. That was an enormous step to take. Without CMI I would still not know what to do with my life, so...I owe them big time. However, all good things come to an end, and we thought it best to leave at this point, in order to be able to take the next step. We will see how things will work out, but I am glad there are no hard feelings on either side. I also believe that we did well by each other."

*What made you sign with Alex's label? What is a good offer for you? Besides the financial part, what else came with the pack age? A better promotional and marketing*

*related deal?*

"I am not at freedom to discuss any details of contracts and offers from labels. All I can say is that it was time for us to move on and see where we could go. I met Alex in Heidelberg where I had been living for a couple of years, and we got along fine. I like his professional approach and his offer was indeed a good one. We will see how things turn out."

*Can you name any other bands working with Trisol that you like and perhaps find to have things in common? How would Anna-Varney's voice sound on ROME? :o)*

"Actually I believe Anna-Varney's voice would be interesting in a ROME song, haha. Apart from Sopor there's of course Spiritual Front on Trisol, who we've talked about earlier. Trisol is a bit different from CMI. In many aspects. You don't get the family vibe that much, but it has other things to offer."

*You said you considered DER BRANDTAUCHER as the spine of the album. So what makes you sufficient unto yourself? Recognising the true make-up of the self, even if not acting towards what we know to be "good"... Is that enough? Is there beauty in shame? Is "beauty" something that should be categorised? Are there different levels of beauty?*

"There is a lot of unseen beauty in shame, yes. All is one. There are no levels of beauty – only in the eye of the beholder. Acting towards what one considers to be good is a must. Of course, the definition of that varies. But I don't think man can breathe without feeling the will to create – even if it's by destroying."

*Your concern for humanity, or should I say, love, or care, transpires through the use of "we" in your lyrics. You do not separate yourself from mankind, traitors or whores; they are "we" and not "them". It just shows a level of maturity that can be seen in your music as well, in its melody, in its overall sound. Why are you not "outside"? Is it a conscious choice not to separate you?*

"I don't think the persona in the song (not necessarily myself) is always completely on the inside or outside. That differs from song to song as far as I can see. But I guess you are right in believing that I don't want to separate myself from traitors and whores. I don't believe in elitist thinking. I reckon we are all made of the same mud."

*Is indifference an act of cowardice?*

"Yes, I believe so. It is laziness and ignorance combined."

*I read your standpoint on music and lyrics and their importance and I was pleased to see how you felt about this issue. Forsomeone*

*who is not a native English speaker (I am generalising here), lyrics are not always important and they often go about unnoticed. But with your music, my senses were pushed towards wanting to understand it all. One sort of needs to, in order to really enter the realm of Rome. And so... it is a positive thing to read that the importance of your lyrics is equal to that of your music. Does your instinct carry you around when creating, or do you always pretty much know what a song will be about the moment its essence appears?*

"I believe I know where a song is going right from the start. There is an initial spark and you must make use of it before it burns out. Once you've nailed the basic idea it's easy. The rest is work. It's the same for the music as for the lyrics. I usually start with a line or two which have a certain mood. All you need to do is find those other words - of the same mood - to fill the rest of the track. Or something like that. It's hard to accurately describe. The lyrics are certainly very important. Just as important as the music. That was the reason why we initially didn't include the lyrics. Because that way people would really listen. You shouldn't take anything for granted. After some time we found that it was better to include them since people were having a lot of trouble understanding them."

*What do you believe in?*

"That keeps changing. I guess I believe in perseverance. I believe in hard work and no regrets. I trust in man's cruelty and in his kindness."

*I believe ROME is the way a story-teller sings after a war. Nothing left to give". It's a very interesting way of describing your music. I think you were quite inspired when you said that, but what does it really mean? Is your music sweeping through history and the human condition, without judgments, but only recollections?*

"I don't think there are no judgements at all, but there are no clear messages or all-too-simple pictures drawn. Nothing black and white. ROME is made of these little recollections, yes, but they are juxtaposed in a way that makes room for various interpretations. It's not devoid of meaning."

*Are you more popular in some countries and less in others? Have you noticed any patterns of such? Do these things interest you at all? I mean... you don't look back on Berlin, or Nera, Confessions are sort of still the present, I guess... but if the fans decide to throw you back there, do you do it? Do you look back through the eyes not of the critics but perhaps the fans? Do you find any relevance in the way others see*

*and understand your music? Is it useful to know that one might have a completely different understanding of your art than what you wanted to project? But still, an understanding that makes sense in that persons world...*

"I don't think there's any clear pattern there. There's some countries in which the underground scene is a bit better organised than in others, which is why we might be able to play more often there. But other than that, I know people from various countries who like what we do. I guess we would have to do an excessive world tour to really find out... I certainly find relevance in what people see in our work. It can be quite interesting at times. We have had some very unusual reactions to some of our songs. It's great to see that people can connect to what you do. The music we do is not a recipe, it doesn't have a distinctive message whatsoever. There is room for interpretation. So there's also room for different understandings of what we do. We like and embrace that. It would be very boring otherwise."

*How is today's world corrupt? A strange question asked by a Romanian, my readers might laugh, but I do want to know your view on this. Is escapism a solution? Or perhaps solutions are not what you are looking for, but alternatives (as a solution implies the running away, while an alternative, freedom of choice). How does life fit into Rome and Rome into life?*

"How is today's world corrupt?! Don't get me started on bankers and politicians... Escapism never really works for long, I'm afraid. Believe me, I've tried. But in the end, you have to be honest to yourself and make a stand. Even if you don't really believe in a solution. You have to pick a side and fight as best as you can for what you consider to be a better option. I believe ROME is very much about that inner struggle."

*I guess this is a question that will always come up: what are we to expect from Rome in the future, what other sounds, experiences, realms will we be introduced to? Is there something you always wanted to do within your music but haven't got around to do it/ try it out? You said you have very specific ideas of what you want to accomplish... How would a fulfilling musical career look for you?*

"I am obviously not going to reveal the themes and realms we are currently working on, but we have several things cooking! There are still other things we want to do on records to come, we have a lot of plans, but they keep changing as time moves on. I really don't think it would be smart to reveal anything, sorry. As for the fulfilling career, well, I don't really know. As far as the financial aspect goes, being able to pay

the rent is enough for me. As for the music, we can only try to retain the fire that we have inside, and make the best music we possibly can – by our own standards."

*Playing in Romania – what are your expectations? What do you know about my country? You know, you mentioned intimate places, theatres with seats as preferred venues... Reduta Cultural Centre is just that...*

"I am quite interested in your country actually. I have read several books on things loosely related to its history, especially the chaotic times from let's say 1919 to 1960. So I don't think it's all about Vlad, no worries. I am very curious to finally see it. And now that you tell me, I am looking forward to that venue as well..."

*It is quite obvious that Jerome and ROME blend into each other through music but also through lyrics. But where does Jerome separate from ROME? In the day to day life, in the personal life...*

"That's a good one. I don't know where they separate. I can feel where they merge, though. ROME is a very intimate thing to me because of that merging. And that's why I try to keep my private life to myself. I need quiet places as sanctuaries of rest. I spend a lot of time on research and writing and after completing a release there's the touring and all the other work involved. It's important for me to separate that life from my private life, but they merge as well, because I need these sanctuaries of rest also in order to write new material. I guess that's what makes me a loner in some way. Lucky for me I have some people close to me, who are very dear to me and whom I manage to feel alone with – in a good way - even when they are there."

*Some last words addressed to the people who will come and see you play?*

"Well, first of all thank you for considering us to come. We will do our best to entertain you in some way or other. And to our fans – we really look forward to meeting you!"

*Thanks for the chat, I could probably go on with the questions but hey, I'll keep some for December. Conclusion?*

*Jerome=Je Rome.*

October, 2008

Some could say that this particular band is just right for the fans of ANATHEMA. Others could probably find patterns and influences that would relate to musical legends such as KING CRIMSON, PINK FLOYD or LED ZEPPELIN. It is very possible for things to stand this way... or not. For me, STILLE OPPRØR means a close tie with two defunct projects, but very dear to my heart, IN THE WOODS... and DRAWN. Christer Andre Cederberg, the guitar player of these last two bands set out to explore a more melancholic and psychedelic dimension of progressive rock, giving us an impressive album, not necessarily from the point of view of originality or interpretation, but from the perspective of the atmosphere it releases. This is why I have invited Chris to talk to us about one thing or another, a good-humoured, kind but very busy guy...

*Greetings my friend, autumn is here, that is it for the fun, the beach, the holiday periods. Any nostalgia weighing on you this summer? I know you had a good bit of activity with ANIMAL ALPHA.*

"Greetings! Thinking about this summer definitely makes me nostalgic as I've decided to leave the band. I am focusing on other projects and my work as a mix engineer/producer from now on. Anyway, we've had a great time and have played lots of festivals all over Europe this summer and have basically been touring non stop between February and September."

"I've also spent much of my time working in the studio with some interesting projects. Just finished producing and recording the debut album for a guy called Petter Carlsen. He's a great musician. You should check him out. The album will be released on EMI early next year."

*You are very active with this Hard Rock'N'Roll & Punk band. What appeals to you in this style? Even the on stage dynamics must be different than the one of a Metal band.*

"There's more dynamics then in a "regular" metal band and you get to use a wider expression on stage. I like the fact that there are no rules. If you want to have a rockabilly theme or a jazz part and then go right ahead into a speed metal part, you can."

*My understanding is that you are to experiment something different once more, meaning a Noise project. What can you tell me about it?*

"We haven't started playing yet, but will soon. Too much has been happening for all of us lately so we've haven't had the time. But it'll be a band where there are no rules and we'll mainly focus on extreme noise. The line-up is drums, bass, guitar and highly distorted saxophone. Feedback will play a large role here. I am very much into the thought of pushing equipment so far that, at the end, the instrument and the feedback is deciding the direction of the music as much as oneself."

*You are a producer and a sound engineer.*

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*What are both the advantages and disadvantages of the work you do?*

"I don't see any disadvantages really. The advantage is that my knowledge and overview in musical situations has increased through my work. I know much more now what works and what doesn't, what a song needs and that sort of stuff."

*Are there any known bands which you have worked with in studio and managed their sound related issues? I only know of TRANSIT and perhaps GOLDLOG.*

"I produced, recorded and mixed Transit but haven't worked with Goldlog. Been working with mainly Norwegian bands and

not much metal so far although I'd like to do more metal in the future. Some of the most known people are ambient/jazz artists, such as Nils Petter Molvær, Eivind Aarseth etc. Don't know whom you would have heard of as there isn't much Norwegian music (except metal of course) that makes it out of Norway."

*Your debut had no promotion, why did you decide to continue with it? I understood that you have thoughts of re-editing it. Is this due to the fact that your new album received a larger interest from the media and beyond?*

"At that time I basically just did it for myself and didn't have many plans for that



album. It sold out pretty quickly and I didn't make more copies after that. The reason I am considering to re-release it is that there's still a demand for it after all those years. People send me emails quite frequently asking about it so it would be good to be able to meet their wishes."

*How do you see "Prosjekt 2 13" now, some 7 years after it was released? Why go from an acoustic sound to something of this sort?*

"It was there and then. I wouldn't do it the same way if I were to re-record it, especially production wise. But it has its highlights. The change in sound came naturally. With

this project I can do whatever I want and decide which way I want to go. Playing in only metal bands, I wanted to do something at the other end of the scale with "prosjekt 2 13", but this time it's more of a combination between everything I'm into nowadays, except metal."

*Concerning your latest album, my review is at superlative. How was it received by your listeners? Do you already have a fan base?*

"The reviews have been great. There haven't been single negative reviews, at least that I have seen, so I am really happy about that. The fan base seems to be growing and so far I've just received good feedback but I know

# STILLE OPPRØR

that if I want the fan base to grow, I need to take this project out on the road and I hope to be able to do that. A couple of gigs have been booked and I hope to do a tour next year."

*Personally, I have commented as a "negative point" the fact that the contrast between the melancholic parts and the noisy ones is too sudden, too abrupt, perhaps somewhat upsetting to the ear. Was this your intent? Has anyone else picked up on this or is it just my opinion? It is as if I find some remains of the noisy sound of ANIMAL ALPHA...*

"I haven't heard that before, but I sometimes feel that contrasts are more underlined if they are introduced that way. Sometimes it's supposed to be upsetting to the ear, because when a calm part is introduced after that you appreciate that part more."

*I will be honest and tell you that I don't think the album cover suits at all. For a musical masterpiece as this one you need to put more thought into the CDs imagistic. What does it represent, what made you chose this one and not any other, perhaps one more inspired, more closely tied to your music?*

"The guy who made it got full artistic freedom and so did the musicians involved in the project. It took some time to get used to the artwork, I have to admit, but the thought behind it is that it's in many ways a contrast to the music, and I told the guy before he started making it that the most important element in the music itself was contrasts and dynamics and he followed that thought. Making, say, a dark, mystic cover would of course fit the music well, but it would also have been a bit typical. The cover has gotten lots of reactions, both positive and negative so it clearly moves people in one way or the other."

*I have noticed that you have a large number of guest musicians on your album, it's like almost all of Kristiansands musicians have made their contribution to it. I noticed that your sister has participated as well (I wasn't aware that she is a musician), Jan Kenneth, Sordal, Tommy... and one other remarkable feminine voice... Give me more details please: why so many invitees? Please introduce them shortly, together with their instruments.*

"This will be a long one..."

Drums:  
Kenneth Kapstad (Motorpsycho, Gåte, ex. Animal Alpha)

Tommy Jackson (ex. Green carnation, Zerozonic)  
Bjørn Sæther, Ole Andre Ljosland, Dag Erik Oksvold (Session drummers).

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Bass:  
Bjarne Severinsen (Session musician).

Guitars:  
Me.

Vocals:  
My sister, Elisabeth Cederberg (making her own album these days and have been playing in a band called Warship).  
Cathrine Bøe (She hasn't been doing much music the last years. It's a pity as she's a great singer...)  
Jan (Transit, ITW..., So xpan etc.)

Viola  
Nora Taksdal (One of the best viola players in the country. I believe she plays with the philharmonics).

Distortion saxophone:  
Ole Jørgen Bardal (Bull of the year).

Trumpet:  
Sigve Nordstoga Hansen (Session musician).

Keys:  
Bernt Moen (ex. Green Carnation, The shining, etc.)  
Daniel Hovik (Session musician).  
Stein Roger Sordal (ex. Green carnation, So x pan, etc.)

"I invited musicians when I felt a song needed something different. My first album had too much of only me in it, so this time I wanted to have lots of fresh ideas from other musicians. It was a great opportunity to shape the songs in interesting ways. There were quite a few drummers participating so I could ask the drummer that I felt fitted the particular groove in each song. It was great fun and an inspiring working method."

*With I team like this I can't help not thinking: how does it all work on stage? There are six of you, am I correct? What is the difference between SO in studio and on stage? Is the sound missing some content when playing in front of an audience? Does SO remain a solo project still?*

"It works well as we use the guitars more, and in that way, fill the gaps from the instruments that aren't there. It's a bit different from the studio versions as there's more dynamics. The up's are more powerful and the down's are even more quiet. Also we have some of the atmospheric tracks on backing tracks, which adds more depth to the show."

*I know you have already had a few gigs with SO, together with TRANSIT as well. What is the feedback you are getting? Will you continue doing live shows? Do these help with the CD sales?*

"We've just had one split gig. We had a great time and got good response from the crowd. The two genres are pretty different, but they fill each other out pretty well. You get everything from punk to big atmospheric sounds in one evening. We sold some CD's at that show but I think one needs to tour pretty extensively for it to make you sell more CD's."

*Putting it all in perspective and considering the project as an underground one, one must say that the promotion is being made at the highest standards. Is the collaboration between Karmakosmetix and Prophecy efficient for both sides? At least from the point of view of Stille Oppror... Have you perhaps received some more serious offers, on the money side?*

"I've been really happy with Prophecy this time. Stefan, the promo guy, works well and is enthusiastic about the project. I haven't

received any serious money offers, but that's not something I expect since, as you mention, it's an underground project."

*Who is Chris in the day to day life? Do you have a family, children? Jan has become a dad for the second time... After consistent travels during his younger years, including to South America, he is now very productive...*

"I don't have any children but I have a girlfriend. I spend most of my time with her, hanging out with friends and being in the studio. I like to travel myself and have had some great trips over the years. I actually traveled with Jan for 5 weeks when he was in south-America. We spent the whole vacation discovering Costa Rica. Have some great memories from that trip."

*How is life in Norway? What about life in Kristiansand? Do you know any other remarkable bands from around there?*

"Life's good here. I live in Oslo at the moment. Haven't lived in Kristiansand since I was 18 years old, but I'll settle down there in some year's time I think. There are some good bands here. For example "The shining", "Kaizers orchestra" and "Madrugada"..."

*What do you know about the rest of the IN THE WOODS members? Do you still meet up? My understanding is that you still keep in touch with Synne and Anders... how come you never invited them onto the album? Or the Botteri brothers...*

"I rarely meet any of them except Jan. One of the reasons is that I live in Oslo and they live in Kristiansand. I don't know why they didn't come to mind when finding musicians. Guess it's because I never see them anymore... Maybe on the next album!"

*Are you not sorry for the break up of the band? I know you have a large number of fans all over the world. And when I come to think that back then you were just a kid, not even in your 20s... How do you see IN THE WOODS today...? Why don't you re-edit the albums but with a re-mastered sound?*

"I am sorry for the breakup, but it was the right time for it. We wanted to break up while we still enjoyed playing in the band. It was a good period for me, music wise, and I have lots of great memories from back then. Being able to reach as many people as we did was also a great opportunity. I don't see why we should re-edit or re-master those albums. Some of them suck sound wise, but one would have to mix those albums all over again to fix it, and I reckon the sound files would be hard to locate. Don't know if anyone knows where they are archived..."

*I was really sorry I didn't make it to your last ITW show... I'm sure it was something very special both for the fans and the band. How was it for you?*

"It was a great evening. The gig lasted for about 3 hours and the crowd was great. The thought of all the people that came from countries such as Australia, Peru, Germany, Italy etc. is still surreal. Imagine that they actually traveled for hours and hours just for that one gig... I'll never forget that. It makes all of us in the band very proud."

*But let us return to STILLE OPPROR. The LED ZEPPELIN and even JIMI HENDRIX influences are quite obvious within the SO sound. Is this your dad's influence over your mind? I know that these days you listen to RADIOHEAD and TOOL as well.*

"My dad introduced me to a lot of great music, and still do. He's very active on MySpace and is finding new bands everyday. He is still really into discovering bands. I'm too lazy about those things. I rarely sit down and try to find new bands. I guess some of the reason is that I work with music 8-12 hours every day, so when I come home from work I really don't feel like listening to music. Favorites at the moment are Radiohead, Tool, Zeppelin and

Hendrix."

*The most distinct and remarkable track on the album is SO2, where everything sounds damn harmonious: 3 feminine voices, different solos, Blues accords, jazz, Americana, Pop and Psychedelic Progressive Rock, with guitars that remind me of Omnio. Do you also feel its the most worked on and the most complex song on the album? Especially as it is changed from the way it was first released, a good few years ago, on that legendary compilation.*

"It's definitely the most complex song. I feel it's capturing almost all the genres, dynamics and expressions that are presented on the album. It was a tough track to mix but I think it turned out well. It was also the first song I made for the second album. At first I didn't want to include it on the album because it was released earlier on the sampler, but with it being the start of the making of "S.o2" I felt I had to, so I re-recorded some of the instruments and made a new version that I thought would fit well together with the rest of the songs."

*Disquietude has a very personal, private feel to it... Listening to it feels almost like a privilege... We all have our monsters, and perhaps some of us can find it easier to fight them than others. Anxiety, depressions... are these known dimensions to you?*

"Those dimensions are known to me, yes. I don't have depression or other serious problems myself, but I know a lot of people that do. This song is about and for one of them."

*The art of music making, as any other art, is closely tied with journeys of self discovery, or simply... with putting parts of yourself out there. The expression of art is primarily a selfish act. How does it feel to open yourself up, release some of your personal emotions and then have them been brought back to you in forms of questioning (like an interview or simply through the curiosity of the fans)?*

"It's a bit hard to open up that much. Since the music is very personal for me, I feel that people might get to know more about me than I would have liked to, but it has to be that way. I need to release the albums that I make before I can go on and start making new ones. Questions from fans or mags are most welcome as it means that the people that ask, care and have studied the music. I really appreciate that."

*Please describe the other tracks as well. I noticed there are no lyrics... Are these too personal; is the album an autobiographic one?*

"The lyrics are a bit too personal to include in the cover but it's not what I'm writing that is the most important aspect with this album. It's the music and the feeling it gives you when you're listening to it."

*When should we expect a SO.3? Should another 7 years pass? Do you have any ideas of how it should sound like?*

"It won't take 7 years. I've made 3-4 new songs now and I guess I'll start recording again sometime in the autumn of 2009. I don't know exactly what sound it will have. I think I'll try to push the limits further. I am really happy with the new songs so I'm looking forward to start working on them."

*I read somewhere on a forum that you would be considered to be a supporter of the EMO trend, or that your music would fit the EMO profile. What are your thoughts on this?*

"To be honest I'm not into that scene at all. Don't have anything against it or the people that support it, but It's just never been something that I have gotten into."

*We had a long enough discussion. Thank you for the interview*

*and best of luck with everything. Still... why did you choose this particular name for the band, STILLE OPPROR? Does it have a specific meaning for you? What about for a fan, what should it signify?*

"It actually means silent riot in English, which kinda sounds like a Metal band. ;)

The thought behind it was that even if the music was very mellow, calm and minimalistic on the debut album (Prosjekt 2 13), the emotions were powerful and had a strong expression. Therefore the name."

October, 2008



One of the longest standing bands in the history of modern Metal is MY DYING BRIDE, probably one of the few who has not accepted making any commercial music compromises. Due to the fact that this winter is set to have brought to light a new release, I have invited Aaron Stainthorpe into Kogaionon...



*Greetings my friend, how does the end of the year look like from where you are standing? Was 2008 a satisfying year for you all? I know your fans have been delighted with your live appearances; I read a lot of positive reviews... How did they (the gigs) go for you? Are there any details that would set apart the events, any differences, specific elements or peculiarities? Or were they built and delivered as concerts and nothing more? Could you perhaps make some references to them, individually?*  
“Good evening. The year end looks pretty busy to us but not from a fans point of view, because we are putting the final touches to our new CD. We only have one more show this year, with Carcass & Napalm Death here in the UK, and that’s the last the fans will see of us until we tour with the new LP. We have the final mix and then the artwork to arrange and then it’s done, so we’re quite busy still. The shows this year have all gone very well for us with very few surprises. We do plan them meticulously and are not used to mishaps and anomalies and so I’m sorry to have to tell you and your readers that we don’t actually have any funny or overly interesting tales to tell from our travels abroad.”

*If I am to make references about the history of the band I could add that there isn’t long left until you’d reach two decades of existence. How do you see this period of time? Like a romantic one, a sentimental one? Have you ever dreamt of being able to perform in front of tens of thousands of people, crazed crowds that would cheer for you non stop? To see metal heads wearing MY DYING BRIDE t-shirts?*  
“It is very hard to believe that we’ve been going for nearly 20 years, something I’d never have dreamt of when we first started out way back in 1990. Like all

bands, we have had some great and not so great times, huge arena shows and small intimate shows, screaming fans and politely applauding crowds – we’ve had them all. I do look back with a smile though and with great pride too as I am very pleased with everything that we have created. We formed the band because we like this kind of music and so we don’t actually feel any pressure or need to do anything commercial or trendy. We’re here because we enjoy what we do, not for the money or fame.”

*At the end of the ‘80s the British Gothic Doom Death Metal nucleus was formed out of three major bands: MY DYING BRIDE, ANATHEMA and PARADISE LOST. Each of these bands have followed their own path, some more commercial, others more melancholic and atmospheric, your band being perceived as one that followed its own line, without letting itself be influenced by the coloring of the times. What do you reckon?*

*How do you feel the music played by the two bands I have mentioned is compared to what it once was, at the*

*beginning of the 90’s?*  
“You’re right that we all had very similar roots but have now gone down different roads, ours being seemingly less adventurous than the other two, but that’s again to do with the fact that we play what we like not what people want. Both PL and Anathema have made brave moves into new and exciting areas with mixed success and results, and I wish them all the very best with that but we’re just not that way inclined. We love doom/goth-metal and so that’s what we stick to and we’re rather good at it too. It would be utterly stupid and false if we did something else just in the hope of getting more record sales and fame.”

*How did the London gig go, playing alongside these two bands? Did it have any sentimental value for you guys? Are you planning an anniversary event for next year as well? Is your label perhaps doing so? What bands would you like to have on stage with you at an event such as this?*

“We had an excellent time in both Paris & London with the other two Northern UK bands and hopefully we may do more next year as an ongoing celebration of Paradise Losts 20th anniversary. It was great to be around Nick & Vinnie and the other guys as we haven’t played in similar places at the same time for a very long time. Our 20th will be celebrated in 2010 but I have no idea how just yet. Something similar to what we’ve done with PL but I can’t imagine what other bands I’d like to see there with us. I’m sure we’ll enjoy the celebration no matter who’s there.”

*Andrew and you are the only ones left from the old guard... Do you know anything about Rick? Last time I asked, in 2001, you told me that all communication ended between you two when he met someone (a woman) who had a certain effect on him... Has anything changed since? What can you tell me about Calvin? He was your tour manager, and a very talented musician...*

“Indeed, Andrew & myself are the last remaining original members, but we’re still full of ideas and still enthusiastic. I last saw Rick at the beginning of 2008 at a concert in Bradford and have learnt since that he suffered a stroke recently but has made a full recovery in a very small space of time. He’s fine now. Calvin was our tour manager for a few years after he left but I’ve no idea what he’s doing these days as he hasn’t been in touch. Ade left and got married and now lives in America and has nothing more to do with music. Martin got kicked out for not turning up to rehearsals but we’ve remained friends and are actually thinking about working with him in the future.”

*Excepting the two of you, you had some*

*other line-up changes, pretty unstable ones though. Hamish seems to be the oldest of the bunch. Lena seems to be a perfect choice for the bass and Dans’ arrival seems to be a smart move as he was known as a talented drummer both in THINE and BAL-SAGOTH. Are these musicians more talented than the ones you have initially started off with? Perhaps even the best out of all the line-ups you had so far?*

“It’s impossible to tell who will remain in the band when you first ask them to join as we all live different lives and have different priorities, things can change in someone’s life which may force them to leave. Hamish is rock solid and a highly valued member, and I hope that Lena and Dan will be with us for the foreseeable future too. The band feels very tight and firm and I’d be very shocked if we lost anyone sometime soon.”

*How has the change in balance (male vs. female musicians) affected the way things are now working in MY DYING BRIDE? Surely there must be some changes, some things you do differently merely due to the presence of the two ladies...*

“No not really. We still swear a lot, wonder about on the tour bus in our underwear, drink and argue.... and the girls join in too! Sometimes, if the dressing room at a venue is very small, the men leave and allow the ladies to change. It’s cool having ladies in the band as it adds another level of interest, not to mention the fact that they are very talented.”

*Katie represented a natural move for the band, especially since Sarah is now a mom and during live performances the keyboard remained uncovered. More so, the newly re-introduced instrument, the violin, is an element of great importance for the fans and has been since a long while. I know she was recommended by a few of your friends. Should I assume that you listen to A FOREST OF STARS? Do you enjoy the music played by them?*

“I’ve never heard of them. Was that Katie’s other band? I’ll ring her and ask. Anyway, we were never looking for another violin player but when we needed a new keyboard player we asked Katie and it was just a huge bonus for us that she could also play the violin. It sounds wonderful on the new LP and I’m glad it’s back.”

*A good while ago you were telling me that you will bring the violin back only if you will find the most suited person. Does this mean that Katie is “the chosen one”? You were also saying that you were considering starting a project with Martin Powell. Was the intent abandoned in its “just an idea” stage? How come you didn’t choose him to perform on the new album? What is the*

*difference between him and Katie? I’m referring here to both musical and technical capabilities...*

“I’m not sure Katie is “The Chosen One” but she’s certainly a welcome addition to the MDB fold and she’s a pretty little thing too, which is nice. The project with Martin never got off the ground as we were both busy doing other things. It may or may not be something for the future. We did want to work with Martin on the new LP but he was quite difficult to pin down and seemed busy with other things, and then Katie came along and filled the requirement so we had to forget Martin and move forward – we had a deadline. The main difference between their styles is that Katie’s playing is less classical but much more folk mixed with abstract soundscapes and unusual ideas, which is fantastic. Some of the things she does on the new LP are utterly amazing!”

*How was the DVD of the gig you had in Amsterdam received? It seems that you are having a great time over in Holland...*

“It has gone down a storm with many fans saying it was better than the previous “Sinamorata” live DVD, with much more feeling and passion. I don’t watch our own performances so I can’t comment on that except to say that it was a great night and we all felt good and that must have been captured by the camera’s.”

*Your collaboration with Peaceville is an indisputable success for both parties involved. Is friendship tying you together as well or its just business? How come you didn’t go for bigger labels, like Nuclear Blast, Roadrunner or Century Media? Or you haven’t been approached?*

“We have had an excellent relationship with Peaceville since the day we signed with them and both parties have worked with respect and maturity towards each other (as well as friendship) which makes for a very strong bond. When a contract with Peaceville ended, it was natural for us to have a little look to see if any other labels might be interested in MDB, and quite a few were but their offers were terrible. With each new contract with Peaceville we were offered more, which was nice, and other labels wanted us for next to nothing, which simply isn’t going to happen.”

*And we made our way to the new album, released by Peaceville as well... My understanding is that it is going to be one with a lot of returns to the roots, with melancholic tracks, sad and depressing ones, but melodic nevertheless. One of the tracks has quite aggressive vocals on it, more violent than ever before. I was reading the other day that you’re left with dealing with the effects and with the mixing. Is that*



accurate? What is your own view on this album, how do you see it, compared to the previous ones? It's closer to... which one of them?  
"The new LP certainly has something for everyone, especially misery. I can't think of an album darker than this one, but with melody too which makes for very sombre listening, and of course the violin adds huge amounts of atmosphere too. We've worked long and hard on this one and are very pleased with the results so far. We just need to make sure we don't fuck it up with the mixing!"

Would you be so kind as to tell me more details about the new album: name, the names of the tracks, lyrics and the album cover...? My understanding is that there are nine? your own view on this album, how do you see it, compared to the previous ones? It's closer to... which one of them?

"I wish I could tell you the titles except we don't have any yet! They are currently under development as is the LP title. There are nine tracks. We are also still trying to find a suitable artist for the imagery. All this needs to be finalized early December as the release date is March 23rd 2009."

I know you stopped dealing with the design of your own booklets. Is it for the best? On the other hand, my understanding is that your art started to attract some interest, as much as to even make money out of it. How long until we'll be able to see an exhibition in Europe? As far as I know, you only had one so far, in New York.

"I am currently working with people in Romania who are very keen to exhibit my work, which is great, and am also in talks with someone here in the UK about taking part in an exhibition in 2009. Art is something I enjoy as it's a way of expressing myself visually rather than through lyrics but generally with the same sort of dark and miserable outcome and it seems quite a few people like it too as some have requested prints via my web page, which I'm very happy to supply, although they are extremely limited to perhaps just 2 or 3 examples. I'm sure I'll contribute to the look of a My Dying Bride cover in the future but not just yet, although I'm not entirely sure why."

You were recently stating that MY DYING BRIDE on stage does not equal to a simple concert, but a show in its own rights. Following this statement, one could say that the clothing (yours, at least) is quite unusual, your hands are painted with dye (red, I think)... everything seems to be part of a ritual, born within a mystical symbolism. Is this just my impression? Are you aiming to deliver a message this way? As through music and lyrics it is all pretty clear...

"I cannot simply walk on stage and sing the songs then walk off again. My work is much deeper than that and I engulf myself with the characters I've created in my lyrics and almost become them when I'm on stage, which makes it a very dark place to be in. I lose sight of the audience and perception of my surroundings including the other band members, and slide uncomfortably into the shoes of those lost souls that make up my lyrics, forcing me into all kinds of dark shapes of twisted agony and suffering. This is why I would be much happier if we didn't actually play live. But I can't force my idea's onto the rest of the band and deny them the chance to play shows and so I have to take the pain and go ahead with it."

We are living in an era where nothing is certain, nothing is constant, everything moves fast and chaotically, everything evolves faster than we can often perceive. Where are we actually going? Are you finding yourself within this continuous and seemingly never ending fight to be number one? As, if your not first it seems that you are definitely last, the underachiever, a slacker?  
"It all depends on your outlook on life and what you hope to gain from your time here on Earth as well as the expectations of others, especially family. I have been lucky in that I was never pushed too hard by those around me into things I wasn't comfortable with,

and allowed to try new and different things. I'm very happy and satisfied with my life right now and can watch the world race by at breakneck speed and in total chaos as I sip my wine and pen my lyrics. One great way to ease the pressure, if it builds too much is to get creative, which is what I do. Instead of letting things build up in your head with a probable outcome of anger, let it out by writing, painting, sculpting... getting creative.

You once said that "Inspiration should flow over you from everywhere". But what if it doesn't? Have you ever felt uninspired? What should one do with such emptiness...? Turn on the TV and watch EastEnders?

"Of course I feel uninspired, we call it writers block, and you just sit there doing nothing. There's no point in even trying to compose something if there's no feeling in it as it will turn out rubbish. I only write when I feel inspired so it's not really much of a problem."

In the context of life, of your life, music and what comes with it must feel like a true gift. And yet... performing it live seems excruciating for you. And so, my question is: what has music brought into your life? If the creative process is a form of personal release, what does re-living those feelings do to you? Never-ending circle, is it?

"I'm not too sure I'd call music a gift - we can all make sounds, some nicer than others but it's still heard. Some are better than others but not necessarily gifted. The lyrical composition does indeed give me relief from the burden of anguish and you're right that it all comes flooding back when we perform live, but it's brief and worth the small sacrifice."

What does happiness, being content, mean to someone who lives the feelings that transpire through the music and lyrics of My Dying Bride? Happiness = what?

"It's whatever you can make out of the things you've been given. I don't have much but I very much enjoy what I've got, and that's true happiness. Sometimes I'm down and sometimes I'm up, just like everyone else, but I try to turn the down times into creative times, and that's a big difference."

Are you someone who lacks patience? My understanding is that you were unable to learn how to play the guitar or the keyboards. Do you reckon you will have the time/patience to write a book on the history of My Dying Bride? Or to actually define in real pages the poetry ideas that are floating within you? Do you need a muse? Or perhaps the easiest justification of "the inability" would be the lack of time... convenient, elegant and... why not, an example of cowardice towards yourself...

"I must admit to not being a very patient man. I get quite angry when simple things cannot be achieved by myself and those around me. I have thought a lot about writing something that won't turn into MDB lyrics, a novel or a selection of poetical works, but I never seem to have the time or the right spirit for such an undertaking, although the poetry would be within my sights. I'm certainly not interested in chronicling the history of My Dying Bride."

You love the history of this small island that has dominated a considerable part of our planet, educating and civilising it on one hand, simply invading it, on the other hand. It is worth admiring what this nation managed to do for so many centuries. Would you have liked to live in a different historical period? Perhaps when Romeo and Juliet lived? Do you think the term patriot is justifiable? Where does nationalism end and fanaticism begin?  
"I am quite a modern man and enjoy the fruits of today's technology but I often feel like we simply have far too much stuff. I think I could live quite happily with just a few choice items for comfort and the companionship of friends, without any need at all to 'log-on and check email'. I think patriots can get a bit too serious and misguided from time to time especially considering the mixed

ethnic/race background most of Western Europe and the USA. The British are made up of several ancient cultures all neatly interwoven into today's society, as is much of the rest of the world so the idea of nationalism is a messy one at best."

The first country ever to legislate the issues surrounding climate change is the UK. By this I mean the issue of controlling and diminishing the CO2 emissions into the environment. Does Britain care about the "green trend"? What is your own view on this issue? Are you an activist, a supporter of the eco movements, of the worries concerning global warming, of Al Gores documentary? Do you think war equilibrates/attenuates extremes?

"Naturally I'm interested in helping the environment, as everyone should be not matter how small an effort, although by my own admittance, it's not a huge amount, but then, if we all did a little, that might be all it takes. Still, it doesn't look too great for our planet in the future. And war doesn't help much either, although it's very good at culling the populace, if a little extreme. I'm not a huge political debater so I'll leave it there. For me, music is a form of escapism and I use it to get away from the day to day rat race of humanity which is why issues like these never occur in My Dying Bride songs. We want people to use the tracks we have created as a vessel for getting away from reality and indulging in something a bit more fantastical."

How do you see religion, as a whole, and how does it fit into your own life's perspective? Does belief have any use? For you, in particular and for others, in general...

"I have no belief in religion at all but am painfully aware of the conflict that is born of it and the utter suffering that prevails from it's more radical followers. Just look at the state of the world today and it's obvious what extreme beliefs inflict upon humanity in the name of god. And where is the proof, the hard evidence of god? There is none at all! It's just a story that has gotten wildly out of control. People actually kill in the name of a character from a story! Unbelievable..."

November, 2008

Triarii represents a particular figure in the ambient music area, this through the force of expression and originality. Throughout the duration of every track, the listener finds him/herself being bombarded by unusual and unique percussion's that differ through their aggressiveness and military cadence. On Wikipedia we find the explanation of the term: Triarii were spear-men in the armies of the early Roman Republic. They were oldest and among the wealthiest men in the army. The music expressed by this German project (based in Berlin) matches the description; it is anthem like, warrior like through concept and through message.

We are having a chat with Christian Erdmann, the leader and the mentor of this band, a pretty mysterious and not very media friendly individual. I was honoured by his decision of sharing with us some of his visions... and perhaps even more!

*Greetings my friend. Everyone who appreciates TRIARII is now expecting the arrival of winter. And of the new album. A good while has passed since we are waiting for your third album. Why so few makes in your relatively long history?*

"Maybe some people expect a release every year due to some unwritten law, but it is more important for me, to produce a good result; even if it takes longer.

Music for me, as for many others, is a form of expressing myself. The creation process depends on feelings, moods and time. It all has to come together to let me create the things I create. Sometimes you produce a song within hours, sometimes you have to deal with blockades. On top of it, I am a perfectionist. If the songs are not displaying or reflecting my intention, I am working it over and over and over again until it fits my own expectations. Like every other artist, I

want completion. I want to reach the highest points of my own creativity. Maybe there is not such a goal or point to reach, who knows? But it is an inner drive that pushes me forward to do that. I think, nearly any art without such an impulse, is senseless. If I would lose that inner drive, I could stop making music."

*What is more appropriate to say: band or project? As you are the only official member...*

"In opposite to many rumours that are spreading around: I am the only member. According to the production of the songs and the creation of the identity, I would say that TRIARII is a project. For live-appearances, I have support from Axel Frank of WERKRAUM and from Volker Neumann of ETERNAL SOUL. People may be right when they see TRIARII as band, when there is a live-appearance. The decision to call TRIARII a band or a project, I leave to the consumers."

*Since this is our first talk, I would ask you to tell us, in a few words, TRIARII's history and also your personal view on your work until date.*

"TRIARII was founded in 2004. I've already made music for a long time, but then had

the luck to get in contact with ETERNAL SOUL, who appreciates my music. So all started with the 7" vinyl "Triumph" in 2004. The first album "ars militaria" in 2005 together with the limited subscription 7" vinyl "Imperivm"; "Pièce Heroique" in 2006. I never expected such a great feedback and never would've thought that there actual will be "fans" who appreciate what I do. There're even people who travel to several concerts, just to see TRIARII. I am very critical of myself, always trying to be as reflective of me as I can; especially with the releases. I try to stay objective as long as I can. Of course, after such a long time, listening to my own stuff over and over again, I have to let go and let others decide. Very good and honest friends help me

## TRIARII

decide what is good and what is bad. Today, I am quite happy that the production of "Muse in Arms", with all its facets, comes to an end. After every release, I feel quite exhausted but also in a way restless; starting with new ideas and new stuff. One of the following releases is already done in my head..."

*You are amongst the few who utilizes the printing of limited edition CDs and due to this one has more options to choose from, as you have different versions, with different booklets. What makes them different from one another, especially as content wise, we are talking the same tracks?*

"Mostly, there are two different versions available; the release is split up into two versions. One higher amount of copies in a regular jewel case, another very strictly limited version in a special edition. Those special editions are made for collectors or so called "real fans" and often come in a box set or a special made package. It follows the identity of the album, but appears in a more luxury version which often contains more than just the CD. With "Muse in Arms", there will also be a limited velvet black box set with silver embossed lettering which will contain (alongside the CD) a T-Shirt, a silver / enamel TRIARII metal pin and a postcard set. The philosophy of ETERNAL SOUL is getting more and more unique in

those days of download-samplers, cheap made stuff and "making a fast buck"... and that pleases me. Of course, the label has to count as well, has to sell and has to make its income... but it is their love for details and for very high quality products that makes me want to release my stuff there. At the moment, I have a place, where my vision of TRIARII and its dissipative, extravagant, lavish and elitist expression has its home. This label would never release anything if it would not find personal pleasure, even if it would sell a bit more. Even if TRIARII someday would not find personal acceptance anymore, this label would stop releasing my music. Probably this fact in combination with my perfectionism and my home-made pressure drives me, to keep a kind of "minimum standard"; a level which is forbidden to under-run."

*Tomas's (Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio) contribution on the "Roses 4 Rome" track is a very inspired one. Looking at the successful contribution between ORE and Spiritual Front, you thought of something similar between TRIARII and ORE? You are tied together though by the origin of your ideas, meaning here ancient Rome... this and an honest friendship...*

"Indeed, I would count Tomas as one of my closest friends, though we don't see each other that much. I love his sense of humour and I can rely on his clear and honest opinion. We have long night-time talks on the phone or send each other our materials and share to one another what we think about them; Actually, we've made a few tracks when "Roses 4 Rome" was made and thought of releasing them someday. But not to see as definite and planned collaboration or side-project. Without any pressure. Maybe the time will come to work on them and perhaps even release them, maybe not. Who knows..."

*What got you to highlight such an aggressive and elaborated percussion? I have the tendency to say that it is unique. Do you consider the percussion to be the essential element of TRIARII? I appreciate it for its technical capability. It has an indisputable consistence.*

"I wouldn't consider the percussion as

essential for TRIARII as you do. Of course it is important for such a martial act. Marching without drumming makes no fun...

In opposite to several people, I wouldn't describe the percussion (or any other part) as aggressive or anything similar. Quite often, I wouldn't describe my music as bombastic or aggressive... only if I would have to describe it to someone for better understanding. My perception on what I would describe as aggressive or bombastic is different, maybe displaced in some ways. When people see some songs that way, I often wouldn't agree. My bombast and aggression starts, where someone else's reaches the pain barrier.

That could be the reason, why several people have the feeling of full on bombast all the way through, even at some lighter parts."

*What brings new "Muse in Arms", as sound and approach? Your second album is a big forward step from the first one. Can you say the same thing about the third one, in relation to the first two? Is it the same Military Martial style?*

"Of course, I would say that "Muse in Arms" is a step forward, otherwise I wouldn't release it. I always work on the improvement of sound and I think that it's recognizable on the third album. This time, I had an even more fussy view on the mastering process. Maybe, I drove Jouni from IN SLAUGHTER NATIVES nuts this time... But it was worth making this album more present, lighter and harder this time. This album will be different in a way, but will also be TRIARII. Like the title word-play says; this time I focus on the Muse. This time, the focus lies more on (neo-) classical arrangements and I've tried to spread within more self-restriction. Of course there will be martial parts, anthems and danceable tracks.

Some people say that the third release is the most difficult one. The first release starts it all; people are impressed or not and some kind of journey starts. The second release often affirms the status and shows it's potential. The third one is quite often a decision where to go or how to move on. Some people will mourn about, if you are doing the same stuff, others mourning about being different this time. So this will always be, but it doesn't affect me. I want to keep the musical spectrum of TRIARII as wide as possible, to be able to do different things without losing the main track. Why should I do the same stuff as with the last release? If people want to have the same as with the last album, they should just make a copy of their own CD. If they expect something totally different, they should listen to another project."

*Can you share with me the technical details*

*of your new album: its length, the lyrics, the concept behind it, the description of every track, guests, the cover and the booklet... Will this be released in different versions as well? How many people have contributed by actually playing on this album?*



"Muse in Arms" will contain 11 tracks. It will be an edition of 2000 copies. 1850 will come in a regular jewel case. 150 copies will be sold within a limited box set which will be a black velvet box with silver embossed lettering. It will contain the CD, a postcard set, a silver/enamel TRIARII pin and a T-Shirt. "Muse in Arms" is also a title of a collection of prose and poetry from the First World War. With concrete melodies and anthems, I will underline possible feelings and images you might have when you think of armour or war. Even the picture of a worst aftermath is able to transport feelings of hope, grief or triumph. During the production process, more and more songs relating to the sun made their way onto the album. The lyrics, I've wrote them myself as usual and Axel Frank from WERKRAUM helped recording my vocals as he's able to work out one of the best results. For each release, I meet several photographers and people who are able to transport my vision within their work. It is getting increasingly difficult for several people I work with because I expect them to deal with my moods and expectations and work with 110% of their abilities for my realization. The artwork and corporate identity follows a very strict line which is recognizable from the beginning of TRIARII. I always work out the idea, a ground structure and this time a graphic designer and friend realized my vision for this release."

*Who is your target audience? What qualities and interests must a TRIARII listener have?*

"Obviously the audience lies somewhere between the martial/neoclassic/industrial & the gothic scene. Personally, I do not care who or where a specific audience lies, as long as people don't try to glorify their (mis-) interpretation to something that I never intended. Of course there will be people doing that, but those will never receive my respond or attention. Art cannot (and should not) assure education in any way. Some

people bore me to death with their narrow left-or-right-wing discussion without any concrete and honest view on their own state of mind. Life is not that simple... To appear in a specific way doesn't mean that all other ways are excluded; it is never that easy."

*What sort of musical preferences do you have? What inspires you from a musical point of view?*

"It depends on my mood. Sometimes I listen to classical music, sometimes Industrial or NeoFolk, sometimes Pop... besides that, I don't have too much time to listen to music in general."

*What is your view on the Swedish label Cold Meat Industry? Have you had no offers from Roger? What projects promoted by CMI managed to get your attention? Are you happy with the label you are working with?*

"CMI is a label with a high reputation inside that genre and Roger is a very nice guy. I had several offers from him to come to CMI, but at the moment, I am quite satisfied with ETERNAL SOUL. So why should I go somewhere else? Maybe the channels of spreading are bigger with CMI, but people who want to have a release from TRIARII will find their way; doesn't matter which label hosts it."

*What is your opinion on the controversial Black Metal genre?*

"I don't like e-guitars."

*How is TRIARII presenting itself live? What are the differences between studio and on stage? How important is the backdrop and what does it symbolises? What sort of gigs related feedback have you been getting so far?*

"TRIARII is a construct. It is artificial. It is a vision. All light, fog, video, the drumming and our appearance is supposed to create a certain feeling of strength, discipline, extensiveness and dignity. For me, a live appearance of TRIARII is more a monumental snapshot, more exposure than a typical band performance."

*I saw TRIARII on MySpace. A few years ago no one would have imaged how easy it would become to consume what others have to say. Despite all of this, TRIARII is not that present on the Internet, and the official page is quite minimal. Why is that?*

"The artwork and corporate identity of TRIARII lives from "less is more". Reduce to the maximum. I like to waste space. It gives room for important things. For me, it doesn't make sense to plaster a homepage full with banners, buttons, advertisements, dripping blood and sparkling little stuff. As a consumer, you go to a specific

page because you want some specific information and not irritating stuff which takes away your intention. And that specific information you'll get when you visit TRIARII.de.

The official TRIARII homepage will offer some more and will be completed when "Muse in Arms" is released. But still... it will be minimalistic. I never displayed my name before, never made a biography or similar. It is not important who I am because it won't change the result, the essence: the music. I know that fans like to know more about a person who runs a music project; but they can meet me during concerts or read interviews as this present one."

*I have noticed that you have a lot of friends from exclusive bands like Werkraum, Kammarheit, Karjalan Sissit or Svartsinn. What do you think about their music, would you like performing together with them?*

"Actually we've already played live with some of them. For example with Kammarheit and Svartsinn on the ICETODIRON Festival in Lithuania in 2005. We had a funny and... a very freezing time there, in an amazing and cold concert bunker; it would be nice to meet them again. I met Make from Karjalan Sissit when he had a concert here in Berlin. Would be nice to play with him live; would be a good setup."

*Tell me a few words about the bands that were invited by me to play in Romania in 2008: Arcana, ORE, ISN, Cascadeur and Spiritual Front.*

"Arcana: I like it a lot.

ORE & ISN: Greetings to Tomas and Jouni. You invited us to come to play with them, but sadly we had problems to appear all together for that date.

Cascadeur: I don't know that much about the new project from Axel Menzer, but I liked the early Hekate. Good to have a new influence.

Spiritual Front: We've played with SF in Lyon. A great project with much potential for spreading much wider over the borders of the Gothic/Neofolk-Scene."

*Are you involved in any other musical project?*

"Not at this time. I am thinking of possibilities for collaborations and probably for a side-project. At the moment, TRIARII takes most of my time, due to its complexity of music and identity. But time will tell."

*What does history represent for you? Does it matter still, in today's world, what has one been? If you could change anything*

*in German history, what would you change? Where do you think the world is headed today? Is the system we have all become accustomed to, good? Can we still be free? Has time compressed? When and where could we enjoy the simple pleasures we had some 10 years ago?*

"History is an important part of present and future. Without history in the way it took place, our life today probably would not have happened or would have taken another course. So, yes, every decision that has been made (in big or small coherence's), has its consequences. I think it is useless to think about what I would change in German history, though I can't and I wouldn't; but it would be nice, just to have a glimpse into a Europe that never would have been involved into war; just to see how it would be today. The system we live in today is maybe not the best, but one of the most durable ones. Although I would say that we are close to climax and collapse. The world today is filled with greed, selfishness, corruptness, war and pollution. I am sure, it will get worse. I think, nobody is "free", according to the original description. Every individual is depending on someone or something. The quite simple dependency on public transportation; or making yourself depend on "the one and only love"; or the state and government which allows or forbids things by law. I think, the political description of freedom becomes more and more a declaration of intent, to leave people on their own devices - not to provide more or "real" freedom. Freedom is also very subjective and depends on individual descriptions for personal room and borders. My freedom is different to yours, but what our freedom has in common is restriction - self-made or decreed."

*What do you think are the positive aspects of a war? They say that war stimulated the progress of a county. Can this be placed in the same balance with the occurring of destruction? What ties you to this topic?*

"War is always present. War happens to each of us everyday. In everyday life, we see ourselves confronted with conflicts and disputes. It is often inevitable not to take position or to stop an aggression (physically or mentally) with extensive means. Of course, every war has its positive aspects. At least the same amount as negative ones. It brings progress in one way or another; it depends on which side of the cannon you sit. Sometimes maybe it could be better for a country to extend, sometimes better to shrink. Sometimes it could be better for people to upraise, sometimes better for the government to oppress. But who's the one to decide?"

We can only assume what the intention of war may bring, but the result is never visible in the beginning... we can only evaluate the result as good or bad - when war is over. And with all insight we move on; stuck between two decisions: Repeating or trying things another way."

*It seems that Germany is an important component of world politics. How is America viewed in Berlin?*

"Yes, it seems so, that Germany is trying again to play along in the political world orchestra, but I don't really care. Not that I am not interested in politics, but aren't the governments today taking more care of their political self-preservation than on their initial function? I don't know what the majority thinks about America. I visited the USA one time and was impressed in positive and negative ways. Positively impressed by their megalomania when it comes to the architecture of what they call "downtown". Everything is much bigger, compared to Europe. But it does not compensate ignorance, partly underdevelopment of infrastructure, (political) education or technical environment. Maybe I met the wrong people, but the ones I've met have been "nice"... but only "nice". Very very cursorily... for me it is a bit too much. And several religions there I see as very sectarian, which appeared quite daunting to me. America is a huge country with huge differences which often contravene to their political statements and behaviours in many ways. Maybe America will earn a better reputation when they admit that and stop playing the global police."

*In the end I'd like to add that, the fact that living in today's world is getting more and more to be a personal struggle with the system its probably a subtle path towards self-destruction, something that man will realise later. Would you agree with me?*

"Living in the world of today is definitely getting harder. Personal struggle within the system depends on how much you let yourself get involved into. Fact is that everybody has to fulfil the minimum requirement of the system. The more you involve your person into the system of political and (social-) cultural circumstances, the more you will find yourself getting annihilated by. But everyone will fulfil a position inside a system in one way or another. Even I do. But the question is: What kind of cogwheel are you? A big or a small one? Thank you for the interview."

November, 2008

## Rhetorics

Just when the enthusiasm of Romania's entrance in EU lures everybody, the Euro skeptic inside me torments into convincing me that no harm is intolerable as far as I'm still alive! Finally, a new surviving pattern! The old way of isolating in the mountains from the Ottomans (eternal Agripina) isn't a solution now, even though several historical legends have taught me that it should be considered as a surviving path! IF there is a purpose for resistance! Interesting times are announced to come, challenging and unexplored ones, another form of being civilized, times that demand to be assimilated and moulded individually. If I'll choose to solely relate myself to cliches and standardized patterns of thinking and acting, I'll certainly loose my identity and become the perfect clone for the functional, well conceived, but dungeon like system. Anyhow, as a professor from around my lands recently pointed out in one of his books: the Romanian individual HANDLES/MANAGES every situation! I do not know if the correct sense is to handle, as I would rather identify it with a simple synonym: to redirect... obviously, plastically speaking! The good part would be that I'll evolve, I'll become more informed, more elegant and better structured into thinking, I'll only communicate via Power Point presentations and ravishing slides, enclosing graphs with ascending trends, I'll make frenetic speeches fully using the body-language techniques that I've learnt during the various and captivating team-buildings and training sessions that I've attended, all saturated in let's do it and proactive attitude; moreover, I'll initiate others into socializing via simulated brainstorming processes filled with roleplay exercises, I'll apply for several jobs opening paths towards career and recognition, I'll decorate my office with all sorts of feng shui accessories bearers of positive energy that will help me to easily print hundreds of professional info sheets; of course, I'll take my lunch in various restaurants saturated in business atmosphere, wearing smart casual clothes that stir up the envy or admiration of some other in charge work colleagues; I'll cure my anguish via as many as possible therapy meetings with the psychologist (preferably attending group therapy), I'll take my kids to spend the day in the malls, sharing impressions regarding the latest remarkable gadgets, I'll make my weekend time pass through an ample, invigorating, liberating watching and shopping process (focused solely on famous European brands, as the Romanian ones are unsatisfactory) but this very process might be sometimes interrupted by mobile conferences with some potential business partners; every summer I'll go to the sea, first on the Turkish seaside, next time on the Greek one, in Malta afterwards, in Egypt... anyway I'll skip the Romanian seaside as it doesn't satisfy my needs anymore; my child will attend a top school that must be a Romanian - American or a Jewish one, needless to say I'll smile to everybody and I'll be a model in all the focus - groups I'll participate in, I'll mostly communicate through SMART sms and handy Blackberrys ... and utterly important: there will be no more bribery's, but only consultancy and intelligent subcontractor invoices... I shall integrate and be the perfect conformist, bla, bla...! Even considering these desperate circumstances from my euro skeptical point of view, I shall live more decently, I'll learn to respect my surroundings more - even if just in a formal way, at times- I'll drive on better roads, I'll make my shopping in more spacious and diversified emporiums, I'll gain access to more credits in order to fulfill my American dream (house, car, exotic holidays), I'll escape exploitation but I'll still be exploited, yet in a willing and conscious manner... I shall prove (to myself) that I can be as everybody else is, but I'll witness my regret for becoming lonelier, more isolated and harassed. As master Paler says, in this puzzling yet emblematic paradox: we have greater buildings but smaller souls, larger highways but narrower minds, we spend more money but we own less, we buy more but enjoy less, we have bigger houses and smaller families, more accessories yet less time, various positions but decreasing common sense, advanced medicine but precarious health... we have learnt to hurry and forgotten to wait... WE HAVE FILLED LIFE WITH YEARS AND NOT YEARS WITH LIFE... it's the era of fast-food, slow digestions, powerful yet paltry individuals... time for simulated lives and programmed emotions to prevail. As far as I am concerned, my path shall probably be the one to refuse the regimentation in the classical Occidental society style, and downshifting will finally become the sole way to escape and survive, latent and regressive as it is, if related to the blindness that will generate the entire modernist society's epilepsy...

DECEMBER 2006

**Agalloch** comes back with an interview for Kogaionon after the one in November 2002. A lot of things happened in these six years, so that is a good reason for a debate with John Haughm and Don Anderson...

*Hello, my friends! How do you feel Oregon/Portland now, after breathing some European air?*

JH: "I feel pretty much the same as I did before breathing European air. I do enjoy Europe a lot and my several visits there in the last 10 years have been great. However, I enjoy the Pacific Northwest just as much."

*After an accommodation question, let's continue with a hard one: After 10 years with The End Records you decided to not renew the contract and to look for other labels. Andreas isn't the same good friend as he was during the last years, is he? Why did you take this decision?*

JH: "It was simply a case of The End Records moving in one direction and Agalloch moving in another. Andreas did not turn into "the bad guy" and we still speak on friendly terms now and again. He wanted to move the label in a more commercial direction and Agalloch did not wish to follow. We finished our contract and we were free to leave if we wanted to. It was as simple as that."

*Agalloch is a band with not too many concerts and tours, but in November 2006 you had your first tour in Europe. I heard you enjoy performing shows in Europe much more than in the States. Tell me more about your personal experience after the second tour in Europe. I know Agalloch works on the DVD footage and audio from your Vosselaar gig this past March '08. Can you tell me more about it?*

JH: "There are a few differences. In Europe, the venues are usually quite professionally run, a decent size, large backstages with showers and healthy catering, and a staff that treats the artists with respect no matter who they are. Mind you, these were just club venues like K17, Loppen, Biebob, Metropool, etc. This in contrast to many American club venues who tend to treat artists like "beer salesmen" and are run like a fucking grade school. I also liked how each show on that tour was exclusive to the touring bands. None of that "5 crappy local openers" rubbish that happens a lot in the States. Also...it's Europe! For us as Americans it is very cool to see new cities, experience different countries and cultures, their food, alcohol, and atmosphere. There were some other things on that tour which were reminiscent of the bullshit we are used to on American tours but overall we really do enjoy playing overseas more than in the USA."

The March tour was interesting because in Europe we played a big festival (aprox 5,000 people) and a DVD gig the night after and I was very sick during both shows. On stage I was dizzy, nauseous, and it burned like hell to sing. It was horrible but the show must go on so I decided to put 100% into it no matter how I felt. You can really tell with the audio of the DVD gig in Belgium. The energy and grim feeling overall is great! A lot of pain went into it."

*I think the idea of having some tours is just about to charm you... right? What are you expecting from now on? What would be the fans' expectations? Any surprises for stage? I refer at your upcoming Spring European tour with DORNENREICH... Many shows, many cities...*

JH: "Yes it will be our 3rd European visit since 2006 as a band. This tour will be in support of the DVD release but mainly it is the result of an offer we could not refuse - to tour Europe with one of our favorite bands, Dornenreich! We go back many years, back to 1997 when Eviga and I traded demo tapes and continued contact as both of our bands grew and reached our various levels of success through the past 11 years. They paid us a visit this year at the Ragnarök Festival and it was nice to meet finally after so many years. I am looking very forward to these 10 gigs and the great memories we will take from this tour..."

*To what extent do you consider the concerts as a form of repression for musicians (and also for the audience)? Could these live performances be just a form of the catharsis?*

DA: "I'm not sure what you mean by "repression?" Yes, performing is very cathartic. I wish we could play live more often. Playing live allows the songs to continue growing. We like to rework parts and try to really make a "live" version of Agalloch that isn't available on the recordings. My favorite part of playing live is being "in" the song at that particular moment. It's like I'm living with the song. This isn't something we can achieve in the studio."

*In "Ashes Against the Grain" you managed much better to combine very different sub-genres of music in a very compact item. The new chapter, "The White" (EP), limited release (two thousand copies), it's just pure neo-folk written between 2004 and 2007. So, Agalloch surprises again fans with totally unexpected change in music. This EP is complementary to "The Grey - EP", creating a duality of sonic opposites. How would you describe this mystical relation and why did you choose to do this kind of music?*

DA: "These EPs are really little moments for us to indulge ourselves and try to go further with a particular style than we would on a full length album. I don't think we'd be interested in doing a 70min sustained performance of acoustic/folk music. These EPs, for me, are glimpses into a specific and obscure part of Agalloch. They don't really have to be a major statement by us. Our albums are what we want to be remembered by. But, for those who like to search a little deeper into our sound then these EPs provide that window. The Grey and the White are related because they were both brief moments where we decided to push on something, some kind of approach or performance, and we wanted to experiment with what was possible with our sound. I think this is why our fan's receptions have been so divided. Honestly, these EPs are not for everyone. We made these EPs for ourselves and for those that find something special in them."

*And now let's talk about "The Demonstration Archive 1996-1998". I know that compilation contains 8 tracks: 3 tracks taken from the first demo "From Which of This Oak", 3 taken from an unreleased 7" vinyl EP recorded in Autumn 1998 called "Of Stone, Wind and Pillor" (which would later be released as a limited edition MCD with bonus tracks through The End Rec.) and the last two are taken from "Promo '98". The recordings for "Hallways of Enchanted Ebony" and "The Melancholy Spirit" are not the same recordings from the album "Pale Folklore". Why have you decided to make this compilation? Are there commercial reasons?*

JH: "This was the first step to attempt a more independent existence in the music business. As I personally own all of this material and there had been ridiculous demand for it for several years, it was a logical choice and a perfect time to make it available in a quality package for a good price. It was self-released via my art fund. The money earned will go back directly into supporting our future endeavors, whether it be buying new technology for me to make our long-distance pre production a smoother process or financing the recording of our 4th album. Those who buy this CD are directly supporting the artist!"



J. Haugm

Why do you aim to a more and more surrealist and impenetrable approach to music? John wrote the texts of the album "Ashes Against the Grain" under the influence of the surrealist and Russian movies, but maybe even under the influence of alcohol. Under these circumstances, do you think that the album could be better understood by the listeners if they tried to put themselves into the place of the person who gave birth to this music?

JH: "I don't know. I don't think about how people should try to understand our work. Agalloch fans should watch Tarkovsky or Parajanov films to be exposed to incredible art – not to try and understand the 3rd Agalloch album! Also, I am generally under the influence of alcohol whether I am writing music or not so that is probably not the best point of reference either. People should just listen to our stuff and make their own decision without trying to "understand" its creators."

At the beginning, John tried to keep Agalloch as a worshipful and esoteric band but, against your will, you became an important name on the Metal scene. Could this be the reason why you are trying to create a music which is hard to understand and this way to keep the distance between you and lots of people?

JH: "No. If we are consciously trying to create difficult music to drive people away, we must be doing a lousy job at it. We have a very wide variety of fans; everything from "kvlt" Black Metal warriors to older contemporary, experimental music fans to young kids who listen to garbage like Atreyu and Slipknot, and many in-between. It is by no means a conscious demographic effort on our part – we just make music that we enjoy. People can take it or leave it."

You have made your first video, for the song "Not Unlike the Waves" thanks to Nicole Dawn Phillips's support (the one who took care of the CRISIS band, too). To what extent did she manage to put into images your musical message? You and Nicole (I have to admit that me too) are fans of the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman. How much did this detail influence the approval of a co-operation with Nicole and the effective making of the video?

JH: "The most important lesson I learned from her was; just because someone likes Ingmar Bergman, it doesn't mean they have his vision and genius. She is, like, the polar opposite of Ingmar Bergman. I would realistically compare her work to directors like that moron Neil LaBute and others like him. I can say that the one positive thing we took from that video experience was meeting Juan Mosqueda. That guy is a visual genius and someone we will work with in the future."

On the other hand, which are the movies (I. Bergman's and not only) which influenced you the most?

JH: "Jodorowsky's "Holy Mountain", Jarmusch's "Dead Man", Bergman's "The Seventh Seal" and "Virgin Spring", Merhige's "Begotten", Tarr's "Satantango", "Damnation", and "Werkmeister's Harmonies", Vlácil's "The White Dove", Svankmajer's "Faust", "The Wicker Man" (1973 version), Tarkovsky's "Nostalgia", "Mirror" and "Stalker", the short films of Jiri Barta, Lynch's "Eraserhead", and on and on..."

How about your webdesigner's work, John? Are you satisfied with it? Otherwise, it is your official job? You earn money from this work?

JH: "I think the site looks great. However it is horribly out of date and needs a massive upgrade. I am not the creator of our current website and I do not do it for a living at the moment. Even my graphic design tends to be mostly for my related projects. However, I am certainly open to lend a graphic hand to someone I respect (this magazine for example...). It would be nice to make a living exclusively from music and art but I am not quite there yet."

Don, you are a teacher. Are you a trainer for a doctor's degree now? On what direction will you go? How do students feel you, knowing that you are a musician in a Metal band? How come that an introvert person like you chose a job which requires a lot of social interaction? How does your job influence the music you are composing?

DA: "Yes, I am in the midst of my PhD work at the moment. My dissertation is focused on analyzing means of living "everyday life" within power formations without necessarily being part of a counter-discourse or "resistance group." For example, I don't believe in resistance or that there exists a pure place of liberation, instead, I am interested in theorizing life within power. My work is inspired my Michel Foucault and his later work on governmentality which is concerned with the "art of governing" and managing populations; and biopolitics/necropolitics where the categories of "life" and "death" become political terms rather than moral/religious ones. My students rarely know that I am a musician. I've had a few who are aware of Agalloch and are a little shocked that I'm their teacher. But, it doesn't come up often."

Which are the writers and books which marked your youth and helped you become the person you are in the present moment? Which is your philosophy of life?

DA: "I don't really have a philosophy of life. However, I've always imagined the work I am doing and the work I ask my students to do to be motivated by the love of inventing concepts. For me, philosophy is the invention of concepts and this is directly inspired by Gilles Deleuze who is a philosopher I admire. Foucault, as I mentioned above, is a hero of mine. I admire him for being a public intellectual who fought real-world problems and made philosophy accessible to everyone. His work becomes more relevant every day."

I know that at the moment you are interested in freelance work for a Horror Film Magazine. How far did you go with this project?

DA: "Not far at all. Graduate school and music pretty much consumes my time. Horror cinema is still a major interest of

mine, but my dissertation has pretty much taken up all of my focus."

Don, after a break of several years due to your studies and the activity with Agalloch, did you finish "Embodiment", the new album of Sculptured. It is said that it forced the limits of the album "Apollo's End" and you wrote almost all the parts using the matrices. How did you get the idea of combining the metal music with Mathematics?

DA: "Embodiment" was released in February of 2008. I am very satisfied with it. I do see "Apollo Ends" as simply an appetizer for "Embodiment." Here's why I incorporated matrices in my music; basically, all musicians rely unconsciously on long-established patterns that they automatically do whenever they pick up an instrument. This got to a point for me when I felt really restricted to how I viewed the fret board of the guitar. I mean this literally. When I look at the guitar, I see shapes and patterns, all of which I have picked up over time. In order to break myself of the habit of doing the same thing over and over, I needed to force myself to re-imagine the fret board. So, I made up shapes on the fret board—triangles, squares, etc., and then inverted them or turned them upside down. I also composed four by four boxes of notes which are called matrices that provided all the chords and melodies I would use. So, these shapes and matrices became a rigorous system that forced me to think and play differently. I mean, key signatures (A minor, Bb major) are equally limiting and rigorous, so I just see my system as another way of organizing notes. Using shapes and matrixes was an "alien" way of composing



D. Anderson

that didn't let me off the hook. I wrote many of the riffs out on paper first and then struggled to learn them on the guitar."

What are the rest of the Agalloch members? Are you intend to include other ones in Sculptured? Maybe in live actions? And what are the other musical projects of your members? Please, describe its music...

DA: "John played drums on "Apollo Ends," but for "Embodiment" Jason is the only Agalloch member. I don't think Sculptured will ever play live because we'd need another guitarist and the drummer this time was only a session member. Also, we all live all over the country. This is true with Agalloch, but things are much more manageable with Agalloch than Sculptured."

Tell me about the new recruits: Dave Murray (drums, Estradasphere, the Deserts of Traun, Tholus), Andy Winter (Winds, Age of Silence) and vocalist Tom Walling. Also, bassist Jason Walton returned to Sculptured. How did you convince these persons to help you at the new material?

DA: "Well, Tom is a very old friend of mine who used to sing in an old High School speed metal band I played in. Andy is also a good friend of mine and he actually only lived an hour away from me when I was writing "Embodiment." Dave is a drummer both Jason and I admire and I simply asked him if he wanted to do it and he agreed. I basically hired him since we didn't have a relationship prior to Sculptured."

Is The End Rec. a good label for Sculptured but a bad label for Agalloch? Why "Embodiment" is made by The End Records if you don't agree anymore with this label?

DA: "Andreas and I go way back. Sculptured was one of the very first bands to be signed to The End and I also suggested some of the earlier bands to Andreas. In the beginning Sculptured was ideal for The End and The End was ideal for Sculptured. I agree with John that The End has moved in a very commercial direction that Sculptured simply does not fit with. I also know that The End is really interested in bands that play live which Sculptured cannot do. At the end of the day, Andreas is a friend of mine and he supports what I do. I can't at this moment suggest the future of Sculptured's relationship with The End as I don't even know if I'll ever make a 4th Sculptured album. Right now I am intensely focused on school and Agalloch."

I know you are a fan of classical music (from Bach to modern classical) and that you would like to compose an item of chamber music. When do you think you will make such a project? Why do you think that lots of rockers are attracted to the classical music

at the same time? In your opinion, which are the common points of the two kinds of music?

DA: "I hope that someday when Agalloch is no more and I am in my late 40s, I'll be able to still do music of some sort. I can see myself attempting to write small classical pieces for a trio or quartet. But, right now I am too focused on Agalloch. So, this is something I'd like to try in the distant future."

I think there are a lot of similarities between classical music and Metal. Both produce incredibly sustained, epic, and bombastic music. I think both metal and classical are very passionate forms of music as opposed to something like pop music which is very banal and made to be consumed quickly. Also, as a former classical music salesman, I can tell the that the fans of both classical and metal are incredibly dedicated and passionate people. There is a dream inside each musician's heart: to reach the day when he can play besides an orchestra and choruses on various voices but this is rather a utopia for these times (financial reasons!). It is your wish, too?

JH: "To be honest, not really. I would rather work with a very good solo violinist or an experimental string quartet than a massive classical orchestra. I think some bands tend to get carried away with this neo-classical approach to the point where it almost becomes a parody of itself. Like Don said, I'd would be more inclined to compose purely classical pieces rather than incorporate it alongside the metal stuff."

Do you think that dreams can give hidden message, that later may give you the possibility to use them for writing lyrics or music?

JH: "Yes, sometimes. In fact the piano part between "Dead Winter Days" and "As Embers..." on Pale Folklore was inspired by a dream I had. It ended with abrupt pounding piano music. I decided that it had to be included on the album."

Knowing that you are not a fan of the digital revolution, do you think technology is just a tool for humanity or, as a lot of people say, it will annihilate human fantasy?

DA: "I'm not sure what the "digital revolution" is because I'm not clear what is being revolted against. I think people say "digital revolution" because they really mean something that is radically new or opens up new possibilities. But, we must not look at the digital age as the problem, I don't think the problem is with digital technology. The problem we are facing with downloading, file-sharing, etc., is a cultural one. The real danger occurs when it becomes normal to listen to mp3s and it

becomes normal to think of albums as disembodied objects with no visual/packaged accompaniment. And it is even more dangerous when people no longer think twice about downloading as opposed to buying CDs and supporting the artists. So, it comes down to how people learn to listen to music. I don't have an answer for this, but I am hesitant to blame technology outright."

*You found bootlegs of Agalloch's demo "From Which of This Oak" on Ebay. Unofficial materials with low quality are sometimes more interesting for people than official materials. What are your opinion and suggestions for fans?*

JH: "I like the idea of official bootlegs – ones that are approved by the band. However, bootlegs that are sold with awful sound or a poor visual design are not acceptable nor are they flattering to me. I have seen very, very poor quality bootleg Agalloch shirts, live CDs, and demo tapes sold via underground websites and eBay in the past and it really depressed me. There are so many outlets on the internet these days where some asshole can create a small amount of very cheap, shabby merchandise and sell it for a lot of money."

*You are fans of Ramones and I know that after the successful cover Sol Invictus you are interested in making some other covers as "I Wanna Live" (Ramones), "The Passanger" (Iggy Pop), "Ecstasy of Gold" (Ennio Morricone) and also a cover of Fields of the Nephilim. Is it possible that the eventual future swan's song product be in the manner of the album "Three Times Seven on a Pilgrimage" - In The Woods?*

JH: "We flirted with the idea of covering "I Wanna Live" and even went so far as to record drum tracks for it. However, it fell through and, in hindsight, I am glad it fell through for a few reasons. First and foremost I feel nowadays that doing covers is very kitsch and pointless, ultimately resulting in something that cannot touch the original. How egotistical are we really to think that we could do a better version of "Ecstasy Of Gold" or a Fields Of The Nephilim song?! We also flirted with covering "Power" by SWANS, which I now think would be ridiculously stupid. The other reason is that I feel the same way about the Ramones that I do about bands like Van Halen or Red Hot Chili Peppers. They are a band that I don't really care about but if I hear their stuff on the radio or whatever, I'm not offended either. I certainly respect and appreciate the legacy of the Ramones but they have not made any impact on my personal musical development for Agalloch so it would be a bit senseless for me to pay tribute to them. Don and Jason are the huge Ramones fans so perhaps Sculptured should cover "I Wanna Live".

Now there have been a couple instances where I was impressed with a cover version. Love Like Blood's cover of "Heroes" is brilliant as is Johnny Cash's version of "Hurt". Also Blood Axis' cover of "The Hangman and The Papist" is great. Perhaps our version of "Kneel To The Cross" falls in this covers-done-right category but, really, who cares. I think it is better to focus on original material."

*I understood that Agalloch would disappear the moment it would reach its highest creative point, having nothing else to say. I heard you have a theme in mind, a lot of ideas, riffs, titles and you want your next album to be a bit more difficult to get into than "Ashes" was, so the most representative album for you hasn't appeared yet and you will continue the activity with Agalloch. I know you are currently in discussion with a couple select labels, but no decision will be made until 2009. Can you tell me something about the new album and the select labels? Maybe labels like Aurora Borealis or Beta-lactum Ring?*

JH: "So far the new material is a continued development of our initial goal; to experiment with our dark metal roots without losing artistic integrity. There are 6 songs in the works at the moment and each one is quite unique. Once again people should never expect "Ashes Against The Grain pt II" or whatever. Every time we make

an album, we consciously wipe away the past and start fresh with a new perspective and new influences. The process for our 4th album will be no different.

As for labels...we have received several offers; a couple from majors, but we are interested in the type of labels that will give us more freedom, artistic control, and ownership of our work. The label has to work for us, not the other way around! So we'll see. There are a couple tasty offers on the table for sure but we haven't made a decision yet. "

*What kind of feedback does AGALLOCH receive in general? What I've read it turns out to be mostly positive and constructive critics...*

JH: "Yeah, there is a lot of absolute worship as well as total contempt and hate towards us. It seem to be an extreme response either way. My attitude is; if someone likes our music, that's great, we're glad. If not, they should just listen to something else. It's not our job to please anyone but ourselves."

*Tell me about your wanderings in your territory... what pleases you the most while doing that? Do you prefer exploring the woods alone? Or with your girlfriend, Veleda? She is a very talented photographer, am I right?*

JH: "I have always enjoyed traveling and, both, Oregon and Washington states provide a wealth of beautiful natural scenery and interesting places to explore. Obviously it is nice to do this with a friend or with Veleda. We often will drive to the coast or the Northern Peninsula, or the nearby lakes, cliffs, and wilderness. In the last two weekends we have explored some new places out in the Columbia Gorge area. Veleda's work has always been great. Even when I first met her, I was impressed with her photography and she has developed her style significantly in the past few years."

*Do you feel more caressed and inspired in pure natural environment or you prefer the presence of some manmade elements in order to reach relaxation and contemplation- modern or old architecture, maybe?*

JH: "I like both, depending my mood. I usually tend to be inspired musically when in a natural environment. However, sometimes the city has given some great inspiration – particularly on The Mantle. That album is a very rich mixture of epic nature and bleak, grey city atmosphere. It is basically Portland and the area surrounding it, manifested as an album."

*I want you to try to recommend me some good music that you recently listened to. Do you still enjoy Metal? What other music you prefer? Have you listened ROME?*

JH: "Yes of course I still enjoy Metal. I still enjoy the old classics and I am always trying to find really amazing new bands and keep in touch with the underground. Lately I've really been enjoying Kroda, Lifelover, Solstafir, Paysage D'hiver, Coldworld, Wedard, Lunar Aurora, Krallice, Silencer, Winterfylleth, and so on. Also, yes, Rome is outstanding. I am actually a fan of a few artists in this issue - Sopor Aeternus, ORE, Spiritual Front, Damiano Mercury/RREA, Shining, Arcana, Tenhi, etc. We all listen to a variety of music. From metal to electronic to folk to new wave to prog/psyche to modern classical and so on. There is a wealth of music in the world and we are always searching for something interesting to check out."

*What would you consider a major compromise into doing music? Have done major compromises so far?*

JH: "I think the only compromise we have made was with our dealings with the press. I initially wanted little or no public presence. However, The End Records invested a lot of money into us and demanded that we be involved with the press. In some ways I regret it but at the same time the exposure has helped us accomplish

some things otherwise impossible."

*Still in the spirit of the previous question, I wonder what do you think about Varg Vikernes (BURZUM)... his music, ideology and Arian concepts? What about his acts... he tried to escape...*

JH: "I do not appreciate his use of Paganism as a platform for racism and idiotic socialigical ideas. Other than that, I don't really care. His story is old, tired, and no longer relevant to me. He made some great music in the 90's though..."

*What do you think of the fact that many people have been inspired by your music?*

JH: "I guess I don't really think about it too much. It is difficult for me to believe since I am just as inspired by other music and bands – some of which are fans of Agalloch. It's really strange."

*What kind of sales figures have you reached with your albums?*

JH: "We seem to do ok. The band now generates it's own income to keep it going without tapping into our personal funds. We can record another album without label support, which is important to us. Touring expenses, particularly abroad, are still something we depend on from outside investors as it is much more expensive than recording."

*There's lots of controversy regarding Gaahl's recent coming out of the closet, admitting he's gay. While many won't admit it, their view on Gorgoroth's music has changed, irreversibly. What's your view on it? On homosexuality and Black Metal? Halford was accepted, why isn't Gaahl? I wonder if being gay isn't the ultimate fuck you to religion, his pinnacle of individualism...*

DA: "First off, I am not a fan of Gorgoroth or Gaahl. I don't like their music and was never interested in their work. As for Gaahl being gay, I think it's an incredibly courageous admission to make within a scene that is inherently very masculine. People in general have a very difficult time reconciling masculinity with homosexuality. Most popular gay males are either effeminate or very clean cut. I think a lot of homophobia is based on the fact that, if you are masculine and gay, this is very threatening since it suggests that homosexuality is something any guy can be, even if he has a big beard and lifts weights! Homosexuality is not something that is combated by "being a man." So, actually, I have respect for Gaahl and Halford both who are within a scene that is based on very masculine traits (strength, violence, anger, etc) and might not seem to be very welcoming to sexuality in general, let alone any kind of sexuality that deviates from the accepted socially constructed concept of masculinity.

However, with regards to Halford, anyone with a scant knowledge of the homosexual scene knows that dressing in leather the way Halford did is a sign and an accepted "code" for other "leather boys" or masculine homosexual men. The funny thing is I am confident that gay men in the audience at those Judas Priest shows knew exactly what was going on. While all the other metal fans who are just into leather, black, and motorcycles were none the wiser. Actually, this example fully outlines my point above. Masculinity and homosexuality are seen as so directly opposed that those who can't imagine a masculine gay man will totally think he is the ultimate Metal god since he is donned in black leather. Whereas, those who see the other part of this "code" will know that this guy is gay. All this comes down to the fact that Heavy Metal has coded black leather as completely metal, whereas, before Metal even came around, gay men who looked like Halford were already linking this fashion to the gay "leather" or "bear" scenes where there existed gay men who flaunted their masculinity. This particular scene was in contrast to the more effeminate gay males. Yeah, sure, it is a "fuck you" to religion. But, I don't need to invest in that in order to be "ok" with Gaahl, or anyone in the black metal scene, being

gay. If people have to say that "ah, it's so blasphemous" in order to come to terms with homosexuality in the black metal scene, fine. But, that's not acceptance. At the end of the day, there are probably many gay males in the metal scene as a whole."

*As it was proven during the centuries, religion has played a great part (and it will as well!) in all centres of influence of our quotidian life and the consequence to such was horrible: major conflicts, wars, victims....What do you think of what is happening now in the world (Jews against Palestinians, Americans against Iraqis...and so on...)? Do you find near or imminent a third world war?*

DA: "No. And I disagree that this is all because of religion. Wars are caused by people who can't accept others who are different from themselves. Religion is a means to come to terms with the meaning of life. As soon as "people" come into the equation, you have war. But, war is not the direct result of religion. I respect religion and feel religion is an important aspect of living in a chaotic world. It's not for me because I find other ways of dealing with the difficult questions of life. But, I am in no way some anti-religion black metal freak. And I won't join the chorus of black metal people who find it provocative and exciting to denounce religion. It's immature and ignorant. Life is meaningless and if one turns to religion, art, or philosophy to work through this, then, that's great."

*Obama will be the next president of US. In this case he will finished the all wars from the Earth? And he will resolve the financial and economics troubles from your country, maybe?*

JH: "I highly doubt any president could accomplish any of that. I think it's amusing that this election divided Americans into either being called "racist" or "sexist" while ignoring the serious issues. Although neither candidate appealed to me, let's just say I voted against any possibility of Sarah Palin becoming president. The thought of that bimbo zealot becoming president if McCain died in office is more terrifying than another term with W Bush. Now that Obama won, maybe these hardline racists and black supremists like Spike Lee, Jesse Jackson, Jeremiah Wright, and the Black Panthers can finally shut the fuck up about 400 years of oppression, the evil white man keeping them down, and the need for reparations and affirmative action. Not that they will, mind you, it's just a nice thought. Human stupidity and ignorance knows no racial boundaries."

*Have you agree with Michael Moore' points of view? He made a few very controversial films in his career...*

DA: "The most important work Moore has done is shed light on America's pathetic and evil health care system. I do give him plenty of credit for setting the tone for the presidential debates early on in terms of health care. I also find him very humorous, but he is a filmmaker and not a journalist. But, I expect him to rhetorically present a view, so I don't blame him for being a leftist and/or liberal figure or whatever."

*How does Romania look like seen from an American corner?*

JH: "Obviously the first thing that comes to mind to most Americans is Vlad Tepes and Transylvania. Obviously there is more to Romania than this and I for one would like to see for myself. I think it is a very interesting and mysterious place."

*What is your inner demon, John? What makes you able to create even more music? Or as the more average man would ask; what's your inspiration?*

JH: "Life. It is necessary for me to be able to create and express myself; my thoughts, fears, hopes, and frustration with the world. I am also quite inspired by the Pacific Northwest. There is something here that haunts me..."

November, 2008

One of the most authentic bands in the Italian Neo Folk scene is Rose Rovine E Amanti. Damiano Mercuri, an intellectual who holds art on a high pedestal, someone who was schooled for years in a musical spirit, now steps forward with a new album; expressive as *Rituale Romanum*, to say the least, but as well as that, with a more accentuated Mediterranean flavour.

*Good evening Rome, good evening dear friend! How is today going for you in the capital of Italy?*

“Good - for the beauty of the town and because I can find musicians and studios where to play and record my music, museums, concerts, and what you want to find for your own personal way of living. Bad - for a lack of humanity which is closer to the country and nature than big cities.”

*I keep seeing on TV how the citizen of Rome has to cope with all these safety issues, how there are all these tourists (too many perhaps), probably a good few hundred thousand cars, agglomeration everywhere, a lot of immigrants, unhappy trade unions... and who knows what else is to follow with this global slump/recession. Is there a new World War ahead?*

“I can give you my personal point of view: we’re living the 3<sup>o</sup> world war since 11 September 2001. Tourists are nice and gentle but bureaucracy and too much chaos are not friends of mine.”

*Is this bureaucratic European Union a step forward? Does it benefit anyone, after all? As it was formed after the Cold War and it seems to be a modern form of dictatorship from which only a small number of people would actually benefit, the great majority being left clueless in the dark... a majority that rests in that state; and even if the realisation of this not being normal kicks in... they find no other alternatives and end up conforming. Very deep the slogan “Unity In Diversity”, don’t you think? Heh... Are we more sheltered this way from the global crises?*

“There are not shelters in this world since the shouted of Adam and Eve. Do you mean “democracy”?? Democracy is oligarchy nothing better. Unity in diversity?? I don’t trust in any political solution I trust only in single individual I’m not interested anymore in talkin’ about dictatorship or democracy, I’m not of this age I’m a passenger and I see this crazy world going down and down with a cafe’ on my hand. Ha ahaha uhhh what an apocalyptical dandy pose don’t you think?? Haa hah!!!”

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*I have recently listened to the Italian project ROMA AMOR, a superb music, catalogued within the interwar genre, tavern like, or cabaret like style, something to listen to with a carafe of red wine next to you and an aromatic cigar within your lips. If I am to visit Rome, or Italy even, will I still get the chance to discover out on the streets out-dated islands of this sort? The tendencies all over Europe are to shift everything towards modernity, traditional elements being a source of mercantile marketing techniques and a cheap survival source for the locals.* “No, you’ll find nothing, but all could be rebuilt only by art for an inner vision.”

*Your music releases a Mediterranean aura, warm, full of hospitality...but...at the same time, harsh, even grave at times, when the low tonalities are used. Would you agree with me on this?* “Yes of course! Perfect!”

*Your guitar is incredible; I don’t think there is a person out there to have listened to Rose Rovine E Amanti and not to recognise this instrument easily. How long have you studied guitar? I know you hold different concerts only by playing it...*

“I started my studies when I was 13 and yes I took my degree at conservatory of S. Cecily and I also play as a classical guitarist. But I never felt myself as a classical musician or a rock one; I’m comfortable in being a minstrel, which is what I like to be. I mean, I just use music for myself, with no bounds if I can.”

*Even more so, your collaborations with different artists are a source of inspiration for many. “Europa Calling” is a fantastic track... Can you name your collaborations so far? What other musical projects do you have?*

“You mean the version I sung in the *Sagittarius* CD, but this song was composed by Lars Werh a brilliant German musician member of Forthcoming Fire, and Josef K. has written the lyrics. I collaborated mainly with Josef K. Of Von Thronstahl because of our true friendship and the respect I have for his art, and Belborn, a great German Neo Folk band which unfortunately doesn’t exist anymore. I had the honour to do a split CD “Grain” with them for the polish label War Office Propaganda (now *Rage In Eden*). My projects are: RREA, myself as solo guitarist and something else which I will not bother officially release.”

*Your voice is an original one as well, with modulations that can astound any listener. The aroma of your tracks performed in Italian frame an unusual picture, singular, difficult to be described... Damiano, why have you created Rose Rovine E Amanti? What are you pursuing through this strange combination of words that sum up beauty (Rose), history (Rovine) and the death of love (Amanti)? Do you perhaps have your own battles, your own inner war?*

“Thanks for your kind words about my voice, I’ve got a very theatrical approach in singing. I created RREA because I was tired to waste my strength and time with other musicians. I wanted to remain in the dark musical scene. It was twilight, I was walkin’ on a roman bridge watching the dome of S. Peter and the Tiber River and these three elements came into my mind: beauty, history and decadence; all coming from Rome in that late afternoon and all of which are still in my heart. Inner battle?? Yes, always against my weaknesses and demons.”

*Let us now talk about “Demian” as well. Fascinating album, congratulations! Although I don’t find a lot of changes compared to the previous one; from a structural point of view, the new album is abundant of instruments, giving at times bombastic dimensions to some of the tracks, and contemplative shadows to others... A step forward, in any case...*

“This new CD is a neo-rock-folk oriented. I needed more power and to use a wider range of sounds but I played no midi files. I wanted a CD which sounds like a band; I’d like people who listen to my music to feel in the background someone who is playing a real instrument. This CD is much much superior than the previous for many aspects.”

*Melancholic and epic as it is, the album continues to be nostalgic and sad as well. Where from and why this sadness? The atmosphere is not a pessimistic one, but most definitely not a very happy one either... Is Italy such a depressed land? You have the Vatican; faith should be the deliverance for many, no?* “Without my Faith and music I could be dangerous... sadness is the legacy from Enlightenment age and of the XXth century. Thanks nihilism, thanks enlightenment thanks modernism and positivism, this way of living has destroyed all and now we walk among the ruins which are still the best landscapes this world can offer. We’re living in the age of grand delusions, this is a fact, and our task is to remain quiet and strong in our dignity waitin’ for the Sun.”

*Let me come back to your latest make, 10 truly superb tracks, indeed! The first thing that surprised me was the absence of the forefront violin, this allowing itself to be heard less and less and on lesser tracks as well. Why did you give up working with Pamela? Or perhaps you haven’t?* “Pamela doesn’t play on CD. I’ve written the violin arrangements I needed and the few tracks where violin plays are perfect to me. This time the main instrument I guess is the full drum kit.”

*Rose Rovine E Amanti has a self standing track with the same name. A mix of English and Italian, violin, guitar and perhaps even mandolin I think, it all sounds so beautiful! Are the lyrics of this track important? The song is of a fantastic magnetism, one of the most inspired of your entire musical history.*

“You make me blush...!! Not casual words but not exhaustive for RREA.”

*Just so I wont have to start asking you about every single track, wont you please briefly describe the themes of your compositions? You were once saying that, for you, music is everything, but it’s not the same with the lyrics. My understanding is that the booklet will now include the lyrics as well. Is H. Hesse that important to you? I very much liked your characterization of this album: “It deals more about the duality of human being, the fight against our demons and the love for the demon, because I love demon but I’m in fear of lovin’ him because I know the meaning of this love and it’s horrible even if the taste seems so sweet”.*

“Yes Hesse gave me the final idea to develop this theme but the CD is not bounded on Hesse’s novel and it’s not a narrative CD. Yes the lyrics are not so important; to me music is still everything. In the booklet the lyrics are printed because after “*Rituale Romanum*” lots of people asked me. But all that is important you will get from the music, not from words.”

*Let’s sing another song, boys... “Il Grande Tradimento” is my favourite track from this album. How would it sound live, in a concert? Perhaps alongside another remarkable one, “Christian Soldier”? To be more precise, once with the release of this album, how will ROSE ROVINE E AMANTI look like on stage? Major approach changes, perhaps?* “RREA is my solo project and according to the budgets they offer me, I can use more musicians or less. With RREA I played with six musicians on my side as well as a duo in holy Sofia last October. I think I’ll never play this song live because it needs too many guitars. The theme is about human betrayal.”

*How would you like ROSE ROVINE E AMANTI to be on stage should you be free of any logistical or financial barriers? Projections, multiple musicians, dancers or pyrotechnic effects...?* “I need one percussionist, 2 guitarists, one

bass player, one pianist, one violinist, 2 backing vocals and one polistrumentist. If possible, I would also need time to create a theatrical approach on the stage. This costs too much and I don’t sell enough to be able to do this, so it’s very much alright for me to play with my musicians in like a smoky small club where live bands would usually perform.”

*Tell me a few things about the band members... Are they the same live as well? What are the instruments they play? Have you had major line-up changes in all these years?*

“There are no band members: RREA is me. All the people who play with me are friends or musicians with whom I collaborate for gigs or studio sessions. But now I try to have more fixed friends for rehearsals of my new stuff and use always the same musicians for each gig, but it’s difficult because not all are free for the same gig and for this reason I collaborate with many different musicians, it depends by chance.”

*Your visibility became more fruitful after signing with COLD SPRING. Are you happy with working with Justin? What does a favourable contract mean, for both parts? Can we perhaps even say that it’s a profitable one?*

“Cold Spring is a marvellous label for a guy like me. I’m free and the whole staff works at its best to promote my music, they pay the studios and help in different ways. It seems they are happy with me and if they wouldn’t be, they would have already deleted our deal. Justin is a great producer, very able and with a huge musical culture. Profitable?? You mean money???”



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Oh no, with this music you can pretty much earn some coins as musician; I don't run RREA waiting' to become famous or rich, it would be pathetic, I run RREA only for personal exigency to make this kind of music which gives me a lot of emotional freedom."

*What music do you listen to these days? Who are your musical idols?*

"Gregorio Bardini, Von Thronstahl, Tony Wakeford, Kayno Yesno Slonce, Parzival, Thorn Agram for example..."

My ever best artists are Lucio Battisti, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Snake Corps, King Crimson, lots of dark-wave from 80' and much much more."

*What bands found in today's scene are in your opinion worth mentioning?*

"The whole scene is comfortable to me as idea in itself. I think "Blut un Jordan" by Parzival, "Gloria" by Legerdes Heils, "Harmageddon" Spiritual Front, "Nera" from Rome, "Belum Sacrum Bellum" by Von Thronsthal "Time is thee enemy" of Blutharsch are some of the best last titles to me."

*Art interests you a great deal. Can you tell me what resonates with you?*

"Without art this world has no colours, odours, meanings and power, it's just blood and cocaine. Art is beauty to me... beauty helps keeping you alive!"

*The message transmitted by you is a Christian one, catholic, just as discreet, as imperative. Are we in need of a new "mental Christian army"? Or perhaps of a new Renaissance? What does faith mean to you? How should it be perceived within the Neo Folk scene, where the trend is Neo Paganism?*

"Please let me point out that I'm a musician, that's all. Then obviously my religion influences me as well as the other things of myself. If you ask me, yes I think we need more Christianity but I'm not into NeoFolk scene as a kind of pathetic prophet. My faith is when you fall and find no good reason to raise against the black winds, is when everybody betrays you but you remain strong in solitude like a stone, is when you fight against your vanity and weakness but also much much more than that. Sometimes I've got no faith, I'm lost somewhere but then this grace comes to me again, and if I'm not dead or murdered is because of my faith. NeoFolk and neopaganism movements don't cause me troubles; I can sleep as well as I did before."

*"Europe needs something a lot better than nihilism". What do you think this continent needs? Can an association be made between nihilism and ignorance? As we have plenty of that too...*

"I've talked for years about this... now I'm too old for words; everybody needs only facts and our dignity. We are losing control again and we'll pay again for this."

*What are the elements that could put together a cultural code of today's values? Without sliding down on an extremist slope...*

"Respect of the life according the Christian vision which is basically shared by paganism too in many many aspects."

*I forgot to mention a few things about the history of this band. This is our first interview and I'm thinking that the readers must hear about all your albums. Can you please describe them to me? How does Damiano Mercuri see them, after some years have passed?*

"No regrets at all. All my CDS are true, there is a lack of sound quality at the beginnings but this low-fi NeoFolk still sounds interesting to me. I see lacks everywhere but I recognize some good elements in each release. The most remarkable on a conceptual way and for many musical aspects is my

second CD-r "Woyzeck" a big journey into the human abyss." "Then come a weird harsh dance mini CD called "Noi Vi Odiamo!" (We Hate You!), which was pretty various on styles and very very weird, I love it in its madness. The split with Belborn (a German pagan band) is still in my heart, it turns in a more songwritin' style. The other split with Sol Invictus and Andrew King is also very brilliant in itself and my contributions are comfortable to me."

*"Rituale Romanum is based on the vision of Europa Cristiana when I visited Aachen the headquarter of Charle Magne, there is a sacral main theme. But my favourite and surely more mature, with a very good soundquality, is my forthcoming CD "Demian", out via Cold Spring in one month. This is my very first whole CD recorded in a professional studio. This gave me lots of opportunities to reach the sound I need. There is more life and more energy, is a neo-rock-folk CD with some songwritn' tunes."*

"The most horrible release is the live 2CD bootleg with Von Thronstahl: I've been betrayed into the deepest part of my heart. They stole my music with no permission. Such CD was recorded in a secret gig I had in Germany. I was there only to cover Von Thronsthal because he's not allowed to play in Germany and no bands (maybe only me and HERR) were available to help. I went there with no band; I played with the celloist of HERR a few songs, we never practiced and no sound check has been done before the show!!! The organisers recorded all and produced such rubbish... when they asked me I implored them not to do it, advised them that if they need extra money I'd send them some unreleased stuff from RREA but they used my music without any permission. That CD is my biggest shame in music and it is the German betrayal I suffered!"

*Almost all of your gigs are together with VON THRONSTAHL. I know you are good friends with these talented veterans of the scene. Are you not afraid that this will get some to see you as associated with the promoters of the right wing nationalist movements? There have been some boycotts related to the view points of these guys. Or perhaps you share their political views as well? How should this aspect be perceived?*

"I've collaborated and I'm friends with Josef K., that's all. Yes often someone tries to boycott some gigs but apart Austria and Germany, no problems. I know that to play with Von Thronstahl means to be labelled as Nazi, but I'm into the underground scene and if I can't feel free to do music with whom I like in this scene I see no reason to remain in it. Josef has nothing to do with national front, I think he even doesn't know really the meaning of being right-winged, it is more a pose, a provocation, he's close to chaos and he comes from punk and his mentality is still punk, so very far from right-winged mentality which needs order and control. Josef loves the right winged aesthetic but not the way of living.

On a political level we think the same about the decadence of Europe but totally different about Russia, Palestine and Israel. I'm a friend of Israel, Josef is close to Palestine and he looks at Israel like a demon."

*Where does patriotism end and nationalism begin? I have noticed the Italian flag hanging next to your microphone, while playing live, on stage... surely you can imagine the speculations that one can make?*

"Sex Pistols or Bruce Springsteen used often during their shows their own Fatherland flag... nobody asked them if they were nationalist. I like my flag and it's smart to play with such lovely flag. Time for nationalism is dead."

Coming back to music, I am now listening to "Pavra Del Demonio". I noticed the way you used the guitars here: electric guitars with a more Rock, even Metal sound. What should I make

of this? Are you interested in this scene as well?

"Not at all... I respect a lot the metal scene for the unity and because you can find very good musicians in it, but I never was involved and I don't listen to metal music. But I love rock, especially Iggy Pop!"

*Toto Cotugno played in Bucuresti for the forth time a few days ago, in front of a huge crowd. To fascinate his fans once again, he sang a Romanian song that he likes a lot (Sheppard with 300 Lambs - Ciobanas cu 300 de oi) and you could imagine the hysteria he caused. If you were invited to play in Romania, would you prepare something similar to us? Especially since you have at your right an inspiring muse?*

"Ha ha ah is Toto Cotugno still alive?? I didn't know! Uhh nice guy ha ahahah!!!!

Well I'm learning some Romanian because, as you know, my girlfriend comes from Dolj- nearby Craiova, we even recorded a Codreanu song in Romanian together for my friend Timo (Saggiarius) but the song wasn't included into the CD. But I know a small nursery rhyme in Romanian and I'm learning a poetry, but probably the Iron Guard song could be more interesting and beautiful... ha ahha ha!!!!"

*How do you see the brotherhood between the Romanian and the Italian people? Our communities form a majority on both sides, there are a large number of declarations of partnerships, of affection, of historical ties, that we originated from Romans... hence the Romanian language. Is this only a façade? How do you see these things, especially as more and more Romanians refuse to stay and work in Italy? Is electoral capital gained from negative examples that unfortunately unfold?*

"Gipsies from Romania brought bad examples of course, and this brings more problems to the Romanians who come here to work and join Italy. But this will be resolved in no time at all. From the Balkans, Romania is the closest to Italy on a cultural level due to our Latin roots, that's for sure. I think now all the ex-communist countries (like Poland and Hungary or Bulgaria) need their own time to rebuild what has been burnt and destroyed by such bloody blind dictatorship and such horrible ideology, I'm waitin' for a new strong Poland, Hungary, Czech and so on... but to be under Bruxelles doesn't seem the best way to raise again... anyway I believe in ancestral European Spirit which will bring a sort of unity among the European Identity, I travelled a bit East Europa and I saw great persons there ready to build something. In my personal opinion I think the best bands in the future will come from East... you've got more to tell us after the cold war, so write us about all the past years we've been so close but so far!"

*As you know, I have organised a few Special Evenings this year, together with ARCANA, ICE AGES, ATARAXIA (a different type of Mediterranean aroma, right?), ORE, ISN, CASCADEUR, ROME and SPIRITUAL FRONT. What is your opinion on their activity? I know you have worked with Simone on "Woyzeck". "All very remarkable projects, congratulations, I guess your audience has been very impressed."*

Yes, I asked Simone to record his voice while reading poetry by H. Boll (my favourite German writer) and he did, but it seems like it was ages ago. I thought his voice could be perfect for such song and it is! Ha! I'm lucky that I'm not a popular R&R star so few persons could think like you! Ha aha ha ha... I don't remember exactly the words but surely I was talkin' about the spiritual attitude and the spiritual roles of men and women which are completely different and must remain different. I'm afraid of how lots of women want to deny their female nature in the name of emancipation... well too long to explain you see... but to think that the duty of women is to make children and take care of kitchen would a little bit silly don't

you think??? I'm not silly at all!" And if we are to discuss about this inequality, why didn't God give man the right to give birth?

*BTW, what is your opinion on cloning? Can it be accepted as the evolution of science?*

"Ha h hahha!!! I'm not the person to ask... I'm not God, but I promise next time I contact Him by phone I'll ask him for you, ok??? Ha aha ahah!!!! About cloning: it is an old-Nazi archetype, do we really want a cyborg humankind??? Yes, all is possible and just like the atomic bombs, cloning will be another step to self-destruction."

*What does family mean to you? Do you find yourself to be a true traditionalist?*

"Family should be the nest before the flight. From family you should learn about your roots, blood and ground and value codes. No I'm not a true traditionalist, I use a lot my PC and an Ipod. But I'm not in fear of Tradition and I try to keep with me the deepest teachings from it."

*Who is Damiano Mercuri in the day to day life? I know your 31 years of age, but that's pretty much it all...*

"I think it is enough, don't you?"

*How does a normal day look for you? What about an ideal day?*

"Each day is not unique, is a handcraft job, I don't like "carpe diem" philosophy, each day is a step in a direction I decided to reach... shall I reach my target??? Let's see!"

*You had gigs in numerous countries, you have visited many cities. Where did you have the best live performance, or what city did you enjoy most? Any funny stories coming into mind?*

"I think Sofia is still the most emotional adventure for many, many reasons. I really must thank Emil from Corvus Rec. for inviting me to play at his great festival. There I met such great Bulgarian artists and the Bulgarian people are so warm and friendly. On a musical level I don't think to have done a remarkable performance, but all around was so magical!

But let me tell you also about Lithuania... uhhh such a loooong night, full of fire and music, and in the morning another gig with my lute... there also great persons.

I honestly must thank all the organizers who invited me for their love and showed me their own land, recently I discovered Budapest thank to Gabor from "Sturmast", there I also met a good friend, Janos, from Kriegsfall. U.

The most crazy and sometimes unhappy situations came from Germany, my beloved Germany seems to be victim of a bad spell... such crazy sad persons I've met there... and so much censorship!!! Probably was freer during Nazi era? Crazy holy damned Germany!!!!"

*Dear friend, you have all my respect for what you are doing in this scene; I wish you all the very best and... inspiration in abundance. "Give us back our old bordello with their perfumes...!!!". Don't you think this is a futile implore?*

"No?? Why?? It's a nice, nasty, jokin' kind of implore full of ironic and sarcasm!!! Ha aha hah!!!!


Thank to you Doru for your time dedicated to RREA and your kind words from my music. Surely we'll meet before or perhaps there, in Romania, and if I'll marry I become half Rumanian, so we'll become a little bit part of a brotherhood!!! Greetings to your kind readers and Romania!"

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA...

November, 2008

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**Za Frûmi** is one of the most interesting acts in the genre of dark ambient. The band consists of Simon Heath and Simon Kölle which both have several other projects on labels such as Cold Meat Industries, Horus CyclicDaemon, Major Label Industries (Tom Bombadill's Collectors) and Waerloga Records. They wanted to dive deep into the world of Za Frûmi and with two albums examine Cults and Orders. The result is stunning. The main label for Za Frûmi is Waerloga Records.

Za Frûmi has two branches and the two albums released 4th of July are both in the Legends series. The other branch is theatrical music about a band of orcs.

Both the albums have 11 tracks and are proof that Za Frûmi is taking another step forward. The albums redefine the view on the project once again but without going into a new style or spoiling what already was great. The albums are perhaps the darkest and the most complete albums ever released in the genre! They are for sure up in the top with bands such as Arcana, Ataraxia and Elend.

Like "Legends act 2 – Vampires" the two new albums seem to be big hits. Legends act 2 was used in several films and receiving top scores in the dark ambient and fantasy scene. Among many the composer Ennio Morricone really enjoyed Legends act 2.

*How do you develop albums like "Legends act 3 - Cults" and "Legends act 4 - Orders", that are so episodic?*

"First of all we talk, talk and talk about the concept and ideas. We don't want to stop evolving so we think of ways to challenge ourselves. This time around it was time for more vocals as an example. After that we split up for a while and let the inner journeys take us places. We write down ideas, titles and then meet up again for more discussions. First after a couple of weeks we actually go into the studio to work. We like to start out right off with improvisation and see where the ideas take us. When the basis for a first song is done we often know more about what will work. We don't dwell on what cannot work but are used to kill away darlings. After working with an album some time we take a halt and let the songs rest and then go back to them again. These two albums we just made are very detailed. I think we have something around (and we are not exaggerating this!) 1000 different sound effects. We combine them and use some as instruments after we cut them up or use all kinds of strange things as for an example drums. On these albums we liked to play a lot of the instruments on our own and also make improvisations. When we are in the zone and know what a song needs we feel confident in our improvisational skills. Sometime before the making of these two albums we also made some recordings with the choir known as Medusa. Last summer was the "summer of Za Frûmi" as we worked a lot with the project but that summer was a long one in that case as we kept on working with the albums all the way to late spring 2008. When we think the work is done we listen to the albums a lot and see if there's something missing. This time we needed to add a song on Legends act 3 - Cults. All along the work we also write the story for each cult. We work parallel with story and song and don't try to make the stories afterwards to sort of fit in. It's a very daunting task to take on working with two albums at the same time but it was worth it and the process is very inspiring in itself."

*What's behind the darkness of mood that you cultivate with such intensity?*

"It's not like you do something just to do something. You are true to the ideas. Each song has a mood, a pace and a kind of feel that the ideas gave you. And so you try to stay true to that, and all the elements that go together to make it. We are kind of addicted to dark moods and both of us grown up reading about cults, orders and stuff like that. With all our projects there is darkness

present in some way or the other. We believe that many try to approach darkness a bit boring but it's our job to make it varied and bring new sounds and songs to the face of the earth. We are both very passionate about the art side of the music making. If it's only mathematics, technical skill and all that it's often boring. We have been in the scene for a while now and still have a lot of energy and that's because we are travelers, adventurers and inventors at the same time. We truly dive into the world that we create. Sometimes it feels like someone else has made the world and we are just visiting it. It's alive and breathing now like an entity."

*Within Za Frûmi what are your roles? Who writes the music, develops the concepts, and writes the lyrics....?*

"We have roles for sure but they are not stiff. We develop, create, compose and agree upon the sound and written texts together. When it comes to the music, everything (even though one of us for an example is improvising) is filtered by both of us. If someone doesn't like something or wants to change it we do it. That way of working regards all facets of the process. Having that said we know our different skills and respect that."

*If you compare yourselves to your genre, where do you find yourselves to be?*

"We don't like to compare Za Frûmi to much else as we honestly have never heard a band sounding like us. We are very much part of the scene now with Za Frûmi and with other projects. The rest is up to the reviewers and fans."

Your music seems to have deep connections to mythology, which pantheon and historical mythological setting appeals to you most, and can we expect some kind of collaboration with some of the leading folklore musicians in the future?

"Connections to the mythology of the world of Za Frûmi, yes. It's not relevant which gods, devils or whatever we personally like or worship. We don't play live with Za Frûmi as we don't want to infect the music with pictures of musicians that much. Live shows can be great but only if you go beyond the "wow, look at how good they are"- feelings. We have earlier collaborated with folk musicians and might do it again. To look up "leading" people don't interest us. If someone honestly thinks they could make us better and be a tool for us they are welcome to contact us."

*How should one enjoy your music at its fullest, what mood setters do you feel are most exemplary for truly listening and entering the world that is Za Frûmi?*

"One should leave the normal world outside and try to go into the music. All people are different and it's always nice to get emails with listeners speaking about when they listened to the music. We don't like to dictate how to enjoy the music. Some people like it in the background when creating or playing games. Others want it as a trip or as an inner film. Every man and woman is a star."

*Please tell us about Barrow Wights.*

"An album released June 2008 by Tom Bombadill's collectors which is a sub label to Major Label Industries in Portugal. We had a deal about this album a couple of years back but things happened and it was put on ice. It was intended as being "hints of what to come" or something like that but ended up being an album with chosen songs from the first four years (2000-2004) of Za Frûmi as a recording band. The early years... It's packed very nicely in a book with hard cover, 24 pages where the concept is developed, a CD with the album itself and a slipcase to round-up the deluxe edition. The cover is done by Mike @ Dragon Design. It's a numbered limited edition release of 1000 copies."



*Simon Kölle, how does the creative process differ when directing a group of actors and technical collaborators as opposed to working with Simon Heath in a studio?*

"Alone with Simon Heath only, him and I have to tune in. With a group you have to talk and act and react until everyone tunes into the same things as close as possible."

*You have a long time friendship with the famous black metal artist Vicotnik who is the mastermind behind Dodheimsgard (DHG) and playing in Ved Buens Ende, Code, Naer Mataron and more bands. Will you maybe work together one day? Can you tell us more about the friendship?*

"He's one of my oldest and best friends! We have the same drive and creative energy even though the outlet is different. Earlier today he visited me here in Stockholm and we caught up. It's funny you ask about a future collaboration as we actually talked about it. It kind of feels like a natural step as we have common ground. Our friendship

is true and we go way back. He is one of few true and genial artists in his scene. You who have seen Twin Peaks remember the Giant and the Dwarf. He is the Giant and I am the Dwarf."

*What motivates you to make music with Za Frûmi?*

"The wonderful reviews, great response from listeners and all that are good but that's like the tip of the iceberg. Beyond that is the drive to make something that will challenge your own self to build a whole world. If someone wants to be a part of the world in one way or the other it's up to them and we welcome that with open arms. I feel myself as a traveler, a seer and an adventurer in the World of Za Frûmi. It's no option to stop working on the world. Money, fame, good reviews and fans should not be what motivate you. I would lie if I said I don't like a good written review that understands the concept and the music though, but that's something else. Sometimes I have thought about creating music only for self purpose but there's something special with the feeling of letting a piece of work go. It takes a life on itself and sometimes it means something to others."

*Talk to us about your other music projects please.*

"When doing a Za Frûmi interview I like to talk about Za Frûmi, but I can shortly mention something about my other projects. Together with Simon Heath I also have the project Abnocto with one release, so far. On my own I have the project known as Musterion which is dark experimental music with lots of inspiration from such as David Lynch, William S. Burroughs, Jerzy Grotowski, H.P. Lovecraft and more. Right now I am working slowly and in a very detailed manner with the second album which will be entitled "The Wondrous Journey Through the Catacombs of Life" and will be released 2009 on the great label Horus CyclicDaemon. After that I head straight into the work with another album which will be released by Sutekh records which is managed by Jhon Longshaw of Black Seas of Infinity. I have done some work together with the genial composer Dimitrij Volstoj which involves big choirs and orchestras. Recently I started a project together with Henrik Summanen (Ahasverus, Anabasis) which we named The Children are Watching. That project is all about the dark side of the 1800s, séances, ghosts, scary children, gentlemen, Occultism, decadents

and magic. We have so far made two songs and will soon look for a label to release the debut. Me and Henrik have a lot in common and so far we work very well together each on our own. Last but not least (as mentioned above) I am talking to Yusaf (aka Vicotnik) about a project too. I would like to stay active!"

*Simon Heath, are you more productive when at peace with your surroundings or when under physical and psychological stress?*

"I indulge in production when I reach certain mental conditions, both stressful and peaceful. Each project has its own condition."

*How did you come up with the idea of Cults and Orders? Did the two of you just sat around and sort of let your minds fly free?*

"The Za Frûmi listeners are slowly unlocking the pieces of the story which is central to Za Frûmi. Which faction had control over a certain part of the world during Chapter 1, which power backed Za Shakapon or just understanding the Ari. We felt it was

# Za Frûmi

## LEGENDS ACT 4

### ORDERS

time to focus on the cults and orders as they are important to not only the History and Mythos in the world of Za Frûmi, but the web of Intrigue as well."

*What does Za Frûmi mean to you? Does it signify something and do you have a specific point of view that you want the listeners to perceive it from?*

"I want the listeners to perceive it with an open mind, to enjoy Za Frûmi; you have to let yourself go....."



15 years passed quite fast... and we can already count ten CDs, seven full albums, an early demo and a few concerts. No DVD, no live album. Pure underground!

Everybody involved, knows that ARCANA is a Swedish musical project formed by Peter Pettersson somewhere in 1993, as he was a young Metal head daring to start expressing his melancholic views differently. Back those times he was still a studio guitarist for several noisy bands, also working for his own projects.

I must mention that Peter still is a true Metal figure and I find it hard to believe he'll change his mind and soul in this life. Or will he? Around his name gravitate about fifteen bands, approaching all sort of musical styles, starting from old Black Thrash Metal all the way to hardcore and punk... But we'll get to them at the right moment. ARCANA is now essential. Willing to give an elegant contour to his fascination for DEAD CAN DANCE, Peter co-opted Ida Bengtsson to do the voice, and so has been created one of the most beautiful Dark Romantic Ambient Medieval Ecclesiastical Gothic Baroque bands, scenting of Renaissance, with a sound floating within a melancholic realm, completely out of time.

That's how the relation with Roger Karmanik became alive and implicitly, the signing in with CMI for two albums, later on for four others. "Dark Age of Reason" (1996) shocked the underground scene at the time, especially as it has been also announced by the Swiss label's compilation "... and Even Wolves Hid Their Teeth" (1995), on which promising bands were present with a special track. Bands alike: AGHAÏT, MORTIIS, RAISON D'ETRE, ILDFROST, ORDO EQUILIBRIO, MORTHOUND, MEMORANDUN, DEUTSCH NEPAL, BRIGHTER DEATH NOW... and I remember that, back then, "The Song Of Mourning" perverted my every forms of imagining music.

Everybody said that ARCANA is a gold mine... or a diamond shining both in light and darkness... Peter preferred the second way, at least that's what time shown us thus far.

"Lizabeth" EP followed (1997) and then the excellent album "Cantar de Procella" (1997), meaning Songs Of The Storm... This album fascinated me completely... Ida's angelic voice plus the multitude of Peter's instruments unveiled remarkable tracks..." The Last Embrace" (2000) came afterwards, then "Izabel" MCD (2000) and it marked the end of the duet's history. Changes in the personal life occurred (the marriage with Ia) and they were followed by some modifications of the line-up, as Ida's place has been taken by Ann Mari Thim and further more Stefan Eriksson appeared. With this new formula (Ia concentrated on the artwork), ARCANA released the magnificent "Inner Pale Sun" (2002), preceded by another EP "Body Of Sin".

ARCANA is not:

- the symbolic figure of the divination and initiating system named Tarot (but it could be used for meditation),
- the school sustaining the New Age movement or the great Masters of theosophy,
  - decorative Gothic component,
  - annually dark fantasy horror festival,
  - the famous videogame,
  - Edgard Varese's piece of music,
  - the American jazz band,
  - nor the studio
- neither the name of the folk dancing or the melody behind its execution...



It marked the end of the collaboration with CMI. Peter took the name Bjargo (more interesting and quite unique) and fully dedicated himself to the activity with his own label, Erebus Odora, where he released "The New Light" in 2004 (a compilation of old unreleased tracks) and "Le Serpent Rouge", a new material that has been one year later re-edited under Displeased. On these two albums, both Ann-Mari and Ia do the choral parts, and the last one's structure is filled with Oriental elements.

Financial and health problems with his younger daughter determined Peter to renounce his own label, yet he kept the studio active and in 2007 he signed up with CHANDEEN's front man, Harald Lowy. The end of February 2008 marks the release of ARCANA's latest studio album, "Raspail" (one title that might be associated with the name of the French writer Jean Raspail, yet Peter had this very name in mind for several years without making the link above). Clearly mightier, the quartet turned in a quintet by co-opting the talented percussionist Mattias Borgh, an old friend collaborating with Peter on the Metal side for years, CRYPT OF KERBEROS being the most known Death Metal band among their projects together.

What should I say more about Peter? He is a quite introverted figure, not liking to be in the spots or to speak about what he's doing, but fully conscious that the respect towards the fans must be also shown by communication; he spends most of the time in his "fairy" room, his studio, but also works (part time) at a museum, he enormously loves his five and 5 year old daughter named Vendela and lives a happy life along his wife and the other three older daughters; he sustains the ecologic movement and every actions deriving from this concept, he's a vegetarian (probably out of respect for animals' rights), enjoying nature and travelling (honeymoon at Prague), pretty rarely concerting with ARCANA, but in the mood for drinking a beer with friends (he has lots of friends in town, just to mention a few), even if his preferences go towards Montenegro or a fine wine; he likes to cook and has many favourite bands, like DEAD CAN DANCE, BATHORY and LEE HAZELWOOD, but he also listens to classic music (Howard Shore).

Musically speaking, solely five projects from the fifteen he has activated in still enjoy his presence. The closer to soul is ARCANA, the most active one is TYRANT (just returned from a tour with GORGOROTH), he brought back to life CRYPT OF KERBEROS, and enjoys himself in MEANWHILE's hardcore punk, in the odd SOPHIA and that's about all about. I have no idea if ILEUS or

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MACRODEX are still active. Ok, no more rockstar aura, he's not like that at all, but it was my wish to make him a bombastic introduction. Why? Because on April 19th will see them live at Brasov, in an elegant and stylish hall, a theatre one, precisely at Reduta. The ones from DONSIART are old fans of the band and Kogaionon's implicitly... within its pages they've first heard about ARCANA, he, he. And they've decided to organize their first concert... Big ambitions are on their way (distinct festivals evenly), but time will show us. Devotion is the substance and the accent is on quality and elegance.

Let's go to facts... and to the present time... I'm taking a bottle of wine in front of me (even though Sophia is not to be found in Romania), I'll pour myself another glass, press the music even louder in order to enter Raspail's atmosphere, and instantly teleport to Sweden, beside Peter...

*Salutes from the wintry Romania my friend! What are you doing? Did you pour yourself a glass of something too, so we can start our relaxing discussion?*

"Hi! Well, today I am not having any wine. I am working in the studio, recording a punk band. But I had some wine yesterday, Ia and me had some friends over and today I pay for it;). And this Saturday I will perform with my punk band, so I guess the beer will occur then again;)"

*Did you enjoy my presentation? I'm sure there are some biases, some errors. Or maybe I forgot to put some important things in line. Will you help me, please?*

"NO, you have pretty much covered it all. I am not used to people knowing this much about my person, and I must be honest: I am both honoured and puzzled. Am I that interesting? I don't think so:). I try to keep myself and my life as personal as I can, but I just have to realise that it is hard when you make music and release it;)"

*Look, in order to believe my true understanding over your reaction to that bombastic history of yours, I'll simply remind what Frank Zappa replied, some years ago, in a very detailed and personal interview like this one, once it turned irking to him: "Speaking about music is alike dancing on architecture..." Do you agree with the idea? Anyway, we'll have to do it! Honestly!*

"Well, what can I say? First of all, Frank Zappa was a genius when

it comes to music. But maybe he is right, I don't know. I have such difficulties talking about my own music and about myself, that I tend to close my ears and eyes, and hope it is gone when I open them."

*Do you still have the two medieval flags from Mark Riddick (photos maybe)? Do you keep in touch with these brothers? Are you going to bring the flags to Brasov?*

"No, an old dear friend has them nowadays. I know they were really special for the performances in the early ages of Arcana, but times are a changing. The flags represent the medieval era of Arcana, and that is long gone. No, I must say that I haven't had contact with them for years."

*I'll pass to a different subject now, so that we can confuse everybody, including us. You've once said "I will choose sex, because it's more important than being romantic." It sounds nasty, doesn't it? Especially when the reader is a woman... and I don't mean IA... Do you still believe in those words?*

"At first I thought about not answering this question, but then again: why not?! Men AND women need sex, they have sex and they want sex. Why should it be nasty? Some like it that way... he he. But seriously: sex and romance might go together in a relationship, but sex will always be more important than romance."

*OK. You've always liked medieval and renaissance music, played a lot of role-plays games (Dungeons and Dragons, Kult...)... are these origins from which ARCANA came to life within you? Starting from where and why this kind of music, why ARCANA? This word had a special musical scent in it...*

"Arcana was a name I liked a lot from start, I actually thought it was the name for a woman. Arcana came from my wishes of making music out of my thoughts of the medieval period, the romantic view we have on that time. A big influence was of course Dead Can Dance, that always have been one of my favourite bands."

*I know you've conceived the '94 demo influenced by the catastrophe from Estonia. The same did the ones from Rammstein, after the aircraft disaster from Rammstein. Are you still interested in such events, do they affect you, give you inspiration in a certain way?*

"Well, that was the biggest disaster that ever occurred in Swedish history, and over 500 Swedish people died. Just as much as in the Tsunami catastrophe of 2004. When Estonia went under and killed so many people we had a big problem with what to do; should we lift the boat from the bottom of the sea, or leave it as a grave for those who died? The later thing happened, and still to this day, people are arguing about it. Major disasters affect us all in different ways, me as well. Sometimes I get creative and sometimes not."

*You're not interested in politics all right, but I doubt there isn't an opinion of yours regarding what's currently happening on Earth... Do you believe a new world war is on its way?*

"Well, not exactly. A new world war would be a disaster for the world economy, and that is a strict taboo. The leaders of today bring money before lives, and that is terrible. However, we should be happy if we can avoid wars. The European Union is a way of protection. We won't attack a country that is "one of our own", so

it is sort of a safe union."

*Is Al Gore's documentary filled with real facts or maybe some of them are simply politically speculated? Is this a huge threat indeed? It's good knowing that the ecologist movement enhances... yet, nobody seems to do anything... I've recently read a study about Sweden being the most interested country in recycling wastes, having incredibly efficient programs regarding this issue... the most powerful in Europe! What differentiates Sweden from the rest of the countries? Is there a distinct education, a different preparation, another message?*

"I believe in what Al Gore said, and I believe that he was "gentle" with his words. I think there is much more than we saw. I must confess, I have not seen the whole movie, although what I have seen is scary enough. I can't say what Sweden do more than others, although we start in an early age to get taught how to recycle and how to keep the nature clean. Even in kindergarden we use recycling and different garbage disposals for different garbage: such as metal, plastic, paper and so on. Even our own daughter is learning how and where to throw different garbage."



*Why did Ida left? You see, I'm moving you from one subject to another so that you tell me everything. You've said consequently to her departure, that she got more involved with school and hasn't purely left bla, bla... Are you still in touch with her? Does she perform in other projects maybe? Her voice is superb!*

"She does have a wonderful voice, that's for sure, but we did grew apart. I have no contact whatsoever with her, so I cannot say what she is doing now. The last thing I heard was that lived in the south of Sweden."

*What's the story of you signing in with Harald? With the beginning and the end! You haven't tried further with Roger? Even though he turned more attached to Harsh noise Industrial now, ATARAXIA, ALL MY FAITH LOST... of course there*

*are some medieval - romantic oriented bands activating with him... Or, why haven't you continued the collaboration with Frederic from Canada? Is Kalinkaland a good paying label? Hope not to get shot by Harald...*

"Harald and I have been in touch for many years, and I have always admired his work in Kalinkaland Records. I like the bands that are part of the label and I thought it would fit Arcana well. About CMI still having the neo-classical, medieval romantic bands: it doesn't matter. I am not fond of genres, and I feel more comfortable among bands like Jo Gabriel and Chandeen. I can never earn money enough on this music to actually live on it, but I am happy just to reach the fans with my music, and that I can do via Kalinkaland. I had a great time, the years I was at CMI, we had good contact among the bands and we had some great concerts, gigs and parties. But one has to move on in life, and it was my time. Frederic Arbour and I are very close friends, both musical and personal, and we will always have some kind of business together. We have the same background when it comes to metal and punk, and we try to see each other as often as we possibly can."

*Some rumours said you'll do a tour with CHANDEEN this year. Is it true? Because if I'll find out that ARCANA is getting more involved in the concert area, I'll start thinking of making extra money by hiring a babysitter for Vendela for a longer time...*

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“He, he, we don’t want to pay for a long-time babysitter, because we don’t wanna leave her for that long. There will be no tour with Chandeen, much to do with tht none of us are that keen on it. Both Harald and me have kids and families, so do Stefan. And we try to give the children priority. A difference was when I was on tour this autumn with Tyrant/Gorgoroth: then Ia was home with Vendela. But an Arcana tour means both Ia and me away from home. We always try to play at least a few times a year. But then again, people might not get bored with us if we perform more rarely;).”

*Some say that you’ve changed your name so that it wouldn’t be confounded with Tomas’s (ORE). Which is the correct story? A propos.... What was there with VICTORIA?*

“No, that is so untrue. How can someone mistake Tomas and Peter? These are two different names. Petterson is a common name in Sweden, thousands have it. I changed my name to Bjargo, first of all because I married Ia, secondly because I have no relation at all to the name Petterson. I know some people think that I am a totally different person from Peter Petterson, but I can’t help if people refuse to get the idea that I took my wife’s name. And this is actually quite usual in Sweden. Victoria was a fun project, and we liked the songs. But there will be no more Victoria!”

*I think it’s not beautiful to be egotistic, so let’s invite Ia beside us. Good evening Ia, how did our dialogue seemed to you so far? As an exclusive man talk maybe?*

“Hi Doru! No worries, I listen and enjoy the conversation. And why not let Peter talk, it is his project ;). Well, I can’t say that much about letting other people talk: I am a bit of a dictator when it comes to talking. My vocal cords work harder than the hands of a drummer;).”

*Ia, how did you and Peter meet? I know you’ve listened to his music for years before. But let’s tell every soul that you are a pure Metal person too, as you’ve grew up with Priest and Maiden... How can a 38 woman, mother of four girls (all my best thoughts to them!) listen to CELTIC FROST or SLAYER? Among the rest of domestic jobs, beside cooking and cleaning?*

“I don’t cook, that is Peter’s job ;) And the music is in the background, sort of relaxing us both. I’ve been a metal head since the age of 12, and Peter even younger. We have the same taste in almost all music, although some of the newer bands differ. I got in contact with Peter in 1999, just a few weeks before my 30th birthday. I had listened to Arcana since 1997 and was totally crazy about the music. So I wrote in the Arcana guestbook and he responded by adding me to his ICQ. At first we were just friends, talking for days, but in October we met and since then we have been a couple. I never in my wildest dreams, would have believed that I one day would marry my “big idol”, have his child and sing with him in the same band that I’ve been listening to for years.”

*“Raspail” is an album of a special beauty! In fact, every ARCANA album is distinct, not easy be labelled. Which album do you feel more attached to?*

Ia: “I feel close to every new album that is being recorded. Just like every other Arcana fan, Dark age of Reason means a lot, although it has much to do about being the first album I heard. Raspail is for now my favourite, much to do with that I have had a bigger part of the album than the earlier. But I think that Peter has made a perfect job on this one.”

Peter: “I think I have to say Raspail. But I have different feelings for each and every album, and most of them are personal.”

*I’ve listened to this album for at least thirty times from last evening to this moment. I want to start with its weak points, as I’ve sensed them of course. Why is it so short? Why so many instrumental*

*tracks? Prolonged sequences too... Why haven’t you approached more the rhythmic, tribal elements?*

“All the albums of Arcana are short, and I prefer to keep them that way. I don’t like albums that are too long, because then you grow tired of them. And as for the instrumental songs: there are only 3 out of 7, and that is not much. Think about Le Serpent Rouge, where all songs except two were instrumental. There are many bands on the market that has the tribal approach; the best in my opinion is Sephiroth. I have no interest of stepping on that path.”

*After listening the Kalinkaland’s compilation one year before, some scents of “Lost in Time” and “Invisible Motions” on your Myspace page, I expected this album to be entirelyle bombastic, rhythmic, fully dynamic and saturated in energy, with all sorts of choirs and percussions... yet, these are the only explosive tracks. Am I the sole perceiving the immense sadness within this album? Piano’s sombreness is an immediately remarked element though...*

“I think the album is a variety of different emotions. The piano has always had a big part of the music of Arcana, although maybe not this much. I can say that there are many emotions in this album, and among them sadness.”

*Tell me a little about the concept, about the lyrics, about each and every track... I can see now that almost every member of the band has written some lyrics...I would truly enjoy seeing your description on every single track....*

“Abrakt is a track that has the concept of environmental destruction, war and peoples ignorance. It was one of the first songs I made for the album, and it was done long before the rest of the songs were made. Sigh of Relief: A piano tune I made. I didn’t even know if was to be part of the album, but I liked it, so. Invisible Motions was one of the earlier melodies I made. I didn’t know what to do with it, so I asked Ia to choose one of her lyrics for it. Ia and Ann-Mari recorded the song one afternoon in September and I am very pleased with the result. The lyrics are about the feelings you get when you realise that the world is coming to an end. You feel empty, anxious but in the end you get satisfied with the thought that soon it is all over: you have had a long life, remember the good things. But then the anger is appearing... and the hate toward the human race for not taking care of it all. Outside your world is about a long lost life, the longing for a world that would never again will exist. It has to do with the destruction of historical buildings, communities that disappeared and the sadness of peoples quest for modernizing the world. Parisal is the song that reminds most of Le Serpent Rouge. It is a track that has medieval and oriental tunes in it. I think it would be a great song live Autumnal was a song I didn’t know what to do with. It felt weak and maybe not for this album. But with the lyrics and vocals of Ann-Mari and choir by Ia, it turned out great. Out of the Gray ashes is a song that was made during a recording session with Arcana. Ia, Mattias, Stefan and me were down in the studio, recording some choirs for Lost in Time and some other songs. After some beers, more beers and more friends coming over, I started to make this song on the guitar. And I actually recorded it all with a few hours. Mattias made the percussion on my timpani and I made the rest. Of course, some of the instruments had to be re-recorded the day after;) Being under the influence of alcohol while recoding is not always the best thing... he he. Ann-Mari and I recorded the vocals later on. Lost in Time first appeared on Lightwave II compilation on Kalinkaland. Then it was only me, who made the singing, but on this version Ia is singing with me and all of us are singing choirs, even Mattias;). The lyrics were from start a love poem to me from Ia, and I think this is the song that is the most positive song on the album. In Remembrance: It was made at the same day as I made Sigh of Relief. Circumspection has Stefan’s lyrics on it and Stefan is also making the whispering. Just as many other lyrics, the theme is quite sad. It is a good song to end the

album, with voices and calm tunes.

The album has no exact concept, although everyone can hear the sadness and anxiety in the lyrics. Of course our personal thought are transparent, but we leave it to the listener to have their own world visualized before them while listening.”

Obviously, Peter continues to be a dictator, as he’s composing all the music. This doesn’t scent of democracy... Especially as there are five of you now... How do you get along? Aren’t there debates over this aspect?

Ia: “Arcana is Peter, and the rest of us are just people that “help out”, so to say. No one would ever be able to make this music, with the touch that has become Arcana. Peter is no dictator, but he is the sole leader, and this is the way it’s going to be. We all get along great together. Just as any other “family” we get angry sometimes, upset or whatever it may be, but we never argue like shouting and fighting. We respect each other, and we have a great time together, both musically, when we party and when we travel together.”

What do you expect from this album?

“I hope the fans will like it. It is the first album in 3, 5 years and many people didn’t even realise that we have had an album after Inner Pale Sun, so for some it is our first in 6 years ;). This is an album that I think should please the people who enjoyed all other records, because it has some elements from the entire catalogue. And I think that this album may reach out to even more people, since it is quite an “easy album”.

The sister album of “Le Serpent Rouge” should have been released too... At least this was the promise. What happened? I know that Peter was very ill at the time. What was there finally?

“The album was delayed due to Vendela’s illness. The diagnose on her turned our world up side down, so the music had to come in second (or third or fourth). But the album will be released, I promise you.” What future projects are there with ARCANA? When should we expect a live album, maybe a DVD?

“For the time being, the sister release. Other than that, time will tell. After each album I feel like I have to take a rest, but one day I will probably sit by myself in the studio, and suddenly I’ve made some songs. A live-dvd has been talk of, but we are never satisfied with the performances we make. It feels like we have to wait until a little longer, and one day we will have a good one.”

You’ll perform at Brasov. What should the ones that will be present there know about you? Maybe some of them will listen to you for the first time... Tell me about ARCANA live? How is it on live shows? How long is a normal concert? Does it sound different from the studio? You have tens of instruments... which of them will you bring along? Partially playback maybe? Does imagery make a difference to you? You made an excellent show at Leipzig, that’s what I’ve heard! Which will be the playlist?

“Arcana live is more about emotions and atmosphere than a live-show. We have Stefan on keyboard and choir, Ann-Mari and Ia on vocals and additional instruments, such as bells and finger



cymbals.  
Mattias plays  
the percussion  
and I sing and play  
some instruments.  
Sometimes we have  
a backdrop that Ia  
and Stefan made some  
time ago, a backdrop  
with moving pictures  
from the surroundings in  
our hometown, along with  
Arcana pictures. Normally we use  
candles on stage, for the atmosphere.

A normal gig is about an hour, but it all  
depends on the mood, audience and other  
factors. We have to have a lot of the music  
pre-recorded, since it is impossible to have  
them all on stage. Then we would have to  
use at least 20 people on stage. Some songs  
sounds like the albums, and some not.... it  
depends. The playlist is always a surprise  
;)”

*Is ARCANA in the knowing of Romania as  
a country? What about its music, the fans  
from here, correspondence maybe...?*

“We have had very little correspondence  
with fans in Romania, but some have been  
written back and forth, especially now  
in the days of Myspace. We do not know  
much about the modern Romania. We have  
knowledge of the communist era, Ceausescu;  
the problems with his politics and of course  
your history about Vlad Tepes :). However,  
the photos we’ve seen from Brasov and the  
surroundings seem fabulous. And we are  
very sorry to say that we don’t know much  
about Romanian music.”

*I would like you to introduce us to every band  
member, briefly and not standardized: age,  
occupation, musical/artistic preferences,  
involvement in other musical projects  
(please describe them), hobbies, religion,  
politics, how does a normal day look like  
.... And obviously, some words about your  
studio and the bands you’re collaborating  
with.*

PETER BJARGO, I was born 1974 here  
in Eskilstuna. I am the father of Vendela  
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who will be  
6 years old this year.  
I work part time at the  
Eskilstuna museum of art, and  
I also record local bands in one of  
the biggest studios in Eskilstuna. I  
have been into metal and punk since  
an early age, but I love almost any kind  
of music, unless “MTV modern music”.  
I have several musical projects: Meanwhile  
(hardcore punk), Tyrant (old school Black  
metal), Sophia (industrial - is terminated  
though) and Crypt of Kerberos (death metal).  
I have multiple projects more, but these are  
worth mentioning. I am not religious at all,  
I am a member of the Swedish Green Party  
and I am into animal’s rights. A normal day  
for me differs every day: I spend time with  
Vendela, I work for the museum or in my  
studio, I hang out with friends, I’m relaxing  
at home with Ia, spending time playing  
X-box 360 and I love to cook and I do that  
every day.

CECILIA BJARGO, I was born 1969 in  
Stockholm. I am the mother of four girls:  
Johanna born 1989, Madeleine born 1992,  
Sara born 1994 and Vendela born 2002. I  
am a student at the University College in  
Eskilstuna, and in two year I am hopefully  
graduated as a teacher, in English and  
social studies. I have a big passion in life  
and that is Photoshop. I love manipulating  
photos and make art from different kinds of  
pictures/photos. I am not involved in any  
other music projects, al though I sing in a  
choir. I am not religious, never been and

w i l l  
probably  
never be.  
I am also  
a member  
of the Green  
Party in Sweden,  
and also a member  
of the Animals Rights  
organisation in Sweden.

I spend my days in school, at  
home, with my girls and Peter, in the  
studio, by the computer, I clean, wash and  
tidy up around the house. Just like any other  
mother do. Rockstar life? Hell, no ;)

STEFAN ERIKSSON born 1971, working  
as a Masterchef, part owner of a web  
company and sometimes doing some  
DJ sets and sometimes I would call me a  
musician. I listen to all kind of music. Top  
6 records ever, in no particular order: Sex  
Pistols - Never Mind the Bollocks, Sisters  
of Mercy - First Last and Always, Kraftwerk  
- Computer World (any will do), Scraping  
Foetus of The Wheel - Nail, Slayer - Reign  
in Blood, Depeche Mode - Speak and Spell,  
well you got the idea?! I guess that’s why  
all other projects I’m involved with are all  
in different “styles”; Brotherhood (goth/  
pop/rock), FilthPig (industrial metal),  
Cardilax (crazy pop/punk), Love, Life and  
Death (down tempo/pop/country), MeM  
(electronic) to name a few. To sum it up; my  
life is: music, family, work, good friends  
and of course movies and TV.

ANN-MARI THIM: I will turn 32 this  
summer and at the moment I am working  
with European dealers for construction  
equipment at a big international company  
located in Eskilstuna. When I am not  
working there, I am either working out or  
making music, may that be with Arcana or  
other bands I am in - Bereft of you (acoustic  
guitarbased folkmusic with some metal

influences) and Veil of Blue (lounge music/pop with a touch of Twin Peaks). I am taking vocal classes at  
the university in Eskilstuna as well so the weeks are pretty full. When it comes to religion I would rather  
call myself an agnostic. However I am very fascinated by different religions, mysticism and mythology,  
which also can be reflected in some of the lyrics, I have written.

MATTIAS BORGH: Ia forced me to describe myself so here goes: I’m 20 plus, tall, slender,  
athletically built, very smart and a real ladies man. Or maybe not... To be honest I’m 32. I work  
as a percussion and ensemble teacher at a music college. When it comes to music I guess I like a  
lot of different kind of genres, for me good music is good music no matter the style. Sorry, can’t  
be more specific than that. Right now I play drums in Calliphora, which is a new project, we have  
just started to rehearse. I would describe it as heavy death metal with some technical twists. Then I  
am supposed to play in Crypt Of Kerberos (together with Peter...) and that is also a death metal band.  
Right now we are not active, but the plan is to make a new album further down the road. Hopefully it  
will happen. I also play percussion in a, maybe I should call it, art project which is called Toro! Toro!  
together with a dancer and a singer. My hobbies are fairly simple, I like movies and hanging out with  
friends and family. When it comes to religion, I must say that I’m not very interested. It’s nothing for  
me, at least not until now. The same goes for politics. I try to keep up with what goes on in the  
world, but I am not a member of any political organization. A normal day, I wake up in panic  
realizing I overslept, rush to work, give a load of lessons and come home later than what  
I had planned. Then I try to do something creative. I like writing lyrics or sit at the  
computer or play guitar (which sounds very bad, but I am trying to get better).  
Another great hobby is to stare at the wall ;)

*I’m convinced that alongside “Innocent Child”, “Closure” and “Through  
the Grey Horizon”, “Lost in Time” or “Invisible Motions” will be rated  
as the most popular tracks. Aren’t you thinking about releasing a Best  
of?*

*“Nope, not yet. I don’t think I ever will;) Some people consider The  
New Light as a sort of “best of”, but that is old recordings, new  
songs and a mix of my entire life of Arcana.”*

*What do you think about the music of: ATARAXIA, LOVE IS  
COLDER THAN DEATH, TRIARII, DVKE, KHVARENA,  
LYCIA, IRFAN, QNTAL? Are you discomforted or honoured of  
their comparison with ARCANA?*

“Honoured of course. Especially Love is Colder than Death and  
Irfan. I must be honest, I’ve heard OF some bands there, but not  
actually heard them. LiCTD has been a band I’ve admired for many  
years and Irfan I just recently heard of, when we perform with them in  
Holland last year: great people and fantastic musicians.”

ARCANA has already done more than one cover-versions for DEAD CAND DANCE. Are  
there any others to come? Do you keep in touch with Brendan or Lisa? Have you been to  
the cathedral where Brendan uses to sing, in Ireland? Did you see them live on tours? Are  
you considering into inviting them on one of your future albums?

“Not at the time, no. Three is more than enough. I am not trying to be “the new dead can  
dance”, I am just very much enjoying with their music and of course influenced by it. I  
haven’t been in contact with Lisa in many years, but Brendan and I have sporadic contact  
every now and then. I have never visited his house or his studio (in the church), but Ia and  
me met him and Lisa in Paris in 2005 after their gig at Palaise de la Congresse. We were  
invited by Brendan to see the performance, but the big treat was to meet him afterwards. It  
would be great working with them at some point in life, but I think they are too busy with  
their own lives.”

*Time now for doing something else. We’ll have a lot to talk about both at the concert  
and at the afterparty. Will you speak with the fans or are we to consider bringing  
in Security for your protection? Surely, the fans will enjoy the opportunity to  
buy some ARCANA CDs and T-shirts at Brasov, won’t they?*

“Ha ha ha, security? No, we will speak to the fans and we will drink beer with  
some of them. We really enjoy spending some time with people during our travels  
around Europe. The gigs are not only to perform, but also to meet new friends and see  
beautiful places. We hope to bring as much merchandise as we possibly can, but it is  
not easy. We hope to do it!

*Thank you for the patience of having this long discussion and, until April 19th, enjoy  
the pure recognition of “Raspail”. The triumphal event is about to come...it belongs to  
you...*

“Thank you! And see you in a few weeks!”

March, 2008

*Hello again, summer is gone while autumn is nearly passing by as well. How is weather in Eskilstuna now? How are you, is everything fine?*

“Eskilstuna is in the middle of the most divine autumn. All trees are in red, yellow and orange and the wind is slightly cold. But still, a perfect autumn. All of us in Arcana are back to sort of “normal”, if that is a term that can be set, hehe. Peter has started to work on new material and has also decided to take a long break after the gig in November. I (Ia) am back in school and I feel that I’m closing in on my masters degree in education. But there is still another 1.5 years to go. Mattias is back to work at his school and is continuing his other musical projects. Ann-Mari as well: work and music. And Stefan the same...”

*It seems that things will become easier for you, as Peter is now a Laphroaig member, heh! So, a new source of inspiration, maybe? For TYRANT or for ARCANA?*

“Well, Laphroaig is an inspiration all in all, Peter says. He found the single malt in London and bought it immediately, since it is EXPENSIVE as hell in Sweden. He is taking a small one everyday, and then he is smiling... hehe.”

*You had a few concerts this year and there is still another one to come in November. Could you be so kind to describe each event, its atmosphere, the feedback you got from the fans, as well as your own point of view regarding them?*

“The Romanian performance was something else. We were so well welcomed and we felt like royalties. All of the people we met in Brasov were kind and friendly and we sure would love to be back.

The performance was maybe not the best one to this day, but we were happy with the audience and their feedback to us on stage. A big theatre is a bit awkward at times, but it turned out fine, since the stage was so nicely done with lights and trees. We decided after that gig about removing a few songs and change orders in the set since some of them weren’t really good on stage. All in all, Brasov was really a special night, a night we will never forget. :)

Mithras Garden Festival in Koblenz, Germany was a nice trip. It was a bit hectic since we arrived late Friday night and went back home early Sunday morning. But Axel of Hekate came to pick us up and drove us to the hotel and was so nice all the time, so we were happy. The venue was an old ruin, an old fortress from the 15th century. Fantastic location that fitted Arcana perfectly! One screw-up though, was that the sound check had to be made twice, and the last time in front of the audience. That didn’t feel so good, but we couldn’t do anything about it since the savings were lost. The gig was okay, but we did have a bit toooo much wine and beer before the gig. Damn German wine that taste so good ;). The audience however were really great and danced and applauded us all the way. We performed under open air, so the atmosphere was fantastic. The rain had stopped earlier that day, so the air was also very fresh. Best thing about the gig: We performed with Jouni and Kathi of In Slaughter Natives. Dear friends that we meet too seldom.

The gig in London just happened last weekend, and it was a great journey. I must say that this must be our best gig this year. Anyway, according to us ;). But the audience gave us fantastic feed-back and they danced, applauded, screamed, cheered and some were like in trance. The venue was Underworld in the middle of Camden, London. It is actually a small metal-place but nice though. We had to make a shorter performance due to the schedule. We weren’t headlining, and Sol Invictus was supposed to be on the stage when we played our final song. Everyone were really happy, both us in the band as well as the audience. We have heard nothing negative about the gig, and it feels great.”

*Which is the most loved track by a live audience? When do the fans go crazy?*

“Oh, that’s a tricky one. Me and Peter discussed it and came to the conclusion that “Invisible Motions” is the one song that people applaud most, and “We rise above” is another one and of course “Innocent Child” is always a hit. But it is hard. In London there were lots of yelling for each song, but then again Peter did introduce them all, so. I know that people would probably scream their lungs out if they would hear “Song of Mourning”, but there are some songs that will not be performed live.”

*You decided to close the live activity till the next year. You told me something about the new tracks... When do you estimate finishing work on the new album? Would there be another one besides the sister Le serpent rouge, maybe? How do the new tracks sound like? New elements, other influences?*

“Well, for the time being we have no idea when all is finished. The songs are in the vein of Le Serpent Rouge, since it is supposed to be a sister-release. I will not say anything about how they sound; we have to give you something to look forward to ;). But it is more live recordings than digital, which is one thing.”

*What is, from your point of view, the difference between a normal concert and a Special Evening?*

“I must say that the Special Evening in Brasov meant a lot. One big difference: A fantastic theatre, great audience and a really fun after party where you could sit and enjoy the company of friends and fans (mainly both included as one). There is often an after party that follows the gig, but it is usually at a big place where the music is so loud that you can’t even hear yourself speak. We prefer calm places, where you can talk and still listen to good music and have a good time without being able to sit anywhere.”

*Stefan and Matthias are both working on other musical projects as well. Are there any links between these projects and you? Please make a short reference to these. Can you also tell me the latest news on TYRANT?*

“Mattias plays in a bunch of different projects and he also does “drums and/or percussion for hire” where he just plays one or two concerts or makes a recording for a band or artist. The things which are a bit steadier are Caliphora (Death Metal), Kult of Omega (percussion weirdo stuff), a pop band with no name, Toro! Toro! (performance art), Blood Mortized (old school Death Metal) and then we have Crypt of Kerberos, which is currently on ice. The only project of all these mentioned where Peter and Mattias do something together, except from Arcana, are Crypt of Kerberos. They’ve played in that band when they were teenagers. The plan is to make a new album, and hopefully it will happen!

Stefan is in a lot of different music projects of all kind of styles (like electronic, industrial metal, punk, country etc). Not all of them are too serious though ;). The one Stefan considers the most serious is called Brotherhood. It’s Stefan and an old friend of his named Micke doing 80s Goth Rock/Pop/Alternative kind of music, similar to bands like Sisters of Mercy and Joy Division. They have an album ready but no label yet. Peter has actually been asked to do guest vocal on one of the tracks.

Tyrant is currently on a break just as Arcana. Peter needs time to relax and get back to a normal life. There is a split being released with Alehammer hopefully early next year, and new songs are being recorded later this winter. In April they will be on a two-day “tour” in Finland with Demonical.”

*Thank you very much for everything and good luck with your band and with your personal lives as well!*

“Thank you and same back to you all. Let’s hope we will meet again soon :)”

October, 2009

## TENHI

Tenhi is one of the bands that has managed to impress the metal crowd, even if the band does not fit the genre. I know Black Metal, Gothic and even older sort of Rock fans (Beatles, Pink Floyd) who have reacted extremely positively to the sounds of Tenhi.

How did Tenhi manage to impose itself in such a manner?

The answer is simple, I think: Tenhi creates original music, un-inspired by a certain trend, full of honesty and creativity, based on acoustic guitars, violins and piano, with a sound that finds itself to be far from the cold computer tones, minimalist, even.

The explanations about its making off story and as well of its musical vision are redundant. I find that their web portal <http://utustudio.com/> has quite detailed information regarding all this. And so, the interview that follows is focused on the potential of Tenhi, potential that will always bring a fresh breath of air into the world of dark music.



*Greeting, old shaman! For those who love your music, Tenhi is „the music of nature”, or at least a journey into its infinite landscape. Why do artists always contemplate nature from within a melancholic pass?*

“Greetings to You. It is true that artists often seem to deal with nature as a melancholic theme. Perhaps it is a way to revere nature from a humble point of view – melancholy gives certain seriousness and grace to the subject that is in focus. For me revering nature means revering the power of life and death; the whole span of life so the approach of making music about it is obviously very subtle and personal. The shades that melancholy provides for me as a musician color the area where my spirit meets the environment best.”

*Melancholy taken to the extremes tends to transform into depression and even suicide. There is an entire debate about the EMO trend, a large number of bands being named as promoters of it. What is your view on this? Tenhi can not belong to the trend as the lyrics deal with themes unlikely to fit the profile and the music has a totally different message, but the atmosphere created, dark, depressive, sad, one of isolation, loneliness, can create erroneous interpretations from the side of the ignorant, untrained and superficial listeners...*

“Sorry to say this but I am totally unaware of this EMO trend...”

*I have noticed the way you express yourself through the medium of video. Have you any plans of producing a DVD? The visual experience on a musical background is very well harmonised, “Kausienranta” being a successful proof of this.*

“Kausienranta is the first and only video we have made so far. Tyko seems to be quite into the medium these days and his planning to make more material from the forthcoming new album. Personally I feel that at the moment we have enough work on our hands just trying to finish our music. The Kausienranta video took a lot of time and energy. But sure, pictures are a powerful way to enhance the music and if there were a couple of hours more, in addition to the 24th day, we would make more videos.”

*As musicians, you most likely have some musical predispositions, some preferences. What or who impressed you from the relatively recent musical scene? Empyrium and Sigur Ros are into developing similar ideas related to the wild nature of Northern Europe. What do you think is the differentiator between same style music produced in the North of Europe and the rest of the world? Does it really make a difference being from the North?*

“I think that the surroundings have a really big influence on what you do. The nature, weather conditions, sociocultural environment molds the mentality of the people.

Of course it somewhat depends on artist’s own personal choices and personality but you can never escape from the fact where you are born and lived. In our case of course the landscapes – physical and mental – of our country are present in a quite underlining way and can be recognized immediately.”

*Tenhi and Mother Depth are both at UTU. What details can you provide about the Mother Depth project? Have you released anything new?*

“Mother Depth has more or less integrated into Tenhi. Partially because of the lack of time and partially because the guys from Mother Depth, Tuukka and Jaakko, are more involved with Tenhi nowadays. Those guys have been involved with Tenhi since „Väre” recordings and have always been a crucial part of our live shows as well. At this point I doubt that there will be a Mother Depth album in the near future.”

*Do you already have a replacement for Ilkka? Although he hasn’t been that involved as he used to, he has always been a part of the Tenhi nucleus. Will the sound of Tenhi suffer any changes, even discreetly, after his departure?*

“We have been responsible for the Tenhi with Tyko for a really long time now and Ilkka’s departure was an awaited decision. From our point of view Ilkka’s involvement with the band did not bring anything to the Tenhi vision and the balance between us as group members was off – so not that much is changed. Of course we will miss his gifts as an artist but surely we will not seek a replacement for him.”

*I know you have just recently organised a special evening, with a few quality bands. How did it go? Can you tell me something about the mood of the event? How many songs did you play? In what setting, environment? SIEBEN is a magnificent violin player while DORNENREICH creates an interesting acoustic sound... What was the feedback you got from the audience?*

“The Night Of Folk Aesthetic went really great. The bands where amazing creating an unforgettable night for the people that were there and for us surely. We wanted to give a glimpse of what our genre at its best can be for the first time ever for the Finnish audience. For Tenhi it was one the best gigs we have done, as that was the first time we played in Helsinki and the line up was special, including a grand piano. Our show was about 90 minutes in all.”

*The majority of the bands bring major changes to their approach and sound throughout their evolution. The amusing part is that a lot of them will return to their original style, in other words, they experiment for a while (2-3 albums) with some different rhythms, instruments and voices. Until present, Tenhi has kept its original line and so the obvious question here would be if you have any intentions of doing something different or to bring new elements into the sound of your next albums.*

“For me it feels that we have quite a vast range of different elements in our expression. And there has been things to explore for us always. Some of the things we have done on our albums have felt very different and new from the „original style” at the time, but I guess you are quite right by saying that we have kept the original line in our work if considering our work as a whole. It seems that the music we have made comes from the same vein throughout our albums and we have no plans of rethinking the way we work in near future.”

*Saivo or the world where death lives. Where is this album title coming from and why? What is the concept of the new album?*

“One myth about the Saivo world is that one enters there through a hole that is in a bottom of a lake. For me one aspect about Saivo is that it can be read as a metaphor for Tenhi – while I am making music I can dive into the bottom and find a new landscape for imagination where the constraints of normal life do not apply. The frames of Saivo concept are still mostly in a non-verbal level, in our mind, so to open the ideology is difficult at this point of time.”

*Please describe the songs, lyrics, the music, the newly introduced elements and the instruments... The album will only be released next year and so, until then, the eagerness is rather big.*

“I have a feeling that the range of expression will grow if compared to our earlier works. There will be bigger arrangements with more instruments and on the contrary more minimalistic songs as well. Things tend to always change until the very end with our songs and usually the first impressions, even for us, have been wrong. For example we always thought that Maaäet would be a drum driven album and it turned out to be quite the

opposite.”

*I wonder why is there always a link between rock music and the sorely, over the top attitude of their fans? I haven't noticed anything aggressive, defiant at Tenhi.*

“Possibly we do not create any of those feelings that you mentioned. Our music is silent and it is to be digested alone. Further more I think that people perceive Tenhi as a concept or an entity – not as your ordinary band with members pushing their faces into media.”

*I was reading in an interview about how family life can affect the „rock and roll” sort of lifestyle. What should be first? Nature as it is around us (environment) or human nature?*

“We have not seen this far any „rock and roll” style of life. Hopefully we will get our share of that later... No, for real, we are more of regular family guys nowadays than we used to be. The misanthropic-teenage-black-metal-monster days have changed into mediocre normal life – which is fine for us.”

*The experience of watching a film and living moments within a*

*time and a space where you don't actually exist can create a false sentiment, more of an informative and pleasant experience than one with ties to authenticity. Is there a risk for that to go the same way when it comes to music? The Northern bands sing about nature, but a great majority of their audience doesn't physically know the nature of Northern Europe. Does this not create a somewhat forced tie between the artist and the audience?*

“I think that one does not have to live in the middle of the forest in order to understand the beauty of it. Often the feeling of longing for something creates the most moving feelings. In a way people tend to always want something different than their ordinary life – this type thing is Tenhi to us as well. The escape from the normal life.”

*Don't you find it ludicrous that in a world that self destructs year after year, the ones who fight against today's society/ system and who are mainly placed in the area of rock/metal, use satanism as weapon and subject of creation? Is this not a double acknowledgement of our self destructive nature? It seems as Nietzsche waisted his breath when suggesting that man*

*should give up on his/her idols. Coincidence though: the majority of the rock fans have read Nietzsche. Satanism should have nothing to do with paganism. Am I in the wrong?*

“I am not an expert when it comes to religions, ideologies etc. but at least for the outsider, such as me, it seems that in a way satanism is a very christian thing. For the both beliefs are dealing with the different sides of the same coin. Personally I have my own way of perceiving the world and I do not regard myself as a member of any specific religion. I have my own calling and I try to stay true to that. Some of our ideals and thoughts can be seen as paganistic but we have never tried to put those thoughts into anyone's head through our art. The biggest differentiator between Christian and Pagan beliefs is a fundamentally different perception of the soul. In Christian beliefs the span of mortal and post mortal life is linear – after this life comes the reward or the punishment which is eternal. The religions and beliefs that are more revering towards the earth are cyclic, such as paganism (some branches), Animism, Hindu, etc. In cyclic beliefs one returns to the earth after death in one form or another which is why life and nature are sacred. From environmental point of view, the linear Christianity is short sighted leaving the world only to be a vessel to paradise or hell.”

*Related to Tenhis' discography... do you consider, chronologically speaking, some evolving qualities of your albums? There can't be a case of devolution... I'm only asking because some artists usually have a instrumental and compositional evolution that reflects into their opinions on their own work. How do you see every Tenhi album?*

“I am not sure if it is a matter of evolution when it concerns our music. We have never been a band playing technically difficult material so that our skill level has basically been the same throughout the existence of the band. And what comes to the compositions...”

I see no big change there either... Possibly the biggest evolution has been the micro level of our expression – I think that we can put more intensively our vision of the song to a record. By this I mean that we are able to be more dynamic in the performance, in other words we can express ourselves better than we used to.”

*Let's come back a bit to the subject of your live performances. Tenhi can't boast with too many concerts throughout its pretty long existence. Why is that? Is there a difference between Tenhi playing live in Finland and Tenhi in Romania? Where is it more convenient to play? Out in the open... or maybe not? In Germany you played in a castle with remarkable acoustics... Do you think that a perfect concert would include a projector that would show a film with images taken from nature? It is a sort of thing that became common practice from some time now...*

“Live performances have always been little tricky for us. I guess that, as persons, we are not performing artists and we rather work with our recordings and graphics than focus on giving good gigs. It has been a conscious decision to try to put as much energy to finishing albums that we can. There is a very limited time for us to be involved with music these days so this is a matter of priorities as much as being quite introvert as a person. On some gigs we have used background graphics and it has worked nicely but I feel that sometimes it can be a bit distracting when there is too much going on at the same time.”

*HARMAA was a project that didn't differ all that much from Tenhi and that is why the album released under this name was re-edited at*





a later stage at Prophecy, but under the Tenhi name. Was there a marketing strategy behind this move?

"There is no marketing strategy behind shifting the Harmaa record to Tenhi. We just saw that there was no need for us to separate anything we do from Tenhi – at the time we did the Airut: Aamujen record we felt that it was too different from the Tenhi material and it needed to be under a different title. But after a while we understood that this kind of thinking was not necessary anymore."

Inspiring the idea with the 3 CD set released on your 10th anniversary... Did it sell in considerable amounts?

"Personally I have not seen any figures about sales. Hopefully there are people that want the package with the artwork and all..."

How does a ordinary day go for the Tenhi band members? Some 12 years ago you were telling me you want to study architecture, or graphic art. How does an ideal day look for you?

"Tyko and I both work in the field of design and architecture. Our normal day is pretty much similar to a normal working people. Besides that, music is a big passion for us and we try to give as much time as we can to create new material."

DOORS, LED ZEPPELIN or ULVER were some of the favorite bands some years ago. What about now? What sort of films do you enjoy watching, are you interested in globalization, global warming, the demographic explosion or the green trend?

"The Doors, Led Zeppelin and Ulver are still good bands – I dare to say on behalf of Tyko as well. Many of the bands we listened then are still valid for us, such as Nick Cave, Tom Waits, Eric Satie, Anathema, Danzig, Johnny Cash, Katatonia, Tool, Type O Negative, Black Sabbath and a lot of classical composers just to mention a few. Usually we are so narcissistic and listen and play only our currently developing material. It really tires our ears enough though... Global warming is of course a big issue and hopefully the financial crisis won't change the focus permanently away from it."

Dear friend, thanks for this interview. Greetings to Ilmari and best of luck with all that you do, because you are doing it in an inspired way! How will Tenhi look like in 25 years? You have the right to dream with your eyes open and your fingers on the keyboard. Although, 13 years ago, at our first interview, all the words were said in writing, handwriting that is, on a piece of paper... those were the days...

"Hopefully we will have the same enthusiasm for the things we do today. This kind of non professional way of working needs a lot of spark and love to come to life."

November, 2008

Rhetoric's

I've recently reread the paragraph: "Every human has his own personal chaos. And in relation with this chaos, there are three phases. In the first one you ignore your chaos. In the second one, you wander around it. In the third one, you try, if there's any time left, to establish some order." Do I really need this chaos? But if I would refuse it (and that proves that I'd admit it exists within me), could I still be me? Who knows? The one from Heaven, the one from Hell, you or me? But would it have any importance... someone says it would... and laughs... I can't see him, but I continuously hear his voice...

Kogaionon says hello and it's convinced you don't need its complicated good wishes, but its lust for music, for life and maximum SINCERITY! And pay attention to the chimney, you don't know what Santa could bring in that particular night when I'm fooling myself into believing that you wont totally submit into partying at the... discotheque! And at least the dizzy aroma of a glass of wine will make a halt for a moment in the illogicality's lap and on the senseless mountain Kogaionon... which will keep on waiting, anyway... even if it will last for ever...

An inspired New Metallic Year!

P.S.: „We can count the stars from the sky because of insanity or boredom. Sometimes, because of both reasons. But, often, we forget to count ourselves, too - the only star, the only planet, the only Sun that does matter! We look at the universe with a strange mistrust, like we couldn't conceive that there are some other worlds, and other realities, and other places where other forms of people love, hate, kill and live. This way reality continuously strikes us with its part hidden in the shadow: What we can't see can see us. What we can't feel can feel us. What we don't miss belongs to us. But, gradually, things we can't see become visible and we start to miss the things we are used to have. Our nature tells us that man is a dynamic system in which infinite things we have swap material and spirit for infinite things we don't have. As long as an equilibrium exists in this system harmony will exist, too. But man is a chaotic being who will tend to assume the knowledge's role and will fail facing new infinities of ignorance which he will catch sight of. Man wasn't created to be happy but to oscillate between the insanity of discovery and the boredom of harmony. Happiness is only the bait which will hold him captive, until the end." Octavian Paler.

DECEMBER 2005

Black Book

A captivating film, a spectacular come back from a great director (Verhoeven), an aroma excellently framed by the bench-marks of a harsh and senseless World War, with characters confused by the illogical sense of anti-Semitism, something popular in the '40s; a German SD full of soul and dominated by a morality at all useful to those times, a Jewish woman wiling to do anything for her loved ones, but who decants something for herself as well towards the end... however the small "wheel" had already transformed into an immense one and nothing could have changed anymore and so, finally... no happy-end! What is captivating? That the joy of the end to come (in this case, of the war) will only be shared by the unimportant pawns of this film, with quite the ending for the main couple: "the war is over... for us, it's just starting... I never thought that I'll be frightened by getting freed". The storyline: a beautiful Jewish woman, blond, sensual, with a suggestive look and an unbelievable determination (Carice Van Houten), after she looses her family in an ambush staged by some "good willed" friends of hers (for money, of course), must infiltrate the German Information Service and she does it in a way that is both predictable and reckless, so as the German officer (Sebastian Koch) leaves everything onto the hazard... What else does the film show to us: disorder, confusion, compromise, corruption, betrayal... human

misery and more! Although agglomerated as message, at times, the film distinguishes itself through a romantic aura, its warmth remaining at the end in your nostrils. An authentic film, with a plot that happens in the Netherlands, spoken in Dutch (with obvious oppressive/Nazi German insertions and freeing English/American), with a multiple apogee, unfolded throughout three distinct stages: humiliating – the over tilting of a container full of human excrement on the main female character, consternating – the treason coming from where you wouldn't expect, violent – the closing up of a coffin with someone still alive in it... and an ending that has its destination exactly where the beginning had, in Israel. Nothing new, nothing unreal, nothing fantastic... just two hours and so of an exceptional and inspired script writing and directing!

August 2007

Francophone Business

Yet to another... successful, I could say, conference, equally trendy, equally involved, with a business community, some 200 people, from all possible spectres of a certain set of activities. Posh hotel, snobby look, charismatic socializing, inspired sharing sessions, information exchanges/extractions, desperate attempts of name tag reading (business jackets, shirts)... to head turns and tripping or slipping off your feet and down the spiral staircase dominated by a very mesmerising (to me) oak wood..., LCD's and plasma screens all over the place, kind hostesses, full of paid smiles, media people who were trying to find the needle in the hay stack that would sit nicely on the front page, sumptuous presentations, full of meaning and statistical depth, straight to the point information but also frustrating deviations. In this Business universe I have found two elements that I truly liked: - an expat who did his best to hold his speech in Romanian... and he did it in a manner full of honesty, something that had to be admired! - an artist" of the words, who showed us that you can make money out of intelligent (training) consultancy, without copying cheep corporate concepts put together in bombastic copy/paste presentations. In just 5 slides that contained 5 quotes of some people of importance, he spoke freely about how it is to gain awareness of where you are situated in this world... something like: if you want to express the eccentric, even if the environment recommends/forces the opposite, you do it anyway! And a few other interesting and full of human pith sequences. Even if he used an alleviated sort of language, or perhaps just due to that, this guy induced the aspirational wave of having... the courage... to think, to a lot of the people present in that room, of looking at the man first and then at his/her job... At least for that half an hour... Because once lunchtime came everything was forgotten... and we got back to where we started off.

It was nice... then... And a funny thing: when the speakers were talking in English, only very few of the lot were asking for translation aids (some perhaps out of embarrassment)... when they were speaking in Romanian, only the expats were using the earphones. A big shock produced when a speaker addressed us in French: mutter, heads turning, silly jokes, queues for headphones... and, finally, a translator decided to save the appearances and she translated over the open mic. Rhetorical or not, I was wondering: where the heck is our francophone side? It's crystal clear; we left it up there, on the top of the Statue of Liberty! The American way is now the trend! Go ahead, monsignor!

November 2007



## The Ultimate Odyssey of Pain

Nicklas Kvarforth of  
SHINING

If with each word we win a victory over nothingness, it is only the better to endure its reign. We die in proportion with the words which we fling around us... Those who speak have no secrets. And we all speak. We betray ourselves, we exhibit our heart; executioner of the unspeakable, each of us labors to destroy all the mysteries, beginning with our own. And if we meet others, it is to degrade ourselves together in a race to the void, whether in the exchange of ideas, schemes or confessions. Curiosity has provoked not only the first fall but also the countless ones of every day of our lives. Life is only that impatience to fall, to fail, to prostitute the soul's virginal solitudes by dialogue, ageless and everyday negation of Paradise. Man should listen only to himself in the endless ecstasy of the intransmissible. Word, should create words for his own silences and assents audible only to his regrets. But he is the chatterbox of the universe; he speaks in the name of others; his self loves the plural. And anyone who speaks in the name of others is always an impostor. There is only the artist whose lie is not a total one, for he invents only himself. Outside of the surrender to the incommunicable, the suspension amid our mute and unconsolated anxieties, life is merely a fracas on an unmapped terrain, and the universe a geometry stricken with epilepsy

I CAN NOT listen to Shining's music without thinking of Cioran's tragic yet truthful words. I just can't. And it's crazy because those are also the moments when some of Beksinski's unnamed, insane and tormented paintings start crossing my mind, and somehow they all come together, they complete each other. I live because mountains do not laugh and the worms do not sing... Who is this Swedish guy named Niklas Kvarforth, and what's all the fuss about this band called Shining? A year ago when we first spoke he was trying to explain: "I gave birth to this ill-child of mine in 1996 and knew from the very start that Shining would be nothing but a portrait of Kvarforth, or rather the most demented parts of his psyche, exclusively. I also understood that I probably would have to do it by myself as there is only one Kvarforth; the rest - they just come and go". To understand Niklas Kvarforth, all you need is just to listen to his music, that's it. If you have the right elements in your system, it will put everything from a different perspective. It can be a spectacular event, because that's what great music does, it reveals beauty in forms you've never seen it in before. Hands down, Niklas is a true artist. He is genius down to a molecular level, and how can his art be any different? You know you've got something special when you realize it's the closest thing to how Burzum's Filosofem or Monumentum's In Absentia Christi made you feel the first time you heard them, and that's not even the beginning. And that's when you realize that you're fucked, and it's too late to turn back. Be halfway down a good bottle of Cabernet, then take the most misanthropic, dark as fuck Black Metal you've ever heard (give it an early Dark Metal Bethlehem feeling), add in Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata played on a grand piano just for this special occasion, and throw in the sickest scene from Blue Velvet, see what you get. Shining has become an entity of its own, created for the soul purpose of bringing every man to the agony of life's last moments by whip, fire and injections. At only 25 years of age, Niklas doesn't just create music, which suddenly becomes such a mediocre, insignificant word.

I really liked it when Fenriz said that Darkthrone's songs are a rusty knife that stabs over and over again - it made sense, it fit. I would say that Shining's songs are a different sort of pain, self-inflicted. And not only that. They're more like deep cuts, they're never lethal but that pain lasts forever. Each of these nasty scars is a painful memory and every while and then they get opened again, making rooms for deeper, nastier ones. His whole life is on those blades filled with blood, tears and dirt. Wound upon wound, his entire art is really what Cioran called an inner torture made possible only by a both gruesome and tranquil vision of death. There is a catch here though. He wants all this inflicted on you!

There's no category to look for, no labels to wave around, this has never been done before, not like this, not in this manner. I invite you to read some excerpts from my discussions with one of the most talented musicians alive today, a man whose gift most of us can't even fathom.

November, 2008 -

*Somewhere in freezing Sweden there's an incoming call from a New York City*

*Hi Niklas, how are you, what's new with you since we last talked?*  
"Well, I'm ok I guess. I just moved to a different city, I was in a hospital here for about three months. I've never been here before, but it's nice, I'm recovering."

*In a hospital, again? What's the name of the city? Last time we spoke you were living in Oslo with Maniac..*  
"The town is called Eskilstuna, it's in the North. But I didn't move here directly from Oslo, I lived in Gothenburg first. Then I got this big problem and I ended up in the hospital here for three months. Hopefully I'll be okay. My friend Peter Bjärgö (ed: the man behind one of the world's finest dark-ambient acts, Arcana) has a studio here, that's why I've chosen this place, I can use his studio frequently."

*OK. Let's have it, give me a few details about your 6th album with Shining, Klagopsalmer. I really can't wait to hear it... what's changed, what's different?*

"It continues from where Halmstad ended, it's somewhat similar, but it's way darker, more sinister, more Black Metal oriented. This time I also let the guitarists write some songs as well, for the first time I have two more people write music for Shining, so I don't know... some clean vocals have been used as well, which will hopefully upset some of our fans. I guess it's different, but it's definitely Shining... also this time the whole band participated in the recording,

which it's not what we've done in the past. It's a wider album..."

*Are you saying that Shining is a real band today, and not only your personal reflection anymore? You actually care about this particular group you're with now?*

"[Laughs] Yes, I guess in some strange way it is a band today. And it has nothing to do with me caring about the people in the band or not, this time I wanted to involve some of them in the writing process, see what they can come up with, and to my surprise they came up with some really cool ideas..."

*I guess it would be fair if you'd introduce these guys to us and tell us a few things about them... after all they do put up with all your crap...*

"Shining is Kvarforth (vocals), Huss (guitars), Gråby (guitars), Larssen (bass) and Schill (drums). Huss is 28, he's been in the band the longest.. He's also played guitar in Finnish band Synergy. He had never played Black Metal before so I thought it would be interesting to bring some fresh ideas from the outside. Gråby is 25, he's been in the band for two years, he had a band called Ondskapt and now also plays in a band called Bloodline (ed: great stuff, check it out, it's similar to an industrial Deynonychus!) We actually met at a show about 7 years ago. He had a fight to pick with me but we ended up being band mates, he was in the right place at the right time I guess. So these are the oldest Shining members, so to speak.

The other two, Schill and Larssen are both 19 years old. [laughs]

*What? That's so young to be subjected to such abuse!*

"Haha, I know. Larssen is actually very mature for his age, he's extremely talented. I met him at a Shining gig in France. He was wasted; he flew from Sweden just for that gig, so I let him crash in the tour bus. We were looking for a bassist, so he took the job. Then we needed a drummer, and he had this good friend, Schill, and that's how we got him behind the drum kit. He's a spoiled brat... he's a great drummer, he comes from a family of musicians, but he only cares about clothes and women, he pays a lot of attention to how he looks and stuff... [laughs]"

*So you guys make fun of him...*

"Of course we do, but he tries to make fun of us back, which doesn't really work because he's not very intelligent. [we're both laughing at this point]"

*Well he looks good indeed, he must be getting all the pussy...*

"Yes he is. Fucking brats, they do get all the pussy. But that's good because the rest of us have girlfriends now so we let him have his fun..."

*You know, this reminds me of my conversation with Blasphemer, when he was telling me something similar about Hellhammer, that every time he tours, half of his luggage is made of beauty care products – shampoos, lotions, etc.*

"Haha, exactly! He has to have it! Hellhammer carries this silver bag with a combination lock, and he keeps all this stuff in, it's so funny to watch him. But that's Hellhammer, Schill hasn't gotten to that point yet, but I can see it happen, when he gets his wrinkles... he's definitely going to be just like him."

*When we met last year you said this album was going have a different vocalist on each song, but then you changed your mind... what was that all about?*

"No, it was a misunderstanding. We were planning of re-record the first album with six different vocalists, and that will still happen, but not right now, because we have booked the studio to record the seventh album in a month."

*Wait, what? The 7th? The 6th hasn't even been released yet... am I missing something here?*

"I wrote a lot of music while I was in this mental hospital, and I have almost all the material ready, the seventh album will be recorded in one month, we booked the

studio already, it's a done deal. We also signed a new contract, we'll be done with Osmose after this one. Our new label will be Indie Recordings (ed: Enslaved, Satyricon, Keep Of Kalessin, Vreid, Gehenna)."

*Congratulations man, that's just crazy news! You probably didn't even have time to rehearse it...*

"Shining never rehearses anything. It's always been a studio thing first of all."

*Some of our readers need a little history... on the first albums you wrote all the music and lyrics, and you're also playing all instruments... are you a self-taught musician, or did you study music?*

"I write basically all music and lyrics myself, the others are merely there to kind off perfect my vision in a way. As I said, on this album they bring much more. I am self-taught yes, and I believe that's a better choice for anyone who's considering working with music as you then truly draw all knowledge from the very inside of yourself, rather than building your work on pillars already set by someone else. However, I have over the years, let close allies of mine contributing to my work with lyrics here and there, something I find somewhat refreshing, to reflect someone else's madness a little now and then."

*Let's go through each album, tell us what your feeling on each of them is, how the sound evolved until this day, in your eyes... There is quite a leap in style from the first to the fifth...*

"Shining I was a very dark album being the debut, mentally challenging to write and overall made under circumstances of tragedy considering family-members dying, being without any income whatsoever and also locked up by force because of the mental situation back then being really intense. Shining II was a pretty decent period of my life when many things were done and plans layed down for the future events, I guess it was during that period I truly found the formula of doing what I do today. with Shining III things pretty much took off, yet the mental crisis increased and the drugs came back into the picture, many people got hurt during the process. Shining IV was a very strange period with me relocating to another part of Sweden and for some odd reason I tried to settle down with wife and kid, yet the darkness was way too overwhelming. It took 13 fucking months in order to finish the album, both because of the band constantly changing members, me trying to act like a family man and half of the album being completely erased, causing a need for recording everything all over again. Then things started to go in a very bad direction with the members and

with our relationship towards Avantgarde Music. Shining V, the last album, which again took nearly a year to record due to my seperation, vanishing into thin air for 6 months and constant abuse, finally made it out. All albums differ from the one and the other, as I am in constant evolution, this new album will be even worse, just wait and see..."

*Shining IV and V are so avant-garde, nothing like this has ever been done... Is this the new Shining? Is this what you wanted from the beginning, or is it a natural evolution?*

"I would say it's a rather natural progression, just compare the evolution we went through between the second and the third album for example, or the third and fourth for that matter, comparing the progression that way, you should really consider the leap being not too exhagerated. I would never stagnate and try releasing albums relying on the same formula, I mean what's the fucking point of for instance redoing another Shining II for example, just for the mere sake of resting on "safe" barrels? All music and lyrics are strictly out of my head and obviously as there are always a couple of years between each album, I change, or develop my life further you know, and it would be rather odd if my musical performance, brilliance if you will, wouldn't have "matured" and progressed throughout the years, right? We have always had solos in SHINING even though it isn't until now we really do master the tequinqe, thus, experimenting a bit more with that. I have also always used many acoustic, clean parts in my songs, even though it wasn't until with this album I really managed to bring forth the ideas in a dynamic harmony. In the past I've used synthesizers in order to immitate what a Cello would sound like if used in my work and last year we had the possibility of actually using an authentic cellist playing on the album, something I just couldn't pass, and last but not least I also used synthesizers for the piano parts I had going on the earlier albums, yet on this recording (Shining V) we had the possibility of using a grand piano and I guess that's why the paino got a bigger role on this record. To sum up, these are all things I've wanted to blend into SHINING since the very start but for either professional or financial reasons haven't been able to do it until last year, but as off today when the name is actually getting bigger and bigger we'd most likely have more of this on future albums."

*The 5th song on your last album, named Attiosextusenfyrahundra, is in fact a cover of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, a composition that could bring any man, balanced or unbalanced to tears... Your interpretation is even more dramatic, as your voice can be heard in the background...*

*goddamn it's sad! You truly are a fucking genius when it comes to manipulating people's emotions... Did you play the piano yourself? Why Beethoven?*

"I had always wanted to make my own version of that particular piece, I mean it's monumental, we already know that, and people will probably go on and on about what a pretentious choice that was, yet who fucking cares? I wanted this and so obviously I did it, just fucking imagine how many people who have had that very tune playing when they've ended their lives, well people, now you have a new, more suitable version out there! If I would go deeper into the subject of the title or even what I am doing in the back-ground while the piano is playing we would probably never be able to enter the states to play as I would have been locked up, so I'll leave it there. The piano on this track was actually not performed by anyone in the band, but by a man called Marcus Pålsson who plays together with Witt in a weekend cover-band when Witt didn't have any other obligations. It felt a bit weird to use him on the album but I wasn't able to play the piece myself, so there was no other choice."

*I'm curious about the movie samples you have on your last two albums, like the one on Samvetskvalens Ballad (IV) for example...*

**Everything is possible, and yet nothing is. All is permitted, and yet again, nothing is. No matter which way we go, it is no better than any other. It is all the same whether you achieve something or not, have faith or not, just as it is the same if you cry or remain silent. There is an explanation for everything, and yet there is none. Everything is both real and unreal, normal and absurd, splendid and insipid. There is nothing worth more than anything else, nor any idea better than any other. Why grow sad from one's sadness and delight in one's joy? Why does it matter whether our tears come from pleasure or pain? Love your unhappiness and hate your unhappiness, mix everything else, scramble it all! Be a snowflake dancing in the air, a flower floating downstream! Have courage when you don't need to, and be a coward when you must be brave! Who knows, you may still be a winner! And if you loose, does it really matter? Is there anything to win in this world? All gain is loss and all loss is gain. Why always expect a definite stance, clear ideas, and meaningful words? I feel as if I should spout fire in response to all questions which were ever put, or not put, to me.**

*it gives me the chills every time I listen to it, where do you take them from?*

"Throughout the years we have sampled from Blue Velvet, Prozac Nation, American Psycho, Identity and She's So Lovely, go and see them all, they are all somewhat worth it."

*Why did you release your first 3 studio recordings by yourself, under Selbstmord Services, and didn't search for a label?*

"Back then I had no interest in working together with any other label or company as I felt a need to do this on my own, even though we had quite a huge amount of labels throwing themselves over us, trying to add us to their ranks. As said, I wanted to try out things on my own instead of relying on someone else, something which now in the end surely have paid off considering I know pretty much how this industry works in each and every way and thus, can give our present label for instance, further directions on how I think things should be done. The first recording we did was the EP you know and I didn't want to waste that recording on a mere cassette release thus, I decided to make the vinyl single instead."

*I guess what I find impressive is that your two first albums were re-released by three labels, Avantgarde, Modern Invasion, and ultimately, Osmose Productions...*

"First I released both Shining I and Shining II on my own, via elbstmord Services and then when we got signed to Avantgarde Music for the third album me and Roberto just decided to re-issue them both via Avantgarde as some kind of celebration that the deal was done or something, and also, the demand was quite massive. Then in the midst of it all, Modern Invasion Music and I were discussing the distribution matters concerning the Selbstmord titles over in down under and he proposed to release

albums over there as well, and so the story goes. Two years ago when we decided to leave Avantgarde Music, we practically "gave" Osmose Productions the opportunity of releasing both albums again, as again the demand was still there and we had never released the albums on digi-pack prior which had been the plan since the very beginning. Hopefully this very confusing story ends here."

*On IV's vinyl version you're thanking doctors for keeping you alive... can you explain how that happened? Was there a suicide attempt, or an accident?*

"Between the years of 2003 and 2004 I was starting to go downwards for real and I had been on medication for quite a few years when I suddenly stopped on the day, which isn't really that smart you know, especially not considering the degree of mental illness I have floating inside of me. Suicide attempt, accident, its all the same, I just ended up where doctors were feeding me medicine, struck down to a bed at the Halmstad emergency rooms. Thus, the little thank-you note, for allowing such a man as myself living on."

*So how did you end up in the hospital again now, a year later, did you do the same thing like last time?*

"Yes, more or less. Drugs mostly, I also stopped taking my medication completely and I went berserk, tried to kill people... so that's how I ended up in this psychiatric institution, all too familiar... But I feel great now since I got out, I'm clean, I started to work out and I'm trying to live a normal life, as a better person [laughs]."

*Until next time when you'll do it all over again...*

"Yeah, maybe it will happen at some point in my life, but right now I am focusing on rebuilding myself, getting back in shape."

*What kind of medication do you take man, what is it that you suffer from?*

"I am bipolar and I suffer from a form of paranoid schizophrenia."

*So when you take medication you're fine, but you loose control when you stop...*

"Not really, I'm not fine when I take it either, but I am more relaxed, it keeps me afloat."

*I know your friendship with Maniac is one of great value for you today, you're even playing in Skitliv together... but that's not how it's always been, correct?*

"[Laughs] No, not at all. Thats a pretty funny story actually, we first met in 2000 when Mayhem were playing in Stockholm and I went there to meet up with Hellhammer, who was the new Shining drummer also 70

(ed: Hellhammer played drums on Shining III). I went there to meet him, and at that time I had just been released from hospital. I was a complete mess, really fucked up; I was either crying or laughing. Maniac saw backstage and asked him "who the fuck is this idiot?" and of course I jumped to hit him, but Hellhammer dragged me out from the backstage area. Due to my friendship with Hellhammer, nothing happened. Second time I met Maniac was about two or three years later when Mayhem played in Gothenburg. He was putting his make-up on and I was trying to teach him these quotes from the bible to yell at the crowd, hoping for a riot... it was something glorifying homosexuality basically, so we got in another fight... When I moved to Oslo I was having a few drinks with Attila at the place I was working at when Maniac showed up. The two of them sat down and had had a few more, and that's when Attila asked me to show Maniac my "Skitliv" tattoo. I had this piece for years, and it turns out that Maniac had just started his new band, which had the same name. Maniac found it delightful



and invited me to a party later that evening. He actually ended up using my tatto as his logo. Since that night, we have basically spent every single day and night at his place, how homoerotically don't you think? Nah, he's one of my absolute best friends and I would kill for him if that was necessary, I guess it's like people say: Kärlek startar alltid med fro bråk. The funny thing is that in return he tattooed my name on his body."

*I must admit I am curious why you left Oslo to begin with, you and Maniac play in Skitliv together, it seemed like your new life was*

*starting there... now you're in this new place...*

"Well, what can I say, I got fed up with Oslo. I don't want to be a part of that scene, I don't feel a connection there. I'm much happier where I am now, I have this studio at my disposal and it's much easier to record my vocals for various projects, I don't have to travel, meet people, etc."

*There's something that's been on my mind ever since we met... you showed me these photos on your cell phone of women having performed self-flagellations, some of them really shocked me by their brutality, they were sliced from head to toe, really gruesome stuff. What's this book you want to put them into all about, when will it be out? Maybe people want to submit some of their photos...*

"It's women and men also. I don't want people to send me anything, this is not a popularity contest. I want to be the one responsible for people doing this to themselves, I want to know I am the one who did that. Me as a person, as a medium,

not necessarily through Shining alone."

*Do you know the people whose photos you showed me?*

"No, I don't know them but I met them all. I don't know if it's going to take a year or five years for this to become reality because it has to be exactly the way I want it to be, and it will. I am still working on this book, and it will take me a while to finish it. In the meanwhile however I wrote another book, an autobiography that follows everything that happened in my life after I started this band. As we speak, someone is interested in

**There are no arguments. Can anyone who has reached the limit bother with arguments, causes, effects, moral considerations, and so forth? Of course not. For such a person there are only unmotivated motives for living. On the heights of despair, the passion for the absurd is the only thing that can still throw a demonic light on chaos. When all the current reasons - moral, esthetic, religious, social, and so on - no longer guide one's life, how can one sustain life without succumbing to nothingness? Only by a connection with the absurd, by love of absolute uselessness, loving something which does not have substance but which simulates an illusion of life. I live because the mountains do not laugh and the worms do not sing. The passion for the absurd can grow only in a man who has exhausted everything, yet is still capable of undergoing awesome transfigurations. For one who has lost everything there is nothing left in life except the passion of the absurd. An existence which does not hide a great madness has no value. How is it different from the existence of a stone, a piece of wood, or something rotten? And yet I tell you: you must hide a great madness in order TO WANT to become a stone, wood, or rot. Only when you have tasted all the poisoning sweetness of the absurd are you fully purified, because only then will you have pushed negation to its final expression. And are not all final expressions absurd?**

interested in translating it into English. I think it could be interesting for people to read it, I don't think many people can understand what this band has created in the last 12 years. It's pretty heavy stuff."

*I heard your father has been in jail for most of your life, and that he's been in the same prison with Jon Nordveidt. Why was he behind bars, and do you still keep in touch with him?*

"That's actually how I got back in contact with him two years ago. Yes my father has spent most of my life in jail for various reasons, bank-robbery, battery, murder and all other life's privileges. He found a CD laying around with the picture of me on it, obviously some Shining CD that Jon had in his cell and so the story goes. My father is a very disturbed person, and praise God for that, nevertheless, I have no contact with him nor any other member of my family. Not to this day."

*Let's explore some of the projects you have going, especially Bethlehem, which is so fucking special to me. They were practically the Shining of the 90's... completely sick and suicidal, they were so controversial that they were banned from playing live in Germany, and they're still under close surveillance today. I just can't believe you're a part of this group now! Tell me the whole story, what led to this surreal collaboration. (Note to readers: If you've never listened to their magnificent 1996 Dictius Te Necare, which in Latin means "You must kill yourself" - sounds familiar? - you definitely should, because Rainer Landfermann's vocals are truly the sickest you'll ever hear, they're practically inhuman).*

"I owe a lot of who I am today to Bethlehem, they've probably had the biggest influence on me. Today I am their new vocalist. We re-recorded S.U.I.Z.I.D and we're going to record the new album in less than six months. I discovered them when I was twelve years old and everything changed for me. A year later when I was thirteen, I sold everything I owned, and I contacted Pat from Red Stream Records, and I licensed their debut album Dark Metal, releasing the vinyl on my label. I also released Reflektionen aufs Sterben on MLP. That's how I got in contact with Jürgen, so one thing led to another and now I'm in the band."

*Leaving aside that Bethlehem's Dark Metal is amongst my top five albums ever, you blew me away when you told me you're also the vocalist of Monumentum. I mean, I could see the connection immediately, it makes perfect sense. Even to this day, I consider their debut In Absentia Christi to be an unparalleled masterpiece that gets better with time. I've never listened to anything like*

*that ever since, and it changed me forever. How did you and Roberto Mammarella (ed: owner of Avantgarde Records, creator of Monumentum) decide to take your collaboration to the next label?*

"Well, obviously we got in contact when he offered me a contract and re-released my first two albums, and we signed a deal for two more. I've always loved Monumentum myself, their debut album is indeed spectacular. We were actually talking about re-recording In Absentia Christi with me on vocals, but in the meanwhile it's been re-mastered it and re-released in a nice package. It sounds amazing. I actually re-recorded some old takes and we will do a completely new album together in the near future."

*What's new in the Skitliv camp?*

"I recorded the guitars for the debut album, but Maniac is currently in Japan, getting married to Vivian (ed: Vivian Slaughter of Gallhammer). I am a full member yes, Maniac writes the basic stuff and then I fuck it up."

*How about your involvement with Den Saakalde?*

"Yes the new album is about to come out, I recorded the vocals. I don't know much about the band, we played live once, and we just released a split Ep."

*You have a tattoo on your chest that looks like a fetus skeleton with wings. I've seen that on Manes's killer "Under Ein Blodraud Maane" debut which finally came out in 1999. Are they related?*

"Yes they are, it's the same thing. I love Manes, killer fucking band! I actually recently recorded the vocals for a song from 1994 that was never released. It will come out as a single. I'm not in the band though."

*How about Craft?*

"I recorded one song for their Terror Propaganda album, called "Razorblade Fascination", I wrote the lyrics for it too, but they never used it. They ended up leaving it as an instrumental piece, it wasn't fitting the image, vocals were too violent I guess..."

*And what's the deal with this Norwegian project Hjarnidaudi? I checked it out, it's pure fucking drone, reminds me of Sunn o)))...*

"Yes it is, they used to be called Hlidolf. I'm not involved in it, I just did this thing called "Niklas Kvarforth presents Hjarnidaudi" album. Basically I took one of his albums and locked myself in this tiny room and recorded the vocals in one take. It was the way we wanted to present it to the world. This is an instrumental project, I play no

part in the music, but the album just came out, it's called Pain:Noise:March."

*Do you consider yourself a nihilist?*

"I don't think I could find a word to describe who I am, I don't like to put labels on my forehead. If I was to look in a mirror, sometimes I hate what I see, other times I like what I see."

*Would you say you're a lonely person, someone who doesn't like human contact?*

"No, not at all. I actually don't like loneliness but sometimes I need it. I don't know what to tell you. I hate life in general."

*Maybe you love to hate it, you find pleasure in finding reasons to?*

"No. I hate the fact that I hate life, it's a burden. But it depends what happens with me, sometimes I love it. It's a duality. See, I have lived a pretty tough life yet I do not blame a thing on my past, its too damn easy! It really disturbs me when I hear people going on about how their past have fucked them up. In the end it is oneself who fuck oneself up, no matter what past might have had on you."

*Who is Niklas Kvarforth? What is his purpose on this planet, as a musician? What's the highest level of recognition you would like to achieve?*

"Destroying life, just with my music. I have noticed that from early age that

I have the capacity to change people's views. It's not a lot, but it matters to me.

I don't want to make a difference, but if I can affect a few

people, I am satisfied. As a musician, I want exposure of course, I want to share who I am with the world, I'd like everyone to get a taste of who I am, because that's what my music is, who I am. But that is very difficult you know, because I use Swedish lyrics, and it's impossible to translate them in English and not loose the deep meanings, my feelings. We tried it in the past and it doesn't work, that puts us back actually. But then again people who can't understand Swedish can feel what the music is about, and they sort of imagine in their own heads, they make it what they want it to be..."

*All these festivals you guys keep headlining or get invited to are definitely a positive sign as far as the band's acceptance goes. Is shining becoming a brand?*

"I don't know, I certainly hope so."

*Are you satisfied with the feedback you're getting?*

"Actually it's too little, it has to be more, and hopefully that's going to change in the future. You have to aim for the starts to reach the branches, you know. But hopefully our 7th album will finally get us the exposure we've wanted all this time. We just signed a new record deal with Indie Records, who will release this record, and hopefully that's when we'll get what we deserve."

*Is suicide a sign of strength or is it a sign of weakness?*

"It depends. It can be a sign of strength if it comes from a higher will, but it can be a sign of weakness if you do it because you own money to your local drug dealer. I personally feel suicidal very often, but I fight it, I try to find strength to continue, almost like giving a slap."

*Suppose you read in the newspaper that yesterday a group of three kids, after listening*

**Suicide is one of man's distinctive characteristics, one of his discoveries; no animal is capable of it, and the angels have scarcely guessed its existence; without it, human reality would be less curious, less picturesque: we should lack a strange climate and a series of deadly possibilities which have their aesthetic value, if only to introduce into tragedy certain new solutions and a variety of denouements. But the act of suicide originates in a radical formula of salvation. Is not nothingness the equal of eternity? The Solitary being has no need to declare war on the universe – he sends the ultimatum to himself. He no longer aspires TO BE forever, if in an incomparable action he has been ABSOLUTELY himself. He rejects heaven and earth as he rejects himself. At least he will have achieved a plentitude of freedom inaccessible to the man who keeps looking for it in the future...Doomed to an uninspired agony, we are neither authors of our extremities nor arbiters of adieux; the end is no longer our end: we lack the excellence of a unique initiative - by which we might ransom an insipid and talentless life, as we lack the sublime cynicism, the ancient splendor of an art of dying. Habitues of despair, complacent corpses, we all outlive ourselves and die only to fulfill a futile formality. It is as if our life were attached to itself only to postpone the moment when we could get rid of it.**

*to Shining's last three albums for a whole week, have committed suicide...*

"Marvelous!"

*Would that make you proud, you would take that as a compliment?*

"Yes I would, it would be the highest level of recognition in a way, it would make me proud. I don't give a fuck if someone kills himself or kills someone else. But if they do it after they listened to my records, that would be something... it would be enormous, if my music had that kind of power."

*Have you ever been in love? With a woman, I mean, not nature or fishing...*

"[Laughs] Yes... I'm actually in love right now with the woman I am going to marry next year, on the 11th of September."

*Congratulations! First Maniac, now you... it's all going down the drain... Seriously though, I'd like to know how this has affected you, do you think love can overcome anything?*

"Well, what I feel now is the main reason that makes me want to live, I made this girl a promise, and I want to do well by her. Love is a very powerful feeling, but I don't think it can overcome depression, it can be a substitute for a while, but life catches up with you... I can't help it, I am sick..."

*There's lots of controversy regarding Gaahl's recent coming out of the closet, admitting he's gay. People's perception of Gorgoroth has changed. What's your view on homosexuality and black metal? I wonder if being gay isn't the ultimate fuck you to religion, his pinnacle of individualism...*

"Well, I I've known this about Gaahl for a while; I found this when he told me he met someone who meant something to him. I was really glad about this, being in love is a good thing. As far as homosexuality in Black Metal is concerned...if we have to bring in religious topics, I can refer to the third book of Genesis, which is pretty self-explanatory. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable, and must be put to death, right? The same thing happened when Rob Halford came out, and everyone said you can't listen to Judas Priest anymore... Who gives a fuck, you know? It doesn't matter to me who or what they stick it into, them being happy with themselves is what matters, you know."

*Yes but Halford is the God of Metal, haha. To a certain degree one could understand why some people find this rather strange, Gaahl is considered one of the most evil men in the scene.*

"It's not strange at all, maybe it's because I know Gaahl though. But nevertheless,

if you're not honest with yourself, then what's the point in living? You might as well put a bullet in your head. I think it's great that he revealed this, he obviously doesn't care about what people think, which is the way it should be. You don't have to be an idiot if everyone else is. You don't have to dig your own grave when everyone else is doing it for you."

*How does 2009 look as far as touring is concerned? Do you enjoy playing live? I know you'll headline Party San one night.*

"We're going to do a very big tour in the spring of 2009. I don't enjoy playing live because each Shining song is a bad memory and I have to relive it every time... A Shining show is not such a great experience, I don't think people would want to be in my shoes, performing those songs, going through that. But it has to be done, to get more people to discover your music, you have to play live."

*When people expect you to cut yourself on stage, does that bother you? Many come for that shock alone...*

Of course it does but I put myself in that position, I do it entirely on my own. I would say that from the people at a Shining gig, 70% are there for the music, 20% to see a scandal, 10% to beat us up. It can be a calm experience, or it can be a brutal experience, when 20-30 people are being beaten up in the audience..."

*Tell me about this very controversial show you did last year on February 11th in Halmstad. You had Attila, Maniac and Nattefrost join you on stage, all full of blood and other things I cant mention in this interview... what really happened? I hear very weird stories about you letting yourself be attacked, or giving razorblades to some people in the audience, etc..*

"It was more or less a normal Shining show wheresome guests appeared. Attila, Nattefrost and of course my good friend Maniac who all contributed to the birth of the Ghoul. What media reacted upon was first of all that I handed razorblades to the front row, telling them to hurt themselves, that I kicked someone in the chest, that I drank urine, that Maniac beat me up and carved a swastika into his forehead. Well, to begin with, I oftenly hand out razors to the audience. I want people to hurt themselves. I hurt people and have to correct fans who think too much of themselves. I oftenly drink urine as it is a part of my transendence I go through at basically each concert and very often during ordinary weekdays. Maniac beat me up in the midst of it all which was no problem at all considering the negative energies we had on stage; it would have been odd if he didn't. And last but not least, Maniac was,

as said, in a very bad mood, drinking alot and sometimes you play with your body, in his case meaning carving a swastika into his forehead. I have to point out that I am not into politics myself, it does not matter if your black, white, brown, green whatever, you are all equally worthless, and I cannot really understand the fuzz about it, I mean he was but performing on one song and had a swastika carved into his forehead, I mean, in what way does that connect to Shining, the band?"

*Why do you think Watain is the only Black Metal band that counts?*

"Because they're the only band who do it the way it should be, and they do it for real, it's a way of life, it's not only about music. I respect them for doing their own thing despite what others are doing or saying. I've known Erik since we were both very young, he's such a fantastic front man and amazing lyricist..."

*Do you think they'll surpass Dissection?*

"Yes, Watain will surpass Dissection. I think they've already done it. Dissection made it all the way to the top with their last album, but then Jon died and that was it. Watain released Sworn To The Dark afterwards which to me is the best Black Metal album of all times, better than De Misteriis Dom Sathanas."

*There's rumors that you might make it to the US in 2009.*

"Yes we're working on that. Actually before you called I just spoke to Erik, and we're thinking of touring the US together..."

*What?? [almost fell off the chair] That's way too much man, not to mention dangerous...*

"Yes I know, that's why we want to do it. It should be like that, too much. Just imagine Shining and Watain on the same bill it will be marvelous (ed: I am, and it's terrifying). We want to get all the psychopaths out of their homes and give them something to remember. We wanted to do this in Europe but it wasn't possible. But in America, it can happen, we want to make it happen. We've also got a lot of death threats from the US actually. I really don't care, but we do have the addresses of most people who did this, and we can't wait to come over and see what this is about. We're not just going to tour the US, we're also going to pay some of these people a visit, see how tough they are when they don't have a computer in front of them, but the person they're bashing."

To be continued...

Story: Stefan C. Raduta  
Quotes: Emil Cioran (1911-2005)  
Photography: Julien Etienne (julienetienne.info)  
& David Fitoussi (vertigography.com)

Greetings Simone. What have you been up to? Hope I'm not interrupting anything... Have you been playing with toy soldiers lately? (I saw a photo of you playing with some nicely displayed toy soldiers)...

"We all need distractions while we play with pussy... after some hours it all starts to be boring, and so we need help. I would seem more unusual if playing with soldiers with toys 'round their dicks."

You're just back from playing in Augsburg... How did the concert go?

"The gig was cool. We found a very passionate crowd, with people coming from all around the world. It has been a brilliant festival and the bands were also great: ARCANA, QNTAL, ROME and ELEND, nice people, good music... We had fun. It was great!"

Your one man project has come a long way... Did it follow the path you thought it would? It grew, transformed and gained new additions. Giving it "your worst" seems to have turned into something pretty beautiful...

"Yes, nothing was planned in the beginning. I started SPIRITUAL FRONT as a personal intimate project, nothing more, but the thing grew; I'm loving the new way, it began to be a real band. It still is intimate, but more enlarged. I think we have to share our feelings with the other boys and girls, this is the meaning of art: share the feeling, giving yourself 'outwards'..."

When you stop and wonder at yourself what do you see? What do you feel? Musically speaking, of course... I don't want to stir up your demons. Not yet, heh...

"As mentioned before, I'm just trying to express myself, I just want to throw outside of myself all the things I'm not able to communicate in my 'ordinary' life; sometimes you are not able to give what you really have within yourself, life is full of constraints. Music, art give you the chance to communicate what lies within to the world, but at the same time it gives you the chance to know yourself better."

What does one need to be able to play with Spiritual Front? Say you need a new band member... What would you look for (apart from perhaps technical capabilities)?

"Motivated people. If you are not motivated you can't do anything... it could be music, sport, licking ice cream, believing in a religion, or work... everything. Motivation and style are the only thing requested. Style... anyway..."

Could you present to us the current members of your band? I know you changed a few of them throughout the years. Why?

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# SPIRITUAL FRONT



I chose to interview this band due to the simple fact that I love Simone Salvatori's voice. In fact, everything that revolves around him... and the music of Spiritual Front can hardly find comparison. That it is Rock Post Folk, Suicide Pop... its only semantics. They have just finished recording a new album and so I thought to ask Simone a few questions relating the bands history, the new album, the concert in Romania and other spicy, or not, details... I hope you will enjoy it.

"It's not easy to play in a band as SPIRITUAL FRONT. I'm usually unsatisfied of everything, playing' could be easy, but more difficult is how to play and how to behave outside the gigs, I mean, you have to be ready to be banished, hated, loved and adored at the same time. We are not a cover band, playing is not enough! You have to understand what SPIRITUAL FRONT is!!!"

"Real music for real people"... I can understand your music feeling real to you, as it comes from within. It's only natural. But how are your listeners "real"? What gives them this quality? What separates them from... plastic?

"Mmmm good question! Fake people are attracted by fake music! Plastic is something can change form and something easy to forget, something that you won't miss tomorrow. If you are sensitive you can easily realise what is shit and what is not, it's a matter of soul, nothing more. It could be industrial, hip hop, death metal, if you are doing it with conviction people will understand it!"

Are you a fan of anyone? Why? What about your own fans. What are they adding onto your existence?

"My fans are rotten but sexy and I love them! I had the chance to meet the most hardcore fans of SPIRITUAL FRONT, and I can assure you that they were all 'real' deep people, they were all addicted to love, a certain type of love. Am I a fan of anyone? There were and still are many artists that I loved. The strangest thing that happened to me was my meeting with Michael Gira from SWANS/ANGELS OF LIGHT, they were my favourite bands, I loved their records so much... but I loved them 'til the day I played with him. He's a real asshole, a fucking arrogant shithead, it was a real disappointment. So it's better to not know the artist you love! Except me, of course!"

What moves you? Where does the creative process start with you? Where does a new track start and what is the road it travels in order to become whole?

"Stimulations come from casual clashes of emotions, from things that shake me. Usually I'm not interested in things that don't belong to me, I mean, I don't talk about facts I'm not living, I don't like those who sing themes they don't know, I'm not interested in politics and I don't sing about it, I don't sing about French cuisine because I don't know it etc, as we talked before you have to be real to be deeply loved, to feel yourself. I don't blame those many neo folk or industrial bands that talk about second world war, various random apocalypse or rune, it's ok, it could be interesting, but

I'm not interested in using my time singing about them, I have the harder urge to talk about myself. Songs usually come directly from my heart, I don't spend that much time searching for the best form; it must be fast and hot in a short portion of time. I believe in instincts."

Would you say your tracks are easy? Catchy? There's word out there that you are a genius. :) I wouldn't imagine it's that easy to get people following (literary) a rhythm that is the manifestation of you. But you sure make it seem easy.

"It's not easy to create an easy song! Think that we are living in a fast and brutal world... There is little time for feelings, little time to dedicate to ourselves, to know ourselves; and then... obviously the time we dedicate to our soul is short and miserable. So we need catchy rhymes that could give us back the feelings we have lost, the sensations the world is stealing us, I don't want to sit down and wait for 30 minutes before a song comes and takes me, it needs to happen now, today! I can't wait, I want something deep but fast, something could make my heart explode, but I want it now!"

I suppose you would have tracks that feel closer to your heart than others. Can you share with me some? Perhaps talk us through the importance of their meaning. Or is that too personal?

"All the songs are personal, ok, maybe some are less than others, there are tracks that I love more, probably because we play them more live, or maybe because I wrote them in particular moments of my life, some songs are more loved because of the lyrics instead of the music and vice versa. All the songs represent me... more or less."

"Jesus died in Las Vegas and he died with the arrogance of who feels loved and betrayed". I suppose it is quite low of us to use betrayal that was brought upon us as an excuse to a path of arrogance. We don't really learn much, do we? We like to fuel our own misery.

"We constantly live in misery. Our condition is misery. We are bound to the senses in an extreme way, addicted to body, addicted to the most miserable things... we betray ourselves constantly. We have learned nothing, we continue to fail, and repeating a failure means being stupid or a fool. This is what we are, we can see it. It's clear."

Can you briefly describe all your releases, your history? Introduce them to some of my readers who aren't that familiar with Spiritual Front and frame them to those who are. If it's not too much to ask. I know you have said before that your earliest releases are best to be left buried. You are a better musician and a better man now, you said. But can't looking back be fruitful?

"I started as a one man band, composing sad dark songs for myself. I had as references bands like DEATH IN JUNE, SOL INVITUS, SWANS, SMOG, ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO, AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB, BOYD RICE and many more, but the main influence was the NeoFolk. I recorded my first demo 'Songs for the will' lately produced by Old Europa Café, after that I released 'Nihilist Cocktails for Calypso Inferno' on Oktagon records, still influenced by Dark ballads mixed to Industrial and Lounge music. It contained a bunch of songs for a planned 12" but the work has been extended including home recordings, demos etc. After this I enlarged the line up (with guys actually involved in bands like DOPESTARS INC., THE FORESHADOWING and KLIMT 1918), recorded the 7" 'No kisses on the mouth' on Hau ruck, Satyriasis on CMI and the 10" 'Nihilist' EP (together with Matt Howden too). For me, this period meant a new way to conceive the band, I decided to work harder for it and open the music to a more Pop side, I was quite sick of the scene. I loved Industrial and NeoFolk but I was feeling sick of it. I wanted to play something more like a 'song'. I then recorded 'Armageddon Gigolo', an album that gave us the chance

to be known by an audience far from the Industrial and Goth scene. That was fantastic, it was hard to achieve for a band considered as a NeoFolk (Goth band liked by Indie Rock people, metal kids, grannies and classic poppers), it was cool, we played in several types of clubs in front of fuckin' different people every time. This means that you play with your heart, telling your life, people love you (or they try to do that)."

"Sex is slavery. Loving another is meaningless". It is your expressed opinion. Or is it still? A world without the act of sex would perish. One without love would collapse. Or is this a too simple view? How many types of love are there?

"I still have the same opinion, sex is slavery, desire bounds ourselves to our bodies, to our flags, to our religion, we need something to adore because we can't understand ourselves, we are empty, and we are blind. We are searching to satisfy our temporary senses, that's the main problem, and we need something back, we expect something back, this creates lack of satisfaction, frustration. Love for a man or for a woman is not real love because it demands something back, it is not pure. Love is pure when you don't need something back, when you don't expect anything."

Is putting yourself out there, through music, lyrics, visual identity and concepts a brave task? What comes back to you from doing that?

"I'm living myself through them, I'm trying to do that. I have to open myself to the rest of the world, sometimes it is painful, sometimes it is joy, but I need to do it. It comes back? Maybe."

What is the short version of the bands relationship with sexuality? We do have time for the long version as well, heh. Why would sexuality take up so much of your work? Why is it so present in your art? Is it that you find it to present the... naked truth about ourselves, as entities, as people, as a society (belonging within borders or even within global realms)?

"Sex is always a constant in everything. Politics, propaganda, art, cinema, normal jobs, on the bus... we are guided by senses... more or less, her less than me, you more than me, etc... sex is the link between our inner self, our bodies and the rest of the world. It's a way to communicate, to dominate, to obey, or to live. We are trying to hide it, but it's our nature."

You once said that sex has no norms, nobody wrote rules for lovers, but then again... what did religion do? What about ignorance and fear? Who are those telling us not to love a man if we are men, not to love a woman, if we are women? Why do we need to control something that feels better left uncontrolled?

"It's stupid indeed, but at the same time it's a way to regulate it, desire often rules our minds, and too often it causes troubles!!! They are just trying to dominate the beast inside of us. Not everybody has the strength to give a rule to desire; religion is for them, for those who need rules, for those who can't manage life. Regarding sexuality... it's hard to compile a list of 'what we can do and what we can't do', but of course... we have to live it intensely, it's the only thing left."

Religion is accepted by those who do as it gives a meaning to their existence. What does religion mean to you? You do have some definite ties with it. It is natural I suppose, having been raised in the place you have...

"I never blame who believes, it's ok, we are free to believe or not, obviously I despise those who force you to believe or those who abuse in the name of... who agrees with it? Religion is terribly interesting, there's no answer, it's an obscure theme, millions of followers without any certainty, merchandise, adoration, that's total entertainment, I love it! Well, the discussion needs entire pages of

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interview... but I like it, after all, it's a fundamental brick of our culture, in a negative or positive way. It is."

*What about politics? You are a fan of Berlusconi? What do you think about EU and about the new global crises?*

"Berlusconi is one of the greatest comedians we ever had! I'm not his fan but I can assure you that in Italy there are worst politicians than him. EU could have been a great project if it wouldn't be built by banks and obscure financial powers, I believe in EU as a cultural and human force. Unfortunately we can build a common society without a bloody business involved. There's no crises, they are inventing and creating crises as they always did in the history of mankind. It's just a classic shameful alibi to their lies, their wars, and their bloody investments. Nothing more..."

*Why would there be "no kisses on the mouth"?*

"Kisses are so intimate; fuck is more impersonal, less close to the bone. When you see someone you like so much you say 'I want to fuck her' not 'I want to kiss her'... this is the basic idea of 'No kisses on the mouth' ahahaha. Well. The meaning is quite clear besides the jokes."

*Your vocal print is quite unique, recognisable and much loved by your listeners. It has changed though throughout the years. Are you planning in taking it anywhere else? What about your music, as a whole... Where is it going? Where would you like it to go in order to bring you and your band satisfaction?*

"Thanks a lot. Well, I don't think it has changed I'd say I started to sing!! Before it was just spoken, now I sing my songs, there's more confidence within myself, I'm less enslaved to genre clichés. The new imprint fits better with the music and evokes more images and feelings, I'm just walking together with it, without planning how to do it better, just... doing it."

*Your frank explanation on where and how you met Tomas of ORE is somewhat perplexing. Natural in delivery, it can leave the untrained slightly taken back. But it is an honesty that must be appreciated. Do you care much of what people think? What would make you care?*

"I care about intelligent peoples opinions, stupid can't talk, they just open their mouths, and that's completely different. Irony can be understood just by the first categories, the second live in tragedies."

*If pain was taken the centre stage in your earlier work, that has now changed. But what has really changed within? Getting*

*older and wiser or just getting used to pain, accepting the way it feels?*

"Older neither wiser, I'm just becoming myself, I'm trying to do it day by day. It's a tiring path, but I must do it. I don't like my first works because they don't and they didn't represent me or at least not entirely, it was me but not the me I wanted to be. Too many mistakes, too many regrets..."

*What are your expectations regarding the gig in Romania? If you have any...*

"Hard question. We heard many stories about it. In Italy we have many Romanians, and the relation between our people is strange, full of many colours. Many lovely people emailed me from there, I'm sure I'll love it!"

*You'll be playing alongside ROME... Do you like their music? Jerome seems to like SF and he has a great deal of respect for you. Now you are on the same label. A possible collaboration between your bands, maybe?*

"Hope so, I love ROME too, especially the last album, they have a great sense of decadent pop song, and I appreciate it a lot. Yeah, I knew 'bout that, they left CMI, hope they'll feel good with Trisol! ahaha"

*Do you know much about my country? Any curiosities regarding it?*

"As I said before, here in Roma the situation is strange, there many nice people, kind, hard workers, true good guys, but at the same time many crimes are committed by Romanians, they are involved in many troubles, we have contrasting opinions 'bout it. Seems that many honest Romanians are embarrassed about their co citizens, it's a hard situation to explain and a weird feeling to explain. I met wonderful Romanians people here, but at the same time, many horrible people from the same place, it's incredible!"

*I had a look on your MySpace page and went through your new, to be released track list. Some interesting titles in there... Can you tell us something about the new material? 'Darkroom Friendship' sounds like a promising track... while 'Black Dogs of Mexico' sounds intriguing... 'I don't like you' is one I'm looking forward to read the lyrics... and 'Kiss the girls and make them die' made me smile...*

"With the new album we tried to give a more... Pop attitude to our work. More relaxing but not less intense. Pop gives you the chance to reach more people, to gather more consents but at the same time it gives you more freedom, you can easily spread your infections around. I never believed in the elite, music is made to be listened not be used for personal failed masturbation. We believe in quality.

*How is your new work different from past releases (the most recent releases)? New sounds, samples or instruments? You told me something about trumpets... Any special guest, maybe? Can you describe each track, please?*

"Each track? Mmmm... it's hard work. The second CD will contain detailed comments about each song. As mentioned before we tried to construct easy and intense songs, you can easily remember each song after the first listening. No sample, no fakes, just real music, real instruments. The new album has been enriched by strings, trumpet, special guests etc. the front cover has been painted by a great American artist Chris Askew, the graphics have been made by Paolo Sollner from KLIMT 1918, beside being a brilliant drummer he's also great professional artwork maker; the pics have been shot by Miss Banana Tisato the official photographer of the Suicide girls, while the other band photos have been taken by Angst in Wald, already at work with Cinema Strange, Sopor Aeternus and other many famous artists. Probably we'll include some clips, interviews etc... we'll see..."

*What is it like to be a... "Gigolo"? You know you're liked and wanted. How do you respond to that? Are you a tease?*

"You think so?? Ahaha, sounds good. I sold myself for a period of my life just to live better, to have more cash to spend, you know the situations. But generally we live in prostitution, to live is prostitution, work is prostitution, art is prostitution, we just pay more attention about the way we practise it."

*What does, in your opinion, make Spiritual Front what it is? What gives its uniqueness? Musically/technically speaking only, this time.*

"You can do unique things just if you put yourself completely in the thing you are doing. That is the uniqueness. You may fail, you may win, it doesn't matter. Better fail being yourself than win living in the shadow. I put myself in the music I'm doing, I don't care if I'm exposing myself to the others, I need to do it. People would understand if I'm telling a lie. In case you want to be lying and to be yourself at the same time, lying demands truth."

*What other collaborations you have, besides ORE? I heard a track with PASSIONE NERA... What do you think about Damiano Mercuri's music? I know you also collaborated with him on a track...*

"I love to collaborate with the artist I like, for sure. PASSIONE NERA is a cool young band, it has been an interesting stimulation to work with them, I love ORE too, we are very close friends, we live far from each



other but we have a sort of a constant spiritual and carnal relation. I'm meeting Damiano rarely, I think he grew a lot considering his last works, he's a professional musician and a nice guy, hope he'll do more than NeoFolk in the future."

*What can you tell me about the each of the following bands: Arcana, Ice Ages, Ataraxia, ORE, ISN, Cascadeur? All these bands were invited here to play this year.*

"ORE are my favourite, I like the obscure and oppressive sound of ISN, ARCANIA are great too, I love their records. I never had the chance to meet ATARAXIA, we are both Italians but I never met them, musically is not my style, I'm not a big fan of those sounds, but they are a good band, they created something unique. Regarding CASCADEUR and ICE AGES, I'm sorry I never heard their music."

*What other bands do you like from this scene? NOVALIS DEUX released an interesting new album, LUX INTERNA a great anthology...*

"Both these bands are brilliant, we played with NOVALIS DEUX, they are fantastic guys. I never met LUX INTERNA personally but I love his songs. I like PASSIONE NERA too, it's a band from

Roma, a very cool Folk combo!"

*What other cover versions do you intend to do? The SOL INVICTUS one was very dark...*

"It has been a sort of musical rape... I didn't want to do the classic cover version, I wanted to ruin a song, and I did it well... maybe Tony freaked out when he listened to it, but I love SOL INVICTUS. Other covers???? Generally I don't like to do covers, sometime it happens, and we'll do it for the next vinyl, but usually I prefer to play my stuff."

*How is life at Trisol? Are you getting along alright with Alex?*

"Seems so, 'til now it works, we'll see for the future..."

*How is life in Roma? Is the city treating you well?*

"Rome is a city full of contrasts, it's the real eternal city, there are thousands of years of history in it, traditions, beauty, but it's slowly fading away, pure Romans are few, it's becoming a multicultural city... but in a negative way, chaos and not integration, modern in a bad way, it still lives the contrast between the ancient roots and the forced modernity. I'm seeing my city changing and collapsing, I'm feeling Roman less and less everyday, I'm watching my culture disappear."

*What do you do when you're not preoccupied with music? What's an ordinary day like for Simone? Have you a family, children, a job?*

"No family, no job. I play music, I'm studying acting, and I do a lot of bad things I can't tell you... ahahaha!"

*What kind of music you listen to these days? Do you have heroes?*

"Never trust heroes! Music? Mmmmm I listen to many types of stuff from Power Industrial 'til pure Teen Pop. Never force your ears to listen to one type of music. We have to expand our knowledge, always ready to receive everything. Everything that has interesting things... Except Hip Hop!"

*Are you into all the global social or awareness trends? Are you green? Do you recycle? Do you advocate anything?*

"I'm as green as possible. I mainly recycle disappointments."

*What is worth believing in?*

"Actually I can say 'yourself'. It's the only thing we are sure we can handle. God, love, politics, nation etc etc, are always uncertain and you can easily change your opinion about them, so consider this!"

*Anything to pass onto the fans that will come and see you perform in December?*

"Love me and support me, I'll do the same."

*Thanks Simone. Why Hellvis and why Suicidal Pop?*

"Kill yourself without thinking about it...and laugh at it!"

November, 2008

When it comes to reviews, I have never been supportive of the objective approach! It is a cheap compromise that should only be done by the specialised press that subsists only by these means... it's all related to advertising rate conditionings, to the promotion of CD's, the usage of tracks on diverse compilations, partnerships, exchanges, distribution... an entire mercantile engine. That is why I have always tried to write in a subjective manner what I think of an album, even if some will end up entirely unhappy with my opinion. Honesty is more important at times than the polite review that writes a lot but says nothing. I appreciate everybody who tries to do something, to compose something that they like, even if at times the result is deplorable. Thus, my evaluation scale does not start from 0 or 1 but from 0.7 (the poorest) and goes towards 1, the truly remarkable ones being those who score above 0.90. You will find within the following pages a block of reviews made throughout 2008 about the most interesting albums I have received, releases that could be of some interest to you. A larger number of reviews can be found on the Kogaionon website, the printed mag presenting the ones I have considered to have something to say. Enjoy...

**ABIGAIL WILLIAMS** (U.S.)  
"In A Shadow Of A Thousand  
Suns" CD'08

(CANDLELIGHT)

Interesting, these Americans! With very pale accents on Core, the youngsters make their debut in an irreproachable manner, the Melodic Black Metal's played reminding me of the old LIMBONIC ART. The piano is quite atmospheric as well, filling the sound and making a personal link, to me, with the second EMPEROR album, with a few things from the early ARCTURUS as well, and as for the rest, aggressiveness and rapidity. An intelligent project, even if its not original, what the Americans present us with adds up with 10 pretty atmospheric tracks, very technical, at times brutal and full of bombastic melody. I can't help it notice though that it is only an album of the current trends.

Rating: 0.84/1

**AGALLOCH** (US)

"The Demonstration Archive  
1996-1998" CD 08

(LICHT VON DAMMERUNG)

It was about time for a CD like this one. The history of this excellent band is not known to many, the interest for AGALLOCH starting once with the inspired "The Mantle". Their first recordings didn't manage to be summed up in an actual album, but in poorly promoted limited edition MCD's or EP's. This particular CD represents a sum of tracks taken from their 1997 demo, followed by the "Of Stone, Wind, and Pillor" EP and by the 1998 promo. And so, we have 8 tracks from the bands debut, some of them being more focused on a very atmospheric

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and rhythmic Pagan Black Metal. I was quite happy about this release as AGALLOCH

is a band that is remarkable for this musical area and the evolution of their sound shocks from one album to another, but at the same time, it is good to immortalise their starting point. The booklet is simple, with a lot of technical details, all wrapped up in a sombre, even Dark presentation. Therefore, you now have the opportunity of purchasing a CD that gathers the best tracks dating from the beginnings of AGALLOCH.

Rating: 0.92/1

**AGALLOCH** (US)

"The White EP" CD 08

(VENDLUS)

More experimental as ever, the Americans are tackling on this EP a style less used by Metal bands, meaning Dark Folk and Ambient. It's obvious that on every AGALLOCH album there are to be found experimental sequences within Metal, however, in this case, there are fewer aggressive harmonies, the voice being extremely calm and quiet. The 7 tracks present to us a completely different side of AGALLOCH, less accessible to the fans with more extreme tastes. The musicality it's at its best, the Dark note takes more meditative shapes, the sound seems colder and more atypical, we have a lot of acoustic guitar, accordion, piano, synth, percussion, harp and Peruvian horns... everything had a different form, different content, different dimension. Too bad that we are getting too few minutes of actual music, however, even so, the EP is avant-garde and full of savour!

Rating: 1/1

**ALBIREON** (ITA)

"I Passi di Liu" CD'08

(PALACE OF WORMS)

Quite tangled up Davide Borghi's project! Started ten years ago, it seems it managed to get some notoriety in Italy through the release of a few underground materials. With a film like music, melodic soundtrack, based on guitar, keyboard, flute and piano, Davide's team presents to us a few interesting tracks that oscillate between Dark, NeoFolk and Ambient, with an accent on the theatrical dimension, a bit difficult to describe in words. I understood that the album was released in a limited version as well, 100 copies that also include a DVD, addressed to all those who want to get a deeper insight into the ALBIREON concept. The Dark note is at times balanced by the aroma of some remarkable ballades, while Davide's interesting voice seems to gravitate around an exclusivist, elitist sound. Quite difficult to understand this project, with a less than commercial message and an original approach... and so, for those interested in strange stuff, ALBIREON could be an inspired choice. Rating: 0.82/1

**ALEX TIUNIAEV** (RUS)

"I Knew Her" CD'08

(COLDSRING)

One single track, 40 minutes of NeoClassical Orchestral in an original manner, with a lot of symphonic but also melancholic transitions, multiple choirs, monumental passages, a long journey into another world, both intriguing and captivating! Quite interesting this project

owned by the Moscow based artist, even if at times the accords seem repetitive! 0.90/1

**ANATHEMA** (UK)

"The Silent Enigma" CD '08

(special edition)

(PEACEVILLE)

Since it's now trendy to release a special edition, why not one from ANATHEMA as well! Especially since we are referring to the first album, the one without Darren White's voice initially released during the summer of 1995. Some might consider it to be the best, most emblematic ANATHEMA album. Vincent took the vocal parts seriously as well and it seems that a lot of people were captivated by the new orientation. And so, a new re-mastering of this material, together with a bonus DVD which contains the legendary 1996 Krakovia concert, plus the most renowned promotional videos, for example "Mine Is Yours", "The Silent Enigma", "Hope" or "Sweet Tears". I see no reason for this release not to be a major success! Rating: 0.95/1

**ANATHEMA** (UK)

"Hindsight" CD'08

(KSCOPE/SNAPPER)

Fans have been waiting for something new, that's for sure!!!! Well, now it came, not explicitly something new, but it can hydrate the ones striving for ANATHEMA. Along Dave Wesling's cello, the British present a half acoustic material, with special tracks, mostly appreciated by everyone, more atmospherically and psychedelically processed than on the original albums, with a shaded Metal dimension

and with the major accent on the female voice, alongside a better arranged and harmonized orchestral dimension. "Flying" seems to be the best track on this material, despite the fact that there are more enjoyable and popular sequences such as: "One Last Goodbye", "Are You There", "Angelica" or "A Natural Disaster". It is a perfect album for the ones adoring "A Moment In Time" DVD. The new track "Unchained" doesn't seem to satisfy the fans' expectations, but it might become a reference one, never know! This is a beautiful album, yet there's nothing interesting besides the mood it creates! anathema.ws  
Rating: 0.90/1

**ANDRAS** (GER)

"Iron Way" CD'08

(EINHEIT)

One of the most long-lasting East German Epic Pagan Metal band has released album number six, by far the most inspired and successful release of their own. The voices remind me of the early IN THE WOODS... the one performed in Heathen Metal style, with normal imposing voices, a very brightly played keyboard, very rapid accords alternating with slow and atmospheric ones... When the voices are aggressive the sound turns dynamic, explosive even, with killer drum passages here and there. When the sequence is slow, a slightly melancholic aura is released, but the approach is martial, created by the prolonged guitar solos. This is a much elaborated material, various and saturated in Pagan, Black or Atmospheric Metal elements! It is, if you wish, a German reply to "Heart of The Ages", a reference album for the Heathen Pagan Black Metal scene!  
andras.de.vu  
Rating: 0.90/1

**ARCANA** (SWE)

"Raspail" CD'08

(KALINKALAND)

After four years of waiting, ARCANA now release their first album with the German label, their seventh though if I'm not counting the MCD's. Rather lyrical and saturated in

Atmospheric - Ambient sequences, "Raspail" transcends you towards another realm, unknown, purely imaginative, full of melancholic romanticism - overwhelming and depressing from time to time, with all kinds of percussion's, multiple choirs, soul uplifting female voices, mighty male ones, plus a superb acoustic guitar heard now and then ("Out Of The Grey Ashes"), a complete orchestra... there seem to be tens of instruments... hundreds even... sorry if I'm bringing DEAD CAN DANCE in the comparison again, but the sound resembles theirs strikingly ... Peter's voice is mature and has a unique beauty, penetrating everything around, while the arsenal of sonorous elements is much, much more diverse than it ever has been before (Mattias's implication is clearly felt). Obviously, this is the most complex album in their history, yet not the most expressive one. On certain sequences ARCANA's own scents are pale and fade, so that you need to be very careful to spot the whispers too. If you listen to it only once, these parts become fade... yet, if listening to the album alone, in solitude, in a room with good acoustics, or in you're headphones, on a pretty high volume, you'll certainly turn fascinated by RASPAIL! I love this album! And "Lost In Time" is sublime, full of atmospheric nobleness! "Invisible Motions" is dynamic too, while "Parisal" is full of Oriental cultures, tribal even. The ten tracks are somehow transient to me, but on the other hand, I realize that if their number would have been 20, I would have sensed the same... because I cannot keep track of the time while I'm listening to this album. The booklet potentates the dreamy universe, and the imagery perfectly resonates with ARCANA. A truly beautiful CD, even though some of you might have been waiting for this album to be more imposing. No, the Swedes continue on transmitting their present state of mind and soul on every one of their albums, and their current mood, is apparently more fragile and

introverted... magnificent though! Melancholic, Medieval, Modern Classical, Ambient, Acoustic... refined... it all means.

erebusodora.net/arcanas

Rating: 1/1

**ARDITI** (SWE)

"Omne Ensis Impera" CD'08

(EQUILIBRIO)

More rigid than PUISSANCE and drier than TRIARII, ARDITI keeps alive a remarkable Martial Industrial Neo Classical line! With Kamrat's NORDVARGR (MZ.412, TOROIDH) contribution, who also collaborates on certain tracks, ARDITI presents an elegant digi-pack, a music full of dramatic touches, with an Epic atmosphere, imposingly somber and cold, saturated in diverse effects, both warrior and classic choirs, intonations and discrete declaims all in an oppressive background, but everything within a unique Dark note. Maybe repetitive and monotonous for a connoisseur, the new ARDITI album seems to be the most complete and inspired one, and I congratulate H. Moller and M. Bjorkman for this little jewel! PUISSANCE and ALGAIION are special bands too, also hosting the participation of the two. I also want to add that ARDITI composed some tracks for the last two MARDUK albums too.  
arditi.tk  
Rating: 0.92/1

**ARKAN** (FRA)

"Hilal" CD'08

(SEASON OF MIST)

Rather Algerians than French, these young musicians made their debut at Season Of Mist, with an extremely beautiful Oriental Death Metal album, standing proof to the fact that ORPHANED LAND aren't the only talented band using this approach. More aggressive than Kobi's voice, with clear sequences of violent Death Metal like NILE or MELECHESH, but also involving traditional interludes, very spicy and exotic, where the female voice and the darabuka's are mighty, the ARKAN sound is both melodic and explosive,

generating an authentic sample of quality music. I cannot get too critic with this album, because it really sounds good... maybe there would be something to say about the brutal change-over from harsh fragments to atmospheric ones. Otherwise, a remarkable album!  
www.arkan.fr  
Rating: 0.94/1

**ARKANE** (GRE)

"Enraptured Serene Mesmerism" CD'08

(SEDUCTION)

I get the greatest satisfaction when I receive an album directly from the ones composing the music. That's what happened with ARKANE, as I've received the CD the same evening when ARCANA held their Brasov concert, when I also met Arkanum X, along George/AD OMBRA. Clearly, if you know and can enjoy the excellent AD OMBRA project, you'll certainly like ARKANE too. The one that performed in FIENDISH NYMPH or DAEMONIA NYMPHE now created a new Dark Symphonic Neo-Classical project, one of rapturous beauty! With vertiginous and hallucinating female voices, and with a bombastic keyboard, ARKANE slowly takes us within the mystery of this Greek concept, not necessarily in an original manner, but most definitely with an incredible expressiveness. Reminding me of early ARCANA, with pale ELEN or DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS influences, ARKANE continues this ambient Dark path in an inspired way! The fact that the sopranos are highly used hides the slight repetition of the tracks' structure, which would be monotonous as hell without these mermaid-like voices. Yet, it doesn't mean that the sound is a simplistic one... on the contrary! The sensation is that we are dealing with a complete orchestra filling the atmosphere in a bombastic way, but, at the same time, mysterious... A good album, appropriate for labels like Projekt or Cold Meat Industry!  
myspace.com/xarkanex  
Rating: 0.90/1

79



**ARKONA (RUS)**  
"Ot Serdca K Nebu" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

I first listened to the album last year when I went to their concert in Iasi, same place where I bought their digipack! The issue released by Napalm presents two extra tracks, both instrumental ones ("Prologue" and "Epilogue"), plus the 12 tracks officially released last year. I saw them live, listened to their music continuously for some months, so what could be there more to say: ARKONA is one of the most representative Slavic Pagan Metal bands and I grant my respects for their activity! Maria's voice is quite explosive and full of energy, sometimes brightly entwining with the throaty one, while the guitars are saturated in riffs, Black Metal ones even, yet on the whole everything consisting in melodious harmonies, even though there are some rhythm changeovers that scratch my ears... Otherwise, beautiful traditional folk instruments, irreproachable traditional rhythms, two tracks that could easily turn into ballads, and heart warming riffs... It's the best album in the Russians' history, even though I cannot say it's perfect. Those changeovers from atmospheric, lent passages towards violent, ultra-rapid ones frame a far too brutal disruption for such a well conceived album. I am sure this contract with the Austrian label will bring them all the needed financial support for creating a masterpiece album that I am estimating will come to light shortly. "From The Heart To The Sky" is an elegant material, that shouldn't lack from your collection, because, even if it doesn't seem to be complete, certainly is representative for "Mother Russia-Mother Nature" current, so progressive and familiar in Lenin's country. I find this contract to be an inspired decision, and I am convinced there's no place for regrets for either one of the parts involved!

arkona-russia.com  
Rating: 0.93/1



**ARTAS (AUT)**  
"The Healing" CD 08  
(NAPALM)

I understood nothing from this Modern Metal! A lot of Power, a lot of aggressiveness, is it Thrash, is it Death, or are these covers sang in the bands own version... I don't know! Probably a band that would suit well to play as an opening act for METALLICA! I thought it to be a funny enough band that could possibly entertain a mass of people while performing live. As a studio audition, did not manage to surprise me or to attract me with anything. Rating: 0.76/1

**ASMEGIN (NOR)**  
"Arv" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

I remember that some 8-9 years ago Marius Olaussen was releasing at his own label, Valgalder Records, a very interesting demo, Viking Metal style. I haven't heard anything else about the label or about the band called ASMEGIN, excepting the album they have released 5 years ago, called "Hin Vordende Sod & So". I now learn that there were a lot of line-up changes within the band, and so, in a new formula, the four musicians released a brand new album, a lot more Folk, with visible traditional influences, plenty of violin, keyboards but also a lot of Metal, structured on throaty or screamed voices, interrupted by passages with normal vocals, warrior-like, singular female voices, atypical rhythms, chaotic guitars, drums that hold no rhythm.... A pretty confused and tangled up Folk Progressive Extreme Metal. Does not sound bad but there wasn't much I understood or got out from it. Rating: 0.80/1

**ATROCITY (GER)**  
"Werk 80 II" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

The legendary German band now releases the second part of their "Werk" concept, now based on , 80's music, meaning cover-versions of Pop, Alternative and Rock. We can get a glimpse on Depeche Mode or Alphaville harmonies played in a Metal version, with extreme guitar

riffs, screamed vocal lines, female voices on the background, abundant keyboard and rhythmic drums. The tracks sound good, yet it all might sound strange for those full of 80's nostalgia. I am not an admirer of the idea of processing this sort of music into a Metal version, but I am sure that ATROCITY is going to be successful while playing them live, especially as the dynamic of the tracks is remarkable. I enjoy the Artmania idea of bringing them this summer to Sibiu, as I am certain that ATROCITY will be a success, especially for those liking a rhythmic and danceable music... Yes, a danceable music, because that's the tracks' style... In what concerns inspiration, if I am to look at the album from the Metal point of view it equals 0. When it comes to the approach, it might turn into a marketing idea worth paying attention to... Yet, I long for "Calling The Rain" and not for a Metal "Forever Young" which is somewhat uncomfortable to my ears.

Maybe different, at Sibiu?  
atocity.de  
Rating: 0.80/1

**AVERSE SEFIRA (US)**  
"Advent Parallax" CD'08  
(CANDLELIGHT)

Well, these Americans have released their fourth album! Tireless within this scene for over 10 years, AVERSESEFIRA still presents an aggressive Black Metal, with lots of Death elements, but without various modern influences. It solely consists of brutality, evil voices and hellish drums. I have no negative remarks for this album, in what concerns technique and interpretation. It's just that I cannot uncover anything special at all, nothing new, nothing to attract me particularly... just Black Metal in its Northern version, linear from time to time, weary even. Luckily, the length isn't considerable, and so the 8 tracks managed to successfully wake me up in the morning, leaving me all refreshed. [aversesefira.com](http://aversesefira.com)  
Rating: 0.78/1

**AZURE EMOTE (US)**  
"Chronicles Of An Aging Mammal" CD'08  
(EPIDEMIE)

The music of these Americans sounds like the name of the album... In fact, everything revolves around Mike Hrubovcak, the one activating in projects like MONSTROSITY, DIVINE RAPTURE or VILE. Avantgarde Death Metal is the style we're dealing with, along many melodic sequences, yet saturated in unfamiliar combinations of Experimental, Industrial, Noise or Electronic. We find hints of ULVER, ARCTURUS, STRAPPING YOUNG LAD, and RED HARVEST, put together in an odd way, especially as Laurie Ann Haus is a guest as well, known from her activity within RAIN FELL WITHIN, TODESBONDEN or AUTUMN TEARS. I am not quite certain what is the band aiming for with this particular release, as at one stage everything seems to sound like a chaotic blend of styles, each one of them going about its own way... Hard audition, difficult to assimilate this intricate sound. Yet, it is an original one... but even so, it's not enough to be considered a remarkable album. [azureemote.com](http://azureemote.com)  
Rating: 0.80/1

**BATTLELORE (FIN)**  
"The Last Alliance" CD '08  
(NAPALM)

Not many bands had the luck that these Finnish had, in less than eight years have released 5 albums working with a professional label and benefited having high standard promotion, all this despite major line-up changes. They now declare themselves to be the promoters of Epic Fantasy Metal, but there is a huge difference between what they started with and where they are today. I could say that we are talking about an atmospheric Gothic Doom Death Metal, in the style of the first two albums of THEATRY OF TRAGEDY, with some influences from the successful NIGHTWIS but that is pretty much it. The album doesn't sound bad at all, the contrast

between the throaty male voice and the fragile female one is well placed in value, the keyboard is everywhere, and the guitars shape an Epic Melodic universe, while the drums are engaged into breaking the rhythm. There is nothing that would sound bad, but there is nothing that would emphasize this album either. The most bombastic track seems to be the first one, "Third Immortal", which will stick into your head after listening to it only once. An album well worked, not very complicated but totally devoid of originality. Rating: 0.88/1

**BIONIC ANGEL (GER/US)**  
"Digital Violence" CD'08  
(SCHWARZDORN)

Well, Gothic Rock has a new name associated with it, one that already appeared on certain compilations, causing some stir. The Dark note is remarkable, plus there is a well conceived Electro structure, and so the six musicians present a captivating but not original approach, as there is a resemblance to be sensed with THE KOVENANT and XANDRIA, also referencing SOULFLY or HIM, with voices that are both aggressive and normal, with super-electrifying rhythms and slow ballad harmonies. The tracks are diverse but the album doesn't seem a conceptual one, rather one based on a sum of diverse influences processed and expressed, without defining an authentic style. It is a debut, so I'll get over the details and just state that the sound is crystal clear and the performance is a pretty good one. I am curious to get to listen to their second album! [bionicangel.com](http://bionicangel.com)  
Rating: 0.86/1

**BLINDEAD (POL)**  
"Autoscapia: Murder In Phazes" CD 08  
(FORESHADOW)

If you were to judge after how the first track starts, you would think that the entire album is out of this world: a voice that starts out calm and explodes throatily after a few harmonies, oppressive rhythms, from the slow limit up to the aggressive bar, all in a sombre atmosphere,

sinister and full of mystery. This is pretty much BLINDEAD'S start. As you go further into the profundity of the album you discover repetitive elements, some monotonous, others that go by unnoticed. It is obvious though that ISIS, NEUROSIS or CULT OF LUNA are sources of inspiration and the music that the Polish band is playing is elegant, a different kind of Post Metal, slow but at the same time brutal, a music that leaves no space to hope, or to the light, it is more like it that the shadows would go by as homely characters within this type of music. A band with talent, but one that should detach itself from the usual patterns and to insist a bit more on originality, as it seems it has the aptitudes to do it. Rating: 0.90/1

**BLOODBATH (SWE)**  
"The Wacken Carnage" DVD'08  
(PEACEVILLE)

Seeing this DVD and listening to the included CD, I realized mi-am that I've done a bad choice deciding not to see the Swedes live in 2005, at Wacken! It's one of the few Death Metal DVDs that I'll proudly keep in my collection! It's incredible what energy these tracks arouse! Plus the incredible, irreproachable execution! There have been only great talents going on stage: Mike and Axe from OPETH, Jonas and Anders from KATATONIA and the legendary producer Dan Swanof! Just as Mike has said during the concert, BLOODBATH has started as a punch project and became an elite Death Metal band! With one EP and two albums released, BLOODBATH doesn't often go on stage, therefore this DVD is a rare opportunity that every listener should relish, no matter if he's an ENTOMBED fan or an OBITUARY admirer! And what a way for the audience to react to Mike's messages! It is an exemplary concert for every Death Metal fan, one that could spark debates about what-not! The sound is clear, with a modest acoustic but you cannot expect more from an outdoor concert, as the instruments sound pretty expressive and Akerfeldt's

diabolical voice dominates everything! Exceptional!  
www.bloodbath.biz  
Rating: 1/1

**BLOODBATH (SWE)**  
“The Fathomless Mastery” CD’08  
(PEACEVILLE)  
After the maximum rating given to the DVD made by them not long ago, it is very easy to assume what I have to say about the new material. At least, it should have been this way. Death Metal in the superlative, a mixture of Swedish and American Death, explosive, brutal, sick and diabolical! In a new power formula Blackheim, Renske, Akerfeldt, Axe and Sodomizer present us with 11 devastating tracks, rapid ones, with Mikes’ killer voice and incredible guitar riffs! I expected much more complexity to be found in structure of the tracks, but it seems that the five preferred a more simplistic approach, and probably the most effective one as well. It doesn’t seem to be more technical than the first album; I’d say it’s more forceful in delivery, but pretty much just that. Frankly, I was expecting much more! The digipack is a pretty special one; and so, a devastating album with a perfect imagery! Rating: 0.88/1

**BLODTRU (DEN)**  
“The Death Of Spirit” CD’08  
(DGF)  
Trua’s solo project reminds me of the beginnings of BURZUM or of some of the MYRKGRAV’s tracks, everything being surrounded by a violent, but well executed Dark Black Metal aroma. There are no interesting approaches, no new ideas, but it is remarkably well carried out, something that pleasantly surprised me. Lets see what is he able to do on the next albums, as excepting the virtuosity, a fresh atmosphere and rapidity, I haven’t discovered anything else that would stick into mind. Rating: 0.88/1

**CHANDEEN (GER)**  
“Teenage Poetry” CD’08  
(KALINKALAND)  
This release is a great surprise. I’ve heard about this trio for

some years now, but I never got the chance to listen to them before. As Harald Lowy is both a member of the band and the boss of Kalinkaland label, I’ve been pretty reticent in what concerns the quality of CHANDEEN’s music. Yet, after listening to these tracks, I can state with all my heart that “Teenage Poetry” is an eloquent sample of Ethereal Wave, similar to the ones of bands promoted by Projekt Records. The female voice has a superb fragility of expression, and the musical sequences are saturated in atmosphere and dreamy soundscapes, as everything oscillates somewhere between LYCIA and Love Spirals... I cannot say it is a Dark album, yet it certainly isn’t a very optimistic one either, but rather a very intelligently created and executed album, dignifying the melancholic and elegant aura of a fully original Wave Gothic. chandeen.com  
Rating: 0.88/1

**COLOSSEUM (FIN)**  
“Chapter 1: Delirium” CD’08  
(FIREBOX)  
Certainly, living in Finland means experiencing deep depression from time to time, and also to feel the imperious desire of total isolation... those beautiful views, the climate, everything seems to resonate with the mood of some profound darkers, alike Juhani Palomaki. I know him for many years and his activity in YEARNING brought five impressive albums, released at Holy Records, in France. The Atmospheric Gothic Doom Metal approach didn’t satisfy Juhani, and so he decided to create another musical project, more aggressive and more solemn than YEARNING. That’s the story behind the birth this quartet, one following the Funeral Doom Metal path, to which it adds Ambient and Orchestral valences and releases a splendidly beautiful album. The guitars remind me of early DECORYAH, the keyboard is darkly present all along, the voice is throaty and prolonged, saturated in despair and contempt towards the daily life... We are dealing with an

album of isolation, solitude, bleakness... within or around us. The six tracks are finely executed, so we have over an hour of intensively emotional music, not necessarily original too. Finnish Slow Doom Metal fans cannot deprive themselves from the joy of listening to this material, especially as it is the creation of a veteran of the Metal scene. It is a complex and complete album!  
colosseumdoom.com  
Rating: 0.90/1

**CORVUS CORAX (GER)**  
“Cantus Buranus II” CD’08  
(PICA MUSIC)  
The medieval music has been rediscovered in Europe by this German band! This is pretty much it, and any sort of comparison with other bands could be a blasphemy, even if some would play equally well. The second part of this orchestral project is just as elaborated as the first one, to say the least: symphonic orchestra, choirs, vocal soloists, bagpipes, percussions, tenors and explosive rhythms, everything sounds irreproachable! Still, something that I found to be left on second place is the Epic dimension, this being shadowed by the very pronounced symphonic elements that are to be found throughout the entire length of the album. The “De Mundi Statu” track is exceptional, same with “In Orbeum Universum”! I would really want to see these talented musicians in a concert, as the band has a totally different perception while performing live! Rating: 0.98/1

**DAGORLAD (BEL)**  
“Herald Of Doom” CD’08  
(SHIVER)  
This very duet releases their third album, and it seems the most complex so far, but also calm, among them all. Focused on an elaborated Black Metal, mixed with Progressive and Fantasy Metal elements, sounding alike a spatial Soundtrack, DAGORLAD essays to open us a door toward a distinct dimension, not necessarily an artistic one, but rather atypical. The keyboard is intensely and brightly used,

often reminding me of BAL-SAGOTH, while the voices are weary pale and the guitars sound fine. In conclusion, the instrumental part is well done, but not the vocal one too. The new album pays more attention to details and is more elegant, but it lacks the necessary force and dynamic in order to be considered a remarkable material.  
skynet.be/dagorlad  
Rating: 0.80/1

**DAKRYA (GRE)**  
“Monument” CD’08  
(279 PRODUCTIONS)  
The six Greeks have decided to impose themselves in a scene full of bands similar in style, each giving the feeling of faded originality. Very atmospheric, based on influences of bands like TRISTANIA, SIRENIA or THE SINS OF THY BELOVED and DAKRYA, it mixes Gothic with Black in a manner that is less than original, but still in an interesting way, basing its driver on the sum of voices, a normal sounding female one, a second one based on an aggressive male growl and a soprano which develops a remarkable neoclassical note. I think Thomais’s voice is the most charming element of the whole DAKRYA concept, the modulations of his voice dominating the whole sound. The keyboard sounds sort of bombastic and I must say, I quite like it, however the piano interludes could’ve been used more in resonance with the soprano; the guitars present to us a rage of sounds, from Progressive riffs and romantic solos to Metal brutalities. The drums seem modest and without personality, perhaps the mix was designed this way, putting more emphasis on the synth! Not a bad album, in any case! I don’t find the aggressive vocal interludes that break the fragility the two female voices are trying to build at all inspired. I understand that they went for a concept based on contrasts but this eventually lead to a build up of sometimes inspired ideas, other times simply forced onto the staves. Let’s not be too critical though as we are talking

of a debut album, and one that is very elegant, neat, a CD with a flawless recording and mixing, a professional looking booklet and musicality galore! Exclusively for fans of Gothic Metal! Rating: 0.87/1

**DANTALION (ESP)**  
“Call Of The Broken Souls” CD’08  
(DET GERMANESKE FOLKET)  
True Black Metal! Starting with SHINING all the way to FORGOTTEN TOMB, DANTALION presents Metal all the way, unoriginal, but very well executed. I have no reproach to make from this particular point of view. The negative part is that after two or three consecutive auditions, the album turns linear, and almost weary. And that’s not due to the execution manner, but to the lack of elements conferring diversity to the sound. Otherwise, an elegant and finely structured Galician Death Black Metal album.  
dantalionband.com  
Rating: 0.84/1

**DARK SPACE (SWI)**  
“Dark Space III” CD’08  
(AVANTGARDE)  
The third album of these mysterious Swedes follow even more clearly the Apocalyptic Black Metal line, very technical, yet extraordinary! More like Industrial Black Metal, referencing Doom through some incredible sequences, with a killing drum machine and desperate voices, together with guitars that torture any form of hope that you can still find within after listening to these sequences, DARKSPACE shows what distinguishing yourself from the army of similar bands means! Perhaps helped by the fact that Martin Ain (ex-CELTIC FROST) declared that DARKSPACE is the most promising Swiss band, the guys released a musical jewel, very ingenious in approach and apocalyptic in expression. Even though the sound and the voice are aggressive, the music has a well calculated balance, one that doesn’t scare or mind, but on the contrary, it determines one to listen to the album again.

And the more you listen to it, the more probable it becomes for you to discover new on that noisy background, new distinct elements, new passages and new remarkable sounds. Excellent!  
darkcyberspace.com  
Rating: 0.94/1

**DARKTHRONE (NOR)**  
“Dark Thrones and Black Flags” CD’08  
(PEACEVILLE)  
Good thing that these two have slowed down on that primitive and repetitive Black Metal! Since a few albums now, all they were doing was to count the year and the album. With this new release Fenriz and Nocturno Culto step into the more brutal side of Heavy Metal, with a lot of accents on the primitive Thrash that was played some 20 years ago, something like today’s AURA NOIR. The voices no longer seem as throaty, I’d say they’re more yelled, but the entire album seems to be recorded in a garage, or a barrel. The track that names the album seems somewhat more consistent, but nothing else. It must be mentioned that the booklet presents a few photographs of the two members and a few relatively interesting comments for that fans. Despite the cult band reputation, DARK THRONE are stagnating for years now from an artistic standpoint and all that they do today is based on their long gone glory days, the new albums being just another hope that something interesting could have been released... Hope dies last! Rating: 0.78/1

**DARKTHRONE (NOR)**  
“Frostland Tapes” CD’08  
(PEACEVILLE)  
This is indeed some fine work! It reminds me about TENHI’s Box Set formed from 3 CDs as well. Though, in this case we are dealing with a complete material for DARK THRONE fans. Four demos, plus the recording of one of the few concerts held in over 20 years of activity. Probably, the central element is “Goatlord”, 12 tracks that have never been officially released. The digipack looks very

professional, hosting lots of details (including the memoirs Fenriz wrote and some answers to specific questions), just right for your collection. I cannot quantify anything, there’s nothing for me to criticize or appreciate, as we are talking about a music recorded between 1988 and 1991. Just to state the fact that all these materials have been hosted under the same roof, a truly inspired box set.  
darkthrone.no  
Rating: 0.90/1

**DAWN & DUSK ENTWINED AND :GOLGATHA:**  
(FRA/GER)  
“Sang Graal” CD’08  
(COLD MEAT)  
A unique collaboration, a complex and diversified album between two remarkable bands! With a mighty and unique Neo Classical Folk Opera message, these bands develop a concept gravitating around Holy Graal, all done through Folk hymns, Dark Ambient fragments, Ritual elements, and by assembling together a sound played by various instruments: guitar, violin, flute, gong, piano, dulcimer, percussion, keyboard... and imposing voices, both male and female, some of them operatic, others recited, normal, almost simple intonations. This introspective music enhances at the same time an impeccable sinister aura and a feeling of admiration! Excellent digi-pack!  
coldmeat.se  
Rating: 0.92/1

**DEAD ROSE SYMPHONY (USA)**  
“Concertos For The Underworld” CD’08  
I am very pleased to be able to listen to unusual bands, original and interesting! Just like in this present case... it’s just that sometimes I find it impossible to describe them! Gothic, Horror, Dramatic, Theatrical, Operatic, Orchestral... something from everything and then some. This trio really got me into trouble! 15 tracks, more than an hour of twisted music, epic, atmospheric, and strange... whistles, yelling, different voices, grave pianos, mysterious guitars... it all gives

me the feeling of a soundtrack or a long theatre play. I enjoyed this journey into a universe that is not easily tangible and can not be assimilated unless if you give up everything during these sequences. A big surprise Dark Gothic coming from the continent of “all hopes”, do not ignore it!  
Rating: 0.89/1

**DEAD TO THIS WORLD (NOR)**  
“First Strike For Spiritual Renewance” CD’08  
(DARK ESSENCE)  
As it all started with Iscariah’s idea six years ago, I was expecting this new project to follow the same approach as the other bands he activated in did, meaning NECROPHAGIA and IMMORTAL. Well, Iscariah co-opted ex GORGOROTH drummer, Kvitrafn, and the two of them are now debuting at the Norwegian label. The musical style is one returning to the origins, to the mix of Speed, Thrash and Black Metal, very brutal and lacked in any modern influence. CELTIC FROST, KREATOR, SLAYER and many other bands of the ‘80’s contour the stylistic spectrum of DEAD TO THIS WORLD. I found nothing interesting within this album, except the perspective of it being followed by and catching the attention of the angriest and most unaltered by modernism Northern fans. I could also mention the guest musicians that were invited to contribute to this album, musicians belonging to bands like OLD FUNERAL, THE BATTALION or ATOMIZER. The album is a modest one in what concerns the conception, yet the execution is exemplary.  
myspace.com/deadtothisworld  
Rating: 0.78/1

**DEMENTIA AD VITAM (FRA)**  
“Spirit Of The Trees” CD’08  
(OCCULTUM)  
That’s an interesting album indeed, based on projects like DARGAARD, DARK SANCTUARY, ELEND, DVKE and ARCANA. We are dealing with an inspired mix of Dark Wave, Soundscapes, Ambient

and NeoClassical, in a captivating but at all original formula. With melancholic violins, fragile sopranos, abundant keyboard, timid but grave bass, whispered male voices, **DEMENTIA AD VITAM** shows that, after **DARK SANCTUARY** or **ELEND**, they could be the most important band in the French Dark Wave scene, along **ARTHESIA**. I've already listened to two tracks from the new material, which isn't complete yet, one of them having Richard Lederer as guest. There also is a cover-version to be found, so be ready to enjoy the new album too, as I hope it will be better promoted and with a mightier expressiveness than the debut was. The four youngsters succeed into framing through their accords an incredible romantic aura of a special beauty!  
dementiaadvitam.com  
Rating: 0.90/1

**DORNENREICH (AUT)**  
"In Luft Geritzt" CD'08  
(PROPHECY)

I understood Eviga until now, as he changed the sound from Black Metal to Dark Acoustic, but this album left me speechless. I didn't understand a bit out of it, despite the insistent violin (Inve) along the diverse guitar, voice and percussion. It is an inexpressive album, completely lacked in dynamics, coherence and distinctly contoured atmosphere, it rather sounds unplugged, like it is a fade, unshaped message. Maybe I wasn't in the right mood for it? Personally, I prefer listening to the previous stuff, as it seems more elaborated and hosts more feeling within. As with the 2008 album, there is solely disappointment.  
dornenreich.com  
Rating: 0.72/1

**EDENBRIDGE (AUT)**  
"My Earth Dream" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

Sabine Edelsbacher's voice is the driver of this Symphonic Metal band that has released in only eight years a good few bombastic albums, full of energy and atmosphere. The latest release has been recorded

along a Czech orchestra, especially for enhancing the symphonic dimension of the Power Metal sound. There are oriental influences too, also some exotic ones, a lot of rhythm and keyboard, voices on the background, super heavy guitars and a dynamic drums. Placed somewhere at the limit of **NIGHTWISH**, with the Light note mightier than the Dark one, **EDENBRIDGE** released an album that does not break any barriers, however, one that values the guitar solos, heard very clearly and interestingly communicating with Sabine's voice. Further, I can only spot tremendous effort and dedication, yet something is missing... the spark maybe...  
edenbridge.org  
Rating: 0.85/1

**ELEND (AUT/FRA)**  
"The Umbersun" CD'08  
(ORPHIKA)

This is the most complex and complete album in **ELEND**'s history! The most loved one by all **ELEND** fans, despite the unfriendly, intricate and hard to assimilate sound! A perfect album! Released in 1997 at **MUSIC FOR NATIONS**, the album was poorly promoted from qualitative point of view, despite the chosen label. Therefore, the collaboration was detrimental to all parts, including the listeners. Remastered super-professionally, in an elegant digi-pack and with an inspired and detailed artwork, the reissuing of this album now gathers "Overture", a track that has been conceived in 1997, but never released. This is a collector's item album, one that no words can describe or rate! The choir together with all Renaud's and Iskandar's instruments turn "The Umbersun" into the reference of a music that couldn't be touched by anyone else, not even imitated! Symphonic, Theatrical, Dramatic, Baroque, Gothic, Aggressive, Violent and also Melodic... an incredible music for completely nonconformist fans! An album not to miss from your collection, released in limited edition, one deserving all the prizes!

elend-music.org  
Rating: 1/1

**EMANCER (NOR)**  
"Twilight And Randomness"  
CD'08  
(NAGA)

Started years back, with an aggressive Death/Black Metal approach, after four pretty modest albums, the Norwegian trio now present their best release. Progressive Black Metal is interestingly entwined with Death and Thrash along with Avant-Garde elements, maybe futuristic ones too. Therefore, if you make a mentally mix of **OPETH**, **DIMMU**, **WINDIR** or **SATYRICON** even, add an older and ultra-fast Progressive touch, put the alternation of male voices and the keyboard saturation in the mix, and we can talk about **EMANCER**. Interesting album indeed!  
myspace.com/emancer  
Rating: 0.86/1

**ENTOMBED (SWE)**  
"Clandestine" CD'08  
(EARACHE)

The legendary Death Metal band presents the reissue of one of the best ever albums of the genre. That's a true collectors piece, one that should be a part of any extreme music admirer's collection! The material also has a bonus DVD, within which you can find the well known promos for "Left Hand Path", "Strangers A e o n s", "H o l l o w m a n", "Wolverine Blues" and "Night Of The Vampire", along with the recording of the 1992 London concert. Excellent journey back in time!  
entombed.org  
Rating: 0.96/1

**ERDENSTERN (GER)**  
"Into The Gold" CD'08

This is a story about an imaginary trip through some secluded lands! The description seemed proper for the music of this trio! During only three years, Andreas, Per and Eva-Maria have released 5 CDs with Atmospheric Ambient Medieval music, or better said Fantasy Music! It is a soundtrack, just perfect for movies or video games, but it does transcend you from the first accords,

sending you towards an exotic atmosphere. These musicians are very talented, quite inspired, but unfortunately they limit themselves into composing solely sonorities such as these. A complete breakage from the everyday life!  
erdenstern.de  
Rating: 0.87/1

**FLOODLAND (AUT)**  
"Nameless" CD'08  
(FLOOD)

These four Austrians are very serious when it comes to music. They have over ten years of activity and 3 albums released, and now **FLOODLAND** returns with a new Dark Rock material, better said a bombastic Goth one, cold, reminiscent of **SISTERS OF MERCY** or **FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM**. Quite dynamic and full of heavy guitars, with a very active bass, and keyboard parts saturated in atmospheric sequences and also Electronic elements, **FLOODLAND** now presents the best album in their history! I cannot say to have uncovered an evolution/major change in what concerns the structure of the tracks, perhaps only if we refer to interpretation. Colder than "Decay", yet more diverse and professional than "Ocean The Lost", **FLOODLAND** released an elegant material, with every single detail considered twice, and with a clean mixing. Listening to this album is a truly pleasant surprise!  
floodland.org  
Rating: 0.87/1

**FOLKEARTH**  
"Father Of Victory" CD '08  
(STYGIAN CRYPT)

Don't be surprised to find out that this band will soon release a new album, entitled "Fatherland"! Or that in the meantime they have released the acoustic version of "Songs Of Yore"! And another project titled **FOLKODIA**! Quite inspiring this Markus, no joke about it! This present release seems more whole, with an impeccable Epic aura, better structured and harmonised, generating 12 beautiful tracks! In my opinion, this seems to be the best **FOLKEARTH** material

and I am very curious to listen to the following ones as well! Is it Viking, Norse, Pagan or Folk, nobody knows anymore... I can only say that I can now recognise **FOLKEARTH** just by listening to a few harmonies, regardless of the track in question. Not to mention that 20 musicians from 7 countries have also made their mark on this release: Greece, Lithuania, Italy, England, France, USA or Wales. Loads of keyboards, Irish flutes, Celtic harps, acoustic guitars, accordion, soprano and violins... a truly pagan atmosphere! Rating: 0.92/1

**FOLKEARTH**  
"Drakkars In The Mist" CD '07  
(STYGIAN CRYPT)

Perhaps the most globalised project from the Folk Metal scene! This is their third album and I can say that the idea behind it is identical: Folk Norse Metal, with guests from numerous countries and different bands. For example, here we have 30 musicians from over 11 countries and different bands: **MORITURI**, **KOZIAK**, **THULR**, **DOL AMROTH**, **DEATH ARMY**, **VETTER**, **PAGAN REIGN**, **HORDAK**, **YGGDRASIL**, **NAE BLIS**, **THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK**, **MOONROT** and **PEORDH**. You can imagine that it is practically impossible to describe the concept behind this project. We have from aggressive Viking to acoustic Folk, with all sorts of voices, with traditional instruments but brutal riffs as well, controlled chaos, if you wish. I don't think it is the most inspired album as the variety of the tracks gives the sensation of a continuous copy/paste, and so, I personally prefer "A Northern Poem" or even "By The Sword Of My Father", even if the mixing of the precedents lacks in some respects.  
Rating: 0.82/1

**FOREFATHER (UK)**  
"Steadfast" CD'08  
(SEVEN KINGDOMS)

Within over 10 years of activity, Athelstan and Wulfstan have now come to the point of releasing their fifth chapter. The essential guideline for the two



was mixing the Epic Folk dimension with the traditional Black Metal. Some of the albums were fully inspired, while others were not so much. What I can say here is that the new material confused me. After listening to it twice, I had the impression that **FOREFATHER** enhanced the Heavy dimension, based on virtuosity. I am now listening to it for the fifth time, and I can assure you that "Steadfast" is a Pagan Epic Heavy Metal little jewel, composed by 11 distinct tracks oscillating between linear rapidity and bombastic Epic sequences, aroused by imposing martial choirs, plenty of melody and medieval atmosphere. It is not an outstanding album, but one that carried the **FOREFATHER** trademark - meaning it is a high quality product. More dynamic than "The Fighting Man", for example, or even "Ours is The Kingdoms", I can state that the English men follow the **MANOWAR** aura, and are now a Pagan Metal version of the well-known veteran band. [forefather.net](http://forefather.net)  
Rating: 0.90/1

**FUNERAL MOURNING (US)**  
"Drown In Solitude" CD'08  
(BLACK PLAGUE)

Just another Funeral Doom Metal project that, despite the keyboard arousing unfamiliar sounds for this musical approach, doesn't bring new things to the table. The voice is the same throaty and demonic one, the guitar solos and the rhythm of the drums are more than slow, while the keyboard tries to give direction to a monotonous and repetitive sound. Even if the band managed to frame the depressing dimension thought-out its accords, a slight boredom is to be sensed after more auditions. This is an album that follows the trends, average, bringing nothing interesting.  
Rating: 0.80/1

**FUNERAL THRONE (UK)**  
"Nihil Sine Diabolo" CD'08  
(SATANAS REX)

Well, Black Metal in its old version! I'm not sure if it's just Black... I can spot a lot of Thrash and Death or Ultra Speed Metal. I guess **AGGRESSOR**

would get jealous if they would listen to this music! In only nine tracks, the trio succeeds to empty the listener's mind of all modern, melody, Epic elements. Diabolical voices, noisy guitars, and explosive drums. Everything put together within a completely uncompromising note, quite suitable for early DESTRUCTION or CELTIC FROST admirers, because there is nothing original or new on this material. Yet, it does sound alright!

myspace.com/nfbm  
Rating: 0.84/1

**GORGOROTH (NOR)**  
"Black Mass Krakow 2004"  
DVD'04  
(METAL MIND)

This is one of the most controversial concerts in Black Metal history! In a predominantly Catholic country, the place of birth of the Pope and where the population follows without arguing the strict rituals imposed by religion, a Satanist band thought to have a gig in a period of time when nothing was happening. And what a show the Norwegians have put one! And I'm not solely referring to the shock produced to anyone present there by the Antichristian messages! But also to the impaled decapitated sheep, bloody as you can imagine, along with some crucified nudes; an imagery that could turn into a case study in sociology courses! Not to mention the conflicts started with the animal rights activists! It didn't even matter that those heads have been bought from a butcher's shop! What can I say... I wanted to see this concert, maybe partly due to the fact it has been highly debated!

Yes, they created an on-stage apocalyptic scene, demented, horror, and GORGOROTH sustained a special concert, in the same Black Metal manner that thrilled and enraptured the fans until that time! GORGOROTH found tremendous success after this show, as they now are one of the most representative Norwegian Black Metal bands. I won't remind you the quarrels and separations that occurred in the band during the last years,

because the DVD also refers to the concert held in February 1st 2004, back in the day when all the band members were together and fully productive. The DVD has two bonus tracks from a concert in Leipzig, held in the year of 2000, along with an animated menu, discography, an instigating photo gallery, and biography... A DVD that I consider 100% advisable to Black Metal admirers, especially as it has been released in only 5000 pieces!

gorgoroth.info

**HB (FIN)**  
"Frozen Inside" CD'08  
(BULLROSER)

Another NIGHTWISH clone! With a more innocent voice and less Symphonic than the legendary band (that now is an inspirational adrift), HB presents a very promising debut, with a both fragile and mighty female voice, who's inflections bring over the salt and pepper of the album. There are slow sequences too, ballads like, and also more rapid fragments, more Heavy, full of rhythm and atmosphere. The album doesn't sound bad, yet I couldn't spot any originality within it. It is just a different Epic Symphonic Metal, or Modern Metal, one that cannot displease the audience! I am sure HB sounds fine on live performances too! Still, it is only a debut, so we shouldn't discourage their intention to show us that they know how to play and to create pleasant atmosphere. But let's see when will originality come to light. I hope with the second album that will happen.

myspace.com/hbmetal  
Rating: 0.84/1

**HELHEIM (NOR)**  
"Kaoskult" CD'08  
(KARISMA)

Well, this Norwegian band has also made a major change in what concerns the sound, this after the less understandable transition with the album released two years ago and named "The Journeys And The Experiences Of Death". The five Vikings present an excellent material, incredibly harmonizing aggressive Black Metal with

Progressive elements, finely alternating the voices and the over-used guitars. The keyboard has an originality of its own (so Lindheim's return seems to be a smart move), trying to dominate a sound where guitar riffs prevail! It is both an aggressive album and a melodic one, exclusively sang in Norwegian, embodying the Norwegian Black Metal spirit, and despite the modern elements, it keeps its Pagan scent! Therefore, we can say that HELHEIM released an album that is the perfect picture of the new Norwegian Epic Black Metal scene, an authentic material, one that leaves no room for negative feedback! It is the most technical and complex album in HELHEIM's history, yet, I must admit, some influences from the producer Bjornar Nilsen (VULTURE INDUSTRIES) are to be sensed. It is also the first album where you can hear more voices, as the guests were Marius Lynghjem (CORVINE) and Royce (HellHikers). I appreciate that the unique atmosphere created 13 years ago on "Jormundgand" is still alive!

helheim.com  
Rating: 0.92/1

**HOLLENTON (AUT)**  
"Opus Magnum" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

Martin Schirenc is one of the most passionate supporters of the Metal scene within his lands, and PUNGENT STENCH is the band he is best known for. His VUZEM project was „flyrting" with the Austrian Black Metal Syndicate at the beginning of '90's, later taking the name of HOLLENTON and releasing in 1999 its debut album, very appreciated at the time. Two years later a new material came into light, this one though being followed by nothing but silence. There have been some shows done at the greatest European festivals, but that was it. Well, seven years later the four Austrians release a new album, the most Epic, Dark, heavy and bombastic of them all, with all sorts of influences, starting with the Atmospheric and Melodic ones to brutal and aggressive parts... yet, all along,

you can experience a fresh mixture of exotic/oriental/ethnic scents, classical music, symphonic too, operatic female voice, mighty male ones, imposing male choirs... an album full of dynamism and energy! I guess the sound must be tremendous on live performances! I am glad that I've been able to listen to a full set of original tracks, with a remarkable musicality structured on a Black Death Metal approach, saturated in Experimental elements. I do not know why, but listening to HOLLENTON made me think of another Austrian project, atypical for the scene, but one to be praised: KOROVAKILL... HOLLENTON shows us another side of the modern Dark Metal, one where the Epic dimension defines a bombastic, explosive, incendiary sound, keeping you activated all along the audition! The tracks are diverse, not having many repetitive elements, on the contrary, within each track you can uncover new scents, new inspired sequences, as everything sounds excellent... In fact there is no comparison to be done, everything sounds right on the spot, with HOLLENTON setting all the rules!

hollenthon.com  
Rating: 0.91/1

**ICE AGES (AUT)**  
"Buried Silence" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

The less known musical project in Richard Lederer's (PROTECTOR) activity, is now on its way to release album number three. Everybody is familiar with the Epic Fantasy Black Metal of SUMMONING, many know the Romantic Dark Wave approach from DIE VERBANNTEN KINDER EVAS, but very few have heard the other side of the artist, the abstract one, marked by an excellent debut album in 1997, followed, three years later, by an exceptional new material. "This Killing Emptiness" enchanted all the admirers of Industrial Dark Wave sonorities! I had to wait eight years in order to listen to a new ICE AGES album! Going the same path, yet

somehow slower and focused on the background effects, the new ICE AGES presents the same mix of normal, brutal and distorted voices, elegantly disposed on a fully melodic structure, saturated in icy and desolated atmosphere. Clearly, it's a continuance of the previous album, more technical though and with diluted Electro sequences, while the synth is now more dynamic and continuous. Naturally, Richard's universe is an abstract one, computerized, virtual, addressing to a future world and definitely not to the one we're living in. It is a journey towards a distinct dimension, via the track "Buried Silence" full of bombastic atmosphere and the incredible "Curse" track, both unveiling a nostalgia that I've never sensed in ICE AGES before. Additional energy is to be spotted on "Through The Mirror" too, while on "Regret", rhythmicity dominates a completely industrialized sound. A truly beautiful album! One that has to be listened using headphones, because otherwise the message turns paler, and the music might be perceived as repetitive and weary.

iceages.info  
Rating: 0.98/1

**INVICTUS (HUN)**  
"Imperium Paganum" CD'08  
(NO COLOURS)

An acoustic project, based on synth, theatrical and medieval echoes, with references from SUMMONING (without the vocal parts) or even of Lord of the Rings, in an East-European version. This Heathen Folk with Wagnerian influences does not impress but its audition is enjoyable. Nevertheless Sahsnote is quite skillful on handling the instruments, especially as he is the same with Bornholm, ASTAROTH's guitarist. A well done album, full of medieval influences and intelligently expressing the Epic dimension of the musical universe!

invictusband.com  
Rating: 0.88/1

**KAMPFAR (NOR)**  
"Heimgang" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

I know Dolk, the vocalist, since 15 years ago, when he was trying to introduce, next to a few other bands, the Heathen / Pagan / Black Metal Folk side into the Scandinavian Metal. He released about 2 MCDs and 2 very interesting albums that were well received by fans! Following these, the band broke up. After a significant break, Thomas and Dolk resume this project and along with Jon and II13 record a new album, "Kvass", launched in 2006. I didn't really find the album to be too inspired, although the Northern Folk echoes were easily recognizable. The four are now back with another album, one that is put together a lot better, more expressive, with a voice that is more powerful and resonant, with more melodic and even epic guitar solos, everything is more concise and better structured, only now proving that KAMPFAR is a respectable Black Metal band! I probably would have liked more diversity in their tracks, but at least I can enjoy the fact that I can listen to an album interpreted in an irreproachable manner, even if it has no other outstanding elements.

katra.fi  
Rating: 0.89/1

**KATRA (FIN)**  
"Beast Within" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

Not long has passed since Tarja left NIGHTWISH and now we are dealing with a serious replica to what once has been the legendary Finnish band. With a voice to envy, Katra Solopuro is the one person thanks to whom the KATRA sound differentiates itself from other NIGHTWISH clones! Very powerful, full of energy, and with an imposing timbre, KATRA's vocalizations finely mix with the bombastic Gothic Metal sounds, even if it seems to be far too much influenced by Classical Rock. It becomes obvious that the musicians have previously performed in bands like WHITESNAKE or RAINBOW – something that could turn out to be the only weakness, from my point of view. On the other hand, this is the sole way KATRA differs

from the old NIGHTWISH... and why not, they could end up having great success with the general audiences that are less interested in the Dark scene anyway, allowing Rock to pleasantly tickle the ears that are eagerly asking for rhythm and melody. There are plenty of Folk influences too, a Northern album by excellence, one showing an authenticity of its own, despite the vast NIGHTWISH harmonies... But what is there to do... they both come from the same land, and the traditional elements are the same! All together, we have a very well conceived and executed debut, full of atmosphere, energy, rhythm, of everything that you could wish for, with a very elegant female voice, around which all the instruments gravitate. The keyboard is played insistently, and the guitars' effect seems to have a sense of its own, enhancing the sound that could blow away every single rocker, no matter the boredom level embracing him/her! I'm sure that this quintet will get recognition sooner than they are expecting to!

katra.fi  
Rating: 0.89/1

**KLIMT 1918 (ITA)**  
"Just In Case We'll Never Meet Again" CD'08  
(PROPHECY)

A new album, nothing new, no change at all! This doesn't sound bad at all, just that it's a simple copy of the Britpop music. In other words, it imitates THE CURE, without forgetting to pass through COLDPLAY, SIGUR ROS, MUSE or MOGWAI... The voice seems the weakest element of this music, far too pale and inexpressive. The rest of the instruments are ok, yet it's a sound that has nothing to do with Metal or any other Dark dimension. There is no doubt that it is the best chapter in the Italians history, but sadly enough, I couldn't find any scent of originality, nothing that the band can call its own. All they've proven is that they can finely play the music that great bands compose for years now. Maybe their next material will

bring along some scent of originality? Anyway, it's a fine audition!  
www.klimt1918.com  
Rating: 0.82/1

**KRODA (UKR)**  
"Live In Lemberg" CD'08  
(HAMMERMARK ART)

The renowned ex-Soviet Pagan Black Metal project has now the opportunity of putting together a live album, based on a concert they had a while back. I listened to it carefully, but I didn't find anything special, anything interesting about it. The band is very talented, the musicians seem to play just as well live too, but I prefer the studio version KRODA. This make doesn't have a quality sound/mixing; even more so, it gives away the idea of a bootleg. I know it isn't so, but this CD hasn't done it for me. It could be that the album would represent an important make for the collectors and the fans. It might very well be so...  
Rating: 0.80/1

**KURGAN (RUS)**  
"...And Green Grasses Are Freezing Slowly" CD'08  
(GARDARIKA)

If FEARLIGHT enchanted me, KURGAN left a bad taste in my mouth. Why? Because beside a limited sort of Black Metal, the young musicians failed in coming up with anything interesting. Even if now and then the flute tries to arouse a Pagan veil alike ARKONA, the compositions are mediocre, at least in what concerns originality. It doesn't mean that we are dealing with a modest album, because KURGAN shows that they are good in manipulating the instruments, yet that's not all that is needed.  
Rating: 0.74/1

**LACRIMAS PROFUNDERE (GER)**  
"Songs For The Last View"  
CD'08  
(NAPALM)

Obviously, the Germans continue knocking on MTV's and other cheap commercial doors! Every single album consequent to "Burning a Wish", gets a more and more Rock sound to it, more melodious, simpler and more

rhythmic. There were 4 modest albums that apparently ravished HIM or THE 69 EYES fans. The new material presents a more nostalgic Gothic Rock, maybe more melancholic too, with different vocals, reminding me of the above mentioned bands rather than of LACRIMAS PROFUNDERE. I do not like the album, even though I rate it far beyond "Filthy Notes For Frozen Hearts", released in 2006. Too commercial and completely lacked in that Dark scent! At least for me, it is! Still, I have nothing to reproach in what concerns the execution: after 15 years of activity, everything sounds finely synchronized, plus there's a high quality done mixing!

lacrimas.com  
Rating: 0.80/1

**LAIBACH (SLO)**  
"Volk" DVD'08  
(MUTE)

Last year you've heard me saying that the LAIBACH gig was probably the best concert of my life! The event was organized in Bucharest, as a part of the tour promoting their new album "Volk". My feeling was not necessarily due to imagery (even though the background projections were excellently connected to the LAIBACH concept), but to its intrinsic message! I've listened to the album for the first time at the concert, and I was ravished by these hymns interpreted in a unique manner! I was expecting to listen to "Tanz Mit Laibach", "Life Is Life" or other more noisy tracks, to experience an industrialized show... But what did I get instead? 13 superb tracks, atmospheric, full of melody, the anthems of 13 countries, some of them processed in a dramatic form, close to apotheosis (America)... Then, Russia with a very melodic and full of pride sense of being Mother Land, an imposing Israel as it is the eternal land of wars between Israeli and Palestinians, Spain fully detached and conquistador like, then the full of romanticism Italy, Germany just as cold as the symbolized folk, Turkey and China introverted, a bombastic



and arrogant England, a specific Japan, France saturated in culture and... maybe the nicest tracks of them all, quite different live than on its studio version, Slovenia, the best piece live. The last track from the first part of the concert ends with NSK, the anthem of their virtual country. The second part of the concert presents six earlier tracks, quite Industrial, where some female percussionists appear and fill in with savour this truly genius concert. Even though Eber's voice apparently sounds dryer and more striking live than on the album, finally you have a great music, decently mixed, especially as the four are supported by the colleagues from SILENCE, whose synth sounds excellent, just as the background voices. The artists' live attitude is remarkable too, everything is perfect with the band's atmosphere. And so, we have 2 hours of LAIBACH on this DVD, more precisely, the complete recording of the March 2007 concert had at Trbovlje. I was surprised to see that the audience gathered people of all ages, proving once again that LAIBACH is a highly respected, appreciated and awesome band, one full of substance and messages of protest against the mistakes done in the world we live in, risking being associated with a band that supports and promotes extremist nationalist actions! That's just the same way I've seen them in Bucharest, but unfortunately some of the people present there were more preoccupied into childish highlighting themselves as being members of some Right Organizations. Pathetic! It's sad to see that associations as such are done, when LAIBACH tries for years to peacefully support their ideas of love for their nation, for their people and the disgust towards the expansion and globalization of all commercial non-values of today. Well, after watching this DVD I've realized that LAIBACH sound identically both live and in studio (this could perhaps be the sole weak aspect), but I find a calming feeling in the thought that I can experience this concert

whenever I want to, as it has become somewhat an obsession for me within the last year. Unfortunately, those who have not been to their concerts will not be able to perceive at maximum intensity the messages transmitted by this band... which is altogether cold/somber/distant during live performances, but also respectful to the audience!  
laibach.org  
Rating: 1/1

**LANTLOS (GER)**  
"Lantlos" CD 08  
(DE TENEBRARUM PRINCIPIO)

Yet another debut, another modern style Black Metal band. Having Alboin (GEIST) as a guest. LANTLOS goes on extreme vocal valences, shouted, sometimes at the limit of distortion! It seems that there would be some VED BUENS ENDE reminiscences, with acoustic passages, breaks in the rhythm and a cold atmosphere. I didn't find it of any interest, nothing special, only underground Black Metal, ok to be noted, not necessarily to be remember. Perhaps the next one...  
Rating: 0.82/1

**LES FRAGMENTS DE LA NUIT (FRA)**  
"Musique De Crepuscule"  
CD'08  
(EQUILIBRIO)

This album could be enjoyed both by Rock fans and Classical music ones, too! With a self-titled Neo-Classical/Contemporary Classical style, the Frenchmen have a vast creative experience in live performances, being into soundtrack making for years now, as well. Based on piano and violin, the sound of the new project is a melancholic one, yet voluptuous, with choral echoes on the background, plus a very active cello and some other violins enhancing an interesting tragic/epic-atmospheric alternation. From Steve Reich or Philip Glass all the way towards ELENDA (throughout vocal parts), ARVO PART or GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR, the Frenchmen present a music that's perfectly

proper to be listened to on a terrace/beer garden, in an authentic summer evening. Still, it's a hard album to comprehend by those not liking Classical music, therefore I am not certain what sort of resonance will this music style have, when promoted through these channels. Something's missing though from this sound: maybe dynamic, force?  
www.lesfragmentsdelanuit.com  
Rating: 0.85/1

**LINGUA FUNGI (FIN) / SHRINE (BUL)**  
"Strange Growths/Wander"  
CD '08  
(CORVUS)

This spilt presents to us the work of two separate bands, the Finnish one having very atmospheric tracks, in likeness with NEST, SHRINE insisting only on the Dark Ambient we are accustomed to. It is not a remarkable release, but it could represent some sort of a starting point or a guide for those who have never listened to these bands. The digipack is professional and even imposing, something now customary coming from the Bulgarian label. Rating: 0.88/1

**LORD AGHEROS (ITA)**  
"As A Sin" CD '08  
(MY KINGDOM MUSIC)

Evangelou continues his trip into the Gothic Black Ambient started a year ago with "Hymn", in the same solitary and mysterious manner. More epic and tuneful, with inserts of more aggressive voices, oscillating between BATHORY, VINTERRIKET, ULVER or SUMMONING, with various oriental passages, this self-defined Lord shows us that he has something serious going and knows how to present his ideas in a clever manner, transposed on the staves, even if in a slightly underground and confusing way, this due to the large amount of stylistic influences. Not much better than the previous one, but perhaps with some pluses.  
Rating: 0.88/1

**LOST KINGDOM (SWE)**  
"As The New Dawn Awakes"  
CD'08 (WAERLOGA)

Tjernberg brothers set out to follow on the path of some legendary classics, so they've done an album out of percussion, keyboard and programming, oscillating between Beethoven, Strauss, Schumann, Mahler, Verdi, Chopin or Wagner. Therefore, what we're dealing with is Avantgarde Neo-Classical, without vocal interpretation, a symphonic music in the end, following the same classical path, one that has no point in being commented on further. It is not Metal, neither Rock, nor Ambient... just pure classical music!!!! Sure, I could try and pose as a connoisseur of such sonorities, yet I think it would be more correct and simple to stop commenting such a beautiful music. The tracks are diverse, each one has a dynamic of its own, so we can certainly call it an album fully diversified in classicism.  
lostkingdom.se  
Rating: 0.91/1

**LUX INTERNA (US)**  
"A Lantern Carried In Blood And Skin" CD'08  
(PROJEKT)

Sam Rosenthal sure knows what he is doing! It is no mystery why he is one of the scenes veterans who still hasn't quit! This time he has decided to promote Joshua L. I. Gentzke's music, a talented American musician who in his 10 years of musical activity has released a few albums that never really got acknowledged. I've heard of this band by chance, through some compilations that fell into my hands throughout the more recent years. This time we are not getting a new album, but an anthology of tracks from their entire history, probably the best sequences. I can't say for sure how much it's Dark Americana, or Neo Folk or Neo Classical, the idea is that Joshua's perfect voice (with an impeccable tonality) harmonises intelligently with other female voices, with violins, guitars and mandolins... If you like Nick Cave, David Tibet and Leonard Cohen or from the new wave, NOVALIS DEUX or ROME, then LUX INTERNA will surprise you in the most positive of ways. Im actually

just getting ready to listen to the albums released in the past at Eis & Licht, as Joshua is more than a musician, I think he is a symbol of this underground scene, and someone whose true value, and I say this with outmost sincerity, I have discovered only now! If you have any doubts, try the track called "Your Lily White Hands" and you will see if he is that far off from the living legend that is Cohen! Even if it is not a conceptual album and the tracks have no links between themselves, the hearing of this album was a real delight for me.  
Rating: 0.97/1

**MARTRIDEN (US)**  
"The Unsettling Dark" CD'08  
(CANDLELIGHT)

After last summer's debut EP, I was waiting for a fulminate debut from the five... Unfortunately, MARTRIDEN doesn't overrun with the new tracks the average of modest albums, lacked in expressivity and authenticity but precisely executed. True, it is hard to oscillate between EMPEROR and OPETH, stay rooted in ENSLAVED and make it all sound as BEHEMOTH. In fact, this Polish band would be the merest comparison, because the approached Black Death Metal is a very technical one, quite rapid but also teemed with some technical and progressive sequences, while the keyboard is bombastic and saturated in symphonic elements and Epic interludes. It is rapid and aggressive more than melodic, and so this debut album proves that the Americans have a path of their own but they are still under the influence of some notorious European bands. Will their next material show a difference maybe?  
martriden.com  
Rating: 0.79/1

**MIDNATTSOL (NOR)**  
"Nordlys" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

If I've only said modest words regarding this band's debut, the situation is distinct in what concerns the second album, as I have to share some superlatives. Do not ask why because it isn't clear to me either. The sound is oriented less towards Folk and

more towards Gothic Metal, filled with symphonic elements too, with an angelic female voice (Liv Espenaes/Krull's sister) and some guitarists whose stylistic sobriety is enhanced by the oppressive riffs (members of the Doom Metal project AHAB). There is a crossing of early THEATRE OF TRAGEDY (Gothic version), along some debuting AMORPHIS influences (Folk version), also scenting of current modernism (symphonic version), yet the guitars bring early TRISTANIA to my mind. Maybe the execution is not excellent (even if the quality of the recording and mixing is perfect), perhaps it isn't in fact as fine as I sense it, but there is no question about it, I've enjoyed it a lot! The only great disadvantage consists in the lack of originality, but the way they've chosen the path of influences is one of quality, as the bands mentioned above had their own time of glory before turning into commercial prostitutes.

midnattsol.com  
Rating: 0.93/1

**MINHYRIATH (SWI)**  
"Gondolyn" CD'08  
(BLACK TOWER)

Here we have a solo project (from the guy that activates in EXCELSIS), based on Tolkienian fantasy. It's a sort of Pagan Epic Folk Black Metal, pretty bombastic, melodic, with atmospheric orchestration, warrior choirs, traditional instruments (flute), Death Metal voice and Heavy Metal guitars. It doesn't sound bad at all, but it is not a material that presents interesting elements. It is a trendy album, at times with annoying synthetic/artificial notes, but that's how it goes when one is using drum-machines.

minhyriath.ch  
Rating: 0.86/1

**MIRRORTHRONE (SWI)**  
"Gangrene" CD'08  
(REDSTREAM)

Vladimir got towards album no. three in his eight years of activity. In the meantime he has founded WEEPINGBIRTH project, but his inner orientation

is still Death Metal. With MIRRORTHRONE the musician explores Progressive dimensions even more than before, and his Avant-Garde style may be associated solely to ARCTURUS or UNEXPECT. The dramatic scent brought by the Neo-Classical piano/synth is felt all along, starting from the aggressive sequences all the way to the slow atmospheric ones. MIRRORTHRONE was related from the very beginning to an Extreme Metal band, deeply rooted in Classical, and on this last material the sound is rather similar to the one on the previous two, maybe a bit more refined. The voice seems dull to me, as its aggressiveness isn't accompanied by any interesting element, one of variety, one that might pull the attention away from the synth... I don't know if it's better than the former albums, but I'm sure it's not weaker. It's just that I was expecting more from this talented musician. mirrorthrone.com  
Rating: 0.83/1

**MISANTHROPE (FRA)**  
"IrremeDIABLE" CD'08  
(HOLY)

Philippe and Co. seem not to give up as they continue on the same line they have started a few years back, offering us a new sample of Modern Metal, from Bombastic to Epic, from Heavy to Technical, with Progressive and Death Metal aromas. If the four seem to stagnate when it comes to the inspiration chapter, they are ahead of themselves when talking about virtuosity, this album being the best example of how to execute Metal in a professional form, with a crystal clear sound and an impeccable mixing. Together with a perfect voice, with incredible modulations! I have listened to the album four times in a row and I am left with the belief that MISANTHROPE is the most experimented Metal band in France, its style being easily recognisable, something that gives a certain authenticity of which the musicians should be proud. I still wish to see them play live as I am convinced that they release a crushing amount

of energy while performing in front of a crowd. I am sorry that I have missed seeing them play last year in Bucharest, but should the opportunity arise once more, I will most definitely not let it slip. The booklet is also quite elegant and full of technical details, managing to take us a few centuries back, to a period of time worshiped by MISANTHROPE.  
Rating: 0.93/1

**MISTRESS OF THE DEAD (CZE)**  
"Weeping Silence Of the Dead" CD'06  
(RUIN PRODUCTIONS)

Vlad Cristea is an underground character who has decided to express his visions through music, the project at hand being a solo. The Funeral Doom Death Metal approach in the style of SKEPTICISM seems to be Vlad's angle, with a throaty and not so aggressive voice but with an easily noticeable low tonality, long guitar riffs, oppressive, slow, drums that are grave but lack rhythm, a piano that can be heard in the background... and some effects... Nothing new, nothing original, however the resulting depressive atmosphere could become a hydrator for the fans of the genre. The CD is quite professional, with an elegant booklet and with an ok sound. In the meantime two other releases have appeared, "I Know Her Face From The Tombstone" and "Funeral Of My Soul", in the exact same manner, but nevertheless worth being noted. With a slowness of sound specific to the Finnish Funeral style, with accents placed on the American Doom Death Metal and with a few elements of its own, MISTRESS OF THE DEAD seems to be a project that deserves attention, even if after a repetitive listening of the three albums, boredom seems to sneak in... But one thing is sure, you will enter its hopeless atmosphere after only a few harmonies. But there is need of something else... Perhaps on the next one? Rating: 0.83/1

**MORD (NOR)**  
"Necrosodomic Abyss"  
CD'08  
(OSMOSE)

GORGOROTH, CARPATHIAN FOREST, IMMORTAL and DARK THRONE, these would be the musical pointers for the Norwegian duet. Consequently a MCD and a CD released in 2 years, MORD signed with the French label and now presents a hellishly angry new material. True Black Metal is what we're dealing with, one following the Norwegian approach, without any modern elements, with no keyboard, no melodic approach. Moreover, there are Thrash Metal influences to be spotted, so in the end, the MORD sound is quite linear, lacking in inflexions or other special aspects that one would consider... solely aggressiveness, violence and rapidity. Despite all the clones that appeared in the last 10 years, MORD left me with a positive impression throughout this album.  
mord-horde.com  
Rating: 0.80/1

**MOURNING BELOVETH (IRE)**  
"A Disease For The Ages"  
CD'08 (GRAU)

The Irish quintet outdone themselves with this new album! There are five elaborated tracks, their best album by far, a true sample of Doom Death Metal!!!! Originally alternating a solemn and throaty male voice (similar to ENTCHANTMENT), with a normal and warm one (sounding like SOLITUDE AETURNUS), along with prolonged, overwhelming and solemn guitar solos, dramatic drums, an overall grey atmosphere. After three albums trying to define and frame the band's musical approach, I guess I can say now that we're dealing with a pattern-like band for this slightly forgotten genre, Doom Death Metal. Therefore, from WINTER to ST VITUS, from depressive slow to Atmospheric (without keyboard), MOURNING BELOVETH succeeded to impose their musical style. A special release indeed!  
mourningbeloveth.com  
Rating: 0.88/1

**MURK (ITA)**  
"Unholy Presence" CD'08

(NO COLOURS)

The fact that the German label only focuses on Black Metal bands, doesn't mean automatically that the choices done are always inspired. From my point of view, MURK is solely a clone of the old Black Thrash Metal school, without any other velleity. I really cannot understand what use one can give to the stubbornness of following the same musical path that has already been successfully exploited 15 years ago... And I am mainly thinking here about DARK THRONE. If I am to say further that MURK comes from Italy, then I do not understand why are they approaching the Norwegian version of brutal Black Metal? Nevermind, it is a modest album, even if the impression of Evil contours after the first harmonies.  
myspace.com/darkmurk  
Rating: 0.72/1

**MY DYING BRIDE (UK)**  
"An Ode To Woe" DVD'08  
(PEACEVILLE)

Clearly, MY DYING BRIDE became a high brand, just good for excavating great money out of it. As proof to this statement, the label that has always supported them offered a new contract for 3 albums, without considering this particular DVD. The DVD contains the recording of the concert held in April 2007 at Paradiso Hall in Amsterdam, a so-called temple for modern music, as it is designed as a church, and which hosted so far, the live performances of Nick Cave, Nirvana, Sex Pistols or The Rolling Stones. Personally, I didn't find it to be a special concert; it's just what MY DYING BRIDE can offer on stage. The DVD's advantages are that it includes the lyrics for all the tracks played in that concert, and the fact that the British made a smart mix between very old and pretty new tracks, showing throughout 13 sequences the true face of the legendary band. With the same theatricals as in the rest of his shows, Aaron has a charm of his own, yet after seeing several concerts held in distinct locations, you get the feeling

that everything is repetitive on live shows, just the well known result of the classic copy-paste. I've seen them last year at Sibiu and that concert seemed better to me. Never mind. We are dealing with a collection DVD, promoted in an exceptional digi-pack that includes the CD with the same tracks, but with a more elegant sound and mixing... well, that's a material that should have a place of its own on your shelves! I hardly wait the moment when they'll release a new version, meaning one including the symbolic and caressing violin along the rest of the instruments... And my personal bet is that it will happen in the immediate future.  
mydyingbride.org  
Rating: 0.90/1

**NARSILION (ESP)**  
"Namarie" CD '07  
(BLACK RAIN)

Lady Nott and Sathorys Elenorth are two very talented young people who enjoy quite a fruitful collaboration, having recorded a demo and three albums in the space of four years. I will skip making references to their history or any other bands they are involved with as there are too many. If "Nelbereth" was a release that announced that this song of the moon and of the sun (the name of the band) was to become of some interest, with "Arcadia" all things became clear. This album is a small Folk Atmospheric Fantasy Medieval jewel of ravishing beauty, one that extracts whatever is best from performers and bands like ARCANA, DARK SANCTUARY, LORENNA McKENNITT, DARGAARD or ENYA. A new album followed, "Namarie", released at the end of 2007, a lot more complex, with a medieval and more forceful aura than the one of "Arcadia", but not as dreamy and meditative. But viewed in the overall, the album is the most mature of all the achievements, where the flute and violin combine perfectly with the percussions & the synth, while the contrasting voices shape an inspired harmony. Too bad that the third member, Dark Wind, retired from the band after just

two albums, his flute being an instrument of reference for the band's sound. But even without it, I have great confidence that the new album that is already in the works will be over the precedents, the two successfully combining both activities: the often enough live performances and the work being done on the new tracks. Although their vocal efforts do not excel, NARSILION dominates exactly through this excellent balance between a dream-like instrumentation and the medieval rhythms. I am very curious to see them live, especially as they use as backdrops Tolkiens' themes and therefore a fantastic universe, indefinable and impossible to localisable through our day to day benchmarks.  
Rating: 0.96/1

**NERONOIA (ITA)**

"Il Rumore Delle Cose" CD'08 (EIBON)  
Mauro, Matteo, Alberto, Andrea and Gianni have released the second chapter of the new challenge named NERONOIA. After a fulminous debut, I was expecting the new material to be mightier, more innovative... you'll be disappointed from this point of view, as the combination of COLLOQUIO and CANAAN remains in the same Dark Atmospheric dimension, enhancing the sadness, depressive yet melancholic mood, a romantic sadness, hopeless on certain sequences. On the other hand, the rhythm decreases even more its intensity, the guitars are heard as an echo, the sound is rather Goth, and the keyboard is less present, the focus is on the poetic dimension, as the normal voice rather recites than sings... or whispers, or weeps... I even thought I'm listening to Celentano at a certain moment... maybe due to the fact that the lyrics whispered in Italian and Giani's low toned voice transcends the listener towards another world. In conclusion, we have ten atypical new tracks, less melodic and rhythmic than the previous ten, yet unveiling the same rapturous beauty... The new NERONOIA risks to be

perceived as less accessible and far too slow... but, if I would compare it with any other band's music, I couldn't find any similarity because NERONOIA now has a sound of its own, independent of the ones characterizing the other projects that the members activate in... no doubt though, you cannot miss the instruments' familiarity...  
neronoia.tk  
Rating: 0.90/1

**NOEKK (GER)**  
"A Minstrel's Curse" CD'08  
(PROPHECY)

The third release of the ex EMPYRIUM members is the most abstract, atypical and saturated in all kinds of influences, except Metal ones, album. Everything gravitates around a Progressive Rock spectrum, with Folk and Classical elements, with normal voices, Pagan scents and without modernistic rhythmicity. It is, if you want, a longer EP, consisting in four quite elaborated tracks which frame an interesting sound, yet in my opinion it isn't a special material despite the proven instrumental art. It is somewhat pale, without form but set on a fine substance for whose understanding a certain mood is required and a lot of patience. I must say I haven't found the way towards it so far. I prefer the previous two releases, amongst which "The Grimalkin" is a musical jewel.  
myspace.com/112535276  
Rating: 0.79/1

**NORDVARGR (SWE)**  
"Pyrrhula" CD 08  
(COLDSRING)

Henrik Bjorkk is known for his inspiration regarding the Dark Ambient realms. His last compositions, eight in total, are placed within a sombre universe, apocalyptic, strange, at times scary and repellent. The Black and Doom influences of the NORDVARGR atmosphere are once again present and they add to the sound that seems not to have progressed much from the previous releases. An album exclusively for the connoisseurs, intangible for the rest.  
Rating: 0.80/1

**NOVALIS DEUX (GER)**  
"Ghosts Over Europe" CD'08  
(BLACK RAIN)

A very elegant release, from all points of view! I was expecting something nice from the Germans, but this album surpassed all my expectations! Less Folk and more Gothic, with expressive guitars and warm voices, NOVALIS DEUX sits easily in my favourites top for this year, probably due to the fact that the album has nothing reproachable. There is no Dark element, everything is rhythmic, melodic, with a keyboard in the background trying to brave the imposing guitars and the rather melancholic violin. It is an album at the limit of all things commercial, highly digestible, without complex scenarios or introverted phases, it is to be listened whenever you want, because the state of relaxation gathers everything under it. It is airy, breezy and imposing! There is nothing new, nothing original, nothing that can astonish... but everything is intelligently designed, with a lot of harmony and inspiration. The digipack is also quite elegant and so I see no reason why this album wouldn't become a collector's item! For more difficult days, where an edible music can do wonders!  
Rating: 0.94/1

**NOVEMBRE (ITA)**

"Classica"  
CD '08 (special edition)  
(PEACEVILLE)

The legendary Italian band enjoys a new editing of one of the best albums of their career but also of the entire Melodic Progressive Death Metal scene. They say that NOVEMBRE is OPETH'S perfect replica, Italian style. This release counts as number three in the history of the band and was initially releases in 1999. In new digipack version edition, together with three exclusive tracks taken of their demos, NOVEMBRE reminds us that elegant and elaborated Metal can be played in other parts of the world as well, not just in Sweden! And this album, conceived some ten years ago, is one to have in your collection!  
Rating: 1/1

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**NYKTALGIA (GER)**  
"Peisithanatos" CD'08  
(NO COLOURS)

Three in studio, four on stage, the German band has now released its second album. For me, this is the number one and I can say that this Black Metal is excellently interpreted, rooted in the first two KATATONIA MCDs and scenting of WIGRID, ABYSSIC HATE or NARGAROTH. The voice reminds me of BURZUM, while a certain aspect reminds me of FORGOTTEN TOMB too, just as suicide, grief, isolation are the main themes approached by these Germans. The sequences alternate between rapid and slow ones, but the guitars play in the same Raw Black Metal manner, without any modern compromises or striking colours. Everything is veiled in a tormenting black-grey, contoured by a Scandinavian Black Metal, distinguishing solely by some brightly used guitar solos. Though there's nothing new if compared with the above mentioned bands, NYKTALGIA proves remarkable maturity throughout their virtuosity, which is a thing to expect because the members also play in projects like KRIEG or STERBEND.

myspace.com/nyktalgiafabpage  
Rating: 0.88/1

**OAKENSHIELD (UK)**  
"Gylfaginning" CD'08  
(EINHEIT)

Interesting indeed the solo project of the British Ben Corkhill! I've first mentioned OAKENSHIELD when I was listening to Markus Eck's compilation, that's the guy from Metal Message by the way. I really liked the chosen track back then, as it was truly bombastic and atmospheric! I now had the opportunity to listen to the entire album, and I can assure you that "Gylfaginning" is a little Melodic Epic Pagan Viking Metal jewel. There are many violin fragments, while the structure is a Pagan Metal one, so Ben inspiringly entwines musical styles that bring bands like FOREFATHER or FALKENBACH to our minds, yet it is obviously rooted in

BATHORY. Sure thing, quite some time has passed since I've last listened to such a good debut!  
oakenshield.org  
Rating: 0.92/1

**OCTOBER FALLS (FIN)**  
"The Womb Of Primordial Nature" CD'08  
(DEBEMUR MORTI)  
Mikko Lehto decided to leave the Folk Ambient scene that he has been supporting through his remarkable "Marras" album. "Sarastus" is to be counted here as well, a MCD just as atmospheric, if we are to relate to what Mikko was singing until now. Influences from early ULVER, TENHI, and EMPYRIUM are calmly and elegantly entwining with some harmonies similar to those of OCTOBER FALLS. Changing the label brought a major change in the band's sound, and so we've got from Folk to a mix of Pagan Black Doom Metal, presenting Folk elements veiled in rhythms reminding of... "Again Shall Be", the fantastic HADES album, and also early KATATONIA. It is melodic, depressing too, also very rapid, with aggressive voices, fully atmospheric sequences... a finely coagulated album, elegant, a true pleasant surprise for 2008! Unfortunately, it is too short, as the four tracks seem to share the same structure even if they are highly processed and so the final feeling is that we are dealing with a continuous repetition. It doesn't mean it upsets... it's just that I was craving for more, especially from an artist that has proven so far that he knows what he wants. I have great expectations from Lehto though, especially as he co-opted studio musicians, among which we count MOONSORROW's drummer!  
koti.welho.com  
Rating: 0.88/1

**OPETH (SWE)**  
"The Roundhouse Tapes"  
DVD'08  
(PEACEVILLE)  
A few months after the British label released the CD with the famous concert played on the 9th of November 2006, the time for the DVD release has come as well, a very professionally made one, with crystal clear image, excellent sound and mix, a long set of questions addressed to every member of the band, footage taken during the sound check or the feedbacks of the fans, gathered after the concert. A collector item of the most successful extreme Metal band of all times!  
Rating: 0.98/1

**ORAKLE (FRA)**  
"Tourments & Perdition"  
CD'08 (HOLY)  
I remember that I had good things to say about their 2004 debut „Uni Aux Cimes". Very good and technical instrumentalists, with a remarkable symphonic note on a quite rapid and

atmospheric Black Metal sound, ORAKLE continues on the same path, but this time closer, more resembling to the one of their inspirational band, ARCTURUS. Black Metal in EMPEROR style, transformed with a bombastic avant-garde touch, where the rhythm changeovers have their own charm. The fact that the voices also oscillate enhances an interesting orchestral/theatrical dimension, and the guitars are well heard, same with the drums, while the synth bewilders us with the specific wrappings; everything sounds quite clear and complex. This album seems dominated by guitar riffs and solos, developing an original mixture of melody and aggressiveness. A very beautiful and technical album! From ATHEIST or CYNIC, to the angriest Black lovers open to Progressive influences, ORAKLE shows that they are a replica of ARCTURUS, but in French version... the lyrics are sung in Balzac's language, and thus framing a distinct form of Metal!  
orakle.free.fr  
Rating: 0.98/1

**ORCIVUS (SWE)**  
"Consummatum Est" CD'08  
(NEXT HORIZON)  
With an intense religious concept, rather satanist than antichristian, Perditor and Mortifer release their debut album after almost two years since the project has been born. Their Black Metal is one that copies GORGOROTH or even WATAIN, bringing nothing new at all. The music is of good quality, there are strong and aggressive voices, some Gregorian incantations, a few scents of religious elements and for the rest... Scandinavian Black Metal, consistent, virtuous and serious. I haven't been very enchanted by the album, but I cannot say it's one to be neglected either. It's just another quality and trendy album, one that will surely satisfy the expectations of the most exigent Unholy Black Metal fans.  
orcivus.com  
Rating: 0.88/1



**ORDO ROSARIUS EQUILIBRIO (SWE)**  
"ONANI (Practice Makes Perfect)" CD'09  
(COLD MEAT)  
"Glory To Thee, My Beloved Masturbator" was the first track I have listened to, as I have found it a while ago on a compilation... What was I to discover? A sound that was changed completely, based on a superb acoustic guitar, a sum of samples full of new elements, effects and perceptions... Rose Marie's voice wraps you into a fantastic, erotic universe; the rhythm of the drums virtually pushes you into the mirage of brothels of the past, the very bombastic keyboard being the piece de resistance, continuously imitating a possible trumpet that is inspiringly resonating at the refrain, where Tomas's voice appears as well, calm, sensual, more like whispered than recited or sang. It's not NeoFolk, it's not Dark, not Classical, nor Ambient... it's just ORDO, but reincarnated, airier as sound, more calm, more Lounge, if you want. The next song I got in contact with was on the night of the concert, where "Can You Hear the Devils Laughing (Or is it just Me)" outlined a dark ORDO, apocalyptic, who shakes hands with an erotic devil in full uncoiling... church bells, crows, sinister moans/groans, oppressive, slow drum rhythms, calm but at all happy voices, more like grave ones... and bells again, moans and crows... I think it is the Darkest ORDO track from the last 5-6 years. And a second new track followed in the concert, towards the end, "I Will Be There; Even after the Flowers are Gone"...; it left me speechless... it is the most romantic track from the entire ORDO history, where the sound of the accordion breaks any form of breathing and the acoustic guitar tries to cope with an incandescent but very melodic keyboard! This track could be considered a true ballad and I think it will ceaselessly amaze and make happy the live audiences. "Confessions Of A SinFlower" seems to be a sequence that remits an introverted message,  
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based on dynamic percussions and incantations specific to the two voices, while on the background the keyboard was emphasizing an inaccessible universe, the Electro-Industrial note being somewhat more present – something that didn't really charm me. "(Remember) What you saw is what you reap" is another track where the presence of the accordion gives a special savour to the sound, this time on a slower background, with recited voices, somewhat monotonous if the attention is not on the lyrics. "The Love and Defiance of Being Alive" shows us a different approach, a lot more Pop Rock, but with a somber, darker contour, where the voices remind me of some of the Leonard Cohen tracks, mixed with Nick Cave... But what amazing lyrics! "Let me show you, all the Secrets of the Torture Garden" is a composition with an atypical rhythm, more static, without musicality, only with the two voices that are trying to emphasise the erotic concept through the different sounds belonging to Rose Marie, mixed with some processed male vocal choirs. "Too Late for Innocence, Too Late for the Regret (Four hands please better than Two)" is a track with a sound that is too commercial, more than Pop, slightly Disco, where Tomas's voice comes through excellently, the approach of this track seems to be different, its label moulding itself too mildly on to the structure of the stave. "Forgive me, I am not Satan, I am Mary just Like You..." seems to be another make lacking melody, life, with an scent of resignation, of isolation from everything, where the accent falls on the lyrics recited by Tomas; a grave and monotonous piano, some keyboard effects and synthetic female voices that make references towards opera... "CUM, and let me lead you far astray" is a completely different song, where the keyboard is more than atmospheric, the guitar is communicating abruptly with the two voices while the sound of the trumpet from the background gives

an astral dimension to a track with an amazing set of lyrics! "Amore Rosse, Amore Marrone, Amore Nero..." is a totally experimental choice, with lyrics in Italian, with a dramatic note developed by the drums and keyboard and that's pretty much it... although it probably has a message to pass on, but I haven't caught it... Still... an interesting voice in the person of Marco Deplano. Some time has passed until this new ORDO chapter... and it was worth the waiting... despite of the four months additional period from the date initially promised... It's the most complete and complex ORDO album to date, with a totally different sound and with new ideas, full of statistical and of effect insertions. I am extremely curious about the next album that is set to appear in September, especially as Tomas assured me that it will be more melodic and atmospheric... You want to understand ORDO? Then listen to The Gospel Of Tomas and do not forget about this concepts Saint Trinity: music, lyrics and visual... as he will be there... "I will be there"... Rating: 1/1

**ORLOG (GER)**  
"Elysion" CD '08  
(DGF)

The second album belonging to the four musicians continues the Black Metal line started six years ago, on a brutal but still technical line that has a pleasant sound and shows a perfect synchronisation between the instruments. The dynamic exists, it releases energy, it enjoys full force, and it is an authentic quality Metal, that, and it must be said, tries to copy the Scandinavian Black. It is not a band thing, but not the most encouraging thing either, considering all the other similar bands within the scene! And so, a quality album, with an irreproachable sound, with demented drumming, an extreme voice and very Heavy guitars... but nothing else.  
Rating: 0.86/1

**ORPLID (GER)**  
"Greifenherz" CD'08  
(AUERBACH)

The Germans forth album is, by far, the most innovative, dynamic and avant-garde of the lot! Frank Machaus' voice is powerful and with an impressive low tonality, the instruments are marking an orientation towards Martial, the atmosphere is colder and darker, I could even say glacial, everything sounds somewhere between DEATH IN JUNE and JOY DIVISION – as the tracks structure and not the actual musicality. A female voice makes its appearance on two of the tracks, one of them actually being dedicated to the legendary Norwegian Black Metal band IMMORTAL. It is obvious that this album will revolutionise the current scene and there will be a risk of losing some more traditionalist fans due to their new statistical approach. Hopefully they will gain a different segment as well, as the album truly deserves all the attention it can get, especially as we are talking about 14 different tracks, diversified, full of interesting elements.  
Rating: 0.92/1

**O QUAM TRISTIS (FRA)**  
"Les Chants Funestes" CD'08  
(PALACE OF WORMS)  
The latest album belonging to these musicians seems to insist more than ever on the Rock and Electronic mix, in an original form nevertheless, interestingly mixing the Ethereal, Folk Medieval and Electro-Soft. The female voices have their own savor, the male ones step in at times in an intelligent manner, we have keyboards, atmosphere, mandolin, bass, acoustic guitar and baroque elements... everything for everyone. The forth album seems to be the best one of them all, but still, something is still needed in order to be able to talk about their apogee. Perhaps this can be applied to the other projects they play with: COLLECTION D'ARNELL-ANDREA or THYVIOLENTVANITIES...  
Rating: 0.83/1

**PANCHRYSLIA (BEL)**  
"Deathcult Salvation" CD'08  
(DARK ESSENCE)  
I guess I've enjoyed the first two albums more! The new material

of the four Belgians is focused solely on aggressive Black Metal, with Northern influences, pretty linear and lacked in originality. I was expecting more, especially as Mortuus (MARDUK/FUNERAL MIST) and Leen De Haes (BINT) participated to the vocal sequences as guests. One track, somehow odd, experimental and atypical to the genre, "Fogbound", reminded me of the musically expressed occultism some years back by the ones from CELTIC FROST, and it is a track you should certainly pay attention to, even if it has nothing to do with Metal. Otherwise, violent tracks, with Evil voices, without any modern influences, the '80's Black Metal oscillating between MARDUK, ANCIENT RITES and DARK THRONE. Nothing new, just another well performed album destined to be soon forgotten.  
panchryslia.be  
Rating: 0.80/1

**PARADISE LOST (UK)**  
"Gothic"  
CD 08 (special edition)  
(PEACEVILLE)  
The excellent decision to re-edit this genius album is more than welcomed, especially since 20 years have passed since the band was founded, when Nick and Gregor, influenced by CELTIC FROST, MORBID ANGEL and CANDLEMASS, established this band. After the debut "Lost Paradise" that was insisting on Death Metal, with inspiration taken from J. Milton's writings, the album that marked the appearance of a new musical current, the Gothic Doom Death, followed in 1991. "Gothic" is the most nonconformist Metal album for those times, when you couldn't really say it was Death or Doom... Those were the times when two other bands were taking shape, ANATHEMA and MY DYING BRIDE. The advantage of this re-edited CD is that we have a bonus DVD containing some exclusive tracks shot live in 1991, plus the now classical tracks belonging to the first two albums. There is no doubt, something that one must keep for its private collection!  
Rating: 1/1

**PASSIONE NERA (ITA)**  
"Research EP" MCD'08  
(COLD MEAT)  
Andrea Pirro's activity started under this name in 2005, firstly with acoustic guitar and piano, and afterwards, in 2007, a group of four members was formed and this four track EP has been recorded. The approach is trendy, a Dark Pop Folk with influences from the '60's, where the normal voice perfectly harmonizes with electric guitar effects, piano and violin, not quite original but pleasant. If I also tell you that on the last track Simone Hellvis Salvatori participates as a guest, along with PJ Ambrosi, then I guess you realize that we are dealing with some sort of another kind of SPIRITUAL FRONT, in a more serene version and with a less imposing and resonant voice. The fragility of the sound gives me the sensation of a band filled with good intentions, yet somehow the style is not complete. In then end, doesn't matter how the album is, "Strength In A Smile" is the most beautiful and representative track, and by far the most expressive one too for PASSIONE NERA. I can't wait to listen to their debut album, which will be released soon!  
passionenera.net  
Rating: 0.87/1

**RAJNA (FRA)**  
"Duality" CD'08  
(HOLY)  
Here they are, having reached the seventh album these two, meaning Jeanne and Fabrice. Their last albums didn't really do it for me, didn't enjoy them as well as I did the first two, perhaps due to the fact that the Oriental elements started to be combined with newer ones, western, more commercial and perhaps a bit too melodious. The new album which totals 16 tracks, an hour of Ethno Heavenly music, tries to come back to that tribal that the DEAD CAN DANCE fans appreciate so much, nevertheless leaving strong imprints from the modern sound, which, due to Jeanne's superb voice, seem to be successfully harmonised. There seems to be quite an abundance of instruments that

were used, probably the most complex albums of them all, perhaps not the most mystical, but definitely the most atmospheric. There are some Gothic elements that can be detected on some tracks, these eventually framing a modern RAJNA but also deeply rooted into the Tibetan civilisation. On some of the tracks Jeanne's voice reminds me of Lisa Gerrard's solo tracks, the gravity of the vocals being the relish of the entire sound. Rating: 0.90/1

**REVUE NOIR (US)**  
"Anthology Archive" CD '08  
(PROJEKT)  
We really do have to deal with some strange music! The collaboration between Sam Rosenthal (BLACK TAPE FOR A BLUE GIRL) and Nicki Jaine brought out a true novelty, a mix of Pop, Rock and Cabaret, based on vocals, piano, violin, guitar and bass. I realised that it is practically impossible for me to describe this music, no matter how much I would try. We are talking here about a virtual world, full of intrigue, love and betrayal, where everything is both agony and ecstasy, where everything is just as controversial as it is erotic and delicious. A unique music which can not be categorised, perhaps only placed somewhere in time, but with a lot of tens of years ago... and only as roots, as influence! Rating: 0.87/1

**ROME (LUX)**  
"Masse Mensch Mental"  
CD'08 (CMI)  
This is one of the most beautiful releases of the year!!! It is of an unbelievable melody, as the male voice transits us via Nick Cave all the way to Leonard Cohen's tunes... or from LAIBACH to SPIRITUAL FRONT and DEPECHE MODE, trans-passing Ambient, Post Industrial, New Wave, Neo-Classical, Dark-Romanticism... We have ballads, and also rhythmic tracks, Pop sequences and also pure Ambient ones, others with scents of Martial... everything is different, strange, simple, but hellishly expressive! Beauty of desperation! Jerome Reuter's third album does not

insist on the Dark dimension anymore, it now focuses on exaggerated melody that contours a slightly more Pop sound, with pale echoes of Industrial but fully atmospheric nevertheless. We are dealing with an album that can induce surprise, but it can also captivate an unbelievable variety of fans, admiring completely distinct music styles! [myspace.com/romecmi](http://myspace.com/romecmi)  
Rating: 1/1

**ROMA AMOR (ITA)**  
"S/T " CD'08  
(CAFE OLD EUROPE)  
Neo-Cabaret Folk! Never in my life did I think that I would be writing about something like this! It's true that I like Jacques Brel, but in any case I wouldn't mention him while talking about Kogaionon! Well, these Italians shocked me with their debut! An extraordinary percussion, an omnipresent accordion, a stunning clarinet, a grave sounding bass and a guitar that is "at the lip of a cigar or a cheroot", a very female voice, an outstanding piano, it is all coming from another era, from another world and another life! It's cabaret music combined with traditional folk, something that was in vogue in the interwar period, presented in a slightly changed manner but with the same flavour that you see in the movies our parents would watch. In fact, some of us are parents as well, so I will go no further with this comment. A mixture of whiffs of a romantic Paris and nostalgic roman, in fact, Latin, outdated, atypical and outside any characterization! I reckon it's not bringing anything new to the table, not developing anything original, but since we are talking of a debut, let's keep an eye out and see what the future will bring for them!  
Rating: 0.91/1

**ROSE ROVINE E AMANTI (ITA)**  
"Demian" CD 08  
(COLD SPRING)  
Damiano Mercuri has outdone himself with this new album! It has mainly the same structure as the last one had, "Demian" presents us with 10 different tracks on which you can hear a

multitude of instruments, Damiano's voice going in all sorts of directions and with only one track that has a female voice as well. I find it difficult to present each song separately as the specific nature of the tracks is unique! The savour of the track titled Rose Rovine Amanti is an incredible one, same with the contemplative aura that is to be found on Ave Maria. Abundant guitar, piano, violin, mandolin, everything sounds in an authentic Neo Folk manner, or how Damiano likes to say, in an Italian Neo Folk manner. In fact, even the Rock influences are presented incisively on this album, composing a fantastic mixture between the Italian Rock and the Mediterranean Neo Folk. And so, if you like SPIRITUAL FRONT or SAGITTARIUS, but with a more Mediterranean imprint, it is impossible not to enjoy the music of this multitalented artist. An album of greatness, a collector's item, one for lonesome moments. Rating: 1/1

**SAATTUE (FIN)**  
"Jaahyvasti" CD'08  
(SPIKEFARM)  
An interesting project, performed in Finnish, with band members that have also been a part of YEARNING or THYRANE. It tries to entwine slow Doom Metal with modern elements, full of melody and rhythm. There's nobleness within the intention, but the probability to succeed is a small one, because a combination like this one can easily produce a fiasco. Well, SAATTUE managed to show throughout the seven tracks a new style combination, giving identity to their sound, an extremely fine conceived and executed one. Many Finnish bands released under SPIKEFARM banner lately are pretty identical, but SAATTUE touched my soul, as I appreciate a lot the extremely insistent voice and the guitar harmonies reminding us that we're listening to a Northern band. We can also spot some scents of wintry Finnish style, as the voice bring TENHI to my mind on certain sequences... otherwise, beautiful Metal, with



Dark voices, screams, imposing inflexions all the way... I am quite eager to get to hear another album from these six, especially as there aren't too many albums released so far!

saattue.net

Rating: 0.89/1

#### **SAGITTARIUS (GER)**

“Songs For The Ivory Tower”  
CD '08 (COLDSRING)

After being part of the Black Metal band HAILSTORM for more than 10 years, Cornelius Waldner decided to explore his Neo – Classical side as well.

After its little known debut, SAGITTARIUS now becomes visible through a special NeoFolk album, full of poetical echoes, of remarkable instruments, somewhere between the limits of melancholic and nostalgic, with a piano that is quite serene but as well as that, one that leaves a strong mark on the album in general, and the reciting voices, in particular. It must be mentioned that the guests are carefully chosen, every single one of them being allowed the opportunity of putting forward their personal know-how or ability, their artistic inputs being easily recognisable. And so, we meet: Damiano Mercuri (Rose Rovine E Amanti), Troy Southgate (H.E.R.R./SEELENLICHT), Philipp Jonas (SECRETS OF THE MOON), Herr Twiggs (KAMMER SIEBEN) or Marcel P. (VON THRONSTAHL). The least bit dynamic, more likely meditative and full of a poetic dimension than anything else, SAGITTARIUS unveils through these 15 tracks a pretty damn elegant universe, slightly elitist and with an elevated aura that could perhaps bother or even bore the superficial listener. I personally find it difficult to understand this band from a conceptual point of view, as a great deal of their poems are recited (rather than sang) in German, but also due to the fact that the sounds aura is impressive. “Europa Calling” and “The Song” are two simply marvellous tracks, where, with or without the flute, the sound leaves you breathless. I noticed on MySpace that Cornelius's

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project has now transformed into a trio, another ex. Black metal player, Dimo Dimov (SVARROGH) being welcomed alongside Marcel P. I am not sure how Dark can this band be considered but no doubt that the word interesting is the least to be said! Rating: 0.99/1

#### **SECOND SKIN (US)**

“Illa Exuro In Silentium  
(She Burns In Silence)” CD'08  
(PALACE OF WORMS)

A pretty vast activity, four media friendly albums, a lot of collaborations, a lot of fans... this is how SECOND SKIN presents itself in 2008. On a Death Rock skeleton but with Dark Gothic references, the band shows a modern sound, based on explosive electric guitars, rhythmic drums, bombastic keyboards and an imposing male voice! There are also industrialised tracks, with an electronic feel to them; some with slower passages, at the limit of melody... everything being within a somewhat dark, glacial and sombre note! I can't find many original elements in this sound... Other than that, an album slightly better than average, that will be looked for by the fans of older Gothic, from SYSTEMS OF MERCY to JOY DIVISION. Judging from this particular point of view, it very well could be that the album is a small jewel and the fans could consider it a cult one!

Rating: 0.85/1

#### **SEPTIC FLESH (GRE)**

“Communion” CD'08  
(SEASON OF MIST)

The Greeks' sixth album is the most powerful and elaborated one among all released throughout seventeen years of history, with two interruptions included. Except the symphonic elements saturating the sound more than ever before, SEPTIC FLESH is the same Atmospheric Death Metal band we've got used to, without many structural changes from the beginning. The album has a mighty start, as the Industrial scent vaguely gets veiled in the multitude of orchestral, symphonic, choral elements (philharmonic orchestra of Prague, over eighty

instrumentalists, thirty voices), while Spiros's voice is the same throaty and brutal one as in the past, and the guitars enhance the Epic expressivity, yet remaining as melodious as before (alike Mackintosh in PARADISE LOST's early times), plus a very dynamic drum... I also uncover some normal voices, but they are quite pale and lacked in inspiration. After the first half, the tracks turn more technical, more composed, the symphonic elements vanish, and everything becomes a damn good sounding Melodic Death Metal with Gothic scents, yet one without any personality of its own. The sole element giving identity to the band remains the brutal, but very inspired voice, even though it doesn't insist on inflexions, but prefers the extreme linearity. A special album, an excellent conceived step for this reunion, and the quartet certainly is a smart choice for every concert organizer.

abstrata.net/sfsite/index.html

Rating: 0.85/1

#### **SERENITY (AUT)**

“Fallen Sanctuary” CD'08  
(NAPALM)

I admit that I am tormenting myself into carefully listening to such sonorities, hoping that, maybe, just maybe, I will find something interesting within. KAMELOT or SONATA ARCTICA are standard sort of bands for this Melodic Symphonic Metal approach, while EDENBRIDGE could be considered a band that sounds identically to SERENITY. Based on a very bombastic sound, with an abundant Progressive touch, and very pompous normal voices (including female ones), choirs even, plus prolonged riffs with Heavy Metal elements, a drum that beats rapid or staccato rhythms, and a keyboard that amplifies a less than Dark dimension, but a more extraverted one, with a very present bass; therefore, SERENITY present a stylish album, well done, sounding quite alright. Just that there is no originality within, no identity of its own. Otherwise, it is a pleasant audition, especially if it's not listened repeatedly.

It is a trendy album, with no remarkable expressivity. serenity-band.com

Rating: 0.80/1

#### **SHINING (SWE)**

“V-Halmstad” CD'07  
(OSMOSE)

Kvarforth, Niklas Olsson to be more precise, is this odd band's mastermind and he completely silenced me with this fifth album! Roberto/Avantgarde must greatly regret not keeping them at his label for at least one more release! It is, on the other hand, atypical for Osmose to promote a work like this one, as they haven't released any avantgarde projects until now! OK. No more harangue, especially as there were certain rumors about Kvarforth's suicide... Details... I am holding in my hands one of the most beautiful and ingenious Atypical Metal albums ever! Starting back in 1996 with a Suicidal Black Metal approach, SHINING unlocks the first forms of nonconformism with their fourth album “IV - The Eerie Cold”! The new material is the continuance of the former one, yet it unveils true ripeness! Darker than ever, melancholic, progressive and ambiental on certain sequences, SHINING revolutionizes every single cliché or musical boundary, reminding me about the impact produced by FLEURETY or VED BUENS ENDE fifteen years ago. There's no analogy intended, it's just a truly admirable conceptual approach! With a Depressive Black Metal structure on the background and some shades of musical misanthropy and nihilism scenting of STRID or BURZUM, SHINING now opens to us a hallucinating universe!!! I find it simply impossible to depict this sound! How the hell should I describe the acoustic version of Beethoven's “Moonlight” sonata, or a track named in a way that solely the Northern ones can understand... I still strive to find some key elements in order to categorize this sound: the old SHINING, alongside BURZUM, BETHLEHEM, with some Swedish Rock touches as MOGWAI or KENT, plus some shades of the '80's Progressive

or eve Psychedelic... both as instrumentation and voices... can you imagine how Niklas's voice modulations project to us from a depressive, darkly cold realm (enlivened by his terrifying rasped tone) towards the melodious serenity of Rock & Roll's dimension! I have no idea how do SHINING's live performances look like now, as for over ten years the classic associations involved blood, cutting veins, suicide, negativism... and plenty of Black Metal! I really wish to see them perform live in Romania, as this last album is a truly inspired one! Just six tracks, a short and acoustic one, the rest extremely elaborated and of considerable length, inviting us on a journey within the entire musical realm... simply genius!

myspace.com/shininghalmstad

Rating: 1/1

#### **SINCARNATE (ROM)**

“On The Procrustean Bed”  
MCD'08

(AXA VALAHA)

I've got this CD from Coro at Artmania, but I have also got to see the guys perform live prior to that. Despite the fact that the tracks' structure seems to be a little old, and that the sound is rather simple, I didn't spot any other great imperfections. It's true, when playing live SINCARNATE sounded much better than on this EP, yet I don't know why: maybe they've progressed, or perhaps because since the project was formed until now (in about a year) the members changed and they've found a better formula for Sybil. Therefore, Doom Death Metal just like in the 90's, with an abundant keyboard on the background, simple but atmospheric guitars riffs, modest drums and a growl voice that would be perfect if this band was a Death Metal one. There is force, there is nerve, although alternation and inflexions lack! Everything sounds too growled, too angry, far too linear, and poorly connected to the melody and atmosphere that this sound liberates! But I don't want to turn cavilling because there's no reason for me to! The band sounds ok and considering the

fact that there are only four tracks, that we are talking about a debut and about the intention to do more and better, I cannot appreciate more than positively this release. Well, the mixing is somehow cut, everything sounds artificial and it has a somewhat copy-paste feel to it. The booklet looks professional, the cover doesn't seem well chosen for the Doom/Death Metal they play, but on the whole, the material is of a fine quality, proving that the Romanian Metal Scene starts to take a fresh breath, even though there's no originality in this project! SINCARNATE has definitely made a step forward, even though it's not perfect! MY DYING BRIDE's fans will easily relish a “mioritic” (local) trial of cloning it. I am waiting for the next album... if they don't vanish in the meantime, as I've understood that Marius, the vocalist, has left the band too. At least I hope he will have more time to focus on Hatework, as the events they organize are of quality and importance within the more extreme scene!

myspace.com/sincarnateband

Rating: 0.80/1

#### **SKITLIV (NOR)**

“Amfetamin” CD'08  
(COLD SPRING)

Diabolical minds, insane sound! You have to be flooded by alcohol in order to enter SKITLIV's trance! It is an original music, a unique approach, a distinct form of Metal that cannot be included in any known style! I wonder if we can call it Black Doom Noise? This CD consists in only 2 studio tracks, “Amfetamin” and “Slow Pain Coming” (Cold Spring Mix), as the rest of the 6 are recordings of the concert held in London, on December 13th, 2007. Maybe you don't know the list: Maniac (ex-MAYHEM) does all possible and impossible vocalizations, while Kvarforth (SHINING) murders his guitar in an unbelievable way. Obviously, both in studio and live, the two invited other musicians, among which Attila (MAYHEM, SUNN O))), but it matters less. Excellent material! The intro is a CURRENT 93 cover version, yet it is performed in the most

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sinister manner possible... the entire music is! I can barely wait to listen to Maniac's debut album! That's if he doesn't commit suicide in the meantime... because within such music, you cannot distinguish many colourful lights.

[myspace.com/skitliv777](http://myspace.com/skitliv777)

Rating: 0.97/1

#### **SLAGMAUR (NOR)**

"Skrekk Lich Kunstler" CD'08 (NEKK BREKK)

That's the most innovative Black Metal band I've listened to last year! Norway shows us once again that it is the true Black scene in the world, this time throughout General Gribbsphiiser's project! Very Avant-Garde, very Dark, saturated in heaviness, sobriety and intricacy, SLAGMAUR shows us the way to play a true Black Metal. I did an association between them and the bands coming from behind along with the SHINING gang, but this project is more original and sinister, full of grave fragments and also acoustic sequences, cello, violin, piano, desperate and distorted yells are present, plus diverse effects, everything sounds atypical and special... meaning SLAGMAUR! I highly recommend this album, that despite some misunderstandings with another label, had to experience a delayed release, but I guarantee you that the waiting was worth it! I do not understand why none of the great labels have hurried into offering them a serious contract, because this is a remarkable music, an apocalyptic Black Metal, dramatic, theatrical, authentic, full of avant-garde elements and nonconformist sequences! The digipack is also sensational, therefore this CD is a jewelry piece for collectors! [slagmaur.com](http://slagmaur.com)

Rating: 0.92/1

#### **SOPOR AETERNUS (GER)**

"Les Fleurs Du Mal" CD'07 (APOCALYPTIC VISION)

This is the last years' most awaited release... at least for me! And I can tell you with all my heart that it was worth waiting for! Anna Varney Cantodea's universe is a unique one,

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individualized and completely immune to fade or ephemeral. There's no way to listen to SOPOR without turning loose from the day to day life and, even if you try to stay in the normal reality, you'll fail, as this genius's music casts you within its first accords in an abstract realm, where is no contour nor shades, no communication, neither dialogue, but solely isolation into listening! The choirs, the violins and all the other instruments atypical for Dark Wave or Gothic unveil a particular charm, while the voice is simply unique and everything pendulates between sorrow and morbid, amorphous mirth...! This work continues the previous one as we can find the same sound line: melodic, rhythmic, staccato, some experimental scents yet on shorter sequences... this last aspect might be the sole minus of the album... aside that, the label's presentation is complete: "Dutch baroque-organs and analogue synthesizers are merging the centuries quite effortlessly, while angelic boys-choirs and powerful male voices in devoted hymn are praising the sexless beauty of their virtuous maiden Queen. The bright sound of the celesta is omnipresent and rolls off like gentle morning-dew of the skilfully delicate web, which, woven at night by all kind of strings and woodwinds, vibrates lustfully from the gloomy toll of the clarion-bells. Undeniably grave are the trombones and trumpets, huge the timpani and drums, and yet they manage to raise such an intoxicating whirl of energy, that even the saddest spirit is easily lifted up to those mysterious spheres of splendid joy." The imagery is also exquisite, as the CD's box is filled with all sorts of accessories for delighting the collector, including Anna's original signature and not a scanned one. This musical jewel can not, may not lack your collection!

[soporaeternus.de](http://soporaeternus.de)

Rating:

#### **SOTHIS (US)**

"De Oppresso Liber" CD'08

(CANDLELIGHT)

Even though the project made its debut approximately ten years ago, the five Americans have only released one demo, quite savoured within the "Promised Land". With a formula of five, SOTHIS presents an aggressive Symphonic Black Metal, similar to DIMMU BORGIR, but with less melodic elements even though it sounds a lot like the Northern bands! I even thought that their pedigree is partly Norwegian. There no originality, nothing special, nothing to make a remarkable band out of SOTHIS! They are lucky to come from America and I cannot remember any other US band to play this type of music in such a good manner! We are dealing with a quality replica for any Black Metal admirer, and this debut sounds quite good from the point of view of the interpretation! The keyboard is at its best, the guitars are viciously amazing, the voice is both casual and diabolical; everything sounds perfect for Black Metal! Considering that it is a debut, I can say that I will keep in mind the following: SOTHIS, the best American Black Metal Symphonic debutante band, with a clear and bombastic sound, with harmonies based more on the aggressive rather than atmospheric parts, and with an impeccable interpretation! [sothis.us](http://sothis.us)

Rating: 0.85/1

#### **SPITE EXTREME WING**

(ITA) "Vltra" CD'08

(AVANTGARDE)

The fourth album is the most confusing one for me. I uncover all kinds of influences on it, Folk, Atmospheric, even Rock, Experimental or Punk. Not to mention THE BEATLES cover version... Structured on old Black Metal, with Thrash influences, the band inserts distinct elements on almost every track, enhancing with vividness a somehow bizarre sound. Clearly, "Vltra" is better than "Magnificat", "Non Dvcor, Dvcor" or „Kosmokrator“, there former releases, but that's not sufficient. I appreciate the mixture of finely entwined

influences on the 10 compositions, but I failed to understand what the band wants through this album. If it is, or it is not Antidepressant Black Metal, you will need to find out for yourselves... You can also find on their site a quite weird video, a quality recording nevertheless.

[spiteextremewing.org](http://spiteextremewing.org)

Rating: 0.76/1

#### **STAR OF ASH (NOR)**

"The Thread" CD'08

(CANDLELIGHT)

Some time has passed since Heidi Solberg Tveitan made her solo debut, known by everybody within the Metal scene as Ihriel. It seems that Ihshan inspires her a lot, even though with this album she concentrates on bringing to light another musical dimension, the Ambient Electronic Experimental one. Less melancholic as "Iter. Viator", yet more technical and intricate, with quite atmospheric interludes and an elegant female voice, Heidi enhances an atypical music, saturated in mystery and with an inner beauty hard to apprehend at times. Saying that "The Thread" is an abstract album would be too much, yet it would be unfair to state that it is a normal one too. It is different, especially as Kris Rygg, Kenji Siratori and Markus Reuter are among the guests. Therefore, it is obvious what sonorities we are dealing with, isn't it? I've enjoyed this album a lot, even though some of the tracks seem quite pale and lacking nuance. [starofash.com](http://starofash.com)

Rating: 0.88/1

#### **STILLE OPPROR (NOR)**

"S.o2" CD'08

(KARMAKOSMETIX)

Christer Andre Cederberg, the guitarist of the legendary band IN THE WOODS..., released a genius album! After an instrumental debut, less enjoyed by the audience and promoted 7 years ago, Chris returned with a new material, one which I hope will be debated longer, one of which people will talk much longer! We are dealing with the same atmosphere I've uncovered a long time ago on "Omnia"! I've discovered once

again a world that I thought vanished with that particular album, maybe with "Strange In Stereo" too! Less Metal than IN THE WOODS..., scenting of DRAWN, without any influence from ANIMAL ALPHA's Punk, yet revealing lots of PINK FLOYD elements, having an inspired Psychedelic Rock impress, and an odd fusion tending towards Jazz, Chris succeeds from his first accords to catapult me towards an imaginative and contemplative realm, far away from all that I breathe, live or smell most of my time! There are 7 tracks, and the last one is instrumental. There are three tracks that I hardly can part with: "Reconnect", "Disquietude" and "S.o2"! These tracks are of an unbelievable melancholy, and their conceptual and interpretative form is unique! There are some noisier fragments on the rest of the tracks, I barely understand them by the way, maybe they are meant to contrast the others, for placing a better value on the calm, tranquil, introspective ones! "Meanwhile" seems to be the most representative, while "L Tune" is meant to be the most suitable for accessing this particular universe. The guitars sound magisterial, the male voices harmonize everything (you can imagine that Jan Kenneth's Transit is easily spotted too), and the female ones slightly remind me of Synne Diana, while the keyboard transcends you towards pure oblivion... Remarkable, yes, the album is remarkable, with a unique emotional dimension that will certainly fascinate the ones desiring to listen to something unconventional! For me, as I'm still unhealed after my IN THE WOODS... wounds, these new tracks are a nostalgic dressing that tranquilizes my musical existence once again... as I firstly lived it years ago at maximum intensity, almost unbelievably high! At least for me... so far! I would strongly desire to see this band live, to find out whether my regrets towards the last IN THE WOODS... concert are or aren't justified... even if it happened a long way back! At all Metal, very Rock, scenting

very Rock, scenting of Pop, and set into an original psychedelic oasis, STILLE OPPROR manages to transform me into a definitive fan of this music, even though we are talking about a sole album! Some patience is required, lots of attention, pale light, a glass of wine and plenty isolation from the daily routine, from anyone else, even from yourself... for an hour at least! It's completely worth it...

[myspace.com/stilleopprior](http://myspace.com/stilleopprior)

Rating: 1/1

#### **STOA (GER)**

"Silmand" CD'08

(ALICE IN...)

Olaf Parusel is one of the most talented musicians of the Goth scene and his activity that started in 1991 constitutes a significant benchmark for a lot of bands, especially as the three albums released during approximately 17 years remain collectors items, for me, at least. If we are to take into account the fact that the previous STOA album was released 7 years ago, then we could say that the appearance of "Silmand" is indeed a true event! This time around Olaf presents to us a more colourful album, one that is oscillating between Classical Minimalist and Goth Pop, with differences between tracks, some of them with a more experimental sound rather than characteristic to STOA. Being also based on external collaborators like Louisa John Krol, Pieter Nooten (ex-CLAN OF XYMOX), Mark Hartung, Brett Taylor or Ralf Jehnert (LOVE IS COLDER THAN DEATH), the new compositions might confuse the listener who is accustomed with the impeccable Dark Orchestral note or with Mandy Bernhardt's remarkable voice, the same vocals that have managed to create a fantastic universe on the previous album. Perhaps the most experimental but also different of them all, with commercial touches on some tracks, the new STOA is an album to retain, even if the sum of the influences does not represent the trump card I was anxiously expecting. The CD's booklet is very elegant and refined, the lyrics are sang in different languages,

something that gives the feeling of a "globalised" album, with a multi-cultural message. Special, intelligent but captivating only for a few seconds, there where STOA remains STOA, where alongside with Mandy's operatic voice and Olaf's grave and somber piano, Christina Fischer's cello inspiringly intervenes... and what fantastic atmosphere you can find on "La Lune Blanche", "Iter Devium", "Hanuz Nist"... or on the instrumental "Sakrileg", "Daar", "Ways" or "Modesty"! The work with Louisa seems to be of good omen, just because her voice is absolutely superb and even if its dimension is not as dark as STOA'S sound, it expresses a warmer and perhaps more candid dimension of the glacial universe created by Olaf. Rating: 0.95/1

#### **SUP (FRA)**

"Hegemony" CD'08

(HOLY)

The new album of the French quartet explores the line of that experimental Death Metal with Technical and Progressive tints, with throaty voices being interrupted by singing normal style vocals, guitars with jerky rhythms, a somewhat pale keyboard and monotonous drums. With all due respect for this band whose longevity is to be noted, the new tracks have not made any waves. At least not from my point of view. Rating: 0.82/1

#### **SVARTI LOGHIN (SWE)**

"Empty World" CD'08

(ATMF)

Do you remember the first few FORGOTTEN WOODS albums? Well, this particular project is an elegant replicate of the Norwegian band, putting together in their 6 tracks a sound of remarkable quality, a truly beautiful Depressive Black Metal. I have tried to find something else that is original here, but I couldn't. Perhaps some references going back to the old ALCEST and nothing else. But although lacking its own imprint, this debut is quite well made and it deserves to be taken into consideration. Rating: 0.85/1

**THE HOWLING VOID (US)**

"Megaliths Of The Abyss"

CD'08 (BLACK PLAGUE)

Ryan's project sounds quite alright, as the Funeral Doom atmosphere seems to have found its perfect home. Based on a throaty voice and prolonged guitar solos along a bombastic keyboard, THE HOWLING VOID presents a nice copy of early WINTER, scenting even of Finnish Funeral, similar to SKEPTICISM. In four very long tracks, Ryan contours an apocalyptic mood, depressing, hosting no shade of hope within. I recommend this album to Slow Depressive Doom Metal fans. [myspace.com/thehowlingvoid](http://myspace.com/thehowlingvoid)

Rating: 0.84/1

#### **THE HUMAN VOICE**

"Exit Lines" CD'08

(EIBON)

A new release of Mauro Berchi's label, the one known for his work with CANAAN, amongst others... The Dark Ambient line continues to be Eibon's direction, and this project of Harleif Langas leaves from the roots of RAISON D'ETRE and gets all the way to NORTHAUNT. Actually this is another project of the guy known for his activity with NORTHAUNT, this time though the Dark note isn't the theme that governs the sound, especially as we discover Post Rock elements, Noise fragments and melodic passages as well. Nothing different, nothing special, just a synthetic computer generated music that can be peacefully digested only together with some inspiringly chosen projections. An elegant digipack that gives away too little, same as the message of this sinister project. Rating: 0.80/1

#### **THE PRIDE OF WOLVES**

(GER) "Dawn Of The Wolves"

CD'08

(SKULLLINE)

The blend of Electro with Experimental and Ambient makes this album expressive enough and well framed, this despite the significant variety of stiles found throughout the 12 tracks. Naja af Wolffen and Blak Wolf are showing us that they have an interesting

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approach to music and I'd say the future will reserve other interesting things from their compositions. This particular album seems to be more like a sum of ideas that were placed one after the other in an unstructured manner, rather than a conceptual work. One thing is certain, this project was a positive surprise for me and I believe that this material can be a surprise even for those who prefer the synthesized sound. Rating: 0.88/1

#### **THE VOID (ITA)**

"Vision Of The Truth" CD'08 (MY KINGDOM MUSIC)

That's an Italian trio that steps on the same path TIAMAT or MOONSPELL did, maybe a bit influenced by PARADISE LOST or THE CURE and even TYPE O NEGATIVE. We therefore have a pretty modest Dark Metal, scenting now and then of PENTAGRAM's or ST VITUS's Doom, but there is a very stimulating sound on the whole, quite bombastic, with Gothic and also Melancholic influences, with normal voices, abundant keyboard and heavy guitars. I've tried to make this album more understandable to me, but the high diversity of the nine tracks pretty much confused my hearing, especially as Diego's voice isn't remarkable, not to mention that it even seemed to be off-key at times, especially when he sings low tonalities. An appreciable debut if we are to consider the intention, yet insufficient to make an impression.

www.into-thevoid.com

Rating: 0.74/1

#### **THEODOR BASTARD (RUS)**

"Pustota" CD'04

(FULLDOZER)

Although the album is very old and in the meantime the Russians have brought out other two releases, I thought it would be good to write about this brilliant achievement. An innovative blend of Gothic with Oriental mixes and Dark Ambient or Hip-Hop rhythms, a fantastic female voice, a male one that rarely intervenes and only in order to allow some contrast

within the nuances of the sound, an intelligent keyboard and guitars that do not take account of any musical frames, everything is at superlative! I must admit that Yenei Veva's voice is like a mental bandage for me, especially as the modulations made reminded me of the times when Lisa Gerrard started off. And I am not exaggerating when making such comparisons! If you want to be clear about what Yena can do, then try the new SHIVA IN EXILE album, called "Nour", where along with Stefan she presents us with a set of excellent songs, starting from Darkwave echoes and ending with some tribal ones. But returning to "Pustota" I can say that is enough to listen only 3 tracks on the album and you will discover that "Pustota", "Sadannah" and "Isolation" are the most expressive, dynamic sequences and melodies throughout the entire THEODOR BASTARD history. The album continues to dwell on the mystical dimension, offering listeners an apparent confused image, but full of elements that are specific to the band. Please note that in the meantime a new album, "Belo", was released, a lot more introverted as far as its message is concerned but equally fascinating! Rating: 1/1

#### **THEODOR BASTARD (RUS)**

"Belo" CD'08

(Q-CODE)

You have no idea how anxiously I waited for this album! Actually, it's only out in Russia, but the band sent me the release in order to get the review out fast. What can I say after the first audition? I was expecting something better than 'Pustota', something slightly more melodic, more atmospheric, and more bombastic! Well... I was to find nothing that I expected to find... everything is too tangled up, too complex, too ethnic, and full of multiple effects, of a very present electronic side, samples and distorted noises, trip-hop rhythms and a pronounced Dark atmosphere... Yana's voice is the only thing that is up to the mark, detached and imposing, reigning the sound. More experimental as ever, with noisy guitars, original

Folk Ethno harmonies, with insertions of less commonly used instruments within sounds of this sort, like cello or harp, with an interesting vocal mix found on some of the tracks, where Fedor Svolotch mends his voice through the most sinister ways; THEODOR BASTARD creates with "Belo", the strangest, most complex, technical and diverse album of its entire history. The 10 tracks tend to me more tangled up than I was expecting, less accessible at a superficial hearing, all bar "Budu Zhit", the reference track for this album, where the melody and the Techno effects dominate everything, alongside a fantastic voice. On 'Ochi' I find that the Electro rhythms take over the sound and the male voice tries to present a different approach as well, more abstract and more experimental. 'Belo' is a very calm track that places the accent only on voice and on some abstract harmonies. 'Son' introduces us into an universe sketched by echoes and surrounding effects, where Yana's voice comes first, together with the harp, cello and a few mesmerising samples at the end... "Uhozhu" offers a peaceful dimension, with a unique way of communicating set between the cello, the guitar, the voice and some strange samples, while "Vernis Chistim" is intelligently mixing male and female voices on a noisy trip-hop/Electro background reminiscent of NINE INCH NAILS... Same with 'Snega', another track that is based on Electro samples and the somewhat mixed heteronymous female voice that finds itself being accompanied by an explosive and dynamic rhythm... 'Mir' is the trailer track of the album, I believe so anyway, it has its own professionally made video as well, something that could fit or suit within any music channel. The most atmospheric, romantic and with a Pop savour seems to be "Lovlya Zlih Zverey", a remarkable ballad, melancholic, atmospheric and where Yana has a natural voice, sang in a light and relaxed fashion, together with cello, harp and other outstanding instruments

of percussion, not leaving out the keyboard, used in an intelligent manner as well. 'Voda' shows us that the Ethno Oriental elements continue to be of reference in the Electro Goth structure created by the musicians, the vocal parts also benefiting a varied and unique representation as well. I would have liked to listen to a 'Pustota' style THEODOR BASTARD, but I didn't get anywhere close to that. It is a different sort of THEODOR BASTARD, I can't say a better or a worst one... but completely different, a lot more ethnic, more complex from the point of view of the instrument usage, with styles untwining unusually with the vocal prints. I must stress though: if you will not listen to this album attentively you might end up thinking that it is monotonous, lacking a special glow... This was my perception as well... initially... Now, after "Budu Zhit" refuses to exit my mind, I'm already of a different opinion... The key towards understanding the THEODORE BASTARD sound is isolation from the day to day affairs, headphones on and entering a state of trance. Even if the lyrics played in Russian could present themselves as an obstacle towards the correct assimilation of the concept, of the multiple effects, the samples, the noises, percussions or changes within the rhythm, it ultimately has no chance to bore the ear... It is clear that Fedor worked hard on this album, the instrumental part being very very technical, hard to describe in words! In any case, an album that left me breathless, but only after a few successive auditions. I am now 100% sure that I want to see them perform live, because they are something completely different from what I have listened to until not... Rating: 1/1

#### **THIS GENTLE HORROR**

(US) "Early Love Music"

CD'08

(THE FOSSIL DUNGEON)

That's a beautiful Gothic Rock! Randy from HEAVEN FALLS HARD participated, and the duet keeps on the path of bands that inspired them, meaning

JOY DIVISION, THE CURE, SISTERS OF MERCY or BAUHAUS. Everything is fresh, all sounds clear and rhythmic, the keyboard is bombastic and the Goth scent is purely remarkable! I can even uncover some elements of horror soundtracks, as one of Carpenter's, Goblin's or Morricone's movies would follow. So, DEPECHE MODE fans out there who enjoy a more Goth like approach to their music, do keep in mind the name of this band! [myspace.com/thisgentlehorror](http://myspace.com/thisgentlehorror) Rating: 0.85/1

#### **TODESBONDEN (US)**

"Sleep Now, Quiet Forest"

CD'08

(PROPHECY)

Laura Ann Haus's fragile and mighty voice is more than familiar, especially for the ones listening to AUTUMN TEARS. Obviously scenting of THE 3RD AND THE MORTAL, THEATRE OF TRAGEDY debut or early THE GATHERING, with Folk, Celtic (Loreena McKennitt) influences, TODESBONDEN reveals a bombastic debut, a well structured one. Both Metal - given the guitar riffs, and very Atmospheric if we concentrate on piano, keyboards, violin and other Folk but very Ethereal instruments, we may get enraptured by the aura of Laura's soprano voice. Even though this sound brings absolutely nothing new, we might consider the interesting and successful style combination that makes me wanting to go back in time, about ten years ago, when Gothic Metal with female vocals mesmerized Europe, and Loreena's music started to conquer more and more fans. I truly enjoyed listening to this album!

[todesbonden.com](http://todesbonden.com)

Rating: 0.90/1

#### **TRANSIT (NOR)**

"Decent Man On A Desperate Moon" CD'08

(KARMAKOSMETIX)

Jan Kenneth has become a father for the second time, so we can say that he is now more than a decent man! I have no idea



where is that desperate moon, yet surely not within this album! The sound of this project has nothing to do with what he was doing with IN THE WOODS... and I can hardly say it hosts a Metal scent within it! We are dealing with a more avant-garde Rock, a quite relaxing one, with a few Experimental elements, some Pop influences and that's all. The voice dominates the rest of the instruments, yet the final result isn't at all convincing! To me it seems pretty fade, lacked in a precise direction, as the tracks are quite different and do not follow a specific path. The sole connector is the voice that also fails to excel on certain fragments! This experiment is quite confusing to me, maybe even more than the other project, SOXPAN. I can understand that Jan wants to have a different approach to music, but TRANSIT hasn't convinced me at all! Or maybe I didn't have the right mood to listen to it distinctly? Ah, that's too Rock for me... [myspace.com/kkxrex](http://myspace.com/kkxrex). Rating: 0.80/1

#### **TRASCENDING BIZARRE?**

(GRE) "The Serpents's

Manifests" CD'08

(DISSONANT)

I remember that 4-5 years ago there was a lot of good feedback directed towards the debut „The Four Scissors“, as it was compared to ARCTURUS. Now, the six Greeks unveil a new material, in the same Symphonic Occult Black Metal manner. Therefore, CRADLE OF FILTH's or DIMMU BORGIR's fans, but also SEPTIC FLESH or ROTTING CHRIST admirers can serenely enjoy a truly fine material. The musicians are quite talented, and I was nicely surprised by the way they play the instruments, including the voice that has some very successful inflections! With two synths on the background, the sound is a bombastic one, full of atmosphere, packed in some Classical influences, all put together in a rapid, even brutal, formula. Although nothing is original, the Greek band manages to show that they can play uncompromised Black

Metal in Greek, in the way ROTTING CHRIST used to do years ago! There are some incredible solos; you could almost bet that you are listening to Heavy or Speed Metal! We can also find interesting instrumental interludes, touching of all kind of styles and proving that the Greeks are not solely limited to Black Metal. If you want to know a few other projects in which the members activate, I can mention DOL AMMAD, CUBICAL SPHERE, ECHIDNA, SYNESTHESIA, AUT OF THE LAIR, REX MUNDI, FINAL ANSWER... It is a trendy album all right, but I find it praise worthy for the interpretation and the quality of the sound!

trascendingbizarre.com  
Rating: 0.91/1

**TRIARI** (GER)  
"Muse In Arms" CD'08  
(ETERNAL SOUL)

After two albums that have impressed the Industrial Ambient scene, Christian Erdmann now comes with the most inspired and interesting release to date. 11 elitist tracks, dominated by an unmistakable Martial rhythm, at times with warrior-like voices, somber orchestral choirs, dramatic effects and resounding echoes, all in an irreproachable manner! Although as structure, the tracks pretty much keep the same orientation, a more careful hearing will bring the realisation that every single one of them emanates a different aura, a different dimension, from dark to melodic ones. "EUROPA" is the most expressive one, "LES EXTRÊMES SE TOUCHENT" insists on a continuous march and a few lyrics in French, the two parts of the track that entitles the album present to us a mix of MARTIAL and MELODICAL – put together in an unusual manner, "FATALIST" is the most representative from the point of view of the energy it releases, on "LEGIO I MARTIA" the bells that are used on a somewhat slow background are framing a dramatic atmosphere, "BIRTH OF A SUN" is highlighting the orchestral dimensions, "ODE TO THE SUN" is focusing on voice, "THE FINAL LEGION"

is reigned by the Orchestral Ambient side while "WIR KOMMEN WIEDER" seems to be the darkest of them all, where a voice dominates the entire sound through specific reciting and a grave musical background. I don't recall to have ever listed to such an imposing album, built within this Classical Martial Industrial manner! Full of strange melodic auras, cold, glacial, with shadows of some glorious past times, but with bombastic accords as well, very atmospheric, the project at hand shows us that music composed on a PC, if correctly conceived, can take sublime forms... and in fact, when carefully listening to this album something seems to rise/reborn from within, perhaps something that has been lying latently... incredible make! I don't know though if TRIARI can make something better than it did here... I can't comprehend an even more mature release that would follow the same musical direction... unless it will change the style or if it will make musical compromises, perhaps insisting on more melody, taking the sound towards a synthetic Pop... I hope that will not be the case. If I haven't been clear enough until now, there is another convincing argument: the entire release was mastered by Jouni Havukainen of IN SLAUGHTER NATIVES, so you can imagine that the Dark Apocalyptic Industrial note is mounted on the same level as the very opposite Classical Ambient Martial. The booklet is very elegant and neat; there was a limited edition released as well but it sold out within a few hours... everything is noble, full of dignity, fascinating and at the same time minimalist and simple... the end result wraps around you even from the first harmonies, throwing you immediately after into a very different world, where justice, honour and patriotism emanate in a constructive way.

Rating: 1/1

**TRINITHOS** (GER)  
"333" CD'08  
(HEIMATFOLK)  
Martin T.'s project is incredibly good! Especially since we are

discussing about three different chapters: within the first one the Folk/NeoFolk dimension dominates the whole sound, in the second one the electronic elements force a more alert rhythm, while in the last one we discover one with a strange feel to it, somewhat more acoustic and more atmospheric, with flutes and other traditional instruments. Throughout the entire album we encounter all sorts of guitars, a decent percussion, violin, warm, calm and quiet male voices and other dream-like female ones... I was pleasantly surprised by this material that, as I was to find out, was first released in 2005! Although the language used is German, the entire TRINITHOS concept is an imposing one, something that proves that Martin is indeed a talented musician, with many other projects he collaborates with. Rating: 0.95/1

#### **TRONUS ABYSS**

"Vuoto Spazio Trionfo" CD'08  
(ATMF)

Pretty confusing... some tracks are interesting, other mediocre. It's obvious that the musicians have something in their minds, but the delivery is confusing... With a Metal structure, with obvious Black Metal references but also a lot of Electronic elements, Ambient and even Noise/Apocalyptic, incantations, atypical rhythms, all in an interesting mix, with guitar echoes that remind me of MONUMENTUM or CANAAN, screaming voices, whispered or reciting... it is somewhat more interesting than the 2003 "Kampf", but it is lacking that direction, that feeling of clarity... I don't know... too bad that it isn't more structured, although the fact that it isn't just copying the experimental Black Metal is a positive thing, as otherwise it would have sounded pretty awful. I wasn't astonished by this band but I will definitely be receptive when hearing of it from now on and this due to their intelligent approach to extreme music. Rating: 0.81/1

#### **TRUE MIND** (ROM)

"No More Silence"  
MCD'08

After FROZEN DUSK, another debutant band tries to prove to us that Epic can combine with Symphonic, on an atmospheric Gothic Metal structure with female vocals! Moreover, there are some Progressive influences too, so that the youngsters from Brasov present four "over-dressed" tracks, with a quality sound (yet seemingly too artificial) for a material done out of their own pockets, plus an incisive and very active keyboard (probably they adore NIGHTWISH), modest guitars (except some beautiful solos) and the drums that seem to communicate with the keyboard, rather than anything else... as for the female voice... I don't know, it is pleasant all right, but the operatic dimension it tries to animate seems a bit fake, probably due to the fact it tries to imitate Tarja! As I've said before, the keyboard seems to be the key element for the entire orchestration, while the rest of the instruments are barely energetic, lacked in contour, and without expressivity. The female voice should allow itself more freedom of expression; otherwise, it will end up sounding the way a thin male voice would sound when trying to growl. Well, I have to say that on the "Stop Killing Them" track, a male voice is inserted, but in my opinion it would be best if it wouldn't be included at all. Thus, this is an elegant debut, one that shouldn't be omitted. Still, TRUE MIND has a long way to go until it identifies its own sound! It is to be noted that the MCD has a nice, professional booklet. truemind-rock.com  
Rating: 0.81/1

#### **TYR** (FER)

"Land" CD'08  
(NAPALM)

Heri Joensen returns with a new album in a very short time. The third chapter of TYR focuses on the same Viking Metal we've got used to, transgressing all sorts of Metal styles, from Heavy or Doom all the way to Progressive and even Celtic

influences. MANOWAR in its Viking version, that's how I could characterize the sound of the four musicians coming from the Feroe Islands. This album presents two elaborated tracks, more than 10 minutes long, while the rest are quite similar in structure and tonality. I guess it is the most complex album of the band, yet it doesn't seem all that inspired too. The sound is fine, both in what concerns the music and the recording/mixing, but something gives it paleness. The force of expression is missing, there is no power and dynamic of the sound, given the approached style. Furthermore, the band has a huge success live, and this can solely bring me joy, even though as far as I'm concerned TYR is a mediocre band. The only scent of authenticity is given by their destination. And this seems to be liked by the fans too!

tyr.cc  
Rating: 0.78/1

#### **VARDLOKKUR** (DEN)

"Fragmenteret Okkult  
Bespottelse" CD'08  
(DGF)

This duo presents to us an old style pure Black Metal, with little or no modern influences, with nothing special... the typical aggressive sound and nothing else. The band members also play in other projects like MONOMANIA, GIDIM and MZORAXC, and when performing live they are joined by the bass player from ANGANTYR, Ynleborgaz. I would have liked to write some more about this band, but since it's only simple Black Metal, I really don't have anything else I can mention. Rating: 0.80/1

V/A - "Might Is Right-Northern  
Warchants II" CD'08  
(DGF)

I appreciate what the German label does with these compilations! We have almost 30 bands on two CDs, most of them Pagan Viking Folk Metal, not quite known, but promoted by labels like DGF, Blood Fire Death, Agonia, Ketzer, Mercenary, Temple Of Darkness... so, we have tracks (some exclusive ones)

from: OCTOBER FALLS, MYRKGRAV, ATOMKRAKT, YGGDRASIL, IRMINSUL, NYDVIND, CARVED IN STONE, HEL, STURMPERCHT, INFAUST, UTLAGR, NUMEN, URGEHAL, DANTALION, SOULSEARCH, HELRITT, BRAN BARR, FOSCOR, FORTRESSE... As a bonus we get a DVD with the 2007 Ragnarok festival, where, along some of the bands already mentioned, also feature KAMPFAR, HELHEIM, ELUVEITIE, MANEGARM, RIGER or TYR. Even if the video recording is quite modest, the viewer can now see how things went last year, and even catch a glimpse of some bands that you won't normally see caught on tape. In conclusion, this is a useful compilation, one deserving all the money!!!  
Rating: 0.90/1

V/A - "15 Years Jubileum Metal  
Attack" CD'08  
(NO COLOURS)

Well, the German label now got to the point of celebrating 15 years of activity! I remember that's from where DIMMU BORGIR started! On this very compilation we can find tracks of the bands under contract, 18 at number, starting with GRAVELAND and JUVENES all the way to NEBIROS or THORON. Nothing interesting, just a good starting point for the ones willing to discover how dark is the orientation of Black Metal bands releasing their albums under the NO COLOURS banner. HYPERLINK "http://www.no-colours-records.de/" \t "\_blank" www.no-colours-records.de

V/A - "As The Book Of War"  
Volume II CD'08  
(WAERLOGA/RADIO  
RIVENDELL)

I must admit that I am not an initiated guy in what concerns the sonorities of the majority of the bands on this compilation. This is the first material that I get from the Swedish label, and also the biggest and most pleasant 2008 surprise. Let me clear away the bands I've known so far: ATARAXIA, with a

track from their last album and UNTO ASHES, a band under contract with Projekt Records and of which I've written Peter's/RAISON project. coldmeat.se  
Rating: 0.80/1

**VIRGIN BLACK** (AUS)  
"Requiem: Fortissimo" CD'08  
(THE END)

London and Samantha manage to present us their second chapter from the trilogy announced two years ago, a release that will be completed until the end of next year. After a "Mezzo" version, full of symphonic, choral and orchestral influences, that I've reviewed about four months ago, the Australians return with a more Metal, tougher and Darker chapter, very Heavy and with a low tonality! Rowan London's voice is now quite deep, extremely guttural and aggressive, the guitars are solemn, everything sounds somber, contouring apotheosis. This is perhaps the most Doom Death Metal sound in the band's history and it cannot fail into satisfying the expectations of the most aggressive minded musical fans. The tracks are conceived in a slower and more burdening manner, and the depressive mood makes its mark even on the female voices that can be heard in the background! The bass plays a role of its own while being brightly used on slow sequences and the drum tries to give some sort of a shape, a rhythm and some expressivity to a universe with no hope! "Darkness" is the most elaborated track and it sounds beautiful, as its twelve minutes inspiringly conclude the album that tends to turn wearisome now and then, should it be listened more than once. "Lacrimosa" does too unveil distinct sonorous shades. Yet, be sure that the storming dimension fulminate your audition from the first riffs you get to hear... Comparing it with the first chapter, more experimental and complex, this second one is more barren, with a black and white feel to it, if you wish... All that remains is the last part, "Pianissimo"... Let's wait and see the calm it brings along.

virginblack.com  
Rating: 0.88/1

#### **WERKRAUM** (GER)

"Early Love Music" CD'08  
(STEINKLANG)

A pure Folk album! Axel Frank, alongside his friends from LADY MORPHIA and CHANGES, has now released 14 tracks that transit us uniquely from Medieval to Traditional or Psychedelic. It's not exactly the style that I frequently listen to, but this album certainly got my attention due to a crystal clear sound and the musicians' talent. We have guitars, flute, mandolins, multiple percussions, piano, bodhran, bass, drums, hurdy gurdy, accordion, and moreover, various voices, both female and male, that perfectly resonate with this Folk style. Complex and brightly conceived album! The digipack is quite beautiful, while the booklet is saturated with interesting texts and detailed technical data. werkraum.org  
Rating: 0.88/1

#### **WOVENHAND** (US)

"Ten Stones" CD'08  
(SOUNDS FAMILY)

Davide Eugene Edwards is a character known in the Rock Americana sphere, especially as he has some activity behind him and a few albums to show for. I've received this new album by chance and I can say that I was shocked of what I could hear in only 10 tracks: Rock, Folk, Punk, Alternative Indie, Americana, Jazz and Blues... From Bob Dylan and Jim Morrison to Joy Division, everything in an original way, with a remarkable voice, talented instrumentalists, the perfect atmosphere to listen to a complex, diverse and even, complete album! The only thing that bothers me is that the Dark note is present only on a few tracks, "Not One Stone" being by far, my favorite! Thus, an album for the open minded, for those who want to listen to something else as well, perhaps more commercial, perhaps more popular but carried out with great skill!

Rating: 0.90/1

**XERION (ESP)**  
"Nocturnal Misanthropia"  
CD'08

(SCHWARZDORN)  
Nocturno's band released the first album after seven years of underground activity, promoting the style of Galician Black Metal. I've listened to the album carefully but I couldn't find many interesting elements. There are some well performed sequences, with rhythm breakouts, lots of atmosphere, plus some inspired guitar riffs and a fine sounding keyboard, but that's pretty much all. The rest is common Black Metal, with aggressive vocals and infernal rhythms, alike the one executed by Northern bands. I must consider we are talking about a debut though, and if we are to look at it this way, than the rating could turn more indulgent. There is also a video on the CD, not very innovative yet presenting attractive landscapes and adding value to the album.

otronodexerion.com  
Rating: 0.80/1

**YEARNING (FIN)**  
"Merging Into Landscaped"  
CD'08 (HOLY)

This band is also a veteran of the Doom Metal scene, and it unveils a unique melancholic dimension, remarkable throughout the penetrating and solemn normal voice and also through the Dark atmosphere created by the various intelligently performed instruments. The new album is the most symphonic one, saturated in Classical influences, yet full of both melody and nostalgia all along. YEARNING simply couldn't release other than a beautiful material, because this is the most appropriate characterization for it. Personally, I still prefer the first two albums, concentrated on the Dark Doom Metal dimension, to the last two ones insisting on the Gothic and Melodic approach, enjoyable, but far too rhythmic for YEARNING. I don't know if the band members have reached the end of YEARNING's path, but I am sure that Juhani's new Funeral Doom project, COLOSSEUM, is closer to 104



my soul. Yet, maybe it is all just a matter of preferences.  
yearning.cjb.net  
Rating: 0.85/1

**YGGDRASIL (SWE)**  
"Kvaellningsvindar oever Nordroent Land" CD'08 (DET GERMANISKE FOLKET)  
Magnus Wolfhart, the talented musician appreciated for his collaborations with many Swedish bands, and not solely, succeeded to release the official debut of another solo project, one with the same Folk Pagan Metal approach, only this time more Epic and melodic. The current material is a little sample of Atmospheric Metal, swinging between aggressive sequences and calm ones, acoustic, bright interludes, rhythm breakthroughs, Heavy, Power and Black Metal elements, normal voices and some violent ones too... yet, on the whole, the album is dominated by the serene, the domestic dimension, the one easy to be listened and comprehended. More Heavy than FOLKEARTH, but as least as Folk, this very debut deserves to be retained and not only to be remembered.  
yggdrasil-sweden.com  
Rating: 0.90/1

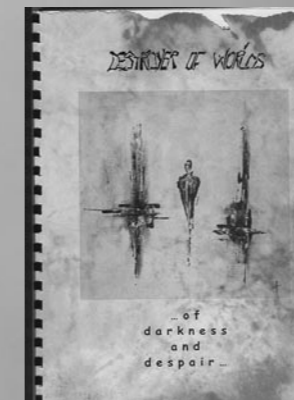
**ZA FRUMI (SWE)**  
"Orders" & "Cults" CD'08 (WAERLOGA)  
Fantasy Dark Epic Music at its best! Simon Kölle and Simon Heath have outrun themselves with the last two new materials, two albums released in 2 different CDs, wrapped in a digipack format and released together, just right for collectors. More Epic than the previous two, more bombastic and symphonic than any other album in this genre, ZA FRUMI presents 22 new tracks, focused on a dominating soundtrack dimension, and also on a sum of abstract elements, hard to comprehend without an adjacent visualisation. I cannot spot great differences between the two albums, and so I've decided to make one review for both of them. I guess it's important to mention that the two guys activate within this scene for a long time now,

and the bands in which they perform are familiar to the fans of the genre: ABNOCTO, ATRIUM CARCERI, MUSTERION, MORTENECK, DORF UNIT, KNAPRIKA, SOJOBLO, ALVSKUGGA, VOLSTOJ or KRUSSELDORF. A journey within distinct realms, a change in musical orientation, another form of perceiving music... Excellent!  
waerloga.com/zafrumi  
Rating: 0.93/1

**ZERIVANA (POL)**  
"Velesvarun" CD'08 (ECHOES OF KOLIBA)  
It is unbelievable what beauties continue to unfold from the real underground! With absolutely no compromises, and with a music coming directly from the heart, Zerivan managed to compose on his own a Neo-Classical Pagan Folk jewel! Everything is born out of programming and keyboards, the vocals rarely intervene, and when they do, they do it in an extremely discrete and mysterious manner. Tribal elements are also present, the emphasis here being found in rhythm and percussion, along with plenty of Neo-Classical, and Heathen scents, which turn Slavonic in Zerivan's version... everything sounds beautiful, the tracks are quite distinct, diversified, saturated in an aura of times long gone, a sound difficult to accomplish given the few instruments involved. I appreciate the fact that there's no monotony within the sound, as the keyboard is played in an inspired way! If you enjoy WONGRAVEN, or the last BURZUM releases, or even friendlier sonorities, as the early PUISSANCE or PENITENT, then this digipack will give you instant and certain satisfaction. The booklet is quite elegant, the colours used and the images are in perfect harmony with the ambience created by a relaxing sound! And if I am to consider that this is his debut after eight years of attempts, I cannot fail into being indulgent!  
myspace.com/zerivana  
Rating: 0.94/1

KOGAIONON 10

Considering that the Internet is continuously evolving, the column reviewing the print media has drastically diminished, now hosting only a few remnants of something that once represented everything... after music... Even so, two old friends and colleagues of mine made the effort of printing something and this is of importance to me. Hopefully not only for me. I would have wanted to write about other publications as well, but unfortunately I have found nothing else to come out of this underground scene... Perhaps there are more out there, but I didn't manage to get in touch with them. On the other hand, I have also included the review of a photo album that left me more than pleasantly surprised, something that I thought you should know of. What will the future bring? Will fanzines still be published? Nobody really knows... Treasure the ones that exist still, especially as they are made out of respect and admiration towards a musical current and in order to maintain and promote the underground unaltered by mercantile modernisms!



**DESTROYER OF WORLDS**  
"...of darkness and despair"  
magazine '08

Roy, known for his activity with Imhotep, decided to publish, in a very limited number, a fanzine dedicated to classical Black Metal. For this purpose, he has made a few very interesting interviews with: GORGOROTH, GEHENNA, DARK THRONE, IXXI, LIMBONIC ART, ANCIENT RITES and MAYHEM. Although the layout is somewhat modest, the print quality is good. There are a few classical photos to be found within the last pages, but I want you to understand that there is nothing else in the zine but these very very long interviews!!!! For example, MAYHEM takes 15 pages, written in 10 size fonts!!!! It is obvious that this FAN Zine can only become a "Bible" for any follower of the bands mentioned above, or even of the Black Metal genre! I never thought that my friend Roy could put together such a sum of complete interviews... but it seems he has done it – something that can only leave me say: Congratulations!  
imhotep.no  
Rating: 0.92/1



**QVADRIVIUM #5** magazine  
October '08

Mikko Kuronen is one of the most intelligent and inspired journalists from this extreme underground scene and reading his magazines will always put me into a relaxed mood: fine humour, discreet sarcasm, attractive dialogues, multiple details and pertinent considerations... everything coming from the heart, with soul, for quality seeking readers. At one stage I was convinced that QVADRIVIUM has as well disappeared of the market... This new number is a sum of materials written and put together in a relatively long interval, approximately 6 years, with a lot of bands that have represented, or still represent something to those who have loved or still love the sounds of Metal, 80 pages in A4 format, professionally printed, with a simple layout and funny drawings; everything is put together in a very original manner, even elegant, with a copy of an irreproachable savour! We have a good bit of text written with small fonts, small images, captivating interviews, "short confessions", the Dedication

Meter II (I noticed that I wasn't counted here, I guess Eastern Europe doesn't quantize, heh), and pretty much something of everything... Amongst the featured bands you will find: ANATHEMA, DERNIERE VOLANTE, MAYHEM, KAAMOS, EDGE OF SANITY, AGALLOCH, TIAMAT, ON THORNS I LAY, THINE, ULVER, IN THE WOODS..., BATHORY, MANES, and MORBID ANGEL. A magazine exclusively for the connoisseurs, for the collectors... perhaps for the nostalgic... including for those of the legendary ISTEN magazine!  
mikko.kuronen@gmail.com  
Rating: 1/1



**VELEDA THORSSON (USA)**  
"Fragments & The Decline Vol. 1 - The Sedlec Ossuary"  
Photography Book, '08 (LICHT VON DAMMERUNG)  
"The meaning of life is that it stops". Franz Kafka gravely introduces Veleda's 80 pages long black and white photography book. But its not a book is it, it's a journey of discovery, a tribute to beauty in decay, something Veleda likes to immortalise through her art. Tombs, a church, silhouettes of trees, entrances... or exists – depending where you're headed, statues, Christ and... human remains. Bones and 105

skulls form the decorations and furnishings of The Sedlec Ossuary, the notorious Roman Catholic chapel located in The Czech Republic. The ossuary contains between 40,000-70,000 human skeletons, the remains of thousands of people taken by the Black Death, one of the deadliest pandemics in human history. The photograph that reigns on the cover of the book must be one of my favourite. Darkness is comfortable to Veleda but it wouldn't represent anything without light. One needs the other and so she plays with rays of sunshine that cut through the shadows of the dark tombs, she shots every picture within its grave, ancient and full of history atmosphere but allows light to shine upon it and thus bringing out the beauty of the ancient moment. The stillness of the pictures is also helped by the light and the dead becomes alive again, touched by the life that lies within the sunshine. Great work but with an easy to shoot "model" that knows how to "smile" to the camera: the Schwarzenberg coat-of-arms, the chandeliers made of bones and skulls, the Putto with the trumpet and the skull, all putting on a great show for the sake of offering a different approach on life, death and history. It must be added that the present work was done in collaboration with John Haughm of Agalloch, John being involved in the design process and art direction. Perhaps Veleda's next published work will be on Romania, as she is a great admirer and appreciator of Romanian culture and history. You never know...  
myspace.com/veleda  
Rating: 0.92

"In these times of false triumphs, the true resistance comes from those struggling for beliefs considered to be lost."

European salutes via Eastern lands!

So... I feel more noble, blonder, utter positive and extra honorable! I am now part of the European Union! Can you imagine while you're reading these lines, how many advantages you will have from now on when collaborating with the Romanians? Bands, labels, magazines, all of you, hurry up and send all of your stuff here, as now the taxes are insignificantly low, we can talk about real savings, serious potential businesses within the land of Dracula! Therefore, promoting your materials in Romania will turn more and more efficient, as our market is a virgin, unexplored and full of never ending surprises (we could copy the Gold Fever syndrome)! The Romanians are yearning for Metal, music and concerts! Come to the tree of wonders, there's no piracy, nor lies or cheap pilfering, moreover, hypocrisy vanished and life's quality miraculously raised over night (the one between all these years of course)... Even the air I breathe is different now, hosting new and fresh odours, impregnated with a yellow/blue fragrance, the one coming from the big European Family bedeviling to surpass the devouring extinction of the Promised Land, of that young, yet perfect history, where democracy rules, so, all its wealth and abundance had to be shared with the rest of the world! Oh, not to mention that this way of communicating with each other is also done in the American way, the one of that Bill guy and his new VISTA.... Yet, I belong to Europe and I should be proud of that!

OK. No more Balkan/Latin frustrations, nor specific problems, the virtual metamorphosis obsession will now end and so shall the never ending struggle between two continents with dichotomous ways of reasoning, yet knotted together in order to survive! (Imagine: the Americans have come to the point of purchasing the third English football club, Liverpool, and the living legend Beckham is going to play in America!) The other continents, hosting over 80% of the global population do not matter anymore... they are minor details as, in the end, the sole important element that remains is Pareto! That's why I've decided to leave this abnormal normality and enter my rhetorical isolation, wandering towards something pure, hosting natural essences: music!

FEBRUARY 2007



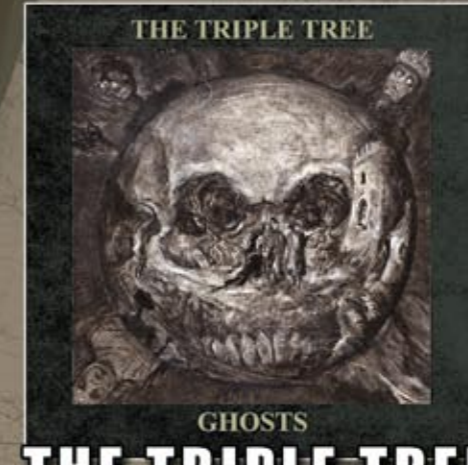
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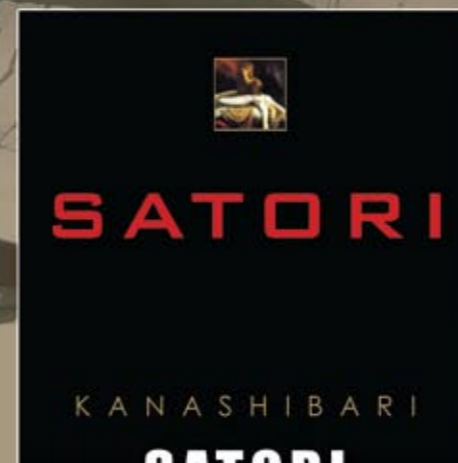
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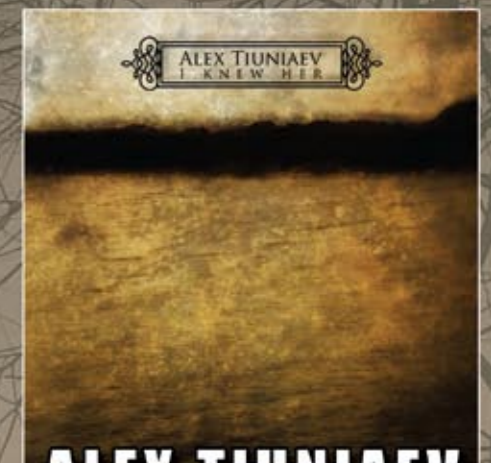
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THE CULTS OF THE WORLD ARE SEEN AS  
PRIMITIVE AND VERY HARSH.

THEY ALL SHARE COMMON GROUND IN THAT  
THEY WORSHIP A DEITY. NOT ALL OF THEM  
ARE SECTS OF MURDER AND BLOOD, BUT  
SOME OF THEM MOST CERTAINLY ARE.



## LEGENDS ACT 4 ORDERS

THE ORDERS OF THE WORLD ARE THE SECRET  
SOCIETIES WITH THE POWER BEHIND THE  
THRONES IN MANY CITIES. THEY ARE ESOTERIC  
WITH ROOTS IN DIFFERENT MYSTIC TRADITIONS  
FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. EVEN THOUGH  
THERE EXISTS MILITARY ORDERS, THEY ARE SET  
APART FROM THE TRULY SECRETIVE ONES WITH  
THE REAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE DARK ARTS AND  
THE COMPLEXITY OF ALCHEMY.



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