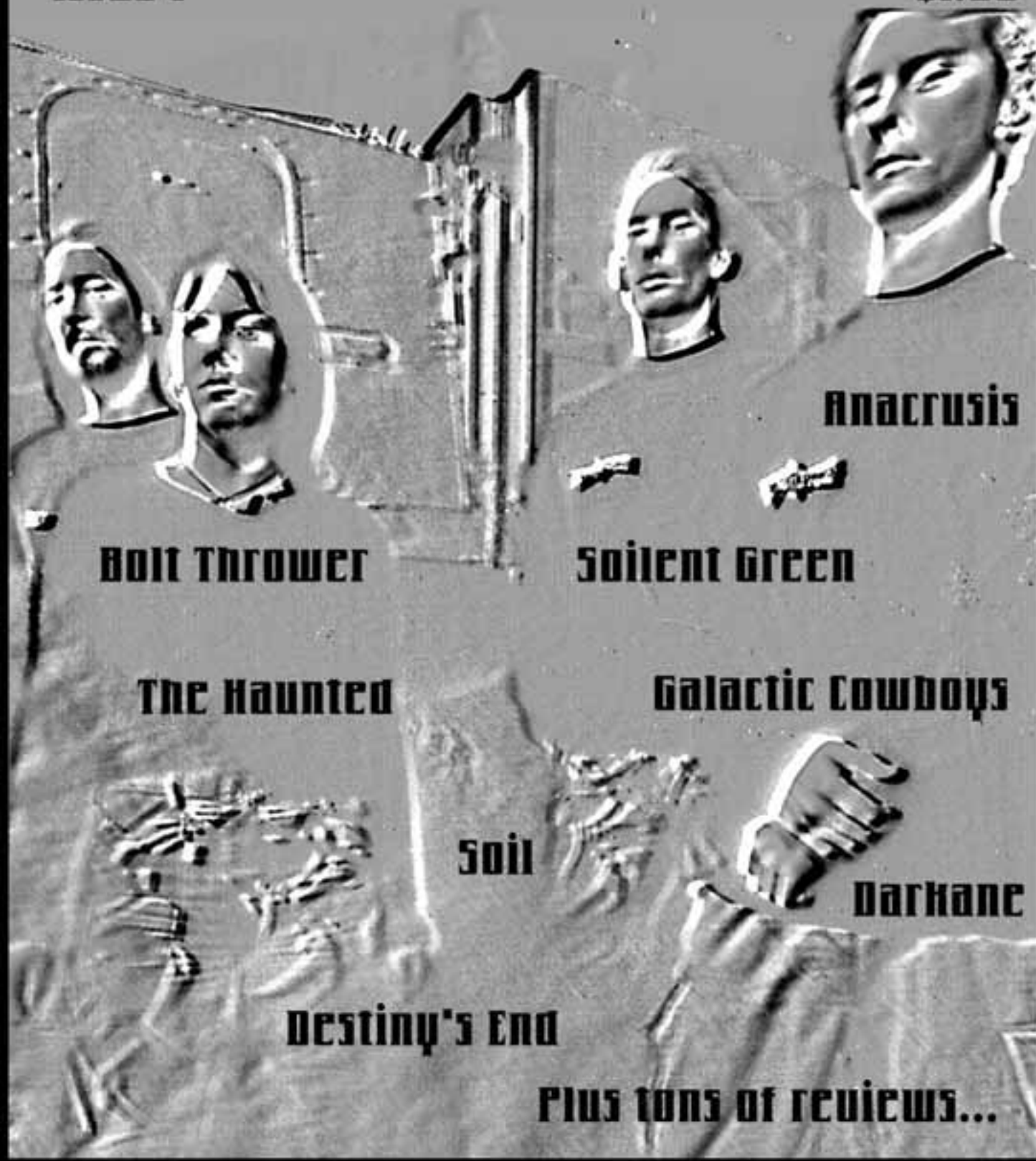


Remnants of Reason

Issue 1

\$1.00



Bolt Thrower

Anacrusis

Silent Green

The Haunted

Galactic Cowboys

Soil

Darkane

Destiny's End

Plus tons of reviews...

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and in the Industry...

Recording

Rumor has it that Nick has left **Cradle of Filth** due to internal conflicts within the band. He's looking for a new group but in the interim there are tentative plans to record a project with Shane Embury (**Napalm Death**) in The Abyss studios with Peter Tagtgren taking care of the vocal duties. **Arch Enemy** are recording a third album, their first with new bass recruit Sharlee D'Angelo (**Witchery, Merciful Fate**). And speaking of the Fate, they should be hitting the studio pretty soon. Producer Sterling Whitfield will once again man the helm as **M.F.** try and match the power of last year's **Dead Again**. **Six Feet Under** are set to record their next album in February, also the debut performance of Steve Swanson (**Massacre**) on guitar. Preparing their next masterpieces are: **Fates Warning, Emperor, Cannibal Corpse, Incantation, Opeth, God Dethroned, Samael** and **Tiamat**. **Amon Amarth** have just booked The Abyss studios for March with an expected may release date.

Upcoming Releases

Coming soon, we can expect some new material from **Memory Garden, Hades, The Gathering, Lacuna Coil, Stratovarius, Pissing Razors, Dimmu Borgir, Hypocrisy, Therion, Cathedral, Immolation, Godflesh, Grip Inc., Vader, Darkane, Amorphis**, and **Skinlab**. **Noise** is currently re-issuing a bunch of their "greatest hits". Titles already out already out include **Voivod's Killing Technology** and **Celtic Frost's Into the Pandemonium**. **Earache** are putting out a **Carcass** retrospective. Similar in title selection to a Japanese Import that's floating around, the "Best of" album will include rare tracks and the never seen on CD *Peel Sessions* album. A special edition of **Morbid Angel's Formulas Fatal to the Flesh** will be released with a bonus disc entitled *Love of Lava*. Supposedly the new **Napalm Death Words from the Exit Wound** is out in Europe, although it's hasn't reared it's ugly head stateside yet. Look for something live from **Manowar** in the near future as well. **Metal Blade** are set to release some **Riot** titles on CD for the first time, look for *Fire Down Under* and *Restless Breed* in February.

Out Now!

If you look hard enough you should be able to find the latest releases from **Cathedral, Flotsam and Jetsam, Nevermore, Nebula** (re-issue), **Carnal Forge**, and **Borknager**. **Hydra Head Records** has released **Soilent Green's Sewn Mouth Secrets** on vinyl, write them at: P.O. Box 990248, Boston MA 02199 for their catalog. Don't forget to check the indie label sites for release dates!!!

Editor's Corner

Welcome to the first edition of Remnants of Reason. After existing on the web as a music information source for more than a year, I realized that we were ready to expand into the "real world." What began as a "hobby" quickly grew into a full-fledged operation, and looking back at how much effort went into this, I'm proud to finally have it completed. While I wasn't able to do everything I wanted to this first issue (professional printing, a color cover, **a demo section!**), I think that there's enough here to keep you interested. I'd like to take a minute and also thank certain individuals, for while this ended up as sorta "my show" (for better or worse!) it wouldn't have been possible without their help. So, in no particular order, special thanks to: Gordon at **M.I.A. Records**; Carl at **Relapse**; Bob at **Metal Blade**; the staff at the Keeaumoku Tower Records (all my pestering for new releases!); the staff at Jellys (both locations); Rainbow Records; Radio Free; Adrian Jensen and **The Haunted**; Peter and **Darkane**; Ken and the memories of **Anacrusis**; all the other bands I interviewed; Matt Parry and Eric Hochberg (for having to hear about the magazine every night); Saori (for realizing how important this is to me, and her subsequent help); the rest of my family and friends; and of course, Rob Carpenter, for all the help with the reviews, the Bolt Thrower interview, the web page and for just staying metal.

That said, I hope you enjoy the first issue. I read everything that's written to me, and I listen to everything that is sent to me. Please contact me about demo reviews, promotional questions, ad rates or if you just want to send your comments (hopefully thoughtful ones!). Also don't forget to check out the **Remnants of Reezon** for tons of reviews and information on the web at: <http://www.geocities.com/~reezon>. - Evan

Evan Howell
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Playlists

Evan (on the left side)

Nevermore - Dreaming Neon Black
Witchery - Restless and Dead
Vader - All
Anacrusis - All
Arcturus - La Masquerade Infernale

Rob (with the hot sauce)

Witchery - Restless and Dead
Borknagar - The Archaic Course
Cemetery - Godless Beauty
Incubus - Beyond the Unknown

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THE HAUNTED



(l-r Peter Dolving, Jonas Bjorler, Adrian Erlandsson, Anders Bjorler, Jensen)
Pictures taken from the official Haunted Home page (<http://www.bigfoot.com/~haunted>)

Finally released last summer, The Haunted's self-titled debut took the world by storm. Attempting to "put the backbone back in metal", Jensen and the Bjorler brothers (At the Gates, R.I.P.) managed to write yet another masterpiece for the general public to enjoy. Fusing the technicality of their former bands with the powerful vocals of one Peter Dolving, The Haunted is hands-down one of the best albums of 1998. If you haven't picked this up yet, do yourself a favor and get it, you won't be disappointed. If you still have doubt, read the reviews in this issue, I think they tell all that needs to be said surrounding this excellent band. Latest news: Jensen informed me that Dolving left the band to focus on his main band Zen Monkey. The Haunted are looking for a replacement now, and judging from the turnout Jensen says they're getting, they shouldn't have any problems.

RoR - Just for the record, could you go through some history of time between the break-up of At the Gates and the formation of the Haunted? Specifically, did you know Jensen from his work with Seance, or as a friend? I guess I'm also curious as to how you hooked up with Peter Dolving, as his work with Mary Beats Jane is very different.

AE - Actually The Haunted was initially Jensen's idea. But he had trouble finding the right people to play with. Both me and Jonas had previously been approached about playing, but we were too busy with At the Gates. When we came back from the last American tour Anders called me up and said that he and Jonas were leaving the band.

Since they were the main songwriters there was really no point in trying to continue with AtG. So I gave Jensen a call and the next day The Haunted rehearsed for the first time. Just me and Jensen though. I got to know him primarily from his work with Seance, when we did a tour with them in '94. The tour broke down however, but we became friends and in late '95 he moved to Gothenburg. Dolving, who was the singer of Mary Beats Jane, approached me about playing session drums with them on a tour since their drummer's wife was expecting a kid, and he wanted to stay home for that. I knew he would be the perfect guy for The Haunted so I asked him about it and he agreed. His first work with the band was a demo we did with the songs Undead and Shattered...

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RoR - How has the response been to "The Haunted" so far? Every comment I've heard and read has been an incredibly positive one. Is the band happy with the final result? Would you do anything differently?

AE - Well, the response has been overwhelming really. Everybody is really happy with the result. We were a bit stressed at the mixing process and looking back at it we would have been better off taking some time off at that time. But you live and you learn right ?

RoR - What is the time frame for the songs? Are there any that are more recent, maybe more indicative of the sound direction that The Haunted are going in?

AE - Time frame? Do you mean the time it takes to complete a song? In such a case I can't really give you an answer. Because once the idea has come up it can take from 1 to 15 rehearsals until we're happy with it. Since the album came out we have done about 6 new songs and we have ideas for another 4. They go in the same direction as the earlier stuff. The main difference now is that we give the vocals a lot more room and actually build songs around vocal ideas. This wasn't possible when we wrote the previous album 'cause Peter came in the band when the songs were already written.

RoR - What is the writing process for the band? It's fairly detailed as to who wrote what, but there must be some input from each member. Does this come during formation of the songs or closer to the final recording?

AE - The credits that can be read on the album are more to show which member came up with the initial idea. During the songwriting process we all contribute to the shaping of the song.

RoR - You stayed with Earache, and are now pretty commonly perceived as their saving grace. Do you think that they will become a strong label again? How has their support for this release been?

AE - It has been OK. Saving grace?? I don't know. All good things come to an end though.

RoR - In both At the Gates and The Haunted, the lyrical content is just as important as the music, almost bordering on poetry. The use of English is excellent, where do the inspirations for this come from?

AE - From reading a lot and just from being alive and

aware about what's happening in your surroundings.

RoR - Also in the lyrics, the view of life and society is a pretty grim one, one that is also sadly right on target. Is there anything in particular which brings such a discouraging view on life? Was this view shared by the band, or mostly the lyricists?

AE - Tomas Lindberg and Peter Dolving are both interested in sex, violence, crime, human behaviour are what (that? - Ed.) most people would call insane.

RoR - The songwriting for At the Gates changed drastically over it's career, what were some of the major influences for that? I am speaking specifically about the use of strings up to Terminal Spirit Disease. Was Alf Svensson a large part of this sound? Your drumming also seemed to be a large part of this change. You proved that you had chops on the first releases, and then concentrated more on tightness for Slaughter of the Soul. Was this intentional, or a natural change to fit the songs on that album?

AE - Alf was responsible for a lot of the weird ideas. We were experimenting a lot as a band and as musicians trying to push ourselves. When Alf left the band we decided to make music that was more to the point and a lot harder. As for my drumming I'm just a team player and have to work with what is going on in the songs try to enhance it and bring forth a groove in it. That's the main reason why I changed my drumming style.

RoR - To most people that I talk to, Gothenburg is considered to be a breeding ground for music, being a part of that scene (if you do consider yourself that!) how do you perceive the music scene there? What is an average day for yourself there?

AE - Gothenburg has got very many musicians but I don't consider it having a music scene anymore.

RoR - To continue that thought, many only know Sweden through the music. Having toured the world, how do you view life in Sweden as compared to other countries? Would you ever consider living anywhere else? Why?

AE - The Swedish standard is quite high (compared to the parts of the world that I've seen). The nature is great, the air is relatively clean, the water is good. I might consider moving to the east coast of Canada since it's nature reminds me a lot of Sweden.

RoR - You must have decided pretty early that music was

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the direction that you would take your life in, if you can recall, what do you remember as being especially hard times, and to contrast that were there times that made everything seem worthwhile?

AE - I started playing drums at the age of 12 and knew quite early that I would keep playing for a long time. The satisfaction of playing live, making other people and yourself happy is by far the best. It is always hard to survive on your music which is to say the least very frustrating.

RoR - *What are you currently listening to, or reading?*

AE - Portishead-Portishead, reading "Women" by Charles Bukowski.

RoR - *Your brother Daniel also plays drums in many Gothenburg bands, but your styles appear very different! Also, how did you both end up playing drums?*

AE - Yes our styles are different fortunately. It's great to have a certain personality to your playing. We had a drumkit at home and he saw me play and later on gained interest. He is very talented, I'm proud that he is my brother.

RoR - *Other than music, what other things are keeping you busy in life?*

AE - Love and friends. I enjoy food and beer.

RoR - *There is a decline in independent record stores here in the states due to the larger "chains" forcing them out of business. Because of this, it's harder to get a lot of the more underground stuff. Mail order and the internet both help, but finding places that are reliable are tough. Do you have any recommendations for getting hard to find material?*

AE - That sucks. I don't really see the same thing happening here yet so I don't really have any problem finding the CD's I want.

RoR - *What does The Haunted find the future holding for them?*



AE - Legal hassles, touring, doing a new album hopefully early '99.

RoR - *Do you have any closing words of wisdom or thoughts you'd like to express?*

AE - Things are never what they appear to be. Don't sign any papers at all... Thanks for reading and look out for The Haunted on tour!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Haunted - The Haunted
1998 Earache Records

Peter Dolving - Vocals
Anders Bjorler - Lead Guitar
Jonas Bjorler - Bass Guitar
Jensen - Guitar
Adrian Erlandsson - Drums

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SOILENT GREEN

A stunning mixture of elements, Soilent Green are finally being recognized as the grindmeisters supreme that they are. Finding a new home on Relapse Records, these guys took the Milwaukee Metalfest by storm, exhibiting a massive degree of energy live, and unanimously being voted one of the best acts of the show. Soilent Green is indeed made of people, proved by Vocalist Ben Falgoust, who shows his true colors as an individual who isn't afraid to voice his opinion on any subject, whether it be music, society, or the state of the world. So where do Ben and the band fit into all of this? Just read on and see.

RoR - So where are you guys at in life right now?

BF - New Orleans. Actually, I'd say greater New Orleans, all of the band members live in the greater New Orleans area. We're all working right now during the day and then in the evenings we practice.

RoR - So you guys practice every day?

BF - Pretty much, I'd say 3-5 times a week, unless we can't get in here, or unless work is overwhelming and nobody can get out of work on time. So that's not too often when that happens.

RoR - So you've got a set place where you can just walk in and play?

BF - Definitely, definitely. We've got a practice room that we rent out every month. We've been there 2 1/2 maybe three years. We moved because in this other room we had there were some problems with break-ins and equipment stolen, so we needed a more secure room.

RoR - So, what happens during a normal practice, do you concentrate on writing new stuff or just playing?

BF - It fluctuates, sometimes we just play through some of the older material, the material from the album. Sometimes we write stuff, and sometimes we just hang out, just sit in there and smoke weed [laughs], whatever.

RoR - When you are writing material, does everybody just come in with a bunch of ideas, because it just seems that

there is so much going on in every song.

BF - Yeah, it seems like usually one person will come in with an idea, and then everyone will go, "well I had all these ideas saved up, so let's start mixing and matchin'". So they start working with each other, intertwining all their different ideas, and that's how the songs come to be. Sometimes the song could take less than a week and sometimes the song could take longer than that. It just depends on the feel and what's going on at the time, you know. So it almost like an atmosphere thing, but when they get writin', sometimes you can't even stop 'em. Or they get into this phase that they can't get anything that they want to go together, cuz they're really picky as to how they place a

lot of things.

RoR - So when you are setting up a song, do you pick a time and say "this is when we stop, or this is where we put part A", or does it just mold itself together over time?

BF - It's kinda a little bit of both. Part of it is saying, "well, this progression will go this many times", or to cut it short for this time. Sometimes it is on purpose, and sometimes it just falls into place.

RoR - So does everybody come from a background of completely different musical tastes?

BF - I think in Soilent Green, everybody in the band is



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quite different as to what they listen to in music. But I think that we all share the same kind of extreme interests as far as Soilent Green. So it's like a mixture of everybody, different people, but it flows together real nice. Almost contradictory in a sense, but it just

flows real well.

RoR - Was this style the idea that the band had for itself when it first started out?

BF - It kind of shaped itself. There was never really a set idea behind Soilent Green as to what it should become. I mean there was always the aspect of having an obscure kind of style, like things that never repeat, but it was never really intended that this is what it would become. I guess it just evolved into what it is today. I mean, I was a big fan of Soilent Green before I was in the band. I remember their first show, they opened up for Exhorder which was just a phenomenal show, I mean, between them and Exhorder it was just incredible. Like any other band they've gone through some changes. They swapped out their bass player, that's when Scott got in. Then a little less than a year later is when I joined the band, and that's when the solid crew that it is now formed.

RoR - How difficult is it to play this stuff live?

BF - I guess that's where our best points are. I think our live performance shows more than when we go record or anything like that. I think that we're more of a visual live band. A lot of people have said that, and we feel better when we're up there playing it ourselves in front of everybody, instead of going into this little studio by yourselves. It's like a people-oriented thing. They're feeding off of you and you're feeding off of them. You know, some bands are really great studio bands, and when they're on the road, they're so-so, and then there some bands that are really great live performers. Their studio stuff is good but it really doesn't cut like a live show, and that's where I think Soilent Green falls.

We're quite happy with how Sewn Mouth Secrets has come out though. We've always been happy with our recordings but we haven't felt that the earlier recordings represented how we come across live, and Sewn Mouth Secrets is the closest so far.

RoR - Was time a factor? It's easy for bands to go in (if time and money permit) and spend a month perfecting a recording, but you guys recorded this in like a week, and I would think that would keep a live feel to it.



BF - It does, it does. I think that when we do the recording and the mixing, we record, and then we take a break for like a week, away from it. Just go on with our regular lives, and then when we come back a week later it's all fresh to start a mix on it. It seems like a lot of people will stay in the studio for so long and then go directly into the mix. You need to break away from it, so that's it fresh and brand-new.

RoR - So you helped mix this album?

BF - I little bit. I think that the major person who has a role in mixing this album is Scott, the bass player. I was there during the whole mixing but Scott I feel played a great part in the mixing. He's got a great ear as far as that situation, and he's a vital part when we get into the studio as far as sounds and everything goes. He won't really take the credit because he's a really modest person but I give him a lot of the credit for that. He's greatly responsible for a lot of how the new album sounds.

RoR - So if one of your strong points is said to be the energy that you put out in a live performance, are you always psyched to get up there? Are there times when you're just dragging until you hit the stage?

BF - I guess we're really psyched to get up there, but there's been times that we've played that the whole crowd was just way into it. I guess that comes from being just a little too self-critical at times. But when we get up there to play we all get into it. There are probably times that we give less than other times, based on the way that we feel, but as a whole it's a pretty good vibe every time we do live shows, whether we play in front of 3 people or 2000, it's still there. You just have to learn to flow with the tide, put your efforts overwhelmingly towards the situation.

RoR - You guys played the Milwaukee Metalfest, right?

BF - Yeah, that was a big goal of mine, to play metalfest. I'd been to it for so many years, I'd saw bands play and thought "one day I'd like to play this, it'd be cool." The total crowd was phenomenal, the room was packed and it went over real well. We did have a few minor technical things, they had an outlet where everything plugged in and it kept coming undone and all the amps would go out, but it was real miniscule. As soon as they got that situation taken care of we just blew into something else.

RoR - There's a certain motif for the album's artwork, sort of like the whole Sarah Bernhardt series, where did that come from?

BF - Actually the main picture in the middle of the frame is by an artist named Alphonse Mucha from around the late 1800s. He did a lot of like burlesque women, really beautiful women. But a lot of the art, for example the border, is from something else. All combined, it looks like a whole full picture, even though the images are all from several different pictures. It reflects the music a lot, since the music is a mixture of all different styles. Not only that, but a mixture of old-school styles mixed with a new idea, and the art kinda flows with it. A lot of people think it's strange because they say "this bands doing this, and then look at the art, it's beautiful." But I think it flows really good because music being so much of an art. A mixture of old styles to create a new idea.

RoR - And that would tie in with the lyrics too...

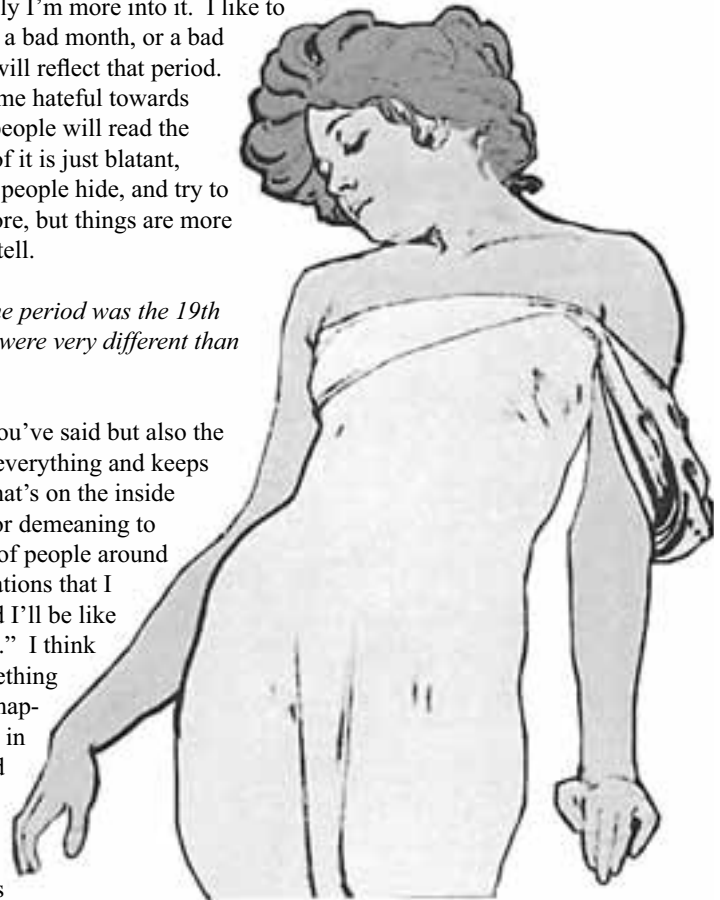
BF - In certain little fashions, yeah. You see Brian Patton was the main contributor for that. It was his concept, and then Adam Peterson (the graphics guy at Relapse) handled the big work on the layout, but it was Brian's basic concept. He cut out all these pieces and laid them out on paper and mailed them in to Adam back and forth. Brian knows the titles to a few songs, so he fused the art to those titles. Kinda subliminal in a sense but it's there.

RoR - You wrote the lyrics, are these to be taken at face value, or metaphorically?

BF - It's a mixture too actually. It's a mixture of things that have happened to me, or that I've seen happen to friends or that I've seen happen around, or literature I was influenced by. I was never big into English in school, but in a sense I guess it rubbed off onto me in a sense, because lately I'm more into it. I like to just reflect my ideas also, like if I had a bad day, or a bad month, or a bad year, and I write a song during that time, the song will reflect that period. A lot of people withhold things and then they become hateful towards a lot of situations, I like to vent things out. Some people will read the lyrics and think that they are hateful, but so much of it is just blatant, like an extreme side of life. It's a lot of things that people hide, and try to put back into their mind and not think about anymore, but things are more extreme in life than that, and that's what the lyrics tell.

RoR - Then that ties back into the artwork where the period was the 19th century and things that were shown on the surface were very different than what was going on in society.

BF - I said that too a lot, with the artwork. What you've said but also the beauty sense of it. Like everybody really looks at everything and keeps it beautiful on the outside, but they never reveal what's on the inside of anything. The lyrics aren't meant to be hateful or demeaning to anyone, it's just bringing it out. I'm sure all kinds of people around the world have been in situations or have seen situations that I write about. There's other bands that I listen to and I'll be like "well I've been in that situation before, I can relate." I think that things make you stronger too. It's like, if something happens, maybe now that I know that these things happen, the next time this kind of situation approaches in my life I can either avoid it or confront it better and handle it better. These are things too that you have to experience. I think that people shouldn't be such home people, that they should get out and do more things. I like to go out there and check things



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out, because things evolve.

RoR - On that note, how do you feel about people that are virtual shut-ins, living their lives through their computers?

BF - I think people start getting lazy in a sense, where they don't want to do something constructive. They can sit there and do something and not have to worry about going anywhere. I think you should do something, even if the internet shut down every store, and you had to buy everything through the internet, get a bike, get a hobby, just do something constructive to keep you going. There's much more in life there.

RoR - Do you think that's an attractive lifestyle, or that people are being molded into it?

BF - I think that people are being molded into it. I think it's like one of those temptation kind of things like a drug, or anything like that. You gotta learn to not abuse things, have temperance with things. If you do things that you like every single day you'll destroy what it is that you love about those things. I don't believe in a "fountain of youth", but I think that you can keep your youth if you learn to not abuse things. Also try some new things, go see a hockey game, get some roller blades and play hockey. I mean, what have you got to lose? I just think that people need to get that fun back into their lives.

RoR - How is the pace of life in New Orleans, is it slower than in a larger city? How do you deal with work and practice?

BF - Yeah, it's slower, I've been to New York a few times and it's just like, damn! It's easy to see why people have such high stress. I mean, I get high-strung about things now and then, with working like 40-60 a week and then going to practice, sometimes I just gotta stop myself and do something else. We have a hockey team here, and I'm really into hockey. I mean I'm not this fanatic into all these NHL players, but I like the aggression of the sport. So there'll be a night where I'll just not go to practice, since I've been to practice 4 nights that week already. Just take a break from burning it out. It's fun to go jam, and I do it a lot, but I don't want it to be not fun anymore.


RoR - If it's not fun, then you have to ask yourself why you're even doing it...

BF - Exactly. That gets into the idea of doing things for money. I mean, trust me, I know that if you get a new car

you've got a large monthly note, but some people are just way too into the money. Some of these bands, you know, like do something constructive with the money. You don't need the mansion, and the fancy cars. You have to start finding worth in other things besides material things. I mean if Soilent Green ever moved on somewhere, and I made some major amount of income from it, I would take care of my family, because they were always there with me. They weren't really into the music that I did, but they were supportive of what I did. If I had something left over I would take all of my friend's bands that never really got to put something out and start putting some of their stuff out. Maybe start my own little label, cut into the majors a little.

RoR - If you could look into the future, where do you see Soilent Green going?

BF - More extreme crazy shit. Soilent Green will evolve, because I think that we have evolved over the last 10 years, from when I wasn't in it to when I was to now. I think that things will change, I can't say that we'll always be as extreme as we are, bands change. Some bands change, and people go with them, but some bands change, and they lose everyone. So it's a matter of doing it right, and doing what you want to do, that's all that matters. I hope the best for it, I really do. I hope it just goes as far as we can take it. After that, who knows what each one of us will be doing.



Louis Benjamin Falgoust - Vocals
Brian Patton - Guitar
Donovan Punch - Guitar
Scott Williams - Bass
Tommy Buckley - Drums

Discography

Pussysoul - 1994 Dwell Records
A String of Lies - 1998 Relapse Records
Sewn Mouth Secrets - 1998 Relapse Records



Ever since I was blown away, close to 10 years ago, by the awesome power that is Realm of Chaos I have tried with no luck to make contact with Bolt Thrower. After several tour cancellations and delayed tour buses I had given up hope, but one never knows what will happen next. With Bolt Thrower's latest offering on Metal Blade records, "Mercenary", in hand I only hoped I would get one more chance. That chance came in the form of a call from guitarist Gavin Ward. This historic event where huge fan meets the legendary over the lines of modern technology is offered here. Interview by Rob

RoR: You have done a lot of interviews since the release of Mercenary. Before I start my barrage of questions, is there anything in particular you wanted to talk about?

GW: Not really... I don't think a lot of people understand that the band does everything themselves. That's why it does take us a while to get around to stuff. We manage ourselves, we print our own shirts, we set up our own tours in Europe stuff like that. I think a lot of people miss that. The band is totally self contained.

RoR: Is that different compared to most bands?

GW: Of course, most of them have merchandise deals where they probably get a few pence for the merchandise that is sold. They obviously are managed. And they get gigs through agencies. Obviously in America we will have to gig through an agent because that is the way it works there. In Europe we deal with the venues direct.

RoR: Is that why you have had problems touring America in the past?

GW: Yes. It's agents really. For us, it's one of those weird ones dealing with an agency. First of all, they set the gig up. But they are only going to set the gig up if they are going to make a profit out of it. They're on twenty percent. It's gotta be worthwhile for them to setup, so you probably don't get as many gigs as you get offered or that they could get you 'cause they aren't getting enough out of it.

RoR: Let's go back to the Warmaster tour with Dark Angel. That tour was cancelled. Was that agents, again?

GW: Yeah, what used to happen with agents was that they would go, "do you want to tour with them?", and we'd go... "no". Then they would say that Bolt Thrower had pulled that tour. No shit like. No shit. They offered and we said no. You offer something that's all it is, an offer. The Dark Angel one was one of the classics. We were offered another tour and decided not to do it because time was tight and the band was sort of on the rocks. We told them months ahead we were obviously not going to do the tour. They let it clock to, basically, the day of the gigs and then pulled it that night. That way it makes the band look bad, the agency look pretty good even though they new three months up front that we couldn't do it, and could have easily told the venues up-front and saved them money. You see you can get a bad reputation pretty easy for not actually doing anything.

RoR: You have real strong following. With six albums and ten years, even with all the crap, there are a lot of fans.

GW: Well that's nice to know! You never really know what it's like.

RoR: Bolt Thrower definitely occupies its own niche in the genre. Why aren't there any Bolt Thrower copy bands? Why hasn't anyone tried to follow in your footsteps?

GW: I think a lot of people that do try to play that style are too much "musicians", you know what I mean? The technical aspect of it they would never really appreciate. Probably, if they listened to our band they wouldn't either. They would think it is sort of, pretty simple music

Bolt Thrower

and they want to show how good a musician they are. But for us it is about songs and music, so we don't really worry too much about the musicianship. Anyone, probably, who has been playing guitar for six months could play one of our songs. They are simple songs to play, like. It's meant to be. It's meant to be so everyone can play it. Nobody does.

RoR: Maybe, but not that fast.

GW: [laughs] No, maybe not that fast. But I think that is the point. People are really trying to push themselves forward as musicians more than just play total music. For us, we just play what we are into. You don't have to be the best musician in the world to play it.

RoR: And I take it that philosophy goes all the way back to the beginning?

GW: Of course.

RoR: So, it's the late eighties and In Battle There Is No Law comes out. Thrash is dying and Death Metal was yet to born. Do you think that In Battle.. was over the top for the time or more of a progressive move for Metal?

GW: It was true. When we released In Battle... Death Metal didn't really exist; there was no crowd for it. It was just bands. There was no scene. Napalm, Carcass... some of the bands that were around.

RoR: What about influences? Are you the influence or...

GW: Now, yeah. Of course. We sort of look a lot inwardly if we can. We are quite, sort of, blinkered, we always have been. We're not really bothered by what's going around us or what everyone else is doing. All we know is we are one of the survivors, and watched all the others sort of go down, like. No problem. Suits me. Most have tried to change with the times and turned out for worse.

RoR: Your sound has not changed all that much. But the talent, skill, emotion and intensity has grown and intensified each album. It seems that Mercenary is kind of a "plateau" for that progression. Are you receiving criticism for that?

GW: Bits. You get people who criticize. I tell you who doesn't criticize; the people who get into it, because they can appreciate it for what it is.

RoR: I have been thumping heads with a lot of people over that. Yeah, it sounds the same, good!

GW: It's meant to be.

RoR: I know I can count on Bolt Thrower to give me a good album. I don't have to keep my fingers crossed and hope I don't have to watch another Tiamat dance off into the dandelion field.

GW: Exactly, like. The Pink Floyd field, wasn't it? Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. For us it was important to keep it the same. When we started, we were into bands and then they changed. And then you wonder why the fuck you buy it. It's not what you like, so you basically forget the band. You look for something else because obviously it's been compromised. We found that it is watered down for commercial reasons. Improve sales, get it into shops. It's something that has never really concerned us. We knew probably years and years ago that it ain't gonna be a Metallica seller. The idea is to keep it as cult as possible. We don't mind promotion, but otherwise we need total control. With Earache or Metal Blade we have full control. If we want to remix it before it's released, we do.

RoR: I have noticed that on every album that there are no credits for who writes the songs. Who does the writing?

GW: No. Baz does all of the writing. I wrote half of In Battle... and some of Realm and a little of Warmaster, but above that it's all Baz. For us it's not egos or who writes the best shit.

RoR: Dan Swano?

GW: Of course! If you want to look at it that way, I am a fan of the band. I like the music they're playing so, if I can

get into it then I say that's a killer or if it doesn't then I say I don't think that sounds like us. Music wise Baz writes all the songs, we all structure it and then add the vocals. It's basically the way it's always been.

RoR: Speaking of Karl, where are you going to go from here? Will it be hard to find replacements? I know there were some problems with Martin Van Drunen.

GW: We obviously have Alex, the drummer at the moment, who played on Mercenary. We got him in because he's fast. He isn't [fast - Ed.] on the album, but he can play the older material.

RoR: Will the new people need to be able to play older material just like the musicians before them?

GW: Of course, I would hope even better.

RoR: The drummer on Mercenary doesn't sound much the same as Whale's material. Why?

GW: He was restricted on purpose. Not to keep him in line, but to keep from having a drum wank album. Like when Slayer introduced a new drummer and that's all you could hear. We didn't want to go down that path. The singer has been replaced by Dave Ingram of Benediction. We already played one gig with him and he fitted like a glove.

RoR: One last question. If your music was a cure for some mental disorder, would you distribute it as a medicine?

GW: Good question! Sure we would. We would give it away free at the gigs. Just to fuck up some company that was selling the shit. Not for the good of the people, but more for sticking it to the company.

RoR: Anything else?

GW: Just a thanks to everyone who has supported us over the years, and to the fans in the States. We'll get there as soon as we can.

Bolt Thrower Selected Discography

In Battle There is No Law - 1988 Vinyl Solutions

Realm of Chaos - 1989 Earache Records

Warmaster - 1990 Earache Records

The Fourth Crusade - 1992 Earache Records

...For Victory - 1994 Earache Records

Mercenary - 1998 Metal Blade Records

*Vocals by Karl Willets on all albums,
drums by Andy Whale on all albums
except Mercenary*

Current Line-up

Dave Ingram - Vocals

Barry Thomson - Guitar

Gavin Ward - Guitar

Jo Bench - Bass

Alex Thomas - Drums



14Destiny's End



James Rivera is no stranger to the metal scene. Spending over 15 years in the legendary Helstar, James was one of the select individuals who realized the importance of quality vocals in thrash music. Unfortunately, the 90s brought sweeping changes to his band, and “deciding that it was time to close the door on Helstar”, Rivera ventured out to Southern California in an attempt to find a new project as challenging as his old one. While not exactly what he had hoped for, Rivera hooked up with Chaotic Order. A mixture of “too many different styles, hence Chaotic”, this was definitely not for James. As fate sometimes plays it’s hand, it was at this time that Rivera was introduced to New Eden. Described as “a reborn Helstar, just fresher sounding”, New Eden were set to release their debut album when they ran into trouble with their vocalist. “He was having D.U.I. troubles, so the band asked me to fill in for a show. The show was subsequently cancelled, but the chemistry was there, so the band figured, ‘hey, our old singer was trying to be James Rivera, but now we can have the real thing!’, so I’m out of Chaotic Order and in New Eden.” The band recorded a demo of their material, and in June of 1997 Rivera took New Eden back to Houston to introduce the new blood. Rivera and Metal Blade had always kept a working relationship, and when presented with the demo, the label showed immediate interest. With the future looking bright, internal struggles within the band began to ensue. Explains Rivera, “the guitarist who found me left the band, and took the name with him. The name was actually the reason he left the band, since he stole it from the bass player and registered it behind his back! He also wouldn’t let anybody else write material, so basically, New Eden would have had half of this Destiny’s End material if he had let Dan (DeLucie) write.” Move forward to August 1997. The band picks up Perry as a second guitarist, Dan came up with the name Destiny’s End and the rest is recorded history.

When a band is comprised of four newcomers to the scene and one seasoned veteran, there can be a tendency for one individual to claim leadership, not so for Destiny’s End, according to James. “Basically I came in like, OK, you want blood, you want to fight this war against other bands? It’s not like it’s my way or no way, but if you guys want the shortcuts, here they are. There’s always going to be one driver of the car, but I listen to the other passengers at least.” Experiencing Breathe Deep the Dark, this appears true. Rivera’s voice is as compelling as ever, but the band is really allowed to stretch out, especially in the axe department. Knowing a bit about the past, it’s easy to spot the influences which give rise to such a classic sound, now being reinvented in the late 90s. Being released with so many albums of a similar style, does Rivera see a return to metal’s glory days? “It’s time for people to get smart again, and metal IS making a comeback. Everything that was popular at one time has to get old and dated to be reborn again. Hey, if disco can come back, than metal can come back!” So why the decline in the past? “Hopefully the labels have learned that you can’t sign too many bands, for too much of one thing will kill metal again.” Assuming that this won’t be the case, just where does Destiny’s End fit into the future of music? “I think that this band has the quality to be one of the forerunners for this new metal movement, to be the band that kids go ‘Wow, I want to sound like that’. We’re just a true, pure, raw metal band with a 90s touch to it. Once we just get the industry behind us, just get the mass promotion we need, then we can turn the machine off and let this thing live on it’s own.” Only time will tell, but if Rivera’s attitude reflects that of the general listening populace, there’s a pretty good chance we’ll be hearing more from these guys in the future. Closing words from Rivera? You betcha, the man’s so confident in his new band, he wrote their advertising slogan which reads: “And the voice of Helstar brings you to Destiny’s End, where the rebirth of metal begins...”

Destiny's End - Breathe Deep the Dark

Metal Blade Records



DARKANE

Although difficult to find in some areas, the Wrong Again roster (In Flames, Eucharist, Cryptopsy, etc...) was quite formidable. While some of the classic stuff may be out-of-print for the moment, the name change to WAR and a recent distribution partnership with industry giant Relapse Records may be the coming of a new age, and if the new WAR signings are any indication, 1999 is going to be killer! Meant to serve as a time capsule for the label, the recent WAR dance compilation had a good mix of standards, some hard to find out-of-print songs, and some absolutely smokin' new tracks. Of the new groups, it was Darkane that really jumped out and grabbed my attention. Intricate riffing (a touch of Arch Enemy) and precision drumming piqued my interest, and I was only partially surprised to uncover that this was percussive wonder Peter (Armageddon, Arch Enemy) Wildoer's new group. More than willing to answer any and all questions given to him in the middle of his hectic schedule, I was able to find out more about his new project. Hearing the two "demo" tracks on WAR dance, it's obvious that Darkane are one band you'll be hearing much more about in the near future.

RoR - Could you go over some of the history of the members of Darkane? I know that you have played in many different bands, have the other members? How did Darkane come about?

PW - Christofer (guitar), Jorgen (bass) and I played for almost seven years together in a band called Agretator. That band also included guitarist/oralist Pierre Richter. Agretator started out as a "usual" death metal band and developed into a progressive metal band influenced by the likes of Meshuggah, Death, Cynic etc... We released two CDs which didn't get any proper distribution. The last three track demo were recorded in October 1997 and never got released because the band split up in January 1998. The reason why the band split up was that Christofer and I felt that we couldn't develop anymore. All the time we tried to become more technical and progressive and finally felt that we were trapped in a corner. We decided to split the band and start a new band which would be more straightforward, intense metal with a progressive touch. Jorgen began to play in a band called Rehab that Klas (guitar) already played with playing metal in the vein of Machine Head.

After a while Christofer and I asked if Jorgen wanted to join Darkane and so he did. Shortly after that Klas also joined forces. In February 1998 we did two tracks (Convicted and July 1999) for the WAR Compilation CD "WAR Dance". On that recording we used Bjorn Strid on vocals and engineered and recorded the two tracks ourselves. After that Wez from WAR Music wanted to sign us and so we did. Christofer and I started to write music and lyrics for the debut album. All the songs were written in five months. We didn't meet our present vocal-

ist Lawrence until we entered the studio in August 1998. We only heard a few tapes that he sang on and decided to ask him to do the vocals on the CD. He is just a great vocalist and are able to sing in a lot of different styles; we never rehearsed the songs with vocals before we entered the studio! Lawrence plays in two other bands: Forcefeed and F.K.U. (Freddy Kruger's Underwear). Forcefeed is a "alternative" band like Korn, Coal Chamber etc... but with more metal. F.K.U. plays music in the vein of S.O.D. and M.O.D.

RoR - Did you know Chris Amott before Armageddon? Was he the person that contacted you about Arch Enemy?

PW - I didn't know Chris before the Armageddon thing, it was Mike Amott that contacted me about Armageddon. He had heard from another guy that I was playing drums and so he called me up, told me that his brother was going to do a record on WAR Music and wondered if I wanted to do the drums. This was only three or four weeks before the recording. Of course I took the opportunity. A few weeks later Mike asked me if I wanted to tour with Arch Enemy. First we should tour in Germany and The Netherlands, then we should go to Japan!!! No problem deciding what to do.

RoR - One more Arch Enemy question... Your playing has a very distinctive style, and you were credited with co-writing all of the material (except Beast of Man). The overall feel of the album was completely different, was this result of different rhythms, a change in songwriting, or a combination of those two factors? Was it known beforehand that Daniel Erlandsson would return to Arch Enemy after the Eucharist album?

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PW - Cool that you think that I have a distinctive style. It's always good if you are able to actually hear what people are playing what instrument, without having to read in the booklet. Actually I didn't co-write the songs, I co-arranged them. All riffs are written by Mike, Johan and Chris. I only was involved in what riffs should be played where and how they should sound. Beast of Man was done after I had left the band. The reason why the album (Stigmata) is different to the first (Black Earth) is that Mike was totally into bands like Savatage, Vicious Rumors, Nevermore etc... when he wrote the riffs. After we got home from Japan, where they just love guitar solos, Mike wanted to do a record that would fit the Japanese market. That is also a reason why Stigmata sounds as it does. He also told me to play more groovy and heavy with a progressive touch, like using double ride cymbal stuff for example. It wasn't decided that Daniel would return to the band after he had completed the Eucharist album, Chris just phoned me one day and told me that Daniel would join the band again. It was kind of boring in the beginning, but everything just turned out for the better. I was able to concentrate on Darkane full time.

RoR - As of now, only knowing the two Darkane songs from the WAR dance compilation, the style seems to be more aggressive than the standard "melodic" Swedish Sound, with a slight bend towards satanism in the lyrics. Did the new vocalist change this sound? If so, how?

PW - The full length CD "Rusted Angel" (release Japan: December 1998, release U.S. and Europe: February/March 1999) contains ten songs, including one intro with choirs and one instrumental piece with guitars only. The songs are fast and intense with a few melodic choruses. I guess you could best describe the music a mix of bands like At the Gates, The Haunted, Strapping Young Lad and Death, I really don't know. The production is very raw and aggressive with a big stereo sound on some parts like Strapping Young Lad. Actually we are not a Black Death Metal band. Sometimes the lyrics are very dark, but I wouldn't say satanistic. I just love horror movies like Hellraiser and get a lot of inspirations for lyrics from them. The same goes for Christofer. The new vocalist Lawrence contributed with a different vocal style than Bjorn on the Wardance compilation. He did a lot of harmony vocals with twin voicings on some parts. The overall feel of the vocals is very thrashy. All of us are great fans of thrash bands like Dark Angel, Testament, Exodus, Destruction, Slayer etc. I just love how the vocals turned out, Lawrence is really a very talented vocalist with great ideas. Daniel Bergstrand (the producer), Lawrence, Christofer and I really experimented with different ideas

for the vocals.

RoR - Now that WAR records is being distributed by Relapse in the United States, is it possible that the WAR bands will be able to tour over here? If you could, would you tour over here? Would it be worth the emotional and financial investment for the band?

PW - There are already some loose discussions about WAR bands touring the United States. If we got the opportunity to tour in the U.S. we would go there. In fact that is one of our main goals. It would definitely be worth the emotional and financial investment.

RoR - You mentioned that you work in a music store, many people seem to think that most bands can support themselves solely by playing and selling records, what's an average day for you or the band?

PW - All of us are working or studying daytime. I would say that an average day for me would be that I begin work at 12:00 and leave at 18:00. After and before that I concentrate on music or do things with my girlfriend. Music takes up a large piece of time in the lives of all of the Darkane members. I also do drum clinics/workshops for a living. Before I got the full time job in the music store I was teaching drums. I guess that only a few metal musicians can support themselves solely on music.

RoR - What inspires you in your playing? More specifically, what influences you and the band in creating music? (Books, movies, life, etc...)



PW - Things that inspire my drumming is of course other drummers. I try to listen to as many different music styles as possible like metal, jazz, fusion, world music, funk etc. It is very important to be open minded about music, that way you can incorporate different music styles in your playing. Some of my favourite metal drummers are Sean Reinert (Cynic, Death), Gene Hoglan (Dark Angel, Death, Strapping Young Lad), Rick Colaluca (Watchtower) and Tomas Haake (Meshuggah). All these guys have their own style and incorporate different musical styles in their playing. Some non-metal drummers that inspire me a lot are Trilok Gurtu, Dave Weckl, Oliver Gene Lake, Morgan Agren, Dennis Chambers, Terry Bozzio, David Garibaldi, Vinnie Colaiuta, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Gary Husband, Chad Wackerman; I could go on forever, but these guys just passed through my brain. When we write music for Darkane we are inspired by different bands, not only metal bands. Some musical ideas just pop up in our heads without any specific reason. A lot of riffs and ideas are created when we practice individually. Lyrics are mostly inspired by movies as I said before.

RoR - How do you feel about "side-project" bands, where basically bands seem so limited in what they are allowed to produce that they release songs which may have a "different" sound as another band. Do you feel that it dilutes or enhances the music scene?

PW - Armageddon was kind of a "side-project" band. We had totally free hands to do what we wanted and I think it turned out quite good. We had no specific pressures to do something since it was the first CD and a project. A lot of the drum stuff was improvised during the recording for example. Personally I think that different projects are cool. Sometimes you are able to hear different musicians from different bands playing together in the same band. Mostly I think that it enhances the music scene.

RoR - How is the music scene where you are now? I live on an island which makes it difficult for outside bands to play. I never realized how important seeing live music was for my playing until I moved here.

PW - In Helsingborg, Sweden where I live there are about ten metal bands who I know of. Two different places have metal bands playing live every now and then. Most of the bands are unknown Swedish bands, but a week ago Meshuggah and Entombed played live here. I think Sweden overall has a lot of talented good bands but very few places that have live metal music. I also think it's very important and funny to see live music. It's one thing to hear music on CD but a totally different experience to see

it live. The cool thing is that you can actually see what the musicians are playing and of course there is a lot more energy live too.

RoR - How do you see the internet affecting the music world in the next ten years?

PW - I think it will affect the music industry a lot. There are already many bands distributing their music over the internet. The importance of record labels and distributors will probably cease. It can also be a threat against the ones who write music and lyrics since it will be more difficult to control the rights for the owners of the music. Hopefully it will help bands to spread their music. It is also good that you can find information, live dates, sound files etc... from your favourite bands.

RoR - How was working with Daniel Bergstrand, and the whole recording process in general? Is he pretty open to input? One cool thing about July 1999 is the delayed snare hit at the beginning of the track. Who comes up with those ideas? It really turns something which could have been ordinary into an interesting twist...

PW - It was just great to work with Daniel. He is very open minded and talented. Everything he does is under total control. Just to check the drum sound took one and a half days. For me it was very interesting since he loves to work with the drums a lot. Daniel is always very calm even if he works under a lot of stress. In the end we only had one day to do the final mix and he just did a hell of a job. Personally I was able to ask a lot of questions about the recordings of Strapping Young Lad and Meshuggah, for example how Gene Hoglan worked in the studio. He is just like me and the other guys very much into experimenting with sounds and other stuff. This time we didn't have time to experiment with a lot of things in the music but we tried many different stuff on the vocals. I would say that the vocals are one of the things that I'm most satisfied with. I hope that we will have more time experimenting in the studio next time.

The delayed snare in the beginning of July 1999 was actually an idea that Christofer came up with when we wrote the song. We wrote all the songs with a drum machine, guitar and a four track portable tape recorder. He said that it would be cool to have a delayed snare and I just programmed it that way. The other special effects and cool things comes from all of us. We also used a real string section on the title track Rusted Angel and a real choir on the intro and the outro of the CD. Those two things were just two ideas Christofer and I had for a long time. This was the right time and a good opportunity to

Darkane

make these dreams come true.

RoR - What plans do Darkane have for July 1999? What direction do you see the band taking?

PW - First of all we will be somewhere on the Northern Hemisphere of the earth since the Southern Hemisphere will be destroyed in July 1999. Perhaps, or should I say hopefully, we will be touring Australia. If we are really lucky, people will like the CD and buy it, which would make it possible for us to tour a bit. At the moment it's very hard to predict the future since the CD hasn't been released yet. Musically I think that Darkane will continue to play fast and intense metal, perhaps even more thrashy, I don't really know. It would also be cool to work more on the production next time. Perhaps a bit more towards Strapping Young Lad.

RoR - Any words of wisdom for those about to rock? Or for maybe someone who wanted to travel through Sweden on a backpacking tour?

PW - Just stay metal!!! If you have plans to travel through Sweden, bring a lot of warm clothes. Most of the year it's not to warm here but it's very beautiful. Thanx a lot!!!

Darkane - Rusted Angel

1999 WAR Records

Christofer Malmstrom - guitar

Peter Wildoer - drums

Jorgen Lofberg - bass

Klas Ideberg - guitar

Lawrence Mackrory - vocals

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One of the true bonuses of doing Remnants of Reezon is having members of the bands contact me. After putting in the loads of effort necessary, to have someone just write and say thanks makes it all worth it. Needless to say, it was pretty damn cool to have Ken Nardi from **Anacrusis** write me one weekend. One of my favorite bands, **Anacrusis** gave the metal community four extremely innovative metal albums during their career. For those who have never heard Anacrusis, each album is a different sonic journey. Their first two albums are raw, driven by the youthful energy of drummer Mike Owen, but in definite contrast with their last two masterpieces, near-perfect albums which showcase the precision technicality this group had to offer. On every album, however, can be found Nardi's eclectic vocal style. Able to accent every mood he wished to convey, Nardi created a unique instrument from his voice. Due to numerous reasons, the band disbanded in 1994 during the tour for their *Screams and Whispers* release, an album years ahead of its time. The **Anacrusis** titles are no longer produced (it's **definitely** time for a reissue) but **can** be found on the internet and are worth their weight in gold. Still revered in the metal community, it was no surprise that there were many fans out there wondering "where are they now?" Initially requesting an interview, Ken went ahead and wrote a detailed history of the band's recording career. From his writings, one is able to gain further insight into what **Anacrusis** was trying to do, and why each album sounds as it does. That said, I'm now proud to offer the first half of the "History of Anacrusis" as written by principle songwriter, guitarist and vocalist Ken Nardi. Detailed reviews of each album (by me) are on line at the *Remnants of Reezon* **Anacrusis** page which is located at: <http://www.geocities.com/~reezon/anacrusis.html>.

SUFFERING HOUR

After gaining the interest of a few smaller independent labels, due to the reviews of our *Annihilation Complete* demo in the Fall of 1987, we decided to take our own money and record the album before we were signed. We figured we might have a better chance of being picked up by a label if we had a finished product to shop around (this money was later reimbursed by Axis records when we signed with them just before recording began). We recorded *Suffering Hour* in March of 1988 for about \$1,200. We did the entire album in 7 days in a small studio in Kansas City, MO. We recorded this album much differently than any of the others, all of the rhythm tracks were recorded live with the whole band playing together. We did all of these in a day or two, with a couple more for solos and vocals.

Last, we mixed the whole thing in about two days (I should say our engineer did most of the mixing, as we were all in the studio for the first time and were too shy to do or say very much except "more reverb please"). Needless to say the finished product was not exactly what we had hoped for, production-wise, but at that time we were thrilled just to have recorded an album. We ended up signing with Bernard Doe's label Axis Records (later changed to Active Records) for a two album contract. Bernard was known for his magazine *Metal Forces*, which was one of the better metal magazines around. We had won "best demo" in the 1987 reader's poll and he had included the songs "Annihilation Complete" and "Imprisoned" on the *Demolition: Scream Your Brains Out* compilation album. As far as the material goes, *Suffering Hour* was a definite hodgepodge of old and new songs, and I think this is the thing that makes it a much more disjointed album than

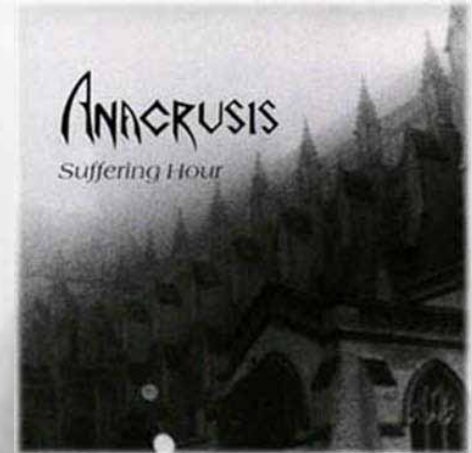


our later releases. Only four of the nine songs were written while we were together as a band, with the rest being either older songs from my previous high school band **Heaven's Flame**, (which featured Chad Smith on drums) or songs Kevin had written before I joined **Anacrusis**. "Imprisoned" was the first song that I wrote for the band, and I think musically and especially lyrically, it would set the tone for the direction we would take in the future. The songs "Butcher's Block", "Fighting Evil", and "The Twisted Cross" were all from my previous band and "Annihilation Complete" and "Frigid Bitch" were two songs Kevin had written before I was in the band. I think this will help to explain the lack of continuity on this album. One of my favorites, still, is "Present Tense". I would have to call this the first 'true' **Anacrusis** song, as it was the first one that we all contributed to and wrote together. I think it was also the last song written for the album (coming up with the best material at the last minute would become

Anacrusis

a reoccurring theme for us). Another thing I should mention is that we also recorded **Black Sabbath's** "N.I.B". It was a hyperactive version that we used to play live, and we intended to include it on *S.H.* but we weren't exactly sure how to go about getting permission to use it, so we left it off the final pressing. Just imagine the original a little faster, with too much reverb and me singing "my name is Ken Nar-di" in place of the "my name is Lucifer" line and that's pretty much it.

We weren't quite sure what we wanted to use for the cover, but we knew we wanted to try and be different than all of the other metal bands around at the time. One idea I had originally was a really great picture of this huge rock with ocean waves crashing all around it. I got it out of National Geographic I think, and I made a photocopy of it to show to Kevin. It looked really cool, all grainy and black and white from the crappy copy machine, but I don't think anyone was too thrilled with the idea, it looked very "New-Age Doom". Then Kevin showed me a picture he had taken on a school field-trip to Washington D.C. It was a photo of the cathedral with this eerie sunlight coming over the top and really nice colors. The only problem was he couldn't find the negative and all we had was this little snapshot. So we had a friend who was a photographer take a picture of the picture so we could blow up the negative from that one. Kevin was learning Commercial Art in school so we thought we could do the layout ourselves and do it just how we wanted. But when we sent the finished cover to the label in England, they didn't want to pay for a color separation for the photo or something like that, so we ended up with the cover in black and white. How ironic is that? Here we were trying to be different and we end up with this drab cover with a picture of this big scary cathedral on it. It couldn't have turned out any more 'metal' looking if we had wanted it to. Needless to say, that scene from **Spinal Tap** has always come to mind. A lot of people have told me they love the cover just because it is so stark and simple and I can see their point, but I have always felt that the album cover, on a subconscious level, plays a big role in how the music sounds to you. For example, when I listen to certain albums I tend to associate a certain feel or 'color' with the music. I think a lot of this is related to the look of the cover, and I think that *Suffering Hour* has always seemed very one-dimensional to me because of its cover. So, all things considered, I think for a first album it's not all that bad. It didn't really show the different textures and moods of our music, even as much as our demos had, but on a positive note, at least I decided to drop the cheesy falsetto-screams just prior to recording the album (shooting for Halford, but sounding like King Diamond, never had a vocalist tried to do so much with so little). I guess it could have been worse.



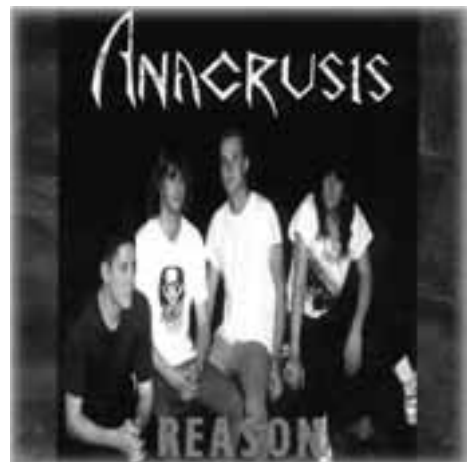
REASON

Whereas *Suffering Hour* was a mixed bag of old and new material, *Reason* was us beginning to find our own identity. This album has some of my all-time favorite **Anacrusis** songs on it. We had originally begun with a eight song demo which contained: "Quick To Doubt" and "Child Inside" (two more reworked Heaven's Flame songs with new lyrics), "Terrified", "Pendulum" (a song from our Annihilation Complete demo which would later get some new music and lyrics and become the bonus track "Killing My Mind"), "Wrong", "Silent Crime", "Not Forgotten", and "Injustice" (also a leftover from the first demo). As anyone who is familiar with the album can see there is a shining absence on "Stop Me" and "Afraid To Feel". Both of these songs were written very close to the time of the album's recording; in fact it wasn't until we were in the studio that the other guys actually heard a finished version of either of them with vocals. These two songs were to become a blueprint for the direction we would later take lyrically and musically. I can only imagine how different an album *Reason* would have been without them. I had always been a huge **Pink Floyd** fan (especially *The Wall*) and wanted to try and bring some of their dynamic range to heavier music. I remember at first no one knew what to make of "Stop Me". We weren't sure if it would come off as being too "wimpy" and had always intended to have "Terrified" be the first track on the album. One day Kevin and I were talking before band practice and we decided, hey what if we put "Stop Me" first? We thought it would give the album a completely different feel, and I think it did. The sad thing is I think these songs also are two of our worst recordings. The playing is very sloppy, the mix is muddy, and ultimately, they did not turn out nearly as good as they could have. This album was also hastily recorded in a total of about ten days. It was recorded the same way our demos were usually done, with me and Mike laying down drums and a 'scratch' rhythm guitar, followed by bass, guitars, solos and vocals being added later. I think the sound of the mix can best be described as an overcompensation for the lack of effects and layers of overdubs on *Suffering Hour*. That, and the fact that I was constantly listening to

Disintegration by **The Cure** at the time (still one of my favorites). Both *Disintegration* and *Reason* have the same sort of big, muddy sound, which I have come to appreciate as having given the album its distant, gloomy atmosphere. As a whole, this album was **Anacrusis** trying to stretch the norm of what was considered 'Metal' at the time. The ironic thing we used to often talk about was, on one hand we were trying to be different, but on the other hand, we were not quite sure why no one was catching on. I think it was always a little suicidal on our part to almost force people not to like us because we were too 'different'. I remember making a conscious effort to have the arrangements in the songs not be the usual "verse, chorus, verse, chorus, solo, repeat 2nd verse, and chorus to the fade-out". Our writing was definitely more fragmented at this time, and would remain that way until the next album when I began to use a drum machine to arrange and record most of the demos. Up until *Reason*, we usually would come up with riffs at practice and then we would just stick them together without a lot of thought about transitions from one section to the next, or even one tempo to another. While this made the songs more unpredictable, I think that sometimes it also made them almost unlistenable. Later we would try and use different textures, whether vocally, lyrically, or musically, rather than unpredictability, to stand out from the crowd. It was also at this time that a lot of changes were happening in our personal lives. When we recorded *Suffering Hour*, Kevin and Mike were barely out of High School, (I had only graduated the year before), all but John still lived with our parents and as the responsibilities of "real life" began to clash with our 'full-time hobby', we all began to put some serious thought into our individual futures. This was when Mike decided that touring around the country in a broken-down van, playing for no one was not exactly what he wanted to spend the next several years doing (who could blame him?) He decided to leave the band after our first tour opening for **D.R.I.** in the (very hot) summer of 1990, and join the Navy. This was a decision that he quickly (and admittedly) would come to regret. We always kept in touch with him and missed him being around (one of the funniest people you will ever meet), but we respected his honesty in not wanting to continue with the band halfheartedly. The strange thing is after he got out of the service he went back to the drums, playing in a few different local bands and the last I heard, he had moved to Las Vegas and now is the only one of the four original members of **Anacrusis** still active, musically.

For anyone who doesn't know, *Reason* was released with one cover in the U.S. and a different one in Europe and elsewhere. The European version is actually the one that I came up with and Kevin did the layout for. At that time we were still signed directly to Active Records and had not even secured an American distribution deal for *Suffering Hour*. It was just before we recorded *Reason* that Metal Blade picked up the first two releases. Because Metal Blade released *Suffering Hour* after *Reason* was already being completed, this caused some confusion with U.S. fans as to when, exactly, these two albums were recorded. When we were trying to come up with ideas for the cover, we knew we wanted it to contain a 'human element', as this is what the songs always dealt with lyrically. Since *Reason* was very much about the confusion and apprehension associated with everyday life, we wanted the cover to reflect this mood visually. When we sent the finished artwork to Metal Blade, for some reason they didn't want to use it. In fact they had some sort of technical excuse as to why the layout wouldn't print properly (obviously Active had no problems with this) and they wanted their art department to put together a cover from our suggestions. So, after many telephone calls and much discussion, they came up with... a photo of us sitting there. Pretty creative stuff, huh? The worst part was none of us ever even saw the cover until we walked into a record shop the day it was released. **Spinal**

Tap II. This wouldn't be the last disappointment we would face over the next couple of years. *The History of Anacrusis to be continued next issue...*



Soil

SOIL



Photo courtesy of MIA Records

A relatively new band from Chicago, Soil are making waves with their *El Chupacabra* E.P.. Best described as an amalgam of hard rock, metal, and blues, Soil have a knack for writing some frightfully catchy riffs. Just finishing their debut L.P. on MIA Records with producer Steve Albini, this young band looks to have quite a promising future, filling the large gap between AOR purgatory and the deep underground. I recently had a chance to speak with vocalist Ryan McCombs via email. A veteran of the circuit for 12 years, he has some interesting views of the industry and music in general. So, without further ado...

RoR - I can see some reasoning behind pairing you up with Skinlab based on sonic structure, but they seem a little more industrial based. How did that tour turn out for you guys? What way, if at all, do you think that the sound of the band changed as a result of touring?

RM - When Skinlab came to Chicago on their tour a problem came about with the band they were touring with (20 Dead Flower Children), and they went running home. Skinlab offered the rest of the dates to us and we jumped on. I think the best reason for pairing Skinlab with Soil has nothing to do with the musical base that the bands have but in how we related to one another as a group of 9 guys on the road together. Skinlab is a group of human beings. To me this is the best comment I can make about anyone in this day and age of inflated heads and industry bull. They're down to earth and just a bunch of great people as well as a great band. As far as how the road affected us as a band, it simply made us a tighter band and feed the desire to get out there to the people even more. We had a lot of fun with Skinlab and one another.

*RoR - How did you get hooked up with Steve Albini? Was that a personal choice? I know his roots are in the Chicago area... What do you think he brought into the studio? What can people expect from the full-length in comparison to *El Chupacabra*? How was the recording process in general, any interesting anecdotes you'd like to share?*

RM - We were playing with a lot of ideas on who we wanted to work with on the full length. We really enjoyed working with Chris Djeretic on the demo and then the EP "*El Chupacabra*" and still look forward to working with him again in the future. Adam came in with the idea of going to and working with Steve Albini (Nirvana, Bush, Plant/Page, Neurosis). We did our homework on several people and decided that Albini, being known for capturing a band for what it truly sounds like, was the way to go for us. Working with Steve was beyond great for me. You hear all kinds of stories about people when your getting ready to work with them but anything negative that anyone might dream up about Steve Albini is just that, dreamed up. Electrical Audio Studios, which he owns

Soil

in Chicago, compares to, if not beats, any other studio I have ever heard of or been in. And Steve gives you full control over your product. I have never been made to feel as comfortable as Steve and the others at Electrical Audio made us feel. With Steve doing his thing I think people can listen to the album and feel rest assured that what they hear is SOIL 100%. When they come to a show what they hear on that album is what they'll get. And that makes us as a band happy, no false images or perceptions given, like I said 100% SOIL. In the short period of time that we were recorded with Steve so many memorable happenings occurred you would have had to have been there. More than once I kicked myself that their wasn't a video camera rolling just so I could remember all the good times. There wasn't a chance to get bored with the recording due to the fun that was being had.

RoR - I hear a stream of influences, the Allman Brothers, Alice in Chains, and some of the New Orleans swamp metal that's been kicking around down there. Are there specific influences that you guys have, or is this a mixture of all of your individual tastes? Who usually comes up with the ideas, or is it a group effort? What role does each member play in Soil?

RM - If you take this band and look into the influences of the individuals you'll find a whole mess of shit. From classic rock to death metal..., it's all here. Each person of the band is just that, a person. And I think any person whether they listen to Cannibal Corpse or The Rolling Stones realizes there's more than one emotion in the human mind and that's why there isn't just one style of music or just one band in the world. Different music fits those different emotions. If you feel like ripping someone's spine from their ass you don't sit down and listen to Stone Free by Hendrix, and if you just met someone who with one look can turn you into a love sick fool, Skeletons of Society by Slayer doesn't quite hit the spot. Soil works in an easy going way. Each member does their share. Adam and Shawn write the majority of the riffs and Tim is always good for coming up with some real keepers as well, and having a drummer like Tom really opens the door for them to be creative and diverse. Once the riffs are written I'll write the lyrics and get a rough idea of arrangement. From there we all throw our two cents in and the song of the moment takes its shape. Outside of the music everyone really has different roles they play. Adam seems to keep things moving in the needed direction and Shawn and Tim are always good for taking care of business bull that has to be taken care of to keep the ship floating. Tom and I seem do our part when we're told what that part is. It works out really well and everyone respects

one another's ability to get the inside jobs taken care of so we can all do what counts, writing and playing shows.

RoR - The bio says that you're getting ready for a pretty extensive tour. Are there any expectations for this? Is there any place in particular that you have wanted to play? What will you change for this tour based on your past live experiences?

RM - We have a few tour plans on the table right now and are just trying to get the LP taken care of so we can jump on one or two or a half-dozen of them to support the EP "El Chupacabra". One big factor will be the other bands involved. Going out with a group of guys like Skinlab can spoil you. We just want to have as good of a time as we can. Tim, Adam, Tom and Shawn have done a lot of touring and have seen and been to a lot of places. I myself just want the chance to experience what they already have and have a good time doing it. Since playing in New York during the CMJ our live performance has grown a new limb. We want to have fun doing what we do, so we just simply do. Since being on the road last time we have gotten a lot more comfortable with one another on the stage. I think that's understandable when you look at the fact that we were a band for less than a year when we hit the road with Skinlab in '98.

RoR - To my ears, Soil's overall sound sits in the middle of rock and metal, yet the artwork and lyrics would push the band further from the mainstream. Have you ever had to modify your style based on outside opinions? Would you change if it meant that you could become a more popular band?

RM - Soil is Soil is Soil. We understand what we (as in the band members) like and the limits we are willing to push. It's safe to say I'll never write about a topic because it's politically correct or it's a popular subject. I'm going to always write about what I know and what I feel or have felt. If someone was to come to me and say "Why don't you write a nice little fluffy love song, it would go over great." My response would be to check out She from the EP because that's as close to a nice song as someone's going to get from me. If I haven't lived it, who am I to preach it. I'm not a politician I'm a normal person who has lived a normal screwed up life like 90% of the rest of the population. And if someone didn't like a cover idea or a photo due to whatever reason (like the EP nipple) fine shrink wrap it in black or even purple as far as I'm concerned. No one is going to dictate what Soil is to us because what we are is Soil. And what good is changing who you are if you can't look at yourself in the mirror

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due to the change. If it angers someone that I view the President of the United States as an empty, powerless figure head for a bunch of 60+ year old politicians who chose to dictate life and create laws as if the world was the same as it was when they were 20, then so be it. I have my opinion you have yours isn't that what freedom is?

RoR - In your opinion, where is the future of music going? If you could help shape it, what would you do? How would Soil fit into this plan?

RM - The future of music is pretty damn scary. If you want to make a living at it go into the business side of it, Become a recording engineer or producer, something with a paycheck. The labels are pretty damn scary right now. The big boys are throwing a hundred bands out there to sink or swim and if you start to sink, it was nice knowing you. Their are still good people within the labels and they do what they can but big business is big business, whether your making tooth-picks or records. I've been at it for twelve years and two bands (DEM and Maji) all along drowning in a musically dead state such as Indiana. There are great bands and musicians in a lot of places that aren't New York, Florida, California, Seattle. If some labels started taking these other areas seriously maybe they could find the next scene instead of bleeding the scenes that they have already plucked clean. As for how Soil fits in..., I hope we swim, who wouldn't??? But I'm no fool, the odds are too thin to see with the human eye so I'd settle for just staying afloat for a little while, you know... just to have some fun with it.

RoR - You're a relatively new band, for those people that haven't heard you, how would describe yourselves? To play the Devil's Advocate, why do you think that people should buy a Soil record over everything else that's out there?

RM - How to describe Soil???? That's a popular question, one of which I don't have an iron clad answer or description for. I can only say if you're a fan of rock or metal music in one form or another check us out by picking up the EP and/or the LP at numerous stores, Best Buy being a safe and cheap bet, or come to a show when we're in your neck of the woods and say Hi. In short everything has been done before in the music world so if you just want a taste of rock/metal with a twist of something new pick us up and give us a try. And feel free to E-mail Soil at Skochees@aol.com and let us know what you think.

Soil - El Chupacabra
1998 M.I.A. Records

Ryan McCombs - Vocals
Shaun Glass - Guitar
Adam Zadel - Guitar
Tim King - Bass
Tom Schofield - Drums



GALACTIC COWBOYS

Wayyy back in September of 1998 I had the chance to talk to Monty Colvin, bass player extraordinaire for the Galactic Cowboys. The Cowboys have been kickin' around the Houston area for the last 8 years, and in that time have managed to put out 5 full length "rock" albums to an unaware public. After a threatened split in '94, Metal Blade madman Brian Slagel signed the Cowboys, allowing the legacy to continue further. Their latest opus, titled "At the End of the Day", is a stunning mix of all styles. No, it's not Marduk or Cannibal Corpse, but they've got enough "edge" on them for me to consider them in the metal sphere, and besides, if the music's good, who cares what it's labeled, right? Something of interest to me, I did this interview right around the release of the Starr Report, and thinking that the whole thing was pretty damn funny, started things off with getting Monty's opinion on the whole thing. Looking back, who knew how far it would be taken!



ROR - So, what do you think about this whole Clinton thing, with the Starr Report?

MC - I think that the whole situation is a disgrace, and that he should step down. That's me, though.

ROR - I kinda like how he tried to play the "I have a private life too" angle. It just seems a little different, you know.

MC - Yeah, like, no kidding, that's like, a public office that we're all paying for pal. I think that you (the people) should stick to your business? I mean, I understand, the guy's human, and people make mistakes, but, at the same time, he's the president of the United States!

ROR - So, I guess I wanted to prepare for this a little bit, so I went back and listened to all the old GC stuff again, and there's a real big division for me after the first two albums. I wondered how you felt when you look back in history, I mean, the first two albums are on Geffen, when Geffen was trying to make it big. They had you guys, probably the best artists on there, and they didn't know what to do with you.

MC - [Laughing] Right.

ROR - So how do you see the band, do you see it as two different bands, or more as a natural progression?

MC - Well, yeah, it seems a little more gradual to me because it's been over the course of almost ten years. Yeah, you know, music was different ten years ago when we started, it was an eighties metal kinda thing, and we were even different during that period. But, still, there was a lot of different things going on back there. There were bands back there that were really big that people don't want to know ANYTHING about now! [laughs]. So, it's amazing to me that we sustained, hung in there, progressed through it all and haven't just disappeared. To me, yeah, we've just kinda evolved, taken the sound different places but yet we've still remained kinda the essence of what we were which has always just been a hard rock melodic "rock" band. You know, we've always sung things that were more on the pop kind of melody thing, we've always had harmonies, and we've always kinda had an edgy guitar sound. Those elements are still there, so to me it still remains what we were, but we have evolved and tried different things, tried to keep it fresh.

Galactic Cowboys

ROR - Also, maybe some of the subject matter changed a lot, like, the youthful outer space themes moved aside for an angrier, cynical side. Maybe it's Obvious...

MC - You mean in the later albums?

ROR - Well, especially with Machine Fish. I kinda followed it on the internet, it was like you guys kinda got turned around. Then, you came out with a really personal album, Alan's (Doss, drummer) producing, it's your artwork on there, and then, instead of being about third person stuff it's more about what you guys were feeling at the time.

MC - Yeah, exactly man, you nailed it. I think that a lot of the stuff that we went through during the Geffen years, and the management that we had, and all that stuff through that period. We just got so screwed around so much, just really taken advantage of. A lot of that stuff is reactions to all of that, and that's probably why Machine Fish is a harder album, and had a lot more aggression to it. Yeah, so, you're right, [laughs].

ROR - I wondered if also if some of the "Astronaut on Earth" theme was a metaphor for alienation or feeling displaced from society, or just feeling different in general. I like the end of Where are you Now when you go back and call your old high school classmates.

MC - Yeah, I think you're right, I think a lot of that stuff, I mean even the name itself Galactic Cowboys was just an expression of doing something that we felt was different, off the wall, progressive, or whatever, you know. I don't know, those early years were just real free for us, we were having a blast, we didn't care what anybody thought. We just we basically being as crazy and experimental with the music as we wanted to. We just had fun, and I think along the way we emotionally got torn down a lot from all of it, and a lot of the music since then has been a product of our survival [laughs] of the whole music scene, record companies, lawyers, and all the crap that goes into the whole "business" and fighting through that. That's kinda what the Machine Fish suite on this album is all about. Kind of a history of what we've been through, things like that.

ROR - It feels like you guys have always been progressive, and different than anything else, but it wasn't forced. I Especially see it on the new album, because you just naturally went against the grain. You got signed to Metal Blade a few years ago, and came out with a real heavy album, but now, Metal Blade's recently signed a lot of black

metal, and you guys came out with an album that's more reminiscent of The Beatles, with a lot of medley.

MC - Yeah, you know, I guess we'll see how that plays with the rest of the bands that they sell [laughing], but I think, once again, we just write according to how we're feeling and what we want to do. Because I don't think that we really feel a part of any group, and there's times when we kinda wish we were, it'd be a lot easier to sell us, and to tour with people, that kinda stuff. But it's kind of a hard sell when you not a part of a specific...

ROR - Package...

MC - Genre, yeah, package, a neat little easy to swallow pill.

ROR - So, I guess corpsepaint would be out of the question, huh?

MC - [laughing] Yeah...

ROR - You might have lucked out, because if there was like one other band that I could compare you guys to, it would be King's X.

MC - Yeah, and consequently we've always been mentioned in the same breath, and we toured a lot with them...

ROR - And you're touring with them again...

MC - Yeah, and we're doing it again. We are friends with them, and we get along well, and just musically it just seems to be a nice match. Their fans like us and vice-versa.

ROR - I guess for inspiration it would be nice to get out there with some other people doing different things.

MC - Oh yeah, I mean, that's the thing, we would love to do some other kinds of tours too. Expose ourselves to other audiences, but it's hard to do. It's hard to find.

ROR - Do you think it's the industry's fault, I mean, you go into any store, and you see maybe ten new bands, and they all sound say, like what they're calling retro metal now. Or ten new bands that are all cookie cutter black metal. Do you think that there are really that many bands that start right away, or that the companies just start signing what they think is hot?

Galactic Cowboys 27

MC - Yeah, I think that they've got to, I've gotten pretty cynical on the whole thing but it seems like they see that something selling, and they immediately run out and try and find something that sounds just like, and there's lots of people that are MORE than willing to sound just like someone else. That's an easy ticket for a lot of bands.

ROR - They'll go a one record deal and then get dropped when it's not hot anymore.

MC - Yeah, that's the whole shame though, I see so many of these bands, they get their 15 minutes and then it's over, forever, you know?

ROR - But, so you think they're really surprised when that happens?

MC - I don't know man, I even think about a lot of those 80s metal bands that so there were so many of back then. I think about some of those bands, and they're gone, and they were big for like one album, and then they didn't have a career anymore. I kinda in some ways feel sorry for them, but it's also like, if you were more creative, maybe you could stick around.

ROR - Well, I hope that there are enough people that can appreciate the creativity and break out from the norm to keep you guys in business, which is unfortunately what has to happen.

MC - Yeah, I'm hoping, and we're always hoping that we can broaden the audience more with each album. You know you're always one song away from bigger popularity, so... If we ever could get some radio play that would help. I guess you keep hoping to broaden your audience.

ROR - Well, there's something extra there, because there are certain bands, and you guys are one of them, that when you put on one of there albums, you're brought back to "that" time when you got the album. Not many bands do that, but each album has a certain time significance to me. At some point, other people have got to figure it out.

MC - I know, some of my favorite bands put out what I feel is the best stuff out there, and then they break up, and they can't do it anymore, because they don't get heard, they don't get pushed by their label. There's a lot of bands out there that have done a lot of creative stuff that just doesn't make it because it's not the same old thing.

ROR - Have you heard the band Voivod at all?

MC - Yeah!

ROR - That's another band I think of in this regard.



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MC - Yeah, I've always really dug them.

ROR - Every album is completely different, but they've just never seemed to find what marketers would call their "target" audience.

MC - Yeah, I don't know, sometimes they kinda stretch the envelope, they've pushed the boundaries of creativity sometimes. That's the thing with music, it's not enough anymore to have a really cool band, that may sell 60 to 100 thousand albums, it's like, if they're not "huge", then they're not worth keeping around.

ROR - Do you think some of it is the venues? Because it seems as though a lot of local mid-sized places are closing down. Is that just because they're just booking major acts? It feels like either you fill a stadium or you play a bar.

MC - Yeah, there's no room for the little anymore, everybody wants the biggest thing. It's even that way in movies, everything is a big explosion. Everything is a big adventure-thriller, Armageddon... Those movies are OK, but how about the little comedies, the small movies? I know they're out there, but it just seems like it's more and more dominated by the SAME THING.

ROR - How many different movies do we need to see with the same story?

MC - Yeah, how many times can you blow up a building or a car? But it's gonna happen every movie because everybody's got surround sound now. [laughs]

ROR - Yeah, god forbid you get to think in a movie.

MC - Right! Me, I just like to go laugh once in a while. I think they see that the big bucks are in big explosions, and that's what you're gonna get.

ROR - It's like a fear of taking chances. They know what they have to make. Somebody is always afraid that they'll lose their job if they sign this band or OK this movie and they don't make 150% profit. So, they just go with something they know is safe.

MC - I know man, it just gets frustrating, I mean, for everybody. I just think people are getting bored with music.

ROR - One of the cool things was that I liked that you started putting your artwork on the albums. To me that was another personal factor to the band.

MC - All right, of course, I totally enjoy doing that. It's been a really cool thing, I've got the degree from college to paint and stuff. Everyone's always going, you need to have a show, and with the CDs and everything you feel like hey, I've got the biggest gallery in the world. So, a lot of people get to see it, it's been a lot of fun.

ROR - Machine Fish was the first one that you did the cover for. Was that a coincidence that it was also the first one on Metal Blade, or was there maybe more artistic freedom?

MC - Yeah, it kinda was a little more freedom. Because at Geffen they were always wanting to figure out how to sell us, which was fine, but it was like: "You need to look like this more" or "No, that wouldn't be good". Because I really cool painting for Space in Your Face, and I'm fine with the cover that we picked for it, but I did painting of the four of us, and I thought that it would have been a really cool thing to have on the album. The guy at the time at the label (Geffen) was a little afraid that we would come off like comic book characters, or that it wouldn't be quite the right image. So I was like whatever. But once we left Geffen we had more freedom. I take stuff into Brian (Slagel, founder of Metal Blade Records) and he's like "yeah, cool". So it's been fun in that way, a lot more freedom.

ROR - So, are you guys getting psyched up to tour again?

MC - Yeah, I've been working out, trying to get in shape. Ready to exert some energy. Yeah, we're looking forward to it. Hope people get there early and check us out.

Galactic Cowboys - At the End of The Day
1998 Metal Blade Records

Monty Colvin - Bass, Vocals
Ben Huggins - Vocals, Guitar, Harmonica
Wally Farkas - Guitar
Alan Doss - Drums

Reviews

Here it is, time to offer my humble opinion on what's been released of late. You, the reader, may notice that some of these titles are a bit dated. This was based on a personal decision, as this is all stuff that I received in the mail or purchased during the last year. You may also notice that many of the titles are from only a few different record labels. The reason for this is based on the fact that several companies send me tons of stuff contrasted with my limited income, which keeps me from buying everything under the sun. I'm always more than happy to give a listen and a fair review to whatever is sent to me, whether it be the sterling production of a major release, or the garage sound of a rough demo. Hopefully these reviews will do exactly as they should, give you a synopsis of what I've heard, and whether or not I would spend the \$16 to get it again. Let's face it, there's a ton of stuff out there, and since people have their own opinions (hopefully!) that leaves a huge grey area for interpretation! The reviews are by me unless marked otherwise, and in the cases where Rob and I both reviewed something, the grade is the average of both of our ratings. That stated, here they are in alphabetical order for your reading ease.

Amon Amarth - Once Sent from the Golden Hall (8.25 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

Rob's View

Asgard has opened!! Amon Amarth has been released on the earth! What an improvement over the last album. Amon comes on strong right off the bat with its deep aggression of sorrow. Guitar here is thick and melodic stringing along streams of Asgardian licks that spin through each track with killer accuracy. Riff arrangement shows more than just thought. From each glorious solo to each break riff, an emotion drapes over the song like an energy filled net. Powerful bass keeps the net vibrant and full even on actual solo pieces. Drumming easily matches the last album, adding more powerful bass runs and pronounced cymbal work. On top of this Amon entity looms some of the most well placed vocals to date. Hegg's dry throated growls and gravel gargling screams burst though the doors of every track, raising the battles din. This album is well done all around. The Amon sound is definitely part of a popular Metal vein, and I believe that Once Sent... is a shining testament to the talent that makes them stand out in it. All Hail ODIN!!!! 8 out of 10

Evan's View

I've been listening to this album for quite a while now, and over time it continues to grow on me more and more. I liked Sorrow Throughout the Nine Worlds, but it seemed to suffer from the comparisons that are always drawn between the multitude of bands from this area. I mentioned that the last couple songs on that E.P. showed some real promise, and here it is realized! This album just rages! It's so intense that one of the band members got lost between the front and back cover! Seriously though, Once Sent... has everything required to be great, pummeling beats, muscular death vocals, ripping guitar melodies, it's in there... Drumming is spot on, much more double bass intensive and creative to boot. The guitarwork is just phenomenal, going from power riffing to melody to really nice lead spots. Vocals are more in the "Gothenburg" sound, pretty similar to Jester Race era In Flames (to my ears). Amon Amarth have also bypassed the repetition factor nicely, keeping things pretty fresh by mixing tempos and feel throughout. Lyrics are pretty standard Viking metal, from what I can hear, but this fits the atmosphere well, and with the incorporation of sampled swordplay, you can feel the agony of the battlefield. It is a rare album that evokes real emotion, and this happens to be one of them. There is a real element of despair that permeates this release. All in all, a release that is worthy to stand on it's own merits, hopefully leaving the inevitable comparisons to lesser bands that have jumped on the wagon. Might be a

contender for a top ten in '98! 8 1/2 out of 10

Arch Enemy - Stigmata (9 out of 10)

1998 Century Media Records

Evan's View

This is going to be a really tough review to write, and to explain why, one would have to be familiar with Arch Enemy's ground breaking opus Black Earth. That album is a masterpiece, which of course, leads to unrealistic expectations for the next album, setting up anticipation for another work of unparalleled genius. Of course, we all know that this may or may not happen (cases: Wolverine Blues, Swansong and Whoracle, to name a few), and it appears that disappointment is here again, as the inevitable transition to a major label has fancied up the bare bones, rushed in the studio, kick ass sound that permeated the first release. Much of the change may be attributed that the facts that the band expanded to a five piece, they had tons more time to write these songs, and that the rhythm section is really Armageddon. How much the drumming may change the overall sound of this band is best evidenced on the opening track, which is the closest in sound to their older material (Daniel Erlandsson is the original drummer, and he plays on Beast of Man). The rest of the album is still pretty damn heavy, but there are more "Gothenburg sound" elements, and quite a few times a hear a lot of In Flames in here. Some other changes? The vocals, which just fit so perfectly on the last album, are sometimes way mismatched with the melody lines, most noticeable in the choruses (Let the Killing Begin springs to mind). So, why is it rated so high? Because, while I am disappointed to see the riff juggernaut that was Arch Enemy become more progressive, I realize that bands must grow, and for fairness, I'll try to leave the comparison's from the first release out and give my review because the Brothers Amott are, in my opinion, one of, if not the, best guitarists/song-writing pairs in metal today. There are so many moments of pure brilliance here that I can't even begin to describe. Songs are longer than on Black



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Earth (the album), mixing different ideas together to produce another killer slab of Swedish Metal. Of course, this doesn't always work, and there are a few spots that make me cringe (again, the Iron Maiden/In Flamesy chorus of Let the Killing Begin), but these spots are few and far between, and Black Earth (the song) is just so fucking incredible it's worth the price of the album alone. Drumming is similar to that of Armageddon (surprise, surprise), very flashy, lots of double bass/splash cymbal hits. I am a big fan of this (normally) but I miss the controlled chaos of Daniel Erlandsson, who seems to add a level of emotion (see Eucharist) where Peter Wildoer offers a more mathematical/fusion oriented approach. Bottom line? There's just no comparison to the first album, this being a much slicker offering, but this is still a riff monster that blows away everything else out being released these days, and that makes this mandatory. 9 out of 10

Rob's View

Sometimes I don't know how I can stay sane waiting for one of my favorite bands to come out with another album. The scariest part of the wait is that occasional sinking feeling that my fave could come out with a plastic coated piece of crap. Hhhmmmmm let me think who else has done this, Kreator!! My fears were instantly blown away with the arrival of Stigmata from Arch Enemy. Let me just get to the point and not bore you with flamboyant wording. This one rocks!! No doubt it is the Amott boys kickin' the licks on number two. Hard and heavy technical guitar continues to be a trademark, with Liiva's vocals sounding as spiritually strained as on the last effort. Changes? Of course one can not accurately evaluate a band without looking at how they have progressed. Stigmata definitely smacks of Chris Amott's Armageddon album which takes some of the power out of what attracted me to Arch Enemy, but the album's feel is enhanced by his melodic riffs and angel-like solo work. Drumming also changes, which I quickly noticed on the second track. Sit-in drummer (and who wouldn't want to) Peter Wildoer does a good job but I found myself wanting for Erlandsson's hardcore attack that better matches the Amott's style. I salute Arch Enemy once again for keeping the meaning in Metal, but..... Don't break the Oath! 9 out of 10

Benumb - Soul of the Martyr (5 out of 10)

1998 Relapse Records

Listen up kids, if ultra-fast hardcore thrash is your bag, then run, don't walk, to your local cd shoppe and throw down the bucks for this baby. If, perchance, that isn't your idea of a rocking Friday night, you'd better leave this hunk of burnin' binary alone. Not counting a 10 minute live set tacked on the end, Benumb manage to cram 34 songs into just over that many minutes to perform aural surgery without any anaesthetic. Track 8 is a 9 minute sludgifest, but everything else is just one-two-three-four blastbeat city, which is little more than I can handle on your average day. No lyrics but honorable mentions go out to about a thousand bands on the thank you list, brings me back a few years I must say. All in all, if you miss old Heresy, Larm or Scum era Napalm Death, this and Nasum are for you. As for me, I'm afraid I'll have to check this war machine at the door.

Beseech - ...from a Bleeding Heart (7 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

Obviously schooled in the Gothic realm, Beseech gather some of the better attributes of this metal subgenre, producing a bittersweet album which is definitely for those who dress in black. I hear traces of Paradise Lost, Sentenced (vocally), My Dying Bride, In Flames and others at varying times. Obligatory female vocals are here (The Gathering), but it's the variance between tracks which really spices up this emotionally charged potpourri. Strong musical performances, with vocals that run the gamut

(clean to death) presenting tales of woe, which makes for a nice package. Probably something that I'd throw on only to accompany a thunderstorm some Sunday, but one of the better efforts I've heard lately, not quite so pretentious, I guess. Worth checking out if you're trapped in an existentialist nightmare and are having trouble finding the perfect soundtrack for one.

Cannibal Corpse - Gallery of Suicide (8 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

The Cannibal Corpse legacy continues, with these Florida deathsters releasing yet another 14 tracks of metal intensity. Seriously, these guys are an institution, producing opus after blood soaked opus of unrelenting grind. To my tainted ears, however, Gallery of Suicide sounds fresher and feistier than the last few, no small part due to the insane delivery of Der Corpsemeister himself, George Fisher. Also up a notch or two is the flyin' finger guitar attack, aided and abetted by new addition Pat O'Brien (proving himself no slouch while in Nevermore), who just rips through this material as if born for the task. Cannibal here also manage to create memorable riffs, one aspect missing in "grindcore" which keeps me at bay. Sterling Morrisound production highlights the cold, mechanical delivery, only emotion expressed being hate. This is best evidenced in tracks such as: I Will Kill You, and Gallery of Suicide, which incorporates a truly kick ass waltzy guitar intro; something that makes me throw this back in the player over say, Deicide. If you know their past works (as most due, Cannibal being one of the most notorious acts around) then you'll get the same old Cannibal, albeit a little tighter and snazzier to my ears, and for you neophytes, a nice intro to one of the tightest, sickest bands on the planet. A guitarist's showcase, extremely technical and mechanical, held together by Mazurkiewicz's fast but seemingly stable percussion and Webster's Kornish bass. Not bad, not bad at all, especially to someone who never got into their previous works.

Covenant - Nexus Polaris (9 out of 10)

1998 Nuclear Blast Records

What's this? Another supergroup! This one features members of Cradle of Filth, Mayhem and Dimmu Borgir, to name a few. Do these guys ever sleep? Usually, with this prolific nature, some real duds are going to fly, but fate is tempted once more and another excellent record is released! I, for one, am glad to see that the focus has shifted from Satan to more of a stellar nature. These lyrics, along with the symphonic quality of the compositions, provides a really majestic sound, amplified by some just killer musicianship! Not just riffs, the songs are actually benefitted by the addition of keyboards. If anyone has heard Hellhammer before, you can attest to his dominance of the drum kit, but here, he also gets to stretch out and draw from different influences, throwing some really interesting fills and patterns into the fray. The production is superb, just bringing this all together but also allowing for everything to stand on its own. Vocals are the standard "pissed off elf in the forest" ranting, but, with the lyrical nature, fit better than on other recordings. The "Starsong" vocals are more of an added effect, which here, like the keyboards, adds, rather than detracts from the astral nature. I think it's safe to say that I like this release much more than anything that the other groups have put out before. After all my criticism of supergroups, maybe they're not such a bad thing after all, for this album just kills from start to finish.

Cradle of Filth - Cruelty and the Beast (8 out of 10)

1998 Music for Nations Records

Supreme evil in the form of the ultimate tribute to the blood goddess herself, Elizabeth Bathory. As EB was known for her outrageous theatrics,

so are Cradle of Filth, who milk humanity's fascination of the dark side for all it's value. With highly confrontational past releases, and a name that makes most cringe, COF are the forefront of the dirt metal scene, selling just tons of material to a hungry horde of evil-lovin' kids all over the world. Being the cynic that I am, I figured that this was all show, but, as with Dimmu Borgir, I was astonished to find the degrees of musicality and musicianship present on their latest release! Sure, the bone scraping vocals, which are the crux of the show here, can rub the paint off at 50 paces, but for some reason here they aren't as overpowering. I've heard that main influences are Maiden, Mercyful Fate and more of the "classic" bands, and I would tend to agree. Guitar work just kills, with scorching riffs (do I smell brimstone?) mixed with the swirling keyboard passages which are nowhere near being cheesy. A more than capable rhythm section maintains the necessary juggernaut pace through roughly 45 minutes of "song" (interludes notwithstanding), with some truly pummeling double bass which is the standard we've come to expect. Only thing that bothers me (besides having to hear about evil left and right) is the paper thin sound of the snare, which is a personal pet peeve. Otherwise, a formidable release from the top contenders in the battle royal for Satan. Now, I have also heard cries of "sellout" here, which I can't argue. This is first album I even considered buying from these guys, and it was only after hearing the quality of the song structure that I finally broke down and got it. So, maybe the "evil" isn't as intense, or the songs aren't as fast, but the sure do stick in the brain over the tons of other stuff I hear daily, and for me, that's a definite reason to recommend this.

Cryptopsy - Whisper Supremacy (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Century Media Records

Ah, the gentle sounds of the infamous Cryptopsy. After two critically lauded releases on smaller labels, this wild bunch have made the highly anticipated step to one of the "majors". This, coupled with the departure of ghoulish vocalist Lord Worm prompted worry on the masses. Well, rest assured that Cryptopsy have no ideas of calming down, and yes, new "vocalist" DiSalvo fills the vile shoes more than capably. At only 32 minutes in length, W.S. is a short "blast" of an album, but similar to driving at Mach 2, how much can a person take before their body decides to shut down? To those indoctrinated with the sounds, this magnificent group of adrenaline junkies puts forth more of the same here, albeit a little more polished thanks to Pierre (Oblivion) Remillard's crystalline production. Amazing actually, since there's this weird push-pull of ideas constantly in motion, where it seems as though each instrument is vying for the same aural space, yet working in unison at the same time. This has got to sound like a nervous breakdown on tape to the rest of the world, yet there's this underlying current of control in the guitars holding this avalanche together. Good thing, as Flo Mounier is definitely schooled in the Steve Flynn (Atheist) school of rhythm, arms and legs hitting anything and everything at once. I can totally picture him all jittery, wearing a bike helmet in the grocery store. Yet, as stated before, for all the speed and intensity, the individuality of songs shines through. Riffs are thrown in a blender, but the solos are memorable, as is the basswork. One drawback? I can't bloody well think when hearing this, as can probably be witnessed by this review, written under the headphone influence of this most massive achievement of noise. Definitely not for the faint of heart.

Dan Swano - Moontower (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Black Mark Records

The musical mastermind does it again. It no secret that progressive rock is a major influence to Mr. Swano, and Moontower is the perfect homage to that forgotten era. Hard to describe, but imagine a solid base of metal with layers of keyboard and synthesizer on top of everything. I do hear some old Edge of Sanity in here, but mostly it's Marillion, Rush, Yes, Pink Floyd, and even The Who! Beware to those who crave the pure, and cringe at excess, for this harkens back to the days of ego, when musicians had

chops and weren't afraid to use them. Personally, I love progressive art rock, so for me, this is the perfect combination, but I can imagine someone taking this from a completely different perspective. Complaints I could see arising? Well, one is that the whole album contains synth work which some will consider too cheesy, and some of the work may be a little too derivative from the aforementioned influences. It's also not Edge of Sanity, and while it will be compared from those expecting another Swano based EOS album, that's unfortunate, for while the voice is recognizable, there is a degree of experimentation which was never attained in that near-perfect band. What just blows me away though is that I can't fault the musicianship at all! While the drumming may lack some dynamics, I am just in awe at Swano's control over every facet in this recording. I did wish for more "clean" parts in the vocals, but it's the rasp which, along with some killer distortion, keeps this "metal" enough for the hordes, and is a small price to pay. Another excellent album from a very talented individual, and an aural mecca for those who are ready to hear some true "progressive" metal.

Dark Funeral - Vobiscum Satanas (8 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

It's albums like this which frighten me, for after listening to this album for the 30th time in as many days, I begin to think that I am becoming a black metal convert. All that it takes to dispel this belief is to throw on, say, most of the other crap that is spawned daily from the norse netherworld. I may be a black metal snob, but it takes something pretty special to catch my interest in this genre, and Vobiscum Satanas just dragged me in from the first cut. A brilliant blend of Emperor's power and Dissection's finesse, Dark Funeral have created (along with studio mastermind Peter Tagtgren) an epic opus sure to rank among the best albums released this year. Sure, the sound is pure evil, standard, black metal, but something, maybe the strong sense of melody, or the crystal clear production, forces me to listen to this over and over. While rather short (clocking in at roughly 34 minutes) the album blends well as a whole, spreading the vibe over 8 tracks of grandiose musical landscapes. Many may find this too similar to other groups, but I might actually prefer this album to the influences for everyday listening, but that is my personal taste for today. So, definitely pick this beast up and figure out for yourself if Dark Funeral have managed to enter the evil hall of fame. Supposedly bassist/vocalist Emperor Magus-Caligula is none other than Masse Broberg from the first two Hypocrisy albums.

Death - The Sound of Perserverence (9 out of 10)

1998 Nuclear Blast Records

Evan's View

I'm not sure as to why, but from day one, it seems as though the majority voice has given Mr. Schuldiner a bum deal. Every interview I read has Chuck defending himself and his music. Enter 1998, and here we have Chuck again stating that this record is a personal vendetta against those who would do him in. Opting for more of a spiritual approach (Human was "revenge") on this release, "Evil" Chuck again proves that he is without a doubt one of the finest explorers of the realm of metal. Hiring three "unknowns", Death may now be a complete band, and if so, we may be luckier than ever. Richard Christy certainly had some big shoes to fill, following two super shredders (Hoglan and Reinert), but nails the critical vote within the first ten seconds of track one. The whole band rips, and what's nice is that the songs aren't written for this task, instead, they flow, and each band member senses enough to pull back when it's time. No more cross-shredding nightmare tracks (see Gorguts) where you have no idea what's going on. Tracks run a bit longer here as well, allowing the song to unfold, cleansing any riffitis which may have occurred. But the biggest change has to be the vocals! Gone are the trademark rasps which were pretty much invented on Scream Bloody Gore. Instead, it's a smoother, more athletic

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growl which fits so much better with the technical approach. Nuclear Blast was wise to pick this seminal band up, for it seems as though we finally get to hear what Chuck wanted us to for all these years. Unfortunately, the album closes with (to my ears) a truly miserable version of Painkiller that I can hardly listen to. Evidently it was included due to popular demand, so be safe in knowing that I'm in the minority on that opinion!

Regardless, we owe thanks to "Evil" Chuck for about 15 years of quality music, all of which is incorporated here.

Destiny's End - Breathe Deep the Dark (7 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

James Rivera, vocalist extraordinaire of the legendary Helstar, here joins 3/5 of the defunct New Eden to form what Rivera describes as the return to the heyday of metal. On this point, I can agree, as this album just reeks of the 80's from it's Maidenish riffs to the D + D cover art. Metal Blade is attempting a coup here what with all the speed metal releases coming out of there lately, and with Destiny's End they might be on the right track. Musicianship is downright excellent, with those trademark Rivera vocals just commandeering this into oblivion. One thing I have noticed, on all these releases and the Dwell Iron Maiden Tribute is the constant use of double bass. Not sure if I agree with it, but it does seem to fit here, giving the album a pretty constant pace, but also adds to the "cons" list, as songs start to bleed together for me during the middle tracks. Some nice bass guitar work catches my ear, impressive since there didn't appear to be much room around the riffage.

Defleshed - Under the Blade (7 3/4 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

Evan's View

Holy smokes! Like a kick in the face, Under the Blade just jumps out of the speakers, ready to pummel the crap out of the next unruly raver. One of the most unforgiving releases yet this year, Defleshed somehow managed to put together 36 minutes of precision death metal which is technically proficient and interesting beyond song two! Overall pace of the album is a pretty darn fast one, but these guys are skilled enough to pull it off. Crystal production helps quite a bit, as this could have just been mush to the ears. As I found with Naglfar's Diabolical, it seems as though the musicians are getting comfortable enough playing at light speed to be able to throw extra stuff into the mix without derailing the song. With an average track length around the 3 minute mark, Defleshed have made an album worth it's weight for anyone into the extreme side of things. For me, I definitely won't be listening to this while having my morning coffee lest my head implodes, which is why I'll give this the rating grade that I do. But there are those of you out there that will just literally kill for this, and I say go for it, as a mixture of power, mathematics and dedication doesn't come around to stay all that often. Re-released by Metal Blade Records in 1998. Also look for the first album which was supposedly released but I'll be damned if I can find any information on. 7 1/2 out of 10

Rob's View

Ya just gotta like this one. Way out Thrash meets the blazing speed and torment of 90s Death in an aural onslaught of fantastic proportions. I couldn't help but be swept away by the fury and power of every track. Having been a Kreator fan for so long I will say that Mille and the boys had some influence here, but Defleshed capture the fire of Metal's heavier riffs and make them burn much harder. At the same time Defleshed stays within the bounds of good music. It would be very easy for this trio to break the seal and melt the whole place down. Which, while being far-out, solid and right-on, doesn't do us any good when you're wondering what the hell is going on instead of listening to the music. Having said this about many other "good" bands you may wonder if I am not just being picky. Well, yeah!! Let's put it this way; the sound of a top fuel dragster making its quarter mile run is a good noise (Defleshed); the sound of a garbage truck full of broken toilets, razor blades, and rusty ball bearings exploding through a cinderblock wall is just noise (Cryptopsy). On top of all that we get an awesome cover of Destruction's Curse the Gods. Ya just gotta like it. 8 for 10

The Dillinger Escape Plan - Under the Running Board (8 out of 10)

1998 Relapse Records

Making Mr. Bungle seem like a group of laid back stoners, Under the Running Board just explodes within the first 5 seconds of playback. Fusing grindcore, experimental jazz and the essence of hardcore into a perfect sphere of pure manic ferocity, these guys have managed to blow away most conventions in only seven short minutes of airtime. Hopefully this is a preview into their sick little world, for everything here works, the grindcore vocals, the muted guitar intricacies, hypergroove drumming... Meshuggah and John Zorn adopt a NYC generic straight edge band and raise it as their bastard child. A cut above the noise coming out today, this EP (at \$5) is definitely worth putting on the ol' Christmas list. Relapse also carries the self-titled first album, if you want to hear the beginnings of the psychosis.

Fates Warning - Still Life (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

After attempting several times to break into the mainstream, the future of Fates Warning seemed uncertain. Retaining only Ray Alder, and Mark Zonder from the old band, guitarist Jim Matheos decided to go for it, penning the 45 minute opus A Pleasant Shade of Gray. Obviously meant only for those that could appreciate it, APSoG unveiled a new FW (with ex-Armoured Saint bassist Joey Vera and ex-Dream Theater keyboardist Kevin Moore). Enter 1998, and Fates Warning give the unsuspecting public another chance to get with it, releasing a live double disc highlighting their brilliant 15 year career. Disc 1 is A Pleasant Shade of Gray performed in it's entirety, quite a marvel to behold, really. Not quite so commercial as either Parallels or Inside Out, there's a sense of maturity here as well-seasoned veterans find out when to hold back on their massive chops a little. Reminiscent of a jazz/fusion release at times, there's a controlled looseness here, and honestly, were the crowd not present, one would be hard pressed to say that this was indeed a live album. While APSoG is broken into 12 pieces, it is indeed one complete song, as themes are revisited. Don't have the studio album, so I can't offer concrete reasons why this live document would be essential, other than to speculate that much like hearing the live Rush albums (where live is pretty much duplicated as in the studio) it's just hearing the majestic overtones of this incredible group performing the unperformable in a live setting. And then off to disc 2 we go! After stunning us with a 45 minute track, we get their second largest offering, the immortal Ivory Gate of Dreams. Now, this might make reason alone to get this, just to hear Zonder's interpretation of how this should be played,

even if he attempts to recreate what Steve Zimmerman put to tape before. Alder evidently still has his range, as he just decimates everyone with his apocalyptic air-raid siren of a voice. Very Impressive. Things slow down a tad on the “newer” numbers, but everything just seems a little heavier and less sterile here, which is way appreciated by me. I guess what gets me the most is that seeing the songs that were chosen, and what was left out, I am just at awe at the back catalogue of this band. Could have done without the “campfire” audience participation though. Maybe for once, Fates Warning will get the recognition they deserve with this, a superb live document of the quintessential progressive metal band.

God Dethroned - The Grand Grimoire (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

Evan's View

More incredible technical metal from Europe. God Dethroned manages to mix the aggressiveness of At the Gates with the technical wizardry of Dissection, forming a crunching pinpoint accuracy attack on the senses. The opening track just blows me away every time I put this on. There's definitely something here which elevates The Grand Grimoire above the hordes, probably a combination of the fluidic guitar lines over uncommonly subdued keyboard passages to give a truly epic feel. Each track rages, no problems there, but added are the finesse touches which succeed in holding my interest past the first half of the album (which is lacking in most releases, where each track bleeds into the next). It also grows on me more after each play, which is a very promising sign indeed. Some longer tracks showcase the use of mood and emotion, adding the intended “grandness” to the picture. Actually, this album has it all, blast beats, anthemic riffs, heart tugging interludes, etc... The only drawback for me may be the lyrics, but then again, they are quite secondary to the music here. Truly strange “band photos” and bio, which are intended to give a “dark ages” feel, but just succeed in kinda freakin me out. One kick ass album, and evidently one of the most played albums on college radio stations, so I'm not alone in recommending this release. Just don't play it at Sunday School! 8 out of 10

Rob's View

One of the only things I would change about metal today is the outright mention of religion in any band's names, titles, and lyrics. Geezzzzzz give me chance to let the album mean something to me besides sixteen bucks that isn't in my wallet anymore. Thank God they don't all do that. Anyway, God Dethroned will always remain an exception to me because this band is damn good. I may not know what a grand grimoire is, but I do know The Grand Grimoire pushes the limits of today's music to the edge without falling over and pressing a piece of crap into a CD. Musicianship is definitely here. Guitar is so clear that it cuts the CD like a grand razor. Softer guitar parts, see Under a Silver Moon, bring a sense of spirit and power to the album that says so much more than the awesomely brutal riffs (which do totally throw down). Drum work is that of any good Death Metal drummer, but he too adds so much more to this crushing band. I consider this to be some of the best riff writing to come along in many years. Metal Blade wins another battle with Rob over the Can't Judge an Album by its Cover conundrum. So if you can get past the name, the curious pictures on the inside label, and the name of the bass player, you got your sixteen bucks worth and more. You can't always tell how deep a nail is by just looking at the head. Now, “I need the Grand Grimoire. I'll find the Grand Grimoire”. 9 out of 10

Gorguts - Obscura (7 out of 10)

1998 Olympic Records

The only thing that really doesn't make any sense to me is why they kept the name Gorguts. Completely reforming the band with three new additions, Luc Lemay proceeds to create yet another subgenre with this totally off the wall avant-garde death metal album. Maybe the band name holds something from the past, but the sounds which emanate from my speakers are light years away from anything that was ever considered metal on this planet. Obscura is a really trippy musical journey through the ethereal plane of existence, where the listener is jarred back to reality at times by the intricate dis-musicality that resides here. Glad to see that this was done, for this is definitely not for the average listening public, which is why I'm even more surprised at how well this is being received. Good for Gorguts is all I have to say, but man this is one tough polymer to handle all at once. Some of the strangest sounds possible are made, at times like a cat-strangling party that went way too late, complete with somebody's precocious kid drumming away in the attic. These are the tough parts, for pieces of this aural tapestry are quite soaring, really. Put the whole thing together and you get something that, if you can hack it in it's extremity, is worth it's weight in gold. If you cringe at the name “Mr. Bungle” or anything like that, get out of the kitchen, it's too hot. So where do I stand? Well, I don't know, but I will say this, I'm totally impressed that this was made, and I can stand back and marvel at the performance, but I feel totally alienated for not liking this as much as I'm supposed to. Maybe that's the point though.

Hammerfall - The Legacy of Kings (8 out of 10)

1998 Nuclear Blast Records - Review by Rob

Hammerfall does it again. A whole new set of horse riding, sword swinging, Norse dudes lay down the law True Metal style. If you liked Glory to the Brave, you won't be left wanting here. Style, delivery, and emotion are very similar to their first effort with some added “glory” or something that makes this CD glow in the rack. Check out the cover of Pretty Maids' Back to Back, it is excellently done. What did you expect? This is good stuff, and there's nothing wrong with doing it twice in a row. “Let the Hammer Fall!”

The Haunted - The Haunted (8.75 out of 10)

1998 Earache Records

Evan's View

When a band appears containing 3 alumni from At the Gates, initial comparisons are inevitable. But, while the basic core sound remains, it is obvious that The Haunted are out to make their own mark, and a force to be reckoned with. Just to throw in a little history, At the Gates disbanded after the legendary Slaughter of the Soul LP, much to the dismay of all who had heard it. It seemed a logical thing to do, as it was near impossible that the dynamics of that record could be surpassed. So we come to 1998, and is The Haunted a step forward? The answer is both yes and no, fortunately for all involved. The irony is that the songs which appear to have the greatest similarity to SOTS are written by “new” guitarist Jensen, while the more progressive material (again, drawing comparison to At the Gates) is penned by Anders. Lyrics are intelligent and angry, dealing with the desensitization of humanity and the perverseness of society as a whole. This is also the area where the biggest change has happened. Gone are the tortured screams of Tomas Lindberg, replaced by the rantings of one Peter Dolving, who if to be pigeonholed, reminds me of Jens Kidman of Contradictions Collapse era Meshuggah. This new direction leads the band into a more accessible area, while still keeping the underground spirit. For me, it's the perfect continuation of Slaughter of the Soul, melding the intricate riffery and precision drumming, while changing enough to hold plenty of interest. For those new to this sound, the intensity of this shit will just blow

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you away! The Haunted have managed to harness enough power to destroy everything in their path. For those expecting SOTS part two, it'll never happen, but this is the closest you will come, and if you give this record a chance on it's own, you'll see the brilliance that resides here. Easily be one of the best releases of the year. 9 1/2 out of 10

Rob's View

I usually avoid things surrounded by hype, and I must admit that news of The Haunted's get together and subsequent album had me turning away before the first CD was cut. So, as you would expect I wasn't really impressed with the first listen. The guitar effects are very sharp and bladesome, but there are riffs that you have heard before in the pre 90s. Even Forensick, a spoken track with exploding guitar punctuation, sounds like something you have heard before. Well, listen again and we get to see beyond the surface. This album borders on perfect. The Haunted have taken their incredible talent and brought forth a gift any metalhead must enjoy. Yeah, it is the old days, but done to a T and with a nineties attitude. I was particularly impressed with the subject matter of the songs. Not so thrilled with the idea of a disintegrated society like Carnivore, but seriously telling the truth about the way it is... Disney or not. These guys are really, really tight. Every string, vocal, and drum punch is very well organized into a totally powerful listening experience. These ARE experienced musicians who know how to write a song. So, I don't really care where these guys came from before now, I'm just glad they took the spirit of Metal to this incredible height. As they say, "don't believe the hype"! 8 for 10

Incantation - Diabolical Conquest (7 out of 10)

1998 Relapse Records

There's just no question that Incantation is either evil or brutal, but unless that's all you're looking for, Diabolical Conquest may leave you a little dry. I've listened to this album about 25 times, but whenever I go to write my thoughts on this satanic epic, I can hardly remember anything about the album besides a few riffs. However, those few riffs do certainly sear into your skull, especially the opening on track one (Shadows of the Ancient Empire comes to mind as well). The whole album pretty much lumbers along at a steady pace, pausing to change moods momentarily on Unheavenly Skies before pounding us back into the fray. Much like Suffocation and Cannibal Corpse, this stuff is hard for me to digest all at once I suppose, for after a few tracks, everything has sorta melded together for me. Now, while I personally don't really get into this, it is a solid death slab worthy of induction into the kingdom of all that is less-than-holy, and those that wouldn't have it any other way most likely have this monster already. Probably best as an apocalyptic mood piece, for closer Unto Infinite Twilight... is just devastating while clocking in at over 16 minutes! Overall, a solid 8 for those in the brutal death fold (out skinning goats as I write, it's gotta be goat-skinning time somewhere!) but a 7 for me, for while it'll throw me across the room, it's just not my first choice for musical intoxication (although if I ever go back to grad school it'll probably never leave the CD player).

In Ruins - Four Seasons of Grey (8 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records - Review by Rob

This grey thing is going around so I could see Four Seasons of Grey being part of your life real soon. What I mean to say is, In Ruins should be on your next shopping list. Production is number one on this Metal Blade offering. Guitar melodies are well played over the stunning guitar riffs, but it is how it is laid down that helps In Ruins keep your attention. Hard, heavy, with just a touch of Goth to sink you deeper than 6 feet. Due to its titanium heavy content, tracks tend to last a little longer than I liked, but never reaching an Opeth like epic. Check out Vampire, Garden of Thorns for a church organ solo that is soundtrack quality.

King Diamond - Voodoo (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

It seems like just yesterday that I was spinning Abigail on my buddy's turntable, but here I am over a decade later throwing in the newest King Diamond disc with a certain degree of trepidation. I've never been the biggest King Diamond fan, for, as most know, it's the voice that just drives me nuts. This aspect of the band (and even more so with companion group Mercyful Fate) is incredibly predominant, leaving most of us to choose a black or white decision of love it or hate it. So, imagine my surprise when I found King's operatic falsetto way more accessible on what proves to be his finest release in years! With a killer mix here, it's La Rocque's guitar which just dominates this disc. This guy rules, and after his tenure here, along with an appearance in Death (Individual Thought Patterns) and his just incredible solo (one solo that will stay in my brain forever!) on "Cold" (At the Gates - Slaughter of the Soul) it is evident that he will be inducted into the guitar hall of fame. The vast pool of influences heard here are equally impressive, as I catch pieces of Sabbath, Fates Warning, Marillion and Pink Floyd, to name just a few! Once again, a concept album, feared by many, but old hat to the kingster, who can weave a tale of treachery better than anyone. Drumming is tasty and powerful, allowing the riffs to ride effortlessly over unwavering rhythms. And the voice just fits so well here. What can I say? A definite must, even for those, who like me, had trouble dealing with "the voice", for Voodoo kicks ass, giving the weak "power metal" resurgence something to aspire to.

Labyrinth - Return to Heaven Denied (7 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records

More keyboard oriented than their peers, Italy's Labyrinth offer up a sound which is so clean, so majestic, it's almost too sterile in nature. Obviously concerned with the final product, Return to Heaven Denied ties the history of metal together in an intricate yet easily discernible package. Running at approximately an hour in length, if you miss the days of Crimson Glory, look no further, for everything which was important back then (excellent guitarwork, operatic vocals, "the look") rises forth to kick you around. Only problem is, I prefer what would be considered the 90s sound, so I'm left a little dry. Another point, maybe it's just to my ears, but a lot of these band sound alike, and I find myself remembering riffs, but forgetting which band it is I'm thinking about. Could be a marketing surge, but the people that lose out are the bands, which is sad, really. Many of the songs are structured around constant double bass, limiting what the rhythm section to do, which forces the keys to play a greater role here. But, while this may not be the first thing I reach for in my overwhelming stack of discs, every time I throw it on I'm impressed by the emotion, the musicianship, the whole damn thing. So I'm sure in saying that if the "new" 80's speed is your bag, then grab a six pack of these and pass 'em around, for it doesn't get any better than this.

Meshuggah - Chaosphere (9 out of 10)

1998 Nuclear Blast Records

Man, I was so excited to get this album. My brother (the suave dude that he is) managed to get someone to sell him a copy of this pre-release so I could get it for my birthday. Having heard virtually nothing from Meshuggah since DEI (you should know my feeling on inter-release E.P.s by now) I don't know what I was expecting, but it sure as hell wasn't was spewed from my walkman in the Philadelphia International Airport. It's unfair I know, but I feel a certain degree of disappointment when I think about this album. All the pieces are here, the insane drumming, the 3/2 percussive lyrics, the killer leads, I just don't know what my problem is. As with many of other favorite bands (In Flames, Entombed, Atheist), I expect so much from them that when they only deliver 100%, I feel let down. Anyway, to be rational, this is about as close to perfect an album as you can get, if this is your particular cup of poison. A couple people have asked me to recommend bands which sound like Meshuggah, and honestly, I was stumped. Lyrically, a concept album which describes an individual who proceeds to swap his human parts for machinery, the music alone could have described this scenario. Cold, precise, yet always threatening to break free of binds which hold this beast together. Interestingly, I guess what is new doesn't appear to be since I have heard the Special Defects, some of which carries over onto Chaosphere. Check out the lead work on Corridor of Chameleons or the vocals on The Exquisite... and you'll see what I mean. If you've heard Destroy Erase Improve, then you probably have this, and if you haven't, well... Imagine a world where a jazz fusion guitarist employs a drummer who has mastered 4-way independence linked with a vocal pugilist who mix it up with precision staccato riffage and you still can't come anywhere near this. Excellent production (again) highlights 5 extremely talented musicians who, while not creating anything new by their standards, have perhaps perfected what will become the "Meshuggah" sound. So, I need to just get over it and listen to the album for what it really is, a sound continuation of a brilliant idea.

Mortician - Zombie Apocalypse (7 out of 10)*1998 Relapse Records*

Evan's View

The ultimate homage to horror movies, or 27 minutes of your life drained away? I've seen both reactions to Mortician's latest offering, and I guess I have to say that I fall somewhere in the middle. I have seen this album just blasted, and honestly, upon repeated listens, it's not all that bad! The samples, which actually bothered me quite a bit at first (usually, samples are cool the first couple times, then they start to get old, fast) add to the element which I'm sure Mortician were going for when they recorded this. Zombie Apocalypse is the perfect album for holing up in your room with the lights off, planning mass destruction. There are some serious negatives to be found, however. At a playing time of roughly 27 minutes, this is a definite E.P., with half of this amount being samples or cover songs. That's too bad, because it's on the original, mid-paced riffs where Mortician show promise, for there are some seriously killer riffs here, especially on the song Incinerated. The drum programming is also a big drawback for me. On the mid-tempo stuff, it almost sounds pretty realistic, but on the blast beats, it's like a jackhammer. Vocals are unintelligible grunts, but of the deathly type that fans of this genre just devour. This is some pretty brutal stuff here, thick sludgy guitars captured with really nice production. If it wasn't for that damn snare! The covers are so-so, but then again, I'm jaded, because F.O.D. was almost my least favorite song on Strappedado. The Repulsion cover is a little better, but still not as good as their original material. In the end, we have a halfway decent E.P. that, for the money, will fit perfectly in any horror film buffs soundtrack case. If Mortician could get a live drummer, and maybe expound on some of those kick-ass riffs, the next album could be a truly brutal contender.

Rob's View

Evan hits this one right on the head. Some bands have managed to put out some great stuff in 26 minutes or so, but that has usually been all music. I have always been a fan of intros, and this album has plenty, but they tend to be too long. Thus, when you do get to the music it just isn't enough. What you do get to hear is pretty good. Bolt Thrower-like guitar effects really had me banging my head along with the machine gun drumming. Vocals are too muddy and unintelligible, but seem to fit the Gore Metal vein. Relapse was smart to hang on to these guys, but needs to put the squeeze on the muscle bound musicians for some more studio time. So for the next effort, let's hear more music, less electronic drums, and some more music. Did I mention more music?

Naglfar - Diabolical (9 out of 10)*1998 WAR Records*

Evan's View

I consciously waited a few weeks after getting to this to pop out a review, and for good reason, as this is rapidly becoming one of my most played discs. Upon first listen, Diabolical is almost a constant blur of blinding technicality, which is cold, mechanical and precise. It was only repeated plays (of which there were many) that the nuances and musical brilliance residing inside escaped. The pace is pretty consistent, and there are some real burners here, speedwise (Blades is just insane), but songs are built on melody, giving an emotional feel which is only apparent on certain, rare releases. With everything that I hear, there has to be something pretty special for me to pull it from the stacks, and Diabolical is one of those releases. So make a sound comparison, let's say a hyper Dissection, albeit much tighter in the rhythm department. Nice use of bass guitar in the mix, and I'm sure the vocalist is possessed, but it's the guitar lines that are truly memorable, layered with just a hint of keyboards to provide a sound which drives but is not muddy. Hats off to the production staff for this job! Requisite piano track is a nice (boy I'm tempted to say anacrusis here) lead-in to the final track, closing an album which may just be one of the top ten of the year. Outstanding job, I'm thoroughly impressed. 9 out of 10

Rob's View

Again, Dark meets Black meets Power meets Death Metal in this awesome follow up to Vittra. Things are not quite as chaotic on this album. Suggesting that someone was doing some practice and production quality has improved. Controlling the energy becomes the focus here, and the result is a fantastic album. The riffs here are just ripping. Fast, melodic, and well thought out. No strum, strum, lets play something dumb. Yeah, it's loud and angry and piano sad sometimes, but Diabolical sculpts an ornate effigy to what those feelings are. I expect we have a long way to go with Naglfar, and I will be looking very forward to the next one from this unique and powerful band. 9 for 10

Nasum - Inhale/Exhale (6 out of 10)*1998 Relapse Records*

Whew! 38 tracks in 45 minutes! Heavily influenced by Scum era Napalm Death, Nasum spew forth politically aware, technically crushing grindcore with the best of them, crushing everything in it's path. The major difference for me between this and say, Benumb, is the propensity for Nasum to write some really catchy riffs, not just explode into cacophony. Production is also a key element, with Dan Swano's old Unisound record-

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does that guitar have a nice “Sunlight” Sound to it?). A nice balance of ferocity and riffage which means it’ll probably get played more than most of the grindcore I own.

ing equipment being put to good use here. The blast/groove ratio on I/E is not too high, meaning that there are numerous chances for Nasum to open up a good idea, not quash it after 10 seconds (the curse of most grindcore), and for me, that’s where my interest peaks on this release. Out of the current g-core crop, Nasum is my pick due to the musicality, talent and sheer amount of bone-crunching riffs per song here (Is it me or

Nile - Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka (8 out of 10) *1998 Relapse Records*

Whoa! This album totally came out of nowhere!!! Alternating between standard death metal and a nightmare swirl of eastern musical passages, Nile here have succeeded in creating a unique sound which will ease the job of trying to differentiate them from the pack of Cannibal Corpse/Suffocation clones out there. It seems as though most bands take a certain paradigm for constructing albums now, either Cradle of Filth, or In Flames, or the aforementioned Cannibal style. This is most likely a function of the limited number of producers used, and the inevitable, indelible mark of their studio “sound” which is imprinted on the band. It is beginning to seem as if each label has a “house” producer, which, to my ears, is extremely limiting. Leave it to Relapse then to find yet another unknown band which is pushing the envelope, trying to forge something new. Importance here lies in the riffs, which, while familiar in scope, have a certain twist (the eastern influence) that is added to a lead guitar tone to create songs that stick with you. Let’s face it, brutal 32nd note attacks may make you run that extra mile, or bench another 30 pounds, but they’re not the songs you’re humming whilst in the milk aisle, unless there’s some melody involved! This is where Nile succeeds for me, matching the unbridled aggression with melodic lines that stick in my head. What could have also been an oh-so-clever marketing ploy of adding a new flavor to an old sound (there is a prevalent Egyptian God of War theme here, complete with tribal passages straight from The Ten Commandments) seems genuine, and the instrumental sections are pretty creepy, not cheesy as they could have been. Drumming is superhuman, of course, ultra-fast double bass, perfect for this type of death metal. Bass is there, albeit rumbling in the mix along with the gargled vocals. It’s the guitar that carries this release along, weaving the intricacies in and around devastating power chords. A to the point album at 32 minutes, Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka is a welcome change from the clone bands that seem to be churned out lately, and is a worthy addition to those into the extreme side of things. Ravi Shankar meets Malevolent Creation.

Opeth - My Arms, Your Hearse (10 out of 10) *1998 Century Media Records*

I figured it’s high time that I reviewed this, as it’s been my tape of choice (along with The Haunted on side B) for biking for some time now. Opeth are one of my favorite bands, fusing progressive passages with real heaviness, muscular drumming and Mike Akerfeldt’s killer vox. Here we come to a turning point. I seem to smell a pattern with creative bands. They

release a sensational album which revitalizes the scene, then they either break up, or follow their opus magnum with a semi-mundane offering. I won’t name names, but I have been so disappointed in the last year that I was wondering if all the bright lights in metal were fading. Several big changes in the Opeth camp had me a little worried as well. Half of what made Opeth was gone. Dan Swano would no longer be producing. Yikes. A slight sigh of relief when I found out Fredrik Nordstrom (In Flames, At the Gates) would have a hand in this, but then Opeth were also moving from Candlelight to Century Media. Yup, things could be grim. With anticipation I chucked this into my player and crossed my fingers... A sigh of relief could be heard outer-island as I just listened, and listened, and listened again to the brilliance which is Opeth. Martin Lopez (ex Amon Amarth is an excellent replacement on drums, and Akerfeldt’s bass work is comparable to the past, but all this would be for naught if the dynamics were grown, and thankfully the songwriting abilities have done nothing but gone stronger over time. Biggest changes are the production, which is much meatier than the first two, Lopez’ funkified approach to the music, and Akerfeldt’s heightened confidence on his clean vocal parts. Songs are also shorter, although this change is not as apparent as others. If anything, the whole band is more refined, able to direct their ideas into a tightly cohesive attack. It’s this coupled with the emotive power thrown into the mix which just beckons for repeated listens. Lyrically, this is a concept album based on a fictional ghost story penned by Akerfeldt (at least as I understand it!). In short, Opeth are masters, and My Arms, your Hearse may just be their best work yet, which is saying a lot. A must have.

Prophanity - Stronger than Steel (7 out of 10) *1998 Blackend Records* *- Review by Rob*

It seems that every time a record company is trying really hard to sell an album they will say the band sounds, “like Arch Enemy meets...”. Well I suppose any band with a guitar could sound like Arch Enemy seeing as they both use the six string to play music. So, when you hear that Prophanity sounds like Arch Enemy don’t blow your wad just yet. Is the album good? Yeah! Is it Death Metal? Yeah! Is it as good as Arch Enemy? No. Stronger Than Steel is an excellent first effort for a band with a likeable concept of 90s Metal. Sounding more like Amon Amarth Prophanity takes some of the screaming Asgardian despair out of the Viking influenced Metal riffs and brings the feeling back down to Earth. Vocals are a little too monotone at times and so totally larynx ripping that I wouldn’t be surprised to see this guy singing out of a little electric tube some day. Underneath all the screaming lies some creative guitar work that may some day rival that of Amon or In Flames. The reason I say “may” is that Stronger Than Steel needs better production. Songs like “Walking Through Fire” have the snare drum mixed so far up front that each beat blunts out the rest of the band. Also noticeable is the relative inexperience of the band as a whole. This is not so much a bad thing as it is an impediment to their true talent being shown. In general, playing and production is just sloppy. It seems like every time I listen to a band that sounds, “like Arch Enemy meets...”, I am disappointed. Prophanity manages to not disappoint despite what the record label says.



The Quiet Room - Introspect (8 out of 10)*1998 Metal Blade Records*

In a Herculean marketing push, Metal Blade is striving to renew faith in the once great American metal scene. These albums all share similar qualities: 80's style album covers, a fair amount of cheese, and some serious chops. Most releases are good, but the sound is pretty familiar. Needless to say, I was pretty prejudiced when I threw in *Introspect*, which is even more of a testament to the success of this album. Professionalism abounds here, displaying the amount of time and thought that went into this release. Songs are dynamic, complicated without excess, and run the metal spectrum. Being a six piece band allows natural layering of melody, which is highlighted by excellent production. Drumming is intricate, yet not too busy, which appeals to those tired of bassdrumitis yet apprehensive of the thought of a Portnoy clone. The sound definitely draws from Fates Warning and Dream Theater (the vocalist sounds quite a bit like Ray Alder), yet The Quiet Room manage to inject their own persona into each track. My only complaint would be the end of the disc, which is a sharp "cut", cleaving the last song, what a tease! Hats off to a talented bunch of creatives who value quality over quantity.

Sacred Steel - Reborn in Steel (5 out of 10)*1998 Metal Blade Records*

Metal, metal, metal. Vocalist is dubbed "Sirens of Metal", they're from Germany. Guitar's are too low in the mix. So far, the oracle reads pain and suffering at the hands of average German retro-metal. This is rather unfortunate, for the newest craze is retro-thrash (Nocturnal Rites, Bewitched and Primal Fear, to name a few), and this subgenre could easily afford more strong contenders. Well, the road to crap music is paved with good intentions, and Sacred Steel can't really provide anything save a few memorable riffs (see the chorus of the title track). The guitars are just buried though, which leaves just waaay too much room for "Sirens of Metal" Gerrit P. Mutz to stretch his fingernail-on-blackboard vocals over each track. This may be the biggest detractor for me, as there are some pretty sweet riffs here, and the drumming is more than adequate. But, man, these vocals drive me nuts! Especially sufferable on the "ballad" *Sword of the King*. Enough already, for I'm sure you get the point. Not a strong recommendation from me, but if you can get past the vocals, you may just find something of interest to share at your next holiday dinner.

Samael - Exodus (5 out of 10)*1998 Century Media Records*

Another E.P., I'm starting to notice a trend here. I guess a positive to see here would be that these guys love the studio, and here give us a "filler" until the next long player, but at CD prices these days, it's a let down. Taking the same approach as Fear Factory (and now Vader???) by remixing old tracks and giving them "A funky beat I can dance to", this would serve best those who don't like metal, but did like the Passage release, as the new tracks are in the same vein. As for me, going back and hearing the originals, I don't see an "improvement" here, so to speak, and recommend this only for the completist. Me, I'm eagerly awaiting the next progression which historically appears to follow these stopgap E.P.s.

Sentenced - Frozen (8 1/2 out of 10)*1998 Century Media Records*

In 1996 Sentenced released *Down*, heralded worldwide as their finest work to date. *Down* was the end result of creative forces culled from op-

posite ends of the universe which managed to merge into one of the finest metal releases of the year. All eyes (and ears) were then directed towards the impending follow-up. Knowing some of the history of Sentenced, it is safe to expect another massive evolutionary leap in sound and direction (witness *North* from here to *Amok*, *Amok* to *Down*). The only evil portent was the lack of the "transitional" E.P. that would give some inkling as to their future direction. Lo and behold, *Frozen* was unleashed to the waiting masses. An apt title, we find Sentenced again breaking their trends, only the irony here is that they have done this by transforming change to consistency. On this opus, Sentenced seem more focused, grounded. The roots that were set on *Down* are deeper here, the themes revisited. Suicide, the dark side of love, despair, all similar paradigms for lyrical form which encompass and overwhelm the listener. Not nearly as majestic as *Down*, nor as gritty as *Amok*, *Frozen* glides you effortlessly through hints of light jazz, heavy riffs, and Ville Laihiala's gentle Hetfield croon which is the siren song for a ride across the river Styx. Appropriate use of female vocals again, which adds rather than suffocates the song. Interestingly enough, it's on the instrumental tracks where the overall feel of the album is raised. The opening song is probably the most dynamic on the album, which unfortunately means that the segway to track 2 seems forced. The end result is another masterwork which may only be given a notch down from the 10 it probably deserves due to the reason that I feel as though I've heard most of this before, and it's just one hell of a depressive, of which I find enough in everyday life. I'll give it this, though, once it's on, it's played all the way through to the end. 9 out of 10

Rob's View

"Kill yourself, kill yourself, why don't you kill yourself." Lyrics about suicide, but from another end of the Metal universe. Suicidal Sentenced returns on *Frozen* to send our world into a time of deep reflection, cold breaths, and moonlit tears. If you liked *Down*, you will like this for the content. If you liked *Down* for its scratchy truth of delivery, you may not like how polished it is on *Frozen*. Natural progression dictates three moves Sentenced could have taken from *Down*. First path, change the whole sound and risk talking to Celtic Frost in the "what the hell happened to them" metal old folks home. Second path has two parts: A. play the same thing they did on *Down* B. play the same thing they did on *Down* but "better". The third is go even more pop and risk making lots of money from poseurs. Fortunately for us, they chose 2B and that's what we got. *Frozen* is *Down* polished up and ported out. I personally liked the music a little less produced and lite, but considering the options this is a winner. Hey, "I want some milk!" 8 for 10

Soilent Green - Sewn Mouth Secrets (8 out of 10)*1998 Relapse Records*

Created in Hardcore, molded in metal and steeped in grind, New Orleans' Soilent Green can be likened to a combination of everything you've ever heard before thrown in a blender. Similar to Mr. Bungle in their hybridization of styles and creativity, Soilent Green effortlessly flip between bouncy jazz passages to absolute blast in a heartbeat, snatching you along for the ride. The musicianship here is incredible, controlled chaos would be an accurate description, as you can smell that things are always residing right next to the straining point. Much of the pacing can be attributed to one Tommy Buckley. Obviously not of this planet, this boy can whip out whatever beat is called for with ferocity and authority. But as much as this blasts, every guitar lick is discernible, something to be said for the excellent production. Lyrics on the other hand... More of a stream of consciousness essay on the darker side of humanity (especially our sexuality and predatory instincts), the prose within is a terrifying rise though the apparently normal mind of vocalist Ben Falgoust. The songs are self-described by the band as a hybrid of older styles into something new,

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I would tend to agree, for that's what gives this record it's qualities. One minute you'll hear an old Slayer riff, then an instant break into something akin to Heresy, fast forward three seconds and you're listening to vaudeville. Truly strange, yet just begs for repeated listens to catch everything. Sewn Mouth Secrets is only growing on me after time, and is recommended for those that are into the bizarre and extreme side of things. It's obvious that these guys put a lot of time into practice, and with an end result like Sewn Mouth Secrets, it was well worth it.

Suffocation - Despire the Sun (7 out of 10)

1998 Vulture Records

Rob's View

Suffocation has a long history of pushing out some serious power and death, but for some unfathomable reason I have never really been impressed. The band as a whole has matured on their latest five song effort. This has been fun to watch as each musical release has brought them ever closer to Metal notoriety. Despire the Sun is a large step in that direction. The talent is here as well as the staple ingredients of the Death Metal mix. Much the same sound of earlier albums, but (of course but) noticeably more control and thought show through the patented Suffocation sound. The name certainly fits. That's if you know the band. If you don't, then prepare for echoing growls for vocals, thick grinding guitar, and blasting drumming with an extra helping of bass drums. Five songs at 16 plus minutes is about right for now. Although there are a few spots that still need some flavor, I look forward to Suffocation's next offering from a few more minutes in the Metal fire. Big Thumbs up to Sufo for not giving up the fight. 7 of 10

Evan's View

Suffocation is, quite simply, the essence of brutality. Their first offerings were raw, unadulterated slabs of molten metal that would just tear your head off. As the years went by Suffocation continued to refine their craft, and now present us with a taste (hopefully) of what their next full length offering will be. The biggest improvements are in both the guitar and drum sections, which are tighter both alone and together than on any prior release. Granted, Suffocation has always had someone who could handle the double kicks, but this guy is insane! You can really hear his precision on the blast beats, which, either due to production or playing style, sound to be lead by the bass drum, as opposed to the snare. This puts a unique spin on things, and for me, throws the repeat listenability factor up quite a bit. If this is the shape of things to come, than Suffocation are definitely set to impress in the coming year.

Warrior - Ancient Future (7 out of 10)

1998 Metal Blade Records - Review by Rob

No sooner had I purchased the re-release of Fighting for the Earth when Metal Blade dropped Ancient Future in the mail to us at Remnants of Reezon. Well some things are ahead of their time and some things take some time to get ahead. Which ever it was for McCarty and Floyd the past 14 years did them good. Vocals are still top notch, moving your blood into high gear right from the start. Six string glam has turned into raw Heavy Metal chunks that shoot through your chest like so many bomb fragments burning with the high pitch solo mastery of Joe Floyd. Again, the rhythm section is well manned for the true Metal experience, but not remarkable beyond the core member's creativity. Lyrics are enough to raise a nostalgic smile on Who Sane? where we hear a few words about mad man Saddam Hussein. Bringing out the point that Metal can still say something besides

"kill the Christians" and not be completely cheesy (See Evil Dead). With the current resurgence of the "good ole days" taking hold on the scene, look for Warrior to stand out in the crowd... if they stay to party this time.

Witchery - Restless and Dead (8 1/2 out of 10)

1998 Necropolis Records

I finally got this in the mail after many delays and false alarms. While I was waiting, I got to read the six billion reviews of this album, building up more anticipation and subliminally forming an prejudiced opinion in my mind. This album will kick ass, it HAS to kick ass, because everyone tells me so going through my mind. So, I throw this in, and within the first 30 seconds I can hear what all the fuss is about. Some may be surprised to realize that this is a full 5 piece band, since most promo shots only feature two members, but Witchery is the "not a side project" of Jensen (The Haunted) and Sharlee D'Angelo (Mercyful Fate), who are evidently as dedicated to this as their mainstays. Better for us, as Restless and Dead offers 10 tracks of instantly classic metal. No joke, to my ears this may be the best combination of the last two decades of metal. And an independent release? C'mon, you just gotta support these guys. To get into descriptions of sound, it all seems familiar, but it's done so well, it comes out as Witchery. Maybe a little bit of M. Fate and The Haunted in there, and I also hear some Bewitched in the later tracks, but as I stated, it's just Witchery now, and can be left as such. The album glides through from start to finish, with some really fluid axework. Suitably impressed by the drumming, as the music dictates an even unegotistical hand in here, which is exactly what we get. Vomit Vox are reminiscent of the NWOSDM, also part of what keeps this in the 90s sound. Yeah, the overall imagery is pretty "dark", and I could see high school kids running around the local graveyard with this in a portable deck, but Witchery are more than that, as if they've just been waiting to provide us a glimpse of what's possible when you just want to make good music.

Yeah, I know, you just finished reading this one, but at Remnants of Reason we never sleep, meaning that the next issue is already in the works, target release date: Spring 1999. So, until then, here are some snippets of what you can expect to be seeing next time. Of course, one can never tell what new sections will appear, but these ones are cast in stone... - Evan

Interviews...

Witchery

Jensen explains the **Witchery/Satanic Slaughter** connection, how writing for **Witchery** differs from **The Haunted**, future releases for **Witchery** and the “Witchery Woman”.

Arch

Remnants of Reason talks to Michael Amott about the new **Arch Enemy** album, how changes within the band affect the group’s sound, plus more.

Anacrusis

Ken Nardi continues the “History of **Anacrusis**”, covering the recording of *Manic Impressions* and *Screams and Whispers*.

Others...

Grip Inc. is finished, plus several other yet-to-be-named bands; (hey, you want some surprises, don’t you?)

Reviews

Of course, there’ll be the world famous review section, chock full of opinions to help guide you through your next musical purchase.

