

X



a dead spot of light...

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BEITHÍOCH ~ THE INTERVIEW

Would you mind introducing your band a bit? Where are you from, what kind of music do you play, when was it started etc.?

Based in the north-west of Ireland, play an atmospheric, mostly instrumental style of black metal that up until now has been very droney and minimal, but we're looking now to develop it beyond this and really enhance the sense of epicness. The idea is to reveal something intrinsic and native to the human soul beyond the technological, social and political comforts of our modern civilization.

What does your band name refer to? Was it taken from a book? Has it some sort of mystical meaning?

Beithíoch means 'animal' or 'beast', and represents what's instinctive and 'natural', if I can say that without sounding like a hippy. It's representative to the concept I spoke of above.

The name of your band is in Irish, right? Why do you choose a non-English name and would you mind translating the titles of your albums?

Using Irish for the name and track titles is about referencing something native in the Irish people. You may or may not know this, but the dominant language in Ireland is English; which has happened through the cultural, political and commercial dominance of England in our country for the last few hundred years. In that time we've lost touch with our heritage and with the language that is so old and so native that it must surely be inextricably woven into our psyches somehow. We use Irish because we're for rejecting a culture based on what's commercially and politically expedient in favour of what it is intrinsically "true" to us and our environment.

Aisling Dhorcha means 'A Dark Dream Vision'; it's a story about being led into a dream and seeing the world in a new way; seeing it as shrouded in darkness and with mankind trapped in sleep, having become weak and fearful. It's also about overcoming this darkness and waking the world up to something heroic and noble again. Athbhreith Lasánta, 'Fiery Rebirth'.

An Sealgaire means 'The Hunter'; it's an evocation of something primitive and almost Neolithic.



Díolaim means 'Collection'; because that's all it is, just a collection of bits of old demo level material.

As this focus on a non-English language is not limited to the titles but can also be found in the track titles as well, I wonder what your intentions behind using a mixture between both tongues were. Is one of them more applicable when trying to express certain ideas or topics? Or is it an atmosphere that would otherwise not be created in such a fashion and this would be the reason for choosing the one or the other.

Early on I used English simply because I just did what everyone else did. Later when I thought about it a bit more I considered it important to use Irish, even if it's just minimally. Irish also fits the atmosphere better.

Should bands try to use their mother tongue or rather head for the mainstream-oriented lingua franca?

If you think the world becoming more culturally homogenous is a bad/boring thing then you should keep your work in your native language.

Interestingly, I was not able to track down the lyrics of your releases. Why don't you spread them?

They are around somewhere. I think Diviliz Rex circulated them (or at least a translation) with their release of *Aisling Dhorcha*. But they're not actually that important. The main medium for expression is the music not the literature. I'd hope that it's possible to understand the music without the lyrics.

Even though you play black metal, you refuse to use symbolism and the sort. Why this reluctance? Has the inflation of their application resulted in them being practically meaningless? Does this type of music need this type of 'symbolic base' in order to work?

Black metal has drowned in a glut of its own clichés, what may have meant something on Immortal's first couple of albums doesn't mean anything anymore through sheer over-saturation.

We do use symbolism in Beithíoch, all art has symbolism in it to some extent, it's just that we use the symbolism that's relevant to the work, not just what other people are doing.

Let us speak about your music a bit. Díolaim, your first output, comes with a strange variety and sounds and styles: monotonous, somehow trance-like black metal; Burzum-inspired minimalist ambient and with the last track an aggressive black metal track, which does not really seem to fit into what was presented earlier. What is/was the idea behind this release?

Díolaim is just a collection of early bits and pieces, that somebody convinced me was worth releasing. That last track was also the first written, which is why it's so different (only thing on there with vocals, blastbeats etc).

Did you try to experiment on your first output a bit or is this variety in styles nothing but an attempt to create certain types of atmospheres; those that are indicated in the track titles? Ghost Trees is a calm one for instance.

The truth is a bit of both. Díolaim consists of independently conceived tracks that were each in their own way sort of interesting, if not all fully developed towards a single concept.



What about the cover artwork? Some man or being and a dog (a haunt?) are shown there. What is the meaning behind it and where was it taken from? How does it relate to the music?

Originally it's the logo of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. I forget who drew it but we don't own it, so apologies to whoever does. It fits because it looks as if the dog and the person are in synthesis somehow, moving or thinking as one. It also evokes something ancient and Irish.

Compared with the first release, the second one comes with quite a different sound and style. More structured, balanced and a clearer idea on how Beithíoch could sound. How would you describe the evolution between these and what had your influences been.

Classical music influenced a lot of the input on Aisling Dhorcha. The best albums are written like symphonies, with a sense of what overall journey the work will take you on. All of the classics by Burzum, Mayhem, Darkthrone, Ildjarn etc feel like they are designed to take you somewhere rather than just be collections of random songs. I tried to take this further by having two of the tracks (the first and last black metal tracks) linked by the same riffs/themes, the first one stating the initial crisis/uncertainty of the story, the later one resolving/overcoming the other, like in Beethoven's 5th symphony or Brahms 4th symphony. The down side was that concentrating on the bigger picture so much meant that sometimes smaller details were never written well enough, but it didn't turn out too bad at all.

It was also an attempt to incorporate pagan symbolism (solar rebirth), intelligently and without making the work a "pagan black metal album" – a decision that was influenced I guess by the number of shitty pagan bands that are out there and justify their warmed-over rock tunes by throwing in flute solos and jigs.

Even though I am generally not fond of drum-computer, the one used for this recording comes with a quite peculiar sound – especially of the snare – which adds a nice touch to the compositions; this slightly hollow, cold way and 'wooden' way in which it is presented here. Do you like working with such a tool or are there chances to hear real drums in the future as well?

I'd prefer not to use programmed drums, but if there's no then you should at least try to do them well. We've been using real drums lately and hopefully will do so on the next album.

It could already be found on your first release but on your second it had quite a profound impact: a dense wall of guitars in the background. Is this a core essence of Beithíoch that you will use on forthcoming albums again or is there a chance to see the band progress into a different direction?

We're going to work on separating parts out a little bit more, so they're not so muddy and instead create the density through larger, better arrangements.

You have remastered (?) your second release Aisling Dhorcha. What are differences between the versions and what made you change your attitude towards the early edition of it?

The original mix wasn't great. It was done in less than ideal circumstances. Drums especially are crap. The redone one actually does the atmosphere justice.

What is the conceptual background of this release and how the album cover play into this?

I think I already answered most of this, but the cover is a painting called "The Dream of Ossian", depicting a blind bard who sees vivid stories when he sleeps. The story of the album is not based on the painting or the stories of Ossian, but it seemed to evoke something similar visually to the album.

I cannot help but think that Ag Stánadh Ar Shíoraíocht was influenced by Metallica's Nothing Else Matters. Well, if you listen to it, then some riffs has some amount of resemblance. A mere coincidence? And what about Solas Na Geallaí? A bit of Elysian Blaze shines through there.

Ouch. Nothing Else Matters? Never noticed it before but the only similarity I can see is that the opening chord is Eb minor in Ag Stánadh... and E minor in Nothing Else Matters, but they're not even the same inversions. Just coincidence and interpretation I think.

I've never heard Elysian Blaze so can't comment.

An Sealgaire comes in a different style again. It is much harsher and rawer, while the cavernous sound makes no further appearance. In some way memories of the first release are awoken again. Why this reorientation? What place has An Sealgaire in the oeuvre of your band?

An Sealgaire was about returning to the most minimalistic aspects of Beithíoch. The mix and performance kind of hinders the experience though as that guitar tone just obscures everything that's there. Even still it was probably too minimal. It was meant to be the first of a two part release, the second was meant to take the minimalism further but has been cancelled.

Two of the tracks fall a bit out of the spectrum of the band; Dubh 1 & 2. Even though the preceding album had these instrumental (non-metal) interludes as well, their share had always been rather small. Is here some sort of the evolution foreshadowed? Is this a facet listener/fans might expect on forthcoming albums?

They were meant to foreshadow the second part, which was to be mostly dark ambient with only shades of black metal.

Do you have a certain preference for industrial and dark ambient sounds? Dubh 2 has a considerable amount of these? Might you combine these with the 'normal' track or do you prefer a clear separation? Some sort of a mixture can already be found in the opener.

There were going to be a few tracks that were going to combine the two on the next album. Those tracks exist but are unlikely to be released, at least not until the direction we want Beithíoch to go be established.



Industrial can only be listened to as transitional passages in a work of a different style in my opinion (eg as intros, outros etc on metal albums). It's too tedious to stand on its own.

In some way this type of separation is visible in the near monochrome style of the cover art. From the looks it seems to be a picture taken at the shore of a lake or at the sea side. How does it play into it?
Precisely s you stated it. That's the intention of that image and that's what the picture is; the shore of a river.

Why is it instrumental? Did it came natural – as a result from the process of song-writing – or was it done intentionally?

It seemed to make sense, to evoke something truly primordial and anachronistic it should be wordless. It's also functions better as ambient music if it doesn't have lyrics or a typical black metal vocal or its rhythmic inflections.

Do you have any releases forthcoming and what would the status of your 'scrapped' one be?

A new album is being worked on but it might be a long while before it is recorded or released. Diviliz Rex will likely release An Sealgaire on tape some time, for which there may be some bonus tracks or additional material provided. The scrapped album will stay out of the public for the time being at least.

A constant element in your music is the low amount of vocals – an aspect that really struck me while I was preparing these questions and listened to all of your releases – and even when they appear, their sound has often not a large impact. Why is that so? Why do the instruments have such a large impact and dominate the music clearly?

It adds to the hypnotic, dream-like atmosphere by not including vocals. Also, as the music is the main medium of expression not the lyrics, vocals are mostly superfluous.

How do you record your music and what kind of instruments do you use? When it comes to song-writing, how long does it take for you to compose a track? Why did you scrap the ideas for the follow up of An Sealgaire? Are you very critical when it comes to your art?

Guitar, bass, and drums or sequenced drums. Synth strings are also used on Aisling Dhorcha and a piano in the interlude Oíche Bhithbheo. Thats about it I think, no hidden synths really as some people have thought, just well mixed guitars with lots of reverb.

How have the responses on your art been so far?

Opinions vary ofcourse, but the responses are mostly positive. The hardest thing has been getting some people interested in music that they're getting for free digitally. I understand why zines especially ignore such things when it comes there way – because its usually some worthless bedroom band. But its dogmatic nonsense to not give the music a chance if it is well presented and thought out, just because it's not on a physical format.

It's also no secret really that most of black metal's audience these days has grown out of illegal downloads, so why not just bypass the pretence, save the money and plastic used on CDs and just give it to the audience directly? It'd not be possible to turn a profit with Beithíoch anyway, why pretend that commercial activity is the real marker of a band's professionalism rather than the quality of their art?

Why do you release your music for free, while a physical release is only spread later?

The physical releases so far don't have much to do with us. Diviliz Rex is run by a friend, who likes the music and believes Beithíoch should be able to access his scene through tape-trading. So he has licence to do so.

Interestingly, you choose the tape as a format to distribute your art. Is this format somehow special for you or what were your reasons for using it? Is there a chance to see a CD release in the future as well?

Tape doesn't mean anything really. CD isn't that special either, it's the music that matters. There may be CDs in future, but right now it's actually better in so much there's minimal pollution through air-mail/fuel expenditure and production of plastic.

As your music is and was released under the Creative Commons, I wonder what your opinion of it is. Could it be a solution to the excessive and often aggressive use of the copyright? Does the latter not do more harm than good these days?

It's convenient to us right now; I can't say I actually have much more opinion of it than that really. But it's openness is interesting at least.

Is there a chance to see the third album released physically?

Yes. But it's got to be finished first, which could be a long way off.

Some more general questions towards the end:

How do you see the development of the metal and the black metal scene in particular? Are there certain trends that fascinate you?

I lost interest a while ago. I do my thing and leave the black metal scene alone to prance around the forest wearing leather as much as it likes. Black metal must have one of the biggest turn-over rates of all metal sub-genres; kids get into it at 14, take a few stupid photos of themselves, make a demo in fruity loops, deride the people who actually bother for not showing the same apathy as they do (no being True enough, apparently); then by the time they're 16 they've gone and got laid or joined an emocore band to cry about not getting laid. That's what I call an interesting trend.

What about the metal scene in Ireland? Is it flourishing, stagnating ... or what is the situation on the Green Island?

Not much happens round here in terms of metal. Nationally I don't really know to be honest, I don't make too much effort to get involved with it and not much worth speaking about has caught my attention. Primordial are still probably the only notable band out of Ireland (Besides Beithíoch, ofcourse. Ha).

Guinness or Kilkenny? I cannot really decide which of these I like most.

Ballygowan bottled water.

Your opinion on stuff like Lord of the Dance or Riverdance? These shows are pretty popular around here.

Crass bullshit. Most so-called 'traditional' music from Ireland is watered down, peasantry nonsense thats ultimately spurious in how 'Irish' it actually is. It's not all bad (credit to the unassuming, unpretentious local musicians all over the country who just play out of love for what they do), but the stuff you mentioned is excrement. But it sells, so they pump out more like it, make a pile of money and turn our culture bit by bit into something fake and irrelevant.

Are there bands that have had a graven impact on you and that made you start playing music as well?

Slayer, Burzum and Darkthrone got me hooked initially, no surprises really. Beethoven, Brahms and Bach keep me going also these days.

What about writers and such. Does art outside the realm of the music have an impact on you and what would you cite as influences?

Literature: WB Yeats, William Blake, Shakespeare, Knut Hamsun as well as old Irish, Greek, Norse and Hindu stories inspire me. Visually, Blake again, Heironymous Bosch, JM Turner and Caspar Friedrich are worth mention.



Where can folks buy your music?

don't be hipsters and get it free at hiarctow.com. It's the music not the object that matters. If you really must own it go to: diveliz-rex.blogspot.com

How can people contact you?

Myspace.com/ceodearg

Or email hiarctow and it'll get passed on:
info@hiarctow.com
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Any final words or comments?

Thank you for the thoughtful interview.

BEITHÍOCH ~ THE REVIEWS

After the interview, a review part will attempt present the music of the band in some respect. The basic elements were sketched were dealt with above. In the following segments all three releases will be presented in the order they were originally released. Some basic facts are presented before the actual releases are discussed:

- The music is often instrumental
- Each of the releases has its own distinct sound and style
- A wall of guitars (a lot of tremolo picking) is a constant facet in the performance of this band
- The use of a drum-computer

Beithíoch – Díolaim (2007)

The first release comes with a considerable amount of contrasts. From slow and doom influenced – The Seafarer – over dark ambient and Earth (USA) influenced – Ghost Trees – to fast and even aggressive black metal – Drowned in Shadows – the style of the music ranges on this recording. Accordingly, the listener might get the impression of a band whose style and concept remains vague and hidden. Fragmented might be a proper word to describe what is going on here. As outlines above, [it] *is just a collection of early bits and pieces, that somebody convinced me was worth releasing.* This should be kept in mind while listening to this recording.

Except for the last recording none of them has lyrics or vocals and the listener gets the feeling now and then that these would be missing... or that something is amiss. The style of the music is generally raw and the emphasis on a texture-like sound of the guitars – with little or nothing to challenge it – appears here on a larger scale than on any of the other recordings. Aside from this, the aspect that the music consists of several recording sessions – The Great Beast comes with a different and much noisier sound – makes it even more difficult to thoroughly enjoy the performance of Beithíoch on their first output. Somehow the music wanders off into some ambient/drone regions, due to the extreme minimalism of the music at times. The last track – as discussed in the interview – breaks out of the concept and provides the listener at least with something that can easily and undoubtedly be described as being black metal; raw, aggressive and a good amount of punch. Well ... at least they offered 'something' some might say.

Nevertheless, Díolaim is pretty tough stuff and not easy to really dig into. The music sounds random and without a clear direction; due to the aspect cited above. A demo that provides some glimpses on the early days of the band and from where everything actually started, this is what their first demo is all about. Nothing else can be discovered on this piece of art. Just a band and their first steps in the musical realm ... with the obvious shortcomings.

Beithíoch - Aisling Dhorcha (2008)

The second of three outputs but also the one which leaves a lasting positive impression. Of all that the band has released so far, it would be this that would actually be able to really take the listener deep into a deep void of darkness. Glór Cianaosta, the intro of Aisling Dhorcha sets the stage for the things to come: a drone texture in the background, with some ambient-influenced keyboard motives on top of it; not only here but in several more occasions' references to the Australian band Elysian Blaze can be found; especially towards their 'Levitating the Carnal' output. The general direction of the Irish band Beithíoch is different though and comes with a clear focus on the black metal art.

Yet to reduce the band to this genre only and measure their performance by standards set there, would do an injustice to them, as the art is more complex than the standard description might suggest. As already noted in the introduction to this longer review section on the music of this band, several core aspects make an appearance on a larger scale, while others appear rather on specific albums and not in the sense of a coherent red line in the oeuvre. In respect to Aisling Dhorcha it would be the structuring of the various types of styles: black metal meets ambient interludes. Such would be the way it appears on this recording:

Intro – black metal – black metal – ambient – black metal – ambient – black metal – black metal – outro.
(and now visit the third release of the band and pretend to look surprised)

Like the tides of the waves, peaks and troughs, the atmosphere moves between two extremes over the course of the album. Something of this can be found in the compositions themselves, as in these a to and fro in the intensity of the 'metalness' can be discovered. So, while the dense layer of the guitars might resemble the idea of a base line, eruptions in scale and intensity can be discovered throughout the entire release. The music is minimalist – or deliberately kept back? – in the way it was composed, but it is able to create a special kind of charm now and then; especially through its flow and progression.

Especially the drums and the way they appear on this recording needs some discussion. With a cavernous and very intense sound they add a strange but unique touch to the music. Surprisingly, they do not merge with the general atmosphere, but instead try to stand out of them in a weird kind of way. Not in the intensity but similar in the style of an hammer hitting some object while being a bit (several meters) away from the listener, the sound might be described. It does not merge with the music, the band maybe never intended to do so, but it works nonetheless as it gives the idea of a counterpoint to the overall dense structure of the music. Out of this dense fog the vocals are unable to shine through in any respect. They simply drown in this mist but as not much of them would appear anyway; you would hardly see this as a negative aspect. As outlined in the interview, the music has a strong focus on the instrumental side and as such the listener might not be dissatisfied by the lack of them.



Some words on the downsides of this output. The performance is not consistent in terms of the quality. While some moments are really interesting – for instance, An Anaithnid Dorcha (first part); Arm Na Déithe (first part); the instrumentals without the outro – the band has some difficulties in maintaining the quality over the course of the album. Some rather plain and uninspiring moments appear now and then with the obvious effect that the atmosphere takes a leap downwards. An interesting concept was provided with this recording, but maybe the overall minimalism comes with a slight negative side-effect.

Beithíoch - An Sealgaire (2009)

In case someone follows this band from the first to the latest release, then it might surprise to see the style changed again. First of all, An Sealgaire is an instrumental release and you can hear this... now and then. Well, the music has much rawer, has less impact on the drums, while the bass-guitar makes some surprising appearances and adds some nice 'counter motives' to the dense of layers of the guitars in the background. The percussion instrument has been reduced to some vague element in the background, whose part is unable to shine though the layer of the guitars anymore. So, this would be another break with the preceding output. In some way it would be fair to start that the band has re-invented their concept for their An Sealgaire release ... in some respect. What has remained is a general emphasis on a high tempo, with the interludes as slow counterpoints. The idea of 'waves' – outlined above – cannot be discovered on this demo anymore. Instead, the air of experimenting and progression towards new shores has taken over the lead here; especially in terms of the actual style of music and their influences.

Similar to Aisling Dhorcha also An Sealgaire comes with a clear separation between metal and non-metal parts:

Metal – ambient – metal – ambient – metal.

It should be noted that the distinction between both facets is blurred in some respect and that the last track on this output comes in a rather experimental fashion with breaks away from the strict way in which the facets had been divided from each other. At least this would be one way on how to interpret it and it would be interesting indeed to see whether the band would proceed on these paths or not.

Again, the structure and the way the music was executed are as such as not to please everyone's musical preferences. Not only are there those interludes again, but this time they take it to much extremer levels: Dubh 1 works as a nice interlude between the compositions, while the noise/industrial mixture of Dubh 2 really takes the cake and breaks with the whole concept of the band. Interestingly, the level of experimenting continues with the succeeding composition, even though on a lower level and less in intensity. So, the listening experience is an ambiguous one ... again.

To sum the impressions up a bit:

This Irish band does not seem to have found their style, yet. Each of the outputs comes with a different sound and concept, has different emphasis and atmospheres. Where the road might lead to was outlined in the interview above, but when we, the audience, will have a chance to actually listen to the next step in the band's evolution is written in the stars. Vague hints can be found everywhere, but no clear path can be examined.

Beithíoch's music is of a rare and strange kind of black metal, something that can be found on the borders of the genres and it does not fully apply to the core essences of this type of music. References are there, but they appear in a rather modest way. The three outputs are recommended to those who like ambient black metal or something that comes with a dense as well as intense structure.

Note:

All releases can be downloaded from the band's MySpace site:
<http://www.myspace.com/ceodearg>

Interview with Benjamin Brooks from Romero.

The standard opening question: How are you and your band?

BB: Tronned. (ie: Stoned)

Write a bit about the history of Romero. Why did you choose this band and when did everything really start for you? Judging from the short biography at MySpace, some of you are not particularly fresh to the scene, or?

BB: It's true that pre-Romero, members were involved in numerous projects of varying genres. Jeff, our guitarist and front-man, played in Naked Aggression, System and Station, and the Bovine Records act Thug. I played in a few groups, most notably The Dead Hookers, who released a 12" / CD full length a few years back on Dead Beat Records. Also, I still play in my own group, called Poney. As far as the Romero timeline is concerned, I met Jeff in late 2008 through his wife, Miranda, who I worked with at the time. We were pretty good friends right away, but I didn't join the band on the drums until November 2009, about 8 months after the other two started the writing / demoing process. From what I understand, Jeff and Josh actually got together over Craigslist. I believe the story goes that Josh posted an advertisement looking for people to start a "doom" band...maybe "drone"? I'm not sure. Regardless, Jeff stumbled on the post and responded, and the rest is a lost in a vaguely purplish green haze.

Why did you choose to play stoner doom? Do you have some sort of a special relationship to this type of music?

BB: Well, two of us are stoners. That helps a lot. Also – and I'm fairly certain I speak for all of us here – we love the feeling and sound of huge tone. Jeff and Josh, each in their own way, are amplifier worshipers. Although I don't use tubes and speakers, I play drums very loudly. Stoner rock provides the platform and structure to really explore the gargantuan side of rock instrumentation, while still giving us room to drop way down in dynamics and groove. Besides that, who can turn down a really killer riff? Not I.

You have an eight month recording session? At least your MySpace site says so. Pretty impression for a 'young band'. What did it take you so long? Did you scrap a lot of ideas or did you try to find the right and atmosphere for the music?

BB: I can try to better describe that situation. What the band really had were three separate recording phases, each of which helped push us further towards our own sound. The first phase didn't actually involve me; like I mentioned earlier, I joined after the initial demoing that Jeff and Josh did together. Once I joined, we spent some time bringing me up to speed and writing the dual vocals that are now really a part of Romero's essence, and then we recorded the same tracks they had started with, albeit with me on drum set and back up vox. This all led up to the choice of the three tracks we did with Mark Whitcomb at DNA Studios for the Solitaire single and following EP. As far as the writing process was concerned, I don't remember working very long on anything we ended up scrapping. If it sounded bad when we thought of it, we just didn't play it again. If it ripped our eardrums up, we kept it in the mix. Jeff generally comes to the table with his vision of the structure for a song, and Josh and I help him find the drums and bass parts that fulfill that vision. We're a good team.

How would you sum your music up? What are its core elements and what bands influenced you on your first two recordings?

BB: Loud, crushing, driving; sometimes brutally slow and usually very catchy. We're influenced by a wide variety of rock, metal, hardcore, and punk, but realistically there are some groups I'm sure we were all thinking of while we put these tracks together. KYUSS, Sleep, QOTSA, Tad, The Melvins; throw some Quicksand and Black Sabbath in there. Orange Goblin isn't far behind. I know I was listening to a lot of Baroness, and putting some of Allen's flow from the Blue Record into my parts.

While writing the questions for this interview I have two tracks from you at hand: Solitaire and El Sentido Morboso. Both have similarities in terms of the sound but differ quite considerably in the dynamics, especially in the vocals and in the heaviness. How does the rest of your music sound; compared with these two?

BB: Just as awesome, and not recorded. Yet.

As both appeared on your first ep output as well, I am curious whether you re-recorded or remastered the tracks for the 7".

BB: Completely re-recorded, mixed, and mastered. See above.

You mention a lot of bands as influences on your MySpace site: Black Sabbath, Blue Cheer, The Who, High On Fire, Melvins, Sleep, Clutch, KYUSS, The Sword, Neurosis, Torche, SUNN o))), Floor. Quite a contrast you offer there. From mere doom over drone to rock and a bit of punk as well. How do you try to bring these facets into some sort of cohesion?

BB: That's an interesting question. I think the honest answer is that we don't try to bring them together at all; rather, they come together in our songs, because those are the musical flavors swimming in our brains. If I tried to start writing a song, and said to the guys, "Alright, we need to somehow make this song encompass Neurosis and The Who," they'd laugh at me and hand me the bowl. Conversely, if Jeff comes in with some heavy riffs, followed by some really killer rock and roll, I might scream my lungs out and then break into over the top 70's drum fills. This causes both of those influences to surface, but without the premeditation. In short, we don't try; shit just happens that way when we plug in.

Do you prefer 'older music' over something that has only been released recently?

BB: You'd have to ask us individually. I'll say that recently I've been listening to Zappa and Russian Circles, although I doubt that helps much.

Have you received any feedback on your music so far? Be it from writers or from fans?

BB: Yes. If I had quotes here, I'd spit them out, but I don't. People are digging it, and you should join the club.



How have your live experiences been so far? Your MySpace site gives some indications that you had some already. Should someone consider going to one of your shows, what could this person expect to experience there then?

BB: Our shows have been, and continue to be, excellent. People leave happy with their ears ringing. We bring groove in by the truckload, and that's a good thing for a stoner rock band to do, but there's an aspect that makes our shows stand out from other head bobbing drone sets. Imagine an immense sound and groove with a sort of visceral physical energy that usually gets toed by hardcore punk groups at their most pissed off, and you've got the right idea.

You use the site bandcamp, aren't you? Why do you choose to distribute your music also on a non-physical way? Do you think it is easier this way to reach out to a broader audience? How do you see downloading music in general?

BB: Bandcamp is awesome. Those people are intelligent, legit, hip, and destructively funny. Plus they're helping out a lot of artists when no one else will. Distributing digitally is a beautiful thing. In general, I see it as a good thing. The more people who can find and hear our art, the better. If it's easy for them to do: bonus.

Interestingly, the download of the 7" Solitaire has even one additional track. How does it sound compared to other two tracks?

BB: Slower, until the last thirty seconds when we crack skulls.

Some of you are or were also involved in other projects. Would you mind writing some lines on what they music is all about and what the status of these band are?

BB: Jeff, as I mentioned, has the all star portfolio. Naked Aggression I think still tours, and I know that System and Station do. Thug is defunct. I co-founded and still manage and play with the experimental hardcore band Poney, also from Wisconsin. We just released a full length called "Seamyth," which is based on a Romantic poem, and will be touring the U.S. With Romero in March 2011.

How can people get in touch with you and where can they buy some of your stuff?

ROMEROISLOUD.COM

FACEBOOK.COM/ROMEROISLOUD

Main review section:

Antichrisis - Cantara Anachoreta (re-release)

(Germany; Gothic Metal)

9 Tracks (2 CDs -- Tunguskamusic) -_-_- (82:07)

<http://www.antichrisis.net/>; <http://www.myspace.com/antichrisis>

The story behind this release is a pretty long one and dates back a couple of years. It is something loosely connected to this as well as other releases, which have found a place in my collection since. Actually, due to the complexity of it all it might well be something to talk about in an interview at some point in the future; in case the other person is interested of course.

It all started at e-bay. Yes, this despicable Internet auction site, this place of countless overprized black metal rip-offs was the source of all what came thereafter. A user offered loads of obscure demos for quite low prices, so a lot of these were added to my collection, because to skip such an opportunity just seemed wrong. Antichrisis' Cantara Anachoreta was one of these and after I had ripped it with Audacity and gave the files a first spin, the band was able to grab my attention from second one. Yet the tape came with a disappointment: part of the end was missing; the same is true of the one released by the French band Funeralium, at least in the copy that I have – I have contacted the band on the issue but received nothing but silence.

Well ... so much about the 'superiority' of tapes compared to other formats. Anyway, the same person from whom I bought these tons of demos back then has started their own label and is also responsible for the re-release of the debut album of Antichrisis. Now, after having to wait for several years, I am finally able to enjoy the art in their full and complete beauty. After a long introduction, a discussion of the art of this band will finally begin. Thank you for your patience.

First of all, a comparison of the tracklists will reveal the differences between the editions. The 2010 remastered edition of Cantara Anachoreta comes with some changes in the order to the compositions:

Original release:		Re-release:
1	Prologue - Vitae at Threswald Anachoreta in Mortem	Prologue: Vitae At Threswald Anachoreta In Mortem
2	Endless Dance	Baleias
3	Requiem Ex Sidhé	Descending Messiah
4	Goodbye to Jane	Requiem Ex Sidhé
5	Baleias	The Endless Dance
6	Her Orphaned Throne	Beautiful Wolves
7	Descending Messiah	Goodbye To Jane
8	Epilogue - Arcanum in Anchorage	Her Orphaned Throne
9		Epilogue: Arcanum In Anchorage

What becomes obvious is that aside from a mere change in the order of the tracks also an additional one was added for the 2CD version; Beautiful Wolves appears as the first track on the second CD and it disrupts the flow of the music in some respect.

Antichrisis' art comes in small neat packages of stories. Each of the compositions deals with a different topic but each of these is presented in a fascinating as well as interesting kind of way. The band does not rely on a single style of approach in terms of the song-writing, nor did the band reduce all the music to a handful of facets. Unlike a lot of black metal bands, here the crafting of the art makes actual sense, grabs you and never really loosen the grip. Everything fits together nicely and whether this has to do with the mixture of calm (acoustic) and aggressive (gothic/black metal) is actually hard to say. Ne quid nimis ... the band seems to have been aware of this Roman proverb and composed their art accordingly.

To describe the music takes a considerable amount of space, because it is simple loaded with influences from a variety of genres. While the metal ones are obvious – gothic, black and heavy – less common might be the various facets of non-metal ones: Spanish music, medieval, pure acoustic etc. Yet when it comes to how this was woven together, then the actual result might surprise a bit. Here, something that is closer to telling a story or a tale would rather reflect what is going on than the normal and done to death chorus/rhyme scheme.



The vocals range from screams over singing (male /female) to whispering and the instruments come with a similar complex approach; whose facets were laid out above. Melancholy, sadness and aggressiveness – like in the 'real' life – are closely linked together and some compositions reflect this quite neatly; 'The endless Dance'. 'Descending Messiah' has a neat play of various styles, whose parts switch to and fro in intensity and as such it is possible to deal with quite a complex topic. How the listener is guided through this track is quite fascinating; especially as the overall amount of lyrics is actually considerably large, but it never feels like overloaded.

Some words of the texts:

The aforementioned track is a good example for the fascination 'Cantara Anachoreta' is able to create. Here, no blatant emission of phrases or done to death passages appear; like they are all too common in the black metal genre ... not only these days. Antichrisis play with the listener and have written parts of the music in a story-like fashion, which gives the idea of a certain form of radio play, wrapped in a mantle of Gothic metal. The music has passages that

are repeated, but they have not the impact like in other bands or releases. A bit of cliché is also apparent on this record when the issue of 'love' is brought up. Compared with what bands from the 'depressive metal' offer today, Antichrisis' performance remains on such a scale that this aspect can be neglected. Moreover, it is important to emphasize the overall melancholy atmosphere of the music. Somehow a vague feeling of sadness can be felt throughout the entire release and this has not only a result from the texts or their content or meaning, but also with how the arrangements are presented.

Beautiful Wolves

This track comes as a bonus for this release and it is the first on the second CD. First of all, the whole concept of the music here is different and music has a larger emphasis on the guitars and therefore on the metal genre. Accordingly, the style of the music does not fit entirely into this album, because the atmosphere differs significantly from what the band provided earlier as well as later on 'Cantara Anachoreta'. The intensity of the guitars together with the too large amount of lyrics backfires here in some respect. Everything is simply not in such a flow when compared with what the band was able to provide again and again on this record. Also the nice acoustic/ambient part towards the end is not able to compensate the listener with what this person has to go through before. Quite confusing is the fact how this track was placed in the actual track listing and it is this aspect that leaves a slight bitter taste.

The bottom line:

Is there something to criticize on this recording? Hardly. Aside of what has been written above on 'Beautiful Wolves'; the quality of the art is on such high levels that it is a pleasure to dig through all the facets and arrangements. Antichrisis composed music with a conceptual touch in such a way as to avoid a lot of the fallacies other bands generally like to fall into. It is important for the listener to be taken by the hand and guided through the storytelling and this can be examined here neatly. The True Endless as well as Abrahel – both are black metal bands – failed in their attempt, because they either ignored this aspect or overdid it. Also the recordings of Ayreon are by no means convincing and leave a lot to be desired.

Antichrisis' music is of a sweet odour with a subliminal philosophical nuisance, whose whole breadth and complexity just waits for the listener to be explored. 'Cantara Anachoreta' is a fascinating and complex piece of art, loaded with neat little twists and turns in the music that will keep the attention on a constantly high level. Since I have listened to this release first it has not worn down a bit ... not an inch. A must have ...

Note:

This release comes in a beautifully designed digipack, but with a different cover than the original. Also the booklet comes professionally printed and comes with all lyrics.

The Black Gate

The Black Gate is a band I stumbled over several years ago and that was able to impress me with their 'The Serpent Who Slept Dead' release considerably. In a review posted at the Metal Archives I gave the band a high rating and praised their music for the amount of balancing and variation of a rather old-type of black metal; something a lot of bands seem to be unable to get done right. In case someone is interested in the background of this band from Norway, then an interview in edition number seven might be able to clear matters up a bit.

The origin of the name should be quite obvious to anyone familiar with the writings of Tolkien. Interestingly, there are several bands of the name Morannon but only of with its translation into 'common tongue'.

The basic idea behind the music:

The band follows a somehow consistent approach over the course of the albums and influences from Immortal, Obtained Enslavement and old-school death metal can be found throughout the releases. In terms of the music a rather complex approach can be discovered and minimalism as well as excessive repetition can hardly appear on any of the outputs. Aquilion – the person behind this band – seems to be stuck somehow in the early days of the black metal scene, while adding thrash as well as death metal influences – the latter might come naturally due to the other project Deathlike – into the dark art in order to keep everything more varied. Over the course of the years several constant facets can be discovered:

- ❖ A distinct way of croaking in terms of the vocals, while clean ones play only a minor role.
- ❖ An icy sound in the guitars, but not influenced by norsecore
- ❖ A drum-computer
- ❖ A close 'alliance' of the instruments and the vocals when it comes to the timing and rhythms
- ❖ At least one long composition per output
- ❖ A general emphasis on faster played black metal, which comes with some neat as well as longer interludes now and then.

Their current MySpace site would be the following:
<http://www.myspace.com/theblackgatemetal>

The Black Gate (2002)

4 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) - - - (27:30)

The first demo of this band came out in 2002 and has not been re-released so far; which means that it is basically sold out; of the second output the same would be true. Both should see the light of day again, because the music offered on them is not only well crafted and produced, but comes with some interesting facets; those differ between the releases of course.

The debut demo switches between faster and rather midtempo played black metal. Aside from the intro the tempo never reaches for slower shores but excessive or monotonous blast passages is also not something this band has had in mind while composing the art. Hints on the nice arrangements on their 2008 demo 'The Serpent Who Slept Dead' can be identified here in some respect, while the directly succeeding one 'Anti Christian War Campaign Part I' actually lacks them. So, someone listing to both early releases might expect the band to evolve in a different direction.



Anyway, a band that keeps getting mentioned in terms of the performance of The Black Gate is Immortal. Even though there is some truth in this claim, it fails short in shedding light on all of performance. TBG's music follows a different approach, is icier and has fewer keyboards and such. What bands could be used as references are Obtained Enslavement, Mayhem and in some respect also Necrophobic and by referring to such an array of styles it should be obvious that it is not easy to narrow the band down to a specific style or concept.

The best track on this release would be the title track. It has an enormous amount of drive and foreshadows in some respect the later developments of the band. Fast and also aggressive, but not monotonous and too simplistic in the arrangements, these would be core essences of this track and these aspects make it quite interesting as well as worth to listen to. Here some of the basic ideas of the band were already laid out: the way on how to compose a long and complex track, while keeping the attention of the listener over the whole length. With a sound not too far away from Immortal's Pure Holocaust, The Black Gate was/is able to create an icy and dark atmosphere. Interestingly, those other two compositions – while ignoring the intro for a while – present black metal in a different fashion: 'In a Night so Long' has quite a melodic touch, while The 7th House Of K is rather a straightforward and fast played black metal track.

Variety is a key facet of the band and some of this can be found on this recording.

Anti Christian War Campaign Part I (2003)

4 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) -_-_- (29:30)

Four tracks can be found on 'Anti Christian War Campaign Part I' and they range in length from six to ten minutes. For someone whose interest was sparked by the 2008 output the music on the first demo comes a bit as a surprise. Here, a certain emphasis on thrashy riffs and music can be discovered as well as straightforward way in terms of the song-writing. A rather high tempo plays an important role as well, while the general absence of a bass – thanks to the production – gives the music an icy and slightly unbalanced sound. Interestingly, the vocals have not changed much since and also on the second demo a certain type of croaking was used that wakes some memories on later Obtained Enslavement.

It is somehow interesting to hear how the band evolved and where their music has started. 'Anti Christian War Campaign Part I' can (or should?) be divided into two separate segments: while the tracks one to three form some kind of unity, the last one falls a bit out of the rule. On the one hand there is rather fast and trash/death-influenced black metal, while on the other a surprisingly doomy facet comes to the surface. Nice twists and breaks in the song-writing are rather the exception here and the music of 'The Black Gate' is surprisingly linear. So, the leap the band has taken from here is quite considerably, because except for the sound and atmosphere the succeeding release has little in common with this one. Also the drum-computer is not really able to fascinate and is somewhere hidden in the background.

'Anti Christian War Campaign Part I' comes with a track that was originally released on the first demo: The 7th House Of K. The differences between these two versions are rather minuscule and as such it is not important to discuss these in depth.

The Serpent Who Slept Dead

5 Tracks (CDr – Self-released) -_-_- (38:13)

It took some time to get this review done. Again and again its completion was postponed due to the reluctance on my side to cast a last and final judgement. These tough kind of releases exist and they are a pain to write on; another one would be the debut of Panopticon; the drums on their debut album are an ambivalent experience and it is hard to judge whether they are supporting or hampering the atmosphere respectively music. When it comes to the Norwegian band The Black Gate something similar can be examined, even though the case lies a little bit different here. What is there to criticize?

First some praises: The Wanderer of The Wastes as well as the title track, The Serpent Who Slept Dead are two great songs, whose existence alone raise the quality of this demo immensely. Over the course of several months (!) -- this would also be the amount of time the review was in the works -- they have never even come



close to being boring, plain or generic; no matter how often they have been played. Further, the intro/outro open or rather help to start/fade out the release in a gentle and proper way. In the latter case, citations of earlier riffs appear again, but played in a slightly different fashion, yet the listener will easily recognize them. Somehow everything becomes full circle.

Yes, consistency is a core aspect of this release and can be examined from the beginning towards the end. In three compositions the band is able to prove their capability on composing black metal and they did a very good job in this respect; let us ignore the intro and outro for a moment. Five years have passed since their preceding release -- Anti Christian War Campaign Part I -- and the time has been used wisely. There are flaws on "The Serpent Who Slept Dead" of course, the number of so-called 'perfect' albums is pretty low, yet on this demo they do not disturb the flow of the music or

reach the point in being annoying. The parts of the puzzle fit together neatly and present to the listener a piece of music that is not too commonplace and therefore quite fascinating.

One of the strengths of this release are the guitars. Not only do they have punch without end, come with great riffs and motives but have also an icy as well as brutal sound that will easily grab the attention of the listener. Be it the fast and aggressive or even the acoustic middle parts -- like on the title track --, one has to acknowledge that a good amount of time has been spend on balancing all of the facets, arranging them and eradicating flaws or plain moments. 'The Black Gate' play with the listener and the fourth track 'The Serpent Who Slept Dead' is a great example on how to compose a long composition without making it a strain to listen to it. A lot of bands these days focus on ambient interludes or other ways to stretch the length for some inexplicable reason, but all they do is basically nothing more than an unnecessary bloating of the composition; the result is obvious of course: leaving the atmosphere at the mercy of the composer, with the result that it will go down the drain and never be seen again. The contrary is the case here: even though the title track is thirteen minutes in length, the idea of taking back the tempo, using an acoustic part with spoken words and reciting the ideas from the opening segment but with more punch, makes The Serpent Who Slept Dead a pleasure to listen to. Repetition is a stylistic element though, yet, unlike on releases by other bands kept up to a certain level and not overdone. There is enough variation in the compositions, enough flow to balance this facet and too many neat ideas that it would stretch the patience of the listener over excess; such a person is taken by the hand and constantly shown something new and in case something 'old' appears, it would not be something to be bothered by. Catchiness and the idea to avoid monotony at any cost might be seen as the two core principles in the band's understanding of black metal.

To some the sound of the guitars might be a little bit, because they have a good touch of death metal influences in them. Maybe the band Deathlike -- another band by Aquilion and it was founded 2007 -- has left some of its traces here; in the time between the second and third release by The Black Gate, the other band's first demo saw the light of day. Anyway, a lead and a rhythm-guitar share the work and the moments in which they both appear at the same time are really great. Together with the vocals they dominate the music, while the drum-computer plays only a small role in the background and is therefore not able to ruin the album; yet a real drummer would have been a nice thing to hear nonetheless. Not surprising is the fact to find a bass on this demo and to recognize it among the other parts as well. Some additional power might not be a bad thing to see, but one cannot have everything. Speaking of the vocals, two different styles can be found here and these would be croaking -- the general approach -- and clean ones -- middle part of the title track. Especially the former work fine with the music as they come with a lot of power and aggressiveness; they sound really evil and necro-like. Along with the guitars a dark and sinister atmosphere is unfolded; those calmer interludes only foster the impression as the darker ones tend to come back with a vengeance.

In the sound, there are some references to Necrophobic for instance, while the song-writing shows glimpses of later Obtained Enslavement; especially The Black Gates' compositions The Wanderer of the Wastes wakes memories on The Shepherd and the Hounds of Hell; even the vocals on this track have been performed in a similar fashion. Immortal is also a bands that is mentioned in reviews on The Black Gate, yet their impact should not be overestimated.

What can be criticized is that instruments and vocals tend to be too close related to each other. There is some sort of harmony between them and not always independent from each other; this is an issue of song-writing respectively arranging of the instruments and vocals together. Yet, unlike a lot of bands whose performance is alike, The Black Gate's art does not suffer from this, due to its high quality. The plainness is not able to affect the art in a negative fashion, as the music is quite consistent and able to keep the atmosphere up at a high level. Further, some additional power in the bass, not much just a little bit, would do the music good. Drum-computer, ey? Well, a little bit too monotonous, but still well programmed -- but too brave and with too little dynamic at times -- whereas the guitars can compensate this short-comings without any effort; even though they have to deal with some moments in which the balancing is by no means optimal.

Final bits and bytes

One man bands do not necessarily have to suck. It all depends on the effort that is put in the music and how critic this artist sees his own art. Only recently, the band went back to scratch with the forthcoming Deathlike release and this self-critical approach is something that is worth to emphasize in a time in which the scene is basically flooded with black metal outputs.

The demo by The Black Gate gives the impression of having being created over a longer period of time; especially the balancing the instruments and the eradicating of plain parts need to be emphasized. Also the

mix of all elements provided the band with enough power to present the art in a proper fashion. Yes indeed, this is a dark and sinister piece of black metal, with nice interludes, build-ups and a song-writing of a quality that leaves very little left to be desired. It is hard to grow tired of this release and especially fans of (later) Obtained Enslavement and Immortal will find this piece of music very interesting. Facets of The Shepherd and the Hounds of Hell can be found here, especially The Wanderer of the Wastes, but better crafted and with a much darker atmosphere. At the Heart of Winter would be a reference to the other band. The overall quality of the demo easily reveals itself and The Serpent Who Slept Dead should get some more attention, because in comparison to a lot of stuff that is being released these days, it is rather a beacon of light amongst the tide waves of mediocre albums, whose sole purpose seems to lie in an attempt to drown the scene with their worthless crap.

I cannot help myself but to praise the band for releasing a really excellent piece of black metal; as a one-man-band! After listening to this I feel somehow inclined to reduce the scores of a good deal of albums I have written reviews on so far, because they all leave the impression of having seen the light of day too early; unable to unfold their entire potential. Everything is in a nice flow on The Black Gates' third demo; everything fits together and has an enormous punch. The Serpent Who Slept Dead is catchy as hell, loaded with well composed melodies, nice interludes and build-ups. These five years between the releases have been spent well, indeed!

A truly great and criminally overlooked demo!

Note:

The demo comes as a CDr with a printed (colour) booklet.

(The review was originally posted on the Metal Archives but has received some corrections for this edition of the magazine)

Some final words:

When you listen to these three releases, then a certain progression as well as some amount of consistency becomes apparent. Even though the band avoids any kind of evolution in terms of their sound, the song-writing has seen some kind of maturing over the years. Sadly, some of the main points of critique that are generally true for a one-man band can also be applied here and it would be nice to see the band creating art with a larger line-up; or at least without the fallacies mentioned above.

Nevertheless, The Black Gate's releases are able to create a certain amount of fascination and in case the band remains as critical as they have been, and continually reflect on the quality of their music, then the forthcoming outputs should be something to look out for. The music might not appeal to the latest trend or hype, but who cares about such stuff anyway? You should really give this band a try.



Buried Terror #2 Sampler

<http://sabbathidrecords.cjb.net/>; <http://www.myspace.com/sabbathid>

The first band of this sampler is not reviewed due to their ties to a despicable branch of the (black) metal scene.

Borgne - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #03] Svojkleth

(Switzerland) - _ _ _ - (6:46)

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

You cannot mistake the Burzum influences in this composition. Why? Because the keyboards sound pretty cheap and have a horrible tinge; the reasons for picking them remain hidden, but maybe the Swiss band needed to add this in order to apply to a hidden scene code. Hell knows. If surmises are correct, then this track has not been released before and this is actually not a bad thing, because it is pretty boring in style. Neither the black metal nor the cheap ambient parts are able to fascinate in any respect. Well ... you can skip the first two bands ...

Kaalt - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #04] XXXII

Kaalt - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #05] XXXIII

(Italy) - _ _ _ - (11:38)

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

Those two tracks were taken from the Winternight release, but the order of appearance on this release is slightly different. Anyway, the first impression is positive, while the second one is rather mixed. Why is this so? First of all, the play of the keyboards is nice and comes in a gentle way and the listener can really feel how s/he is accompanied by the melodies. Yet and this would be the negative aspect, the band overdid it or to say it more precise: the band relied too much on this one idea, stretched it over access and this limitation resulted in a negative impact on how it is perceived. Ambient can be minimalist but overdoing it can only lead to one thing: boredom. So ... a mixed impression.

Kenji Siratori - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #06] Gray Bowel

(Japan) - _ _ _ - (11:13)

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

Mr. One Million Releases, at least this is the impression that I have of Kenji Siratori, because this name pops up at nearly every second label site in the diy scene. From which of the one billion outputs the track has been taken could not have been made out, because I was too bored to check all of the one trillion of them; the booklet gives no indication whatsoever.

Someone who has reached this part of the CD, will acknowledge that this track is the best so far; something that is not particular difficult though. Nevertheless, a variety of noisy ambient structures with a good amount of variation in their level of dominance and style can be found here. The music is a bit chaotic due to the shiftiness in which the noise textures oscillate. Even though the music is confusing, the way it is presented makes it still an interesting listening experience; the cavernous sounds in the background add a nice touch to this composition.



F.I.N. (Funeral Inconscientemente Natural) - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #07] The Winds of ... Delirium
F.I.N. (Funeral Inconscientemente Natural) - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #08] In the Mist (Alice)
<http://www.fin.funerart.org/>; <http://www.myspace.com/doomfin>
(Chile) - _ _ - (12:38)

In case someone wants to find more about this band, then the MySpace site is a proper place to turn to, because it is there that a lot of links to releases -- made available at the Internet Archive -- are presented. Doom ... this is a term the band and the label use for describing the art.

The Winds of ... Delirium: Sucks because of the constant and pointless vocals in the background. Field recordings of people talking in a café can be pretty nice, once this segment is placed in the proper spot in a composition. Yet to stretch it all over excess generally fires back ... like here.

In the Mist (Alice): This time we have: boredom... and bad vocals again. In case someone wants to hear a good examples on how to use vocals in a minimalist environment, then turn to Cenere Muto or The Infant T(h)ree. This Chilean band seems in desperate need of influences or something to measure their performance with.

Did anyone actually rehearse these two tracks?

Congenital Hell - [Buried Terror #2 Sampler #09] Life and Death
(Japan) - _ _ - (13:03)
<http://www.ab.auone-net.jp/~noise/>

Yay, back to Japan ... and to good music. Does anyone notice the psychedelic Pink Floyd references in the background? No, then listen to the live bootleg of Atom Heart Mother (2 CDs); I think this was the release... this thing is somewhere ... around here. Anyway, this one bastard of a track by the Japanese band is really weird. It combines such a large array of influences and sounds that it is hard to sum it up in a few words. Doom metal parts, ambient ones, psychedelic segments ... but it all has a touch of insanity. This track is really challenging, because in its style it progresses into regions that are seldom explored and have generally a small audience. How the title fits into everything is difficult to surmise. Are those screams in the background those of a Banshee, while the growls are the last attempts of the soon-deceased to express the thoughts? It should be interesting to hear whether the band will be able to compose more of this kind for a full-length album.

This piece by Congenital Hell is by far the best track on the release.

To sum everything up:

One good, one interesting track and a lot of mediocre stuff ...



Yogsothery: Chaosmogonic Rituals of Fear

What an ample choice for the first instalment of the trilogy. Yog-Sothoth – the gate, the key, the guardian –, a being more powerful than Azathoth and familiar with all knowledge that flows around, he is a well chosen character for such a tribute series. He is a bit of a mystery and makes only some rare appearances in the writings of Lovecraft and as such little is known about him; compared with more ‘famous’ characters as Cthulhu for instance.

Jääportit – Kuihtuman Henkivi (25:31)

(Finland; Ambient)

<http://www.myspace.com/jaaportit>; <http://www.jaaportit.net/>

My opinion has not changed over the years: I find this band from Finland pretty boring ... generally. Some tracks are/were nicely composed but the overall impression is by no means positive. Kuihtuman Henkivi, their share on this compilation, is not able to change my state of mind. The sounds are too sterile and even though some surprising elements – disruptions and the like – can be found, it all sounds too common and too predictable. Would the band have moved away from this pretty pointless beat motive earlier and brought the music to some intense levels, then something could have been made out of this composition, but this odd electronic theme gives me a real hard time here.

Part two of this track is some sort of dark ambient, which in style is pretty minimalist but progresses into some texture loaded type of ambient music. Flutes play, some vague sound fragments can be heard, some kind of beat makes an appearance ... everything is kept at a low level and without much complexity. The music is generally dark and in some respect also haunting.

How this composition relates to Lovecraft? I have no freaking idea ...

Umbra Nihil – Suur-Nikkurin Virsi (10:50)

(Finland; Doom Metal, Ambient)

<http://www.umbranihil.net/>; <http://www.myspace.com/umbranihil>

Well ... compared with what the first band on this four-split release has offered, the music has taken a turn into the metal regions and left the ambient ones a bit behind. Suur-Nikkurin Virsi is generally slow and heavy. Well produced, balanced and arranged are some further facets. It is a track that moves on the borderline between metal and hard rock.

The band is from Finland and used their mother tongue for expressing the lyrics, so in case you are not familiar with it – like the reviewer – you are pretty much alone in figuring out what the band actually sings about. Aside from this, the Lovecraftian facet seems to have been reduced to a small ambient fragment in which a strange kind of laughter gives the impression of ‘insanity’. This is the only aspect that you can make out from merely listening to the music.

(note: the reviewer has received a download with the files but no information on the booklet)

Aarni – Lovecraft Knew (11:34)

(Finland; Experimental)

<http://www.myspace.com/aarni>; <http://www.aarni.info/>

In case someone is not familiar with the music of this Finnish band, then to this person the performance on this split album might come as a surprise. Yet to those who have been had a chance to take a dive into their musical sphere this strange and weird type of music does not come as a prerequisite. Actually, from all bands on this release it would be Aarni whose concept might come closest to what could be described as ‘Lovecraftian art’.

Distorted vocals and background textures, the strange as well as haunting atmosphere and the lyrics – they are in English and from what can be understood they are at times a rant against humanity but deal with the

Old Ones, too – complete the impression of something that pays tribute to the numerous rituals that were described in the Cthulhu myth.

Caput LVIII – Resurgent Atavism (29:57)

(Italy; Doom, Drone Metal)

<http://www.i-voidhanger.com/caputlviii.htm>

The cake for the longest track on this release takes the Italian one-time project (they split-up after the recording/release of this split album) Caput LVIII. The name has a lot of different meanings which are roughly listed on the band's homepage. One of the incidents it refers to dates back to the time of the Templars and their imputation by the Catholic Church as well as the French King. Those other meaning seem to be more farfetched and range over a number of different topics and characters:

Baphomet, or a majestic golden figure; a virgin, or a crowned old man; a be-headed creature, an androgynous figure, or an aries head...

(Source: homepage of the band; where they got this piece of information from is unknown)

Anyway, the music is nothing really special. A mixture of doom and drone without much of a surprise in terms of arrangements and concept. There are some ambient/drone facets which wake memories on Longing for Dawn, but aside from this the band kept it pretty basic and minimalist. Long passages and a lot of repetition make up the core essences of the art. Distorted screams, a generally dark atmosphere and a well crafted production are what a listener is able to discover here. References to Lovecraft? Maybe with the help of the booklet but they are most certainly not revealed by the music alone.

The bottom line:

The idea of Lovecraftian art is hardly represented here. Remember the music played by Erich Zann or the extraordinary weird and extreme performances, which are generally a topic in HP's writings? Aarni's performance gives hints on this and might be the best performance on this recording, while the rest fails miserably at achieving such a level. The name of this American author is thrown around a lot but when it comes to actually creating something that would stand up a test with the universe created by him, then the gap is nothing but immense. Sometimes you get the feeling that band put music on a sampler that they were unable to use otherwise. This and no other impression is what lasts once the CD is over.

Sina. – Violent Things

(United Kingdom; Ambient, Experimental)

8 Tracks (MP3 – Kopp Netlabel) - - - (16:10)

<http://www.archive.org/details/Sina.-ViolentThingsEpkopp.14;>

<http://www.myspace.com/sinamyspace;>

<http://koppnetlabel.blogspot.com/>

The music scene is full of beauty. All you need to do is to actually find it. Sometimes you happen to stumble

over it by chance and a release instantly grabs your attention. Sina. was such a case. Those eight compositions on the 'wrongly' entitled release 'Violent Things' are a mixture of a variety of instruments and short excerpts from old movies. Why wrongly? Well, the term violent is simply misleading; a misnomer for what is a listener has to go through on this rather short record. A mixture of neoclassic, horror film-inspired and ambient music can be found here, but in such a way that is able to create a smile in the face of the person who listens to it. The hilarious content of the samples, the easiness in the arrangements as well as the bite size concept of the music, wake memories on the old time radio shows; some of these



can be found in the Internet Archive for download. If there is something violent in whole performance then it is the way it imposes itself on the person who lends this music an ear; this inability to really ignore the tunes and strange arrangements.

Sometimes I ask myself whether the film music of the old and 'long forgotten' movies is actually better than what is being released today. This charm that they are able to create now and then; this odd reverberating sound that tends to dominate those worn down copies, whose quality was not preserved properly. Some of this can be found on Violent Things. Some of this strangely infantile imagery, on how to see art and music and what to actually make of it. How the piano fits together with the tunes of days gone by is a pleasure to listen to and you should definitely give this release a try. According to the band's MySpace site the time to get this output done was considerably short, yet the final result does not reveal such a thing.

Note:

I wonder which movies were actually used in the process of creating this piece of art; especially as to love is referred to as a Violent Thing in the introduction like track. I am somehow curious.

A Cloud Forest - Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep

(USA; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (CD/MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (13:13)

<http://catchphrazerecords.com/acloudforest/>; <http://www.myspace.com/acloudforest>

Another one-man black metal army from the USA, another drop of water into the vast ocean of releases that this genre has brought up so far. Five tracks can be found on the first demo output of this band and the music follows a simple pattern: fast, aggressive and raw music with some touches of keyboards and the sound of the bass in the background. Only one melody line is played, which means that the strings play all the same stuff; an aspect that adds a strange touch to the performance. The vocals sound as if they were put later on top of everything and due to a rehearsal room touch it is a bit difficult to really enjoy them.

The compositions are not overtly bad, but leave a bit to be desired in terms of the song-writing as well as the atmosphere. Everything is a bit too limited and you can hear the lack of experience in the three black metal tracks without much difficulty; the first and the last track would be an intro and an outro respectively. A Cloud Forest's Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep is listenable but only if your preferences are not too high.

Note:

The Debut album of this band has already been released.

Torba – Dotåbåtå split (c31)

Hair on my Food split release



<http://myspace.com/haironmyfoodtapesrecords>; haironmyfoodtapes@gmail.com

Dotåbåtå

(Australia; Drone, Noise)

1 Track (15:03)

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

The first track on this tape reminds in style and concept a bit on Danny Kreutzfeldt's Noiseworks 1; especially on the opener Kanter og støj / Edges and noise (Variation 2). After a calm beginning the music begins to increase in intensity and noisiness, while closing again in a calmer style. Compared with the Danish artist, the Australian one used a less harsh and offensive approach and relied on some drone-like textures instead of continuingly increasing the level

of the noise. It should be noted that here guitars were used and chord-like sounds appear; with a lot of distortion and generally played on a low tempo.

This track of fifteen minutes is rather calm and I would prefer the one by Danny Kreutzfeldt, because it comes with a larger array of facets as well as intensity. Dotâbâtâ's performance is not bad, just a bit too nice.

Torba

(Germany; Noise, a bit Drone)

4 Tracks (15:12)

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

When you visit the band's MySpace blog and search for the reviews I had written on their music, then you will notice a discussion I had with them publicly about the way I described their music back then. So, let me give them an opportunity to ramble a bit more.

Several facets come to mind while listening to their side of the split is the existence of two contrasting facets: in the background there lingers a vague type of texture while on top of it noise creates some sort of a counterpoint; take 'Anemia Modulare' for instance. 'My Guitar Want to Kiss Your Mama' as well as 'Arduino' have a similar approach, but the execution was done slightly different. 04. #6 (Extreme Noise Remix) would close the split and in style it reminds on what some black metal bands are heading for today: a noisy metallic drone-like structure with various types of layers beneath.

To sum it up:

Two bands perform noise music with various kinds of influences.

Note:

Limited to 47 copies.

Dotâbâtâ – Dotâbâtâ

(Australia; Drone, Noise)

2 Tracks (3" CDr – Noise Park Activities) - _ - - (17:46)

<http://www.myspace.com/noiseparkactivities>; <http://www.myspace.com/dotabata>

Why not discuss a second release of Dotâbâtâ? This 3" CDr comes sprayed and with a short sheet of Xeroxed paper taken from several books; one side looks like an excerpt from an encyclopaedia of some sort.

Anyway, compared with the music of the split album with the German band Torba, the performance here comes with a large amount of variety and concepts. Here, the focus lies more on the noise side and the band leaves little doubt this. No nice and slow build-up was used on this recording. After some seconds of the first composition have passed by, an intense buzzing of pissed off 'bees' – this might be an appropriate metaphor – provide a glimpse of what will follow. Noise textures of various intensities interrupted or accompanied by drone ones is what the listener can expect on this recording.

Track 1 (6:35): Aside from what was written on before, the music increases in the level of noisiness and the more it progresses the more the play with a distorted guitar can be found. The music continues this way in some respect in different levels until the end; which comes with the 'buzzing of the bees' again.

Track 2 (11:11): opens with quite intense noise layers, but progresses then into some drone/noise mixture, which comes in a quite chaotic style somehow; there is a strange to and fro of the volume and effects. In some respect the latter part of it resembles a bit industrial-influenced music due to the way everything was arranged and what type of noises were used.

To sum it up:

For me it is always difficult to give a definite statement on a noise release, because I am not able or willing to listen to them on a general basis. They are rather something I like to turn to now and then; especially when I am sick and tired of everything that has lyrics or texts in it.

Near - The Opening of the Primordial Whirl

(Italy; Black Metal)

8 Tracks (CD -- ATMF) - _ _ - (41:03)

<http://metal-archives.com/band.php?id=10178>; <http://www.atmf.net/>

Some releases are so blatantly boring that they give the writer/review quite a hard time while writing on them. Near is such an example. Generic would be an euphemism when it comes to actually measure the quality of the performance. Done to death, then resurrected, killed again, burned, cremated, ashes blown in the wind, risen again, destroyed once more, buried and then resurrected another time ... this is the feeling you get while listening to The Opening of the Primordial Whirl. An epitome of mediocrity, a mixture of influences from a variety of bands: Dawn (Sweden), Riddle of Meander, Darkthrone, Hrizg ... and so on and so forth. Art that basically leads nowhere ... except for bringing the listener into a realm of torment and agony.

While listening to this album the cover artwork of Animus Herilis' Recipere Ferum comes to the mind. A 'proud' skeleton that looks over a landscape and even though it might impress on the first glance, a more reasonable interpretation comes to mind soon: being actually already rotten to the bones and nothing but a shadow of the grandeur of the old days, to which it attempts to pay tribute to, the whole expression changes to that of a farce. Back to the music of Near: The endless and pointless barrages of riffs and drums as well as the monotony in the motives (and also how they switch from one to the other) take a lot of restraint on the side of the listener – Ventrar for instance. Aside from this, the supposedly evil but rather uninspiring way in which the vocals were expressed makes it even more difficult to enjoy anything of this piece of art. So, all these elements point towards one direction: an approach going horribly wrong.

This release is difficult to enjoy and the reasons for this lie in song-writing. The limitation in the complexity and the restriction of facets sound forced and not natural. This becomes especially apparent once the band moves a bit away from their minimalist way of playing black metal: Ventrar – the slower interlude –; The Dead Side of Human Nature – the last part suggests that the band searched for a way to close the album and simply put it there, because they did not think of any other way to get it into the composition –; Pian della Genere – a pointless instrumental – and so on and so forth. Much more could be said of the album and by no means positive things.

This band exists since 2002 and this is the best they are able to come up with ... jeez.

Nebel – De Profundis

(France; Dark Ambient, Industrial, Noise)

7 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (50:19)

[http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/NEBEL_\(2\)](http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/NEBEL_(2))

A voice singing in a choral like fashion, while in the background some vague industrial and dark ambient sounds create a certain basis, this is the way this album opens. It is a sad start ... and the keyboards, whose play follows succinctly, continue with the music in a similar fashion. Sadness without end, sadness without mercy. Nebel – German for 'fog' – takes the listener into such a bleak and desolate world. De Profundis does not stop there though. With the second track the music wanders off into a different direction and leaves these depressing or melancholic parts aside.

Legion is more of an industrial fashion, Abyssus abyssum invocat returns to the dark ambient genre with some strange sound effects – some sort of a howling, but execution in a rather uncommon style. Nebel meanders a bit between these two facets, but the latter is more dominant and appears on a larger scale. With the exception of the last two tracks maybe, everything remains in a somehow calm and 'inoffensive' tension; there the whole approach changes with a slight shift towards the noise as well as 'normal' ambient genre with the obvious result that everything moves towards a voluminous and calmer type of music.

Nevertheless, the performance of Nebel is generally pointed towards a minimalist dark ambient concept, which is generally followed throughout the album; in certain degrees which was laid out above. Everything is kept in a steady and dark state, which is nice to listen to as the whole piece was well crafted, but it is still difficult to actually make something of this album. Some sort of a red line is missing and the compositions sound random. The opener is quite good, but what comes after is a steady to and fro between different types of dark compositions. Where is the concept, where is the one thing that would guide a listener through 'De Profundis'?

It took some time to get this review done, even though the files were downloaded from Jamendo several months ago. Somehow it proved to be difficult to form a definite opinion on this piece of art, because despite all the nice moments, it is still an ambiguous experience to listen to the whole thing ... be in one run or in several sessions.

Note:

The sample of the female vocals in 'Pulvis et Umbra Sumus' sounds familiar, but I cannot recall on which album I have heard it before.

Brimstone Fist – Demo 2008

(Thailand; Doom, Stoner, Rock)

5 Tracks (Tape – Self-released) - - - (30:48)

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

A glance on the Metal Archives profile of the band reveals a long and complex history, which would be beyond this review to sum it all up. What becomes clear after a spin of the demo tape is that this band seems to have stuck in the early days of the metal scene. The atmosphere, the sound and the arrangements are all of a sort that rather wake memories of days gone by than on music that might reflect the current state of the art. William Wolfe, he would be the sole person behind this project, seems to be stuck in a certain time frame and tries to express this through Brimstone Fist's art. His history in the music scene dates back a bit – 1996 to be frank; source: profile at the Metal Archives –, so it is only natural to hear a combination of a variety of influences and sounds.

Hellmetal, this is supposedly the description of the overall concept and it is pretty vague at reflecting what is actual going on here. In terms of the style the band shows a close relation to the early days of Black Sabbath; not only in terms of the atmosphere but also on how the music was arranged. Doomy music style, a voice that reminds on stoner rock/metal genre and a general tendency of neat little twists and turns in the arrangements make this demo actually quite good. If you keep in mind that this is a one-man band, then you might be surprised about the overall quality of this output; even more so when taking the current location of the band into account as well. Yet the whole performance cannot be limited to this, because at times the music receives a kick and heads for faster regions. It would be one of these moments in which influences from bands like Kyuss have been thrown in; but less heavy and more mixed with rock than metal. 'Demo 2008' has a pretty cool atmosphere at times – Ride it – and the elements merge nicely together.

Five pieces appear on this first demo output and they offer some nice different approaches to this mixture of doom/stoner/rock thing. Kiss the Whip (Slavemaster of Gor) would be my personal favourite due to the atmosphere of the composition and the way the guitars were used. This piece seems to weigh at least 1000 tons and flows by like a rotten corpse on a bed of black lava. The demo is interesting, but the band is not entirely able to fascinate me, because my personal preferences rather lie on slow and intense doom music, something Brimstone Fist not always are. Nevertheless, their demo is good and recommended.

Note:

This demo tape was re-released by Hellhouse666 Productions only recently and this edition comes with an additional track called "Witch Hunter". <http://www.hellhouse666.cjb.net/>

Note 2:

In case someone wants to have some background information on this release, then turn to Satanwolf's review at the Metal Archives. It was done by the band and you get a pretty good idea what this demo is all about. Hopefully, the moderators will keep it for the time being. Read it here:

<http://metal-archives.com/review.php?id=280094>

Sources pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/handyandytaleofi00loveuoft>

<http://www.archive.org/details/frenchpicturesdr00gree>

<http://www.archive.org/details/landscapepaintin00harriala>

<http://www.archive.org/details/drawingsofalbrec00druoft>

<http://www.archive.org/details/dreamofeugenearea00hoodrich>

<http://www.archive.org/details/drawingsofrosset00woodrich>

Outlook

Two interviews are already done and will be added to issue number eleven ... maybe even some more.

Some longer review section ...

And the usual old pictures ...

