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a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Another month, another magazine. I am a bit surprised that I am able to keep my schedule as well as maintain the overall length and variety. The difference to the earlier edition would be the length of the interview/review section. Yes, a combined section. See, I think it is rather pointless to give a band some space to express their opinions and talk about their music, while the latter is not given the appropriate room to present to the reader what this band is all about. Therefore, Blackthrone/Astrum/Kosmokrater are presented in one section, while Soul Devour in another.

Another point: the colour of the magazine has shifted a bit, because I wanted to create a more of flow between the pictures and the background. The tools I have at hand here are limited and the idea had always been to have a soft transition between these two aspects of the magazine, but as I decided to have some sepia-coloured pictures in this issue, the colorization of the earlier issues needed to be revamped on a small degree. The LaTeX thing is still in the works and I am not always sure on how to get it done properly. Maybe I am a bit too lazy and too indecisive when it comes to changing the program as well as the creating a definite layout.

This issue will have a lot of content, but foreshadows the things to come:
More interviews combined with reviews; more poetry and more pictures.

The size of the letters has been reduced to nine and while arranging everything together, I got the vague feeling of having used some of the pictures in a previous issue; which is not correct of course.

Important:

I have changed the Creative Commons license beginning with this issue. The new one is:

Creative Commons – Namensnennung – KeineBearbeitung
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/de/>

I hope you enjoy reading this humble work of mine. Feedback is always welcome.

Cheers

Oneyoudontknow (oneyoudontknow at yahoo dot de)

Note:

As usual, no cover artworks were used, due to the messed up situation in International Copyright.

Art for Art's Sake

Art for Art's sake; but in that art,
The true, the beautiful, the good,
Traced from a throbbing human heart,
Should tint that sky, that field, that wood.

No lens may catch the soul that lies
Hidden in Nature's wondrous breast;
Alone, the lover's reverent eye
May there a blissful moment rest.

And how he wonders and adores,
As to his soul her own replies.
And yields the mystery of her shores,
Her trackless floods, her boundless skies!

(By Barry Dane)

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The Interview section:

Blackthrone / Åstrum / Kosmokrater

Blackthrone, Åstrum and Kosmokrater, these are the three bands which will be covered in the following long section of this issue. It all began some years ago, when a moderator at the Metal Archives asked me whether I would be interested in writing a review on this quite obscure black metal band. Please keep in mind, when I got this request, only the second Blackthrone release was known and only the first two releases of Åstrum had seen the light of day, while Kosmokrater was still non-existent. Moreover, there was no homepage, no band picture ... nothing. Only this vaguely informative entry at the USBM list.

Well, I accepted the request and what I got was something really tough to endure; please visit the Metal Archives and read my pieces in order to get an idea of what I am talking about. But ... but ... this band made their way. Spread promos, tried to get a lot of opinions on their music, completed their line-up and a progression towards the right direction is there. The interview in this edition is a little bit older and does not cover all the facts anymore, but it offers a good insight on how the bands work/ed and how everything came the way it was. Enjoy the reading.

Band links:

Åstrum

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

Kosmokrater

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

The reviews:

Blackthrone

Blackthrone (USA) – Grimness and Cold (1997)

6 Tracks (self-released) -_-_- (18:53)

In the process of writing this review/interview the band provided me with the MP3s of this release and as I have not covered it before it seems only natural to do so in this edition of the magazine. **Grimness and Cold** dates back to 1997 and when listening to it today, then I have to admit that in quality as well as in atmosphere it is superior to what came immediately after. Alright, the quality of the files I have here at hand is a bit wanting, but you can nevertheless get the idea what the band wanted to express and how their art of black metal could be categorized.

It is raw, it is unbalanced, it is a bit odd ... but it is also listenable not entirely bad. Maybe I should clarify the term 'bad' a bit. What annoyed me on the early works – Blackthrone's *Return to Darkness* as well as the first two of Åstrum – were some facets which simply gave and give me a hard time; foremost the vocals and then the obvious short-comings of the instruments, the one thing underground bands seem to find quite challenging to deal with. As usual it all comes down to the level of impact and in this respect, *Grimness and Cold* is simply more tolerable and less annoying. So, generally fast played black metal, with the two types of vocals – clean one as well as the typical half-growls/singing/speaking style – and a clearly discernable bass in the background is what this release is all about. The sound is really muddy with the result of drowning the drum-computer nearly entirely ... at times.

So, this is the starting point of Blackthrone and Åstrum and it is possible to hear some of the style already; which is a surprise I have to admit. You can hear the some glimpses of the path will proceed on as well as how they interpret black metal. The side-project of Mulciber aka Timpaler would continue with the old-school type of music, while Åstrum takes a different progression; but this will be discussed later.

Blackthrone (USA) – Return to Darkness (2001)

5 Tracks (self-released) -_-_- (12:54)

Imagine you write a review on a demo and give it a 10/100 score, how likely is it to give it a further spin? The odds are enormously against it, but here I sit at my PC and write these lines to the tunes of **Return to Darkness**. Or am I supposed to write *Return to Torment*? Well, this would be an excerpt from the review I once wrote on this piece of music nearly two years ago:

By listening to the music of Blackthrone one is taken back to the early days of the black metal scene and in a time when the demands could easily be satisfied, because the scene offered little to the 'masses'. Such are the compositions on this release. Simple composed riffs, a vocalist which could easily join a punk band and of course is all produced quite bad. None of this is unknown and a lot of bands start this way, yet are the good moments simply too rare and the negative impressions simply too graven.

<http://metal-archives.com/review.php?id=195341>

The difference between the early one – **Grimness and Cold** – and this can be described easily: the production. Some of the flaws and inaccuracies simply drowned in the muddy sound of the first output, while the second one offers more transparency. Moreover, the riffs on **Return to Darkness** show this weird slightly chugging style, which is later used on several releases again but not earlier. Furthermore, the performance of Blackthrone is not far away from the early one of Astrum: the vocals and the song-writing, the sound as well as the atmosphere give a clear indication where they originated and they evolved over time.

The demo comes with a Mayhem cover, but as the recording quality is quite low, I am unable to say whether it is good or bad.

From today's perspective I would judge the demo less harsh and examine it from a broader perspective. Yes, the quality is still subpar but some moments can be enjoyed. Those who are interested in how everything came to be and where the ideas were born, should turn to this release to receive some enlightenment.

Astrum

Astrum – Reign of Storms (2003)

5 Tracks (self-released) - _ _ _ (16:02)

A new name, a new approach? Not really. The general aspects have remained the same ... no, let me say it different. While the basic or underlying principle of the music has barely changed, a shift in sound and atmosphere can be found. This was taken from my review on it:

In comparison to the works of Blackthrone, the music of Astrum is certainly better and also has this release a better production. Still does the music apply to the description of being some kind of primitive black metal and it takes the listener on a time travel into the early days of the scene. Mid-tempo and fast are the songs and the riffs are repeated excessively, but there often a neat and solid structure in the compositions and would it not be for the hilarious lyrics respectively vocals, the songs would be quite listenable.

<http://metal-archives.com/review.php?id=194734>

I would go a bit further now: the music has a sense of free style in the way the vocals are used. They do not follow the melody line and do not only appear on a much too larger scale but also without orienting itself on the rhythm model. Believe me, you will hardly find bands who craft black metal in this particular fashion. Yes, the issue of an imbalance of lyrics/music is something a lot of bands have to deal with, but Astrum is different. Here you have a quite peculiar of 'we do not really care and give a fuck' attitude in the execution of the music. It is so far of the score that some might praise the band for their extreme execution of the art. Moreover, compared with the preceding release the music is more straight-forward and less of this weird riff chugging. One question remains though: is the music dark and sinister? No ... but I doubt this has ever be the intention of the members behind Blackthrone or Astrum.

Astrum – Ordo Astrum (2005)

5 Tracks (self-released)

Even though there are five tracks mentioned above, I have only four of them here. The missing one would be the last track, entitled Evil Reign. Well, one cannot have everything.

Somehow the music is fascinating with its dark and raw sound, with the mixture of clean and bloodless growling and with the primitive riffs as well as songs. Sadly the ideas rarely [edited; original: never] reach the point in which they become full circle and the two sessions in which the demo seems like to have been recorded in – judging from the two different kinds of productions –, make it hard for the band to thoroughly fascinate the listener. [edited; original: do not help the band to fascinate the listener in any respect]

<http://metal-archives.com/review.php?id=195339>

An equation might cover the style of the music in some respect:
Blackthrone's Return to Darkness (sound) + Reign of Storms (song-writing, general approach) = Ordo Astrum
(tracks 1+2; the other ones are like on the preceding demo)

One difference should be emphasized: Astrum has its first long track: the title track with a length of 6:42. Why is this important? Well, on all (!) preceding releases the tracks were never less than two and never more then four minutes long. The band attempted to keep it short and rather linear. Complexity in the arrangements and the style was something this band did never seem to feel very comfortable with. When done right such can have its advantages. Aside from this, my comment on the preceding demo covers also this one in some respect.

So, the first part (tracks 1+2) are pretty cool, while the other two have too much of the fallacies of the **Reign of Storms** demo. How Astrum can sound, once they get their stuff done right can be examined on these two tracks.



Astrum – Torch of the Ancients (2008)

5 Tracks (self-released) -_-_- (20:45)

Torch of the Ancients marks a turning point in the band's career. Originally recorded by **Timpaler**, the demo was spread around a bit and got also into the hands of **A. Tomik**, who then became the drummer of **Astrum**. The idea to re-record the entire release with him behind the kit was dropped later, but as four of these had seen this revamping already, the band used them for the Icons ep. Just compare the two tracklists and you will see the similarities. One additional aspect needs to be mentioned as well: for this recording electronic percussions were used but played and not programmed. All of these were performed by Timpaler.

On the music:

Yes, there is a transition. A transition from the early days of the band and from the unbalanced issues in the arrangements towards something with a more of structure and timing. Yes, the music takes shape and you get an idea of what Astrum can sound ... in some respect. The drums are a bit off the course and the vocals suffer from this issue as well, but the melodies give you at least hints on the direction this band wants to proceed towards. Unlike on the preceding releases, this one gives the listener a coherent performance of Astrum and even though it is still underground and has some amount of flaws, it is also one which comes with a consistent approach. One recording session and nothing more was used; no switches in the balancing and the like can be found here. In style there is a progression from the first part of the **Ordo Astrum** release, which had been discussed above.

A bit of a surprise are the slower – doomy? – parts and especially the opening of Lunar Descendants comes a bit of a surprise: a slightly depressive segment progresses later into the normal old-school black metal of the band. This is the not the only example on this release, but it the one worth emphasising; due to its sound and how it was placed in the composition.

Well, **Torch of the Ancients** reminds me a bit on a comment I read on the **LLN-scene** once: *you have to look behind the obvious facets and the flaws*; paraphrased. This is what I would recommend in terms of this release as well. There are some nice moments, but due to adverse effects as well as a too minimalist line-up, they are unable to reach their proper quality. Those who are interested in getting an idea on where the ideas really took shape should give this demo a try. Moreover, as some of the tracks were later re-released in a re-recorded fashion on the Icons ep, fans might want to compare the different version of them.



Note:

The source of the biographic elements in this review is Timpaler, who kindly provided the information on the background of this piece of art.

Astrum – Icons (2009)

5 Tracks (Before The Dawn Productions) -_-_- (13:45)

Icons marks a break in the style of the releases. Unlike the preceding ones, Icons has a cover artwork and was actually released by a label; **Before The Dawn Productions**. One more step towards professionalism. The history behind it has been discussed above, so a brief comparison of the version will be presented here.

The first obvious difference is the sound. With a real drummer in the background the music comes with a different touch and atmosphere. Raw and slightly noisy punkish black metal is what the listener can find on this release and from the sound as well as the style, the expression 'underground' comes to the mind. Aside from this change a further appears in the dynamics. With the monotonous drum patterns in the background gone, the drummer is able to give the songs at least a bit of additional power and drive. It is not much, because of the dominance of the guitars as well as the unbalanced production, but a bit is able to shine through.

Experiment failed? Would this be a proper description of this release? Once you happen to know the history behind it, then you look at it in a different light and understand the reasons why it was so difficult for the band to get the music right. One-man-line-ups find it generally challenging to get the drums and the guitars into a coherent and sound combination, but to use the same pattern and rhythm models for a new release, while the drum-machine is replaced by a real drummer is not an easy task and the outcome can be examined here. To listen to Icons is a bit of an ambiguous experience ... even more so now.

Which version is preferable? A tricky question, because both have their pros and cons. While the early one is more consistent in the sound and arrangements, but tiring due to the drum-computer, the other one sounds a bit messy but has some additional drive. Could be a matter of preferences...



Astrum – Apocalyptic Dawn (2009)

10 Tracks (Before The Dawn Productions) - _ _ - (27:10)

The band really starts here. After a good amount of releases and attempts, several musicians got together and recorded this piece of black art. Black? Well, this term would scratch nothing the surface and leave everything else beyond it untouched. **Apocalyptic Dawn** is rather thrash with punk and black metal facets then something solely belonging to this dark, harsh and aggressive genre. In some respect this development is the result of the continuous evolution of the band over the years. Those aspects had always been part of the band's concept, but only here they have such a graven impact on the compositions and the overall style. It is like only with a full line-up these had a chance to blossom and to be released into the open.

In part the evolution and the sound is only natural, because glimpses were already able to shine through on the Icons ep. There the drums gave the music an additional amount of dynamics and drive, but the progression did not stop there. When you listen to this latest piece of music, then there is rather a 'we do not give a fuck attitude' apparent than anything someone would associate with the black metal genre. Apocalyptic Dawn moved towards **Hellhammer's Apocalyptic Raid** release, but changed the way in between towards a different direction. When you take a band like **Warhammer** for instance, then **Astrum's** performance is swifter in the execution and has less of this 'graven and heavy' atmosphere, this thousand ton burden which hangs upon this type of music at times.

A constant aspect are the vocals with their mixture of growls, screams and speaking. They follow the aforementioned bands in style, but do not try to merely copy their concept. When you listen to the art of Astrum and are aware of the band's history, then you will notice some facets which occur again and again. The song-writing, the way the texts are 'expressed' and certain aspects of the atmosphere show hints on the previous works. Compared to the current standard of the scene, this American band follows a rather barren path, but as **Darkthrone** seems to progress also towards a more punkish path, the future might not as bleak as one might imagine.

Sadly, some of the flaws of the early releases could not get rid of and it is therefore possible to find some of the weird timing problems again. Yet, compared with the previous recordings, this is an aspect someone might tend to or be willing to ignore. Rather, some praises will be uttered about the old-school inspired and actually well executed production. Everything is still a bit raw and seems to have been recorded in several different sessions, but this is also nothing but a minor flaw.

It is pretty easy to describe the performance of the band on Apocalyptic Dawn as the most mature up to date. Unlike on the preceding outputs the amount of annoying facets are rather low and also the production is appropriate. This is not mainstream music, nor anything that would easily reach the attention of a broader audience, but with recordings of similar qualities, Astrum might be able to receive the attention they deserve. There is already a new album in the making and also a split album is planned, so watch out ... this band is on its way to prepare the next round of ass-kicking.

Kosmokrater

Kosmokrater – Pure Nekro (2009)

10 Tracks (self-released) - _ _ - (30:59)

Kosmokrater – Black Metal Supremacy

8 Tracks (self-released) - _ _ - (44:29)

Kosmokrater – None More Black

10 Tracks (self-released) - _ _ - (29:36)

Unlike the other reviews, this single one will cover three releases of one band and the reasons for doing so are quite obvious. The differences between those outputs are so minuscule that it would be absurd to write on each on them separately; also I as an editor have some sort of an responsibility to my readers. So what IS **Kosmokrater**? It was formed by **Mulciber** (aka **Timpaler**) as some sort of offspring of **Astrum** and takes the listener back to the days of **Blackthrone** or to say it slightly different, to a kind of primitive black metal.

There are certain characteristics in the art, which are somehow constant and used again and again in the process of recording the music.

1. The vocals: a mixture between fast singing and speaking with some rare tendencies to scream or growl.
2. The drum-computer: a monotonous and texture-like sound in the background.
3. The riffs: generally minimalist and repeated excessively.
4. The tempo: the music has the tendency to drift into faster regions.
5. The production: raw, unpolished and follows the formulary of the underground.

So, in terms of the art it is nothing really uncommon in the black metal scene. It should be noted that the music lacks a bit of the atmosphere the listener might expect when it comes to this genre. The music is of the old-school type and has a punkish note on all of the releases. More like **Venom** and **Hellhammer** than anything band would like to present to the majority audience of these days. If you would like to know how to spot such an attitude in the first place: look at the cover artwork of the CDs: diy and nothing else.

Yet to reduce these three releases to the description above would be slightly unfair, so I will provide a short description of the differences of them.

Pure Nekro:

This is the one album with which the spirit of Blackthrone is re-awoken again. It is a bit difficult to compare it to the other ones, because to do so vice versa is an easier task. Anyway, an aspect which strikes me again and again while listening to this output are the vocals. They lack a bit of power and might be described as too forced and a bit strange in style.

Black Metal Supremacy:

This release comes the highest overall average in track length (~ 5:31 minutes) of all three outputs. Moreover, with **Legions of Belial Arise** it would also contain the longest track of all albums up to date. Aside from this, BMS comes with a slightly muffled sound, which has an effect on how the guitars are perceived. Furthermore, the noisiness of this instruments tends to drown the bass as well as the drums at times. So, there are moments in which you will hear nothing else than the vocals and the guitar.

None More Black:

This release is the one with a distinct sound of the bass guitar. Unlike on the preceding two this instrument has some sort of place in the concept of the band and can clearly identified in the overall raw style of black metal Kosmokrater feels comfortable with. Otherwise, it is closer to the debut but comes with a more professional touch; also the vocals show some amount of resemblance.

To put it succinctly: Kosmokrater is rather for a small group of black metal enthusiasts – I would avoid the term fan, because this is something rather appropriate for someone whose main focus lies on the mainstream part and an (partial) ignorance of the underground scene – as it rather follows their sense of music and style. This is nothing modern, this is nothing new ... hell, this is even not friendly to the ears at times. Like **Motörhead** one basic concept is reiterated and changed in a number of small variations, but always with a somewhat characteristic concept. You can identify this band, can recognize it among others, because not many will try to compose music in such a fashion.



Summary:

Astrum came a long way. With some first steps under the moniker Blackthrone, it has evolved with every release a little bit more. A steady progression, a clearer and clearer path and a somehow strange as well as rare approach describe the evolution of the band pretty well. Moreover, from a merely two-man-army, the line-up has changed significantly to a full line-up and you can hear this not only in the overall sound of the albums, but also in the way the songs were written. (Nearly) Past are the days of those simple arrangements, unnecessary repetitions as well as unbalances in the production or these odd timing errors. When you follow the band and have had the chances to give each of them a try, then with each output you would find another step in the right direction; on the first one slower but with some significant leaps on the latest ones.

Kosmokrater on the other hand are some sort of a project which offers nothing but the basic black metal formula. Underground, diy and a 'slightly' odd concept is what this band is all about. There are hardly band whose music could be used as an example or something to compare it to, due to actual level that it is out of the ordinary spectrum. The likeliness to gather a large fan basis for this type of art is rather minuscule, but maybe this was and presumably never will be the idea behind it. Somehow similar to Zarach 'Baal' Tharagh, Timpaler releases music because he has some ideas left and wants them to be shared with an audience.

The latest news on Astrum would be the recording of a new album as well as a split with a band from Portugal. Would the band be able to take their art on a new level – getting rid of some of the flaws on *Apocalyptic Dawn* – then these two outputs could be something to look out for.

The interview:

Greetings Mulciber, please enlighten us on why it was impossible for you to not make music.

I was always creative, and music for me was another avenue for creative expression. When I 1st laid my hands a guitar, I knew this could be a tool for artistic expression. It was destiny to create sounds for me.

When and how did you start listening to metal and when did you begin to play the guitar?

If memory serves correct, I must have been maybe 12 or younger when I was given my 1st guitar, but it was later that I used it to create my own songs, I am thinking maybe around 14, or 15, and that's when I got into the underground music scene of punk and metal, this was maybe 1982/83.

Which releases have been important to you in the early days and has your interested in metal shifted over the years? If so, to which new shores has this progression lead you to?

I hold the old school style and ethic as my main underlying vision. Bands that impressed me the most were Venom, Celtic Frost, Sodom, Discharge, The Exploited. I still support and am fans of these bands today. I also very much liked the 2nd wave of Black Metal with Darkthrone, Immortal, Emperor, and I also like bands like Unleashed, and Candlemass with Messiah alot.

Looking back, then the metal (music) scene was better fifteen to twenty years ago (at least from my perspective) ... better music, less labels, I did not have to vomit when turning on the tv -- I have none anymore, because the low quality of the programs began to bore me to death. Is your perception the same or is this kind of looking back just something done by grumbling old men?

I agree. The old days had limited availability to learn of new bands, with zines and labels to introduce most bands, and of course word of mouth, and trading. Today, with the internet, it's almost overkill, while some bands are stand out, it's just so many, and so many labels. It's good, and bad, but the old days had a charm to them, and then it wasn't so commercial.

I. BLACKTHRONE

Has this been your first band or did you participate in others before this one?

My 1st musical project before Blackthrone was an earlier anarcho punk project called Terminal Solution. This was the early 90's, and had some ads and reviews in Maximum RocknRoll and Profane Existence magazines.

Are you able to recall the reasons for choosing this band name?

At the time, I was mostly influenced by Darkthrone. I even recorded some cassettes at the time I did not release with titles based on Darkthrone titles, such as Beneath a Mortuary Moon.

Tell us about how this band got started, how you recorded/wrote your music?

It got started with me wanting to do an underground style black metal with the same vibe as early Darkthrone. I wrote the material the same way as I wrote all my material, and even recorded it the same, untill just recently, as now the recording production is much much better.

What did Blackthrone sound like? What was their style?

Well, even though inspired by Darkthrone, I do not believe it sounded like Darkthrone at all. To me, it came out more similar in a way to Immortal. But always had this rough punkish edge.

Did you get any feedback at the time? How were the releases distributed and do you have an idea on how many copies of them saw the light of day?

I did get mainly positive feedback from friends. At that time is was cassettes. I passed out a few, I have no idea how many were distributed. Not many. I always did music 1st for myself, and if others liked it too, great. But even if no one else ever heard it, I'd still do it.

II. ASTRUM

Why did you change the band name from Blackthrone to Astrum and what would be the meaning behind the new band name be? Did you also attempt to progress with the art a bit and bring it on a new level with this new approach?

I changed it to Astrum as I felt the name Blackthrone and how it came to be would be limiting to what the sound would be, or what it would be expected to be, with a name like that. Astrum to me, is associated with the depths of space, and

unlimited, and could be anything I wanted it to be, and would not be assumed to sound like something unheard. The new level, or approach was more of an artistic freedom to be free to take it where I wanted to.

Your logo is a quite peculiar one: a winged (?) cobra on an ankh, which has a baphomet on it and this would come with an eye in the middle. Care to explain us the concept behind this a bit?

This is not our logo, Lord Riktor found that somewhere and just used it on the website. It will be replaced soon with a new sharper image of our original name logo.

How would you describe the music to someone who has never listened to it before?

Old school blackened thrash with a punk vibe.

What has been the basic concept in the music and how has it changed over the time?

The basic concept has always been punk attitude, and old school underground metal. That will never change.

You have written to me that a new guitarist will enter the ranks of Astrum. Who is this person and what effect will this have on your art on the future recordings? Is there a path you want to progress on?

We have a new guitarist, his name is Drew Blood. Along with me, Timpaler on bass and vocals, and A.Tomic on drums. The name Mulciber I use for the Kosmokrater project. The path of progress is being a full band, that retains the basic concept, but allows for other members to use as a vehicle for their ideas as well, to form a bond of metal that makes Astrum more than one could do alone.



III. KOSMOKRATER

You do not like modern black metal do you? Astrum, another band you are involved in, is nothing the masses would listen to and Kosmokrater is surrounding an even viler odour of 'I do not give a fuck'. How do you reply to this? Why do you prefer the old music over the new one?

Kosmokrater is approached in a more experimental manner, of being more sporadic and chaos inspired and not caring what others think at all, for it's a personal project, which is sort of like dropping a bomb and waiting to see what happens. I prefer the old music I grew up on more than the new, because that was the pioneer spirit, and it was rebellious and underground, not a plastic product with the goal of profit.

Do you think today's bands can catch some of the spirit of the old days of the scene or has the scene shifted too much and the equipment become too modern to create music in a similar style?

I believe it's possible and is being done, by many, Toxic Holocaust comes into mind, and the greats of the old days still do it too. It's more about attitude than equipment. I am totally ignorant about instruments, I just know it has strings and makes noise. I taught myself to make songs. They may be considered crude and amateurish to some, but that's what makes it good.

To compose art for the mere pleasure of doing so or to appeal to the masses? From the perspective of a diy/underground band, how do you see this aspect?

I am very DIY, that's the main thing that affected me from the old punk days of Crass and Discharge, and even Venom. It was the message of, "you can do this too". Others that agree with this will see it, and like it. The "masses" will see this too and not like it. They prefer their plastic products, while the underground wants real metal and punk.

Why are the covers hand-drawn, the last one by Astrum (2009, Icons) is printed for instance, and why the red light? (see the cover can be found at the Metal Archives entry of the band)

The covers of Kosmokrater were hand drawn because I am very DIY, and an artist, and just wanted to do them myself. I may use a different approach for the next Kosmokrater release. The red light was not intentional, it was just the flash of the camera I used. The Astrum, being a full band, does try for a more professional look. Our new CD should be very well designed.

What are the benefits of a one-man-band? Do you think in the process of composing music for Kosmokrater write music for Astrum by chance and use it for this project then or is there a gap between these two bands that cannot possibly be crossed.

Presntly, there is a gap in the approach of these 2 projects that cannot be crossed. They are different projects, one my own experimental chaos manifestation, and the other, a solid full band with a more structured group effort approach.

IV. SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS TOWARDS THE END

Why black metal? All of these bands belong to this genre and accordingly it would be interesting to know your reasons for playing this particular kind of extreme music. Is there something that makes it special among the other ones?

Black metal, to me, is of the original old style of bands like Venom and Bathory. Like a metal version of punk, and that's what Astrum is. I find the old vibe of original black metal to have this energy and DIY mentality, that is not about selling out or making money, but expressing an energy or attitude, more to than a specific message, but an outlet for pure creative freedom.

What are the lyrical concepts behind these bands? Are the lyrics meant to be straight-forward or do you attempt to wrape the message in metaphors for instance? Are the authors or concept which have influenced you over the years and whose ideas you want to express through your 'writings'? Is there a difference between the bands?

I have made an effort to not go for the "Hail Satan" type of lyrics, as while I do like many bands that do, and I can appreciate the LaVey philosophy, my lyrics often are more based on atmosphere, and imagery, and occultic fantasy. Lord Riktor has contributed to many songs in Astrum, the one song Reaper he wrote after watching the movie Doomsday. His style, to me, is very post apocalyptic inspired.

For Astrum and for Kosmokrater a good deal of promos were spread and how has the feedback been? Do you use the responses and reviews to improve your skills and concept or do you see their impact as overrated? Are reviewers honest persons from your perspective or do they write pieces for the mere purpose of getting free stuff.

I do like to hear others opinions of my material. While I do 1st and foremost make music for myself, I do also seek to improve myself and my art. I do consider what others say. I also listen to my material and seek to better it with each release. The feedback has generally been good. Material wise, and also depending on who is listening to it. Some of the older releases I think get underappreciated due to poor quality recording. The new Astrum CD has a very good recording this time though.

Are there any plans of a live-performance of Astrum or Kosmokrater?

Not for Kosmokater, but Astrum will attempt to play some shows.

Vinyl, tape, CD, MP3-download ... what kind of format do you prefer and for what reason? How do you see the rise of non-physical releases?

Personally, I prefer CD. I collect CDs. I like the quality and size of them. A.Tomik, Astrum's drummer is a vinyl collector. And we have a plan to make the next release a 12 inch vinyl. Also the current album will be on CD, and I think a cassette release.

Which releases are important to you and should be a part of everyone's metal collection?

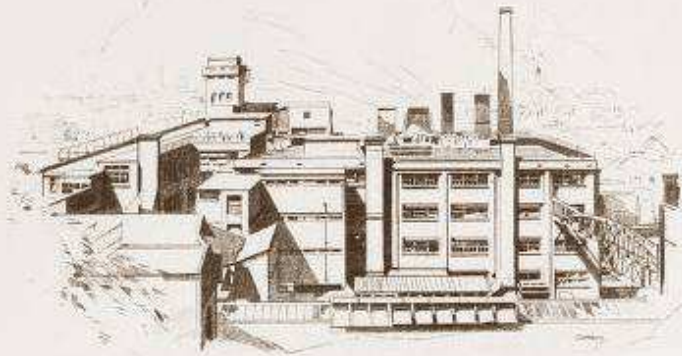
The first 4 albums of Venom, the first 3 of Celtic Frost, the first 4 of Sodom, the first 3 of Slayer, the first 4 of Bathory, some early Destruction, and also Immortal Blizzard Beasts, The Exploited The Massacre, so many to name.

Some final words, please.

The new Astrum CD is done, and just about ready. It is called Apocalyptic Dawn. It is 10 songs, one of them being a cover of Discharge. Drew Blood, our new guitarist plays on 4 songs. Our engineer Brian G plays bass on one song. We should have the packaging design done any time, and will get these pressed in a nice digipack CD format. I believe it will be well recieved. We also have some ideas of playing some shows with the new songs. We also will have T shirts made of the cool logo design I made. Kosmokrater will have a new CD out in 2010.

See the Astrum myspace for some new songs posted:
<http://www.myspace.com/themightyastrum>

Metal Hail!



A View showing a portion of W. & R. Jacob & Co.'s Biscuit Factory in Dublin. On the building to the right can be seen the flat Roof Garden which is available for the girl workers as a recreation ground during the dinner interval. From this point extensive views may be obtained of the city and the surrounding country.

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Soul Devour

When you are active at the Metal Archives, then you never know what is/will going to happen to you. I am contacted again and again by some really obscure bands from countries outside my local hemisphere. Generally, they want to have my opinion on their music and I am more than willing to share them; who needs another supportive review for the latest Darkthrone release or any other established black metal band? **Soul Devour** are a young band from Singapore, a scene which has gained some prominence in the black metal branch; thanks to Impiety for instance. Yet this new one feels more comfortable in the **death metal** branch. In 2010 their debut album already saw the light of day, while the year of the band's foundation was 2006. Only recently Ars Funeris spread a split release with the Malaysian band Crown of Horns.

Band links:

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

Label links:

<http://infernalchaos.dothome.co.kr/>

<http://www.evilspritperu.blogspot.com/>

The reviews



Soul Devour – Soul Devour (2008)

4 Tracks (CD – self-released) -_- - (12:36) [first edition]

7 Tracks (CDr -- Infernal Kaos Productions) [second edition]

Tape edition by Evil Spirit D.I.Y. Prod.

Step number one for this band would also be the release which has their name as the title as well as of a track. A pretty strong statement if you ask me and I would rather expect this on a later output. Or to put it in different words, in a time when you can expect the band to have found their style and being recognizable; in some respect at least. Call me old-fashioned if you like. One does not necessarily have to follow the formula all the time of course.

First of all, this review was written on the first edition of the release, which means on four tracks and not on seven. These would consist of three compositions by the band, while a cover of a Death track was included as well; see also the interview for the background of this. In terms of the music this band merges elements from a variety of rather old-school-styles of death metal. There is a bit of **Cannibal Corpse** – vocals –, the music shows hints towards **Morbid Angel** and in terms of the solos aside from the aforementioned one also **Death** should be brought into the line of argument.

Despite a somehow limited drum pattern at times, the band is able to create a well crafted and interesting mixture of melodic as well as aggressive music. **Soul Devour** tried to create some sort of a middle way between these two facets and while the opening two tracks would show more hints towards the former, the third provides an example of the latter style. With the exception of the cover all tracks are below three minutes and when you add what has been said before, then it should be obvious that this band is rather out to perform straightforward music than something with too complex arrangements. The

music is not only fun to listen to but also well produced for a young band. So, if you ever thought about checking out a young band from a small country in South-East Asia, then why not take this one? They know their shit ... unlike a lot of bands here.

Soul Devour – Apocalyptic Anti-Human Annihilation (2010)

9 Tracks (CD – Infernal Kaos Productions) -_- - (28:38)

The debut ... already. Really? I am always astounded by the leaps some bands are willing to take. Some take years until they are ready to spread their first 'opium magnum', while others start their career with it. The Singaporean band thought it would be best to bring their music on a new level as well and the result would be **Apocalyptic Anti-Human Annihilation**.

And this release is nothing but a step in the right direction. Not only are the tracks longer, more complex and better written, the whole album gives the impression of a band who is aware of their music and on how to improve it. You can hear this with track two already – aside from the fact that there is an intro I would not start a discussion with it – because it unleashes nothing but a blast of death metal on the listener. **Soul Devour** want to make clear where the trip will be going. On the demo a slight focus on more melodic and midtempo elements together with a monotonous drum pattern in the background was apparent, but this has shifted and seems to be nothing but a memory of the past. These 'flaws' have been dealt with and the compositions are loaded with neat twists, breaks and turns.

What about the consistency? Is the band able to really convince over the whole length of the album? Yes, the old-school type of the death metal branch which can be found on the entire release was very well executed. With a focus on more Morbid Angel inspired art – a mixture between the old stuff and newer ones – and Death – especially the well written solo parts – but played with a slightly drawn handbrake, the band offers an interesting mixture, which rarely becomes boring. The comment with the brake should be explained. Soul Devour play fast music or better said they have certain fast segments in their music, but they like to take the tempo back a bit again and again. Endless and monotonous blasts is not what they have in mind. There is a touch of progressiveness in the arrangements and the variation in the speed is one aspect in favour of this release.

Next time the bass should be given more room and power. Somehow this album needed this instrument in order to give it more depth. So, while the production was well executed and leaves little to be desired, this one aspect could have been done better. Apocalyptic Anti-Human Annihilation is a pretty good listening nonetheless, especially as it does not offer a mere copy the old-school formula but some sort of a well performed mixture of different influences. You should really give it a try.

Summary:

No, I will do not do this. I will not write endless praises about how the band evolved since their demo, but the steps the band took since point towards the right direction. Looking back at the demo, then my initial praises might have exaggerated its quality a bit, but the music on the latest output are most certainly of a kind that is not only worth to be recommended but also to listened to now and then; I am quite shifty in my tastes and preferences when it comes to music and this is what you should have in the back of your head while reading the last comment. I wonder how this band will sound like in five years or so, but should Soul Devour be able to preserve some of the qualities of their early releases, then their music might be of a kind to keep an eye on. As usual: nothing is certain and the future is a tale that waits to be told.

On a side-note:

Only recently Soul Devour released a split album with the band Crown of Horns – entitled: **Glorification ov War, Death & Destruction** – via Ars Funeris Records.

The interview

Hailz! Please introduce your band, where you live, the members and reasons for your band name.

Mightiest hails to you german metalheads!! we are SOUL DEVOUR from singapore , i am DEVoured on guitars, bass and growls, and my 2 warlords DAEMONOZ is on guitars and shrieks, and IBLIS on drums. we chose the name SOUL DEVOUR because it reflects the basic procedure when death occurs, also that it is the actual meaning of life (which is to die!), and it is a process we'd like all humans to feel!!

Why death metal? What does this genre mean to you and why did you choose it above others?

Well my friend, i have been fascinated by death metal since i was young, and i feel it is the genre most complicated! death metal is in the blood and veins i'd say! though my bandmates DAEMONOZ and IBLIS were influenced by black-death metal, i chose death metal because the genre is more complex and due to that it came first before black metal! And i did not choose thrash metal because we want something not just about thrashy riffs but more than that. but above all, it is the extremity in music and old-skul image that bewildered us! praise the 80's era! hails thrash/death/black metal!

When did you start listening to metal and when playing an instrument?

Me? i listen to it since i was 12 years old and i still remembered the first death metal song i listened to is deicide's dead by dawn! i was surprised by the extreme level of it; the drums were like machine guns and the vocals all, then after that, DEATH METAL became my true inner self hahahaha! and i started playing instruments when i was 16, yes i wouldn't lie about that. picked a guitar and you know catch some deicide riffs and all hahaha!

How did the band Soul Devour start? How did the members met first and decided to found a band?

Well i have had a band since i was 13 (2001), but it never came to what i envisioned, so during 2005, i met DAEMONOZ at our workplace, and saw him wearing a DEATH t-shirt! we became friends and it seemed that we have the same interest in death metal, and i figure out, why not start a new band? at the same time i also met YAS (The one playing drums in our demo) at the same workplace and took him in to play drums. yes, that is soul devour back then! then iblis came in as a new drummer this year and hope all will go well for our future releases!

How does the song-writing take place? Do you write them together as a band or separate from each other? What are your influences for the music and for the lyrics?

As for the demo, the 1st song necroshadow was composed when i was 14 hahahaha! an old song brought forward to our demo. songs composed were based on songs i listen to and blends in the influence i had, you know inspired by catchy riffs and riffs i

made when playing guitar. most music were composed by me, but the song screams of mercy were created by me and DAEMONOZ. we figure out riffs during sessions and blend in together and that is the final product.

well my influences is mainly from Death (symbolic) cannibal corpse (how i love the album butchered at birth!) deicide (legion!), obituary(slowly we rot!), immolation, morbid angel(altars of madness!), hate eternal, krisiun, malevolent creation and many more old skul death metal bands to name! those were the bands i listen to at that point of time and in fact up until now!

lyric-wise is mainly about our anger towards human race, how humans slowly self-destruct the earth and kill each other for their selfish desires and such.. disgust by the existence of humans and hatred drives our mood for writing lyrics!

Your music is rather complex arranged, have nice riffs and are quite catchy... but a bit too short; all songs on the first edition of the first demo are below three minutes. Will the songs remain short or where do you see Soul Devour progress towards?

Hahaha! thank you for the nice words and honest thoughts! it is true most songs (in fact all!!!) were short in length as it is how i express my music to be like, a straight forward kind of song! but don't you worry, we will not be repeating the same short length music for our next release hahahah! i took every comment into account and i will improve for times to come. do wait for the next release maybe early 2010 and find out!

You have a cover version of Death's Crystal Mountain on the first of your debut demo and the track 'A Skull Full of Maggots' by Cannibal Corpse on the re-release by Infernal Kaos Productions. Why these tracks in particular and why these band? What do they mean to you?

Crystal mountain was DAEMONOZ'S favorite song and he worships chuck as the father of death metal. so why not paying tribute to him? that is the main reason why we covered crystal mountain, old-skul death metal is what we dig into. as for the song a skull full of maggots, it it our first song that we practiced after soul devour is formed! so to preserve those memoirs why not we put in a re-release version? hahaha!

Both songs, see above, are a little bit older. Do you prefer 'old-school' death metal over new one? Or do you not care as long as the music is heavy as fuck and well played?

Yes! old-school death metal is what we portray! if not for old-school bands, death metal will not flourish as it is now! most young people nowadays listen to the techy-type of death metal and be proud of it! but when asked about chuck schuldiner, tray azagthoth, pete sandoval and all old school shit i bet you they don't know! how ignorant! to tell you the truth we are not proud of too-technical bands nowadays, you know bands trying to show their talents and stupid emo trendy shitload image... we prefer the real brutality, the original death metal, old school riffs that is headbangy and all!! fuck trendy wannabe metal bands!

Your first demo was re-released on CD (Infernal Kaos Productions) and on tape(Evil Spirit D.I.Y. Prod.). Please tell us if you prefer any of these formats; vinyl over tape over CD for instance.

The old school way will be of course those formats you stated! we prefer it all! how i wish one day we have a vinyl of soul devour! will work on that in the future there my friend! fuck mp3 downloaders hehehehe!!

Some words on your side-projects, if you do not mind. What would their style be, are they active, new releases forthcoming?

Well i have some side project bands in the process.i will update you if it is all set and ready to go! one band is an old-skul death metal project together with my friend KAI from VRYKOLAKAS (an old-skul band influenced mainly on incantation), and another is the old school black death metal band ADOKHSINY comprised of international musicians, waxs witchhell from DEMONICAL CRISIS ASSEMBLY(malaysia)on drums, Tormenized from IN TORMENT(malaysia) on guitars, and the holder of infernal kaos productions (korea) Jeff as vocalist. i am on bass and guitar duties. will release something these coming months!

Tell us something about your local scene? Is it striving? Are there a lot of young skilled underground bands (which?) and is it possible for you to attain many metal concerts there? Did you have had the chance to play live already? If so, please share with us your experience.

The local scene? i can't say much... honestly all i can say is that most bands were not our cup of tea. there are less old-skul death metal bands now i'd say. but during those old times in singapore were the scene flourishing with old school image! all hails mighty IMPIETY and ABHORER!

we did performed live in singapore, the first live ever,and a memorable one for us too! i can still remember performing first time live, it went well but my vocals were not how i want it to be haha.. but anyway, nothing went wrong and it went good!

Are there any plans for the future recordings already?

yes, end of 2009 we will be recording for our next full length. early 2010 then soul devour will release our first full-length! and we want you to have the honor of reviewing us!

How can people reach you?

Please do send comments to my personal e-mail:

morbid_necrosadist@hotmail.com
or band e-mail
soul_devour@hotmail.com
or log on to our myspace!
www.mysoace.com/souldevoursg
i'll be the one in charge so feel free to do so!

Some final words please.

My final words: SOUL DEVOUR'S GRATITUDE TO ALL THRASH/DEATH/BLACK METALHEADS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE FOR THE SUPPORT! NOTHING IS AS BRUTAL AS THE SUPPORT FROM YOU GUYS! ETERNAL CONDEMNATION TO TRENDY WANNABE METAL BANDS AND MASSIVE FUCK OFF TO SELF PROCLAIMING POSERS!!!!

that is all i guess. and thank u so much for having us here with your zine, i really appreciate it! eternal friends we shall be!!! AVE SATHANAS!

(Note from the editor: some smaller corrections – capitalizations of the first word of the answers – were done. The rest is left the way I received it.)



A Summer Evening Churchyard

Lechlade, Gloucestershire

The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of
Day :
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men.
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway.
Responding to the charm with its own
mystery'.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aëreal Pile ! whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells.
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living
things around.
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night :
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from
human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did
keep.

P. B. Shelley



The review section:

The big sleep in search of Hades – Ownland

(Spain; Experimental, Rock, Metal)

13 Tracks (MP3 – self-released / Jamendo) -_-_- (65:35)

http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/The_big_sleep_in_search_of_hades; <http://www.myspace.com/tbigsleeping>

Not very long ago I read the novel **The Big Sleep** by **Raymond Chandler** and when looking at the band's name, I tried to imagine how this search for Hades would actually look like. The characters in his writings are generally of a kind whose existence tends to hang in the balance and it should not surprise to see a good amount of them bite the dust in the course of the books; often as a result of the main characters' – Philip Marlowe by name – tendency to get in messy situations, which he rather tries to solve by himself and only with the help of the 'official' (police) forces, when he cannot help it anymore. Those who are rather fond of films, should try to get the Humphrey Bogart versions.

Hades, though, is the place of the dead in the Greek mythology. Moreover, it is also the name of the God, the ruler of this dark and sinister place. Being a merciless character, persuasions were a hopeless attempt; except for **Orpheus** of course, whose music was able to soften the bitter and dark heart of his; do I really have to mention the name of the myth? So, when you combine these two aspects together, then you get a pretty interesting line of reasoning.

The big sleep in search of Hades... you see how the dubious persons of Chandler's writing are heading for a deadly end, try to challenge the borders of reality and unmerciful reaper; neatly described in **Camus'** novel **The Plague**. They walk on the thin line between life and death, always close to the one God, whose power it would be to take them down into a world where light and absolutism are rare.



My two cents of insanity...

Ownland might be described as a certain facet or aspect or part of this eternal (?), never ending struggle. The issue of retaining one's property or place in the outer world, the uncertainty of stability in an ever-changing environment. To have such experimental music is not only natural, it is mandatory. What else beside affluence in the concept could be appropriate to reflect the facets of such a problem? The term 'search' has been left out in the discussion above, but this is what the music is all about: the band wanders through different stages and moods and wants to take the listener on this trip.

The music is pretty experimental and each of the compositions offers something different from the preceding one. While the opener is surprisingly long, others seem to last no longer than a blink of an eye; in comparison. Extreme in a variety of aspects is the music of this Spanish band and the oeuvre ranges from metal over post-rock over ambient. It

is really difficult to nail the band to a particular style or sound, because like a shape-shifter – ever played **Baldur's Gate** – uncertainty from a viewers perspective seems to blur the perception of the reality and the information overkill does its own part to confuse this person. Maybe this is the weakness of this release. What does it mean? What the overall meaning behind it all and how does everything fit together? Like a somnambulant you wander through a world which is unknown to you, but it is difficult if not impossible to take anything with you. The listener has no lyrics and the download version has also no additional information on the release. Yes, the song titles give a vague indication of where the road will go, but only a vague one and as the vocals cannot be understood all the time, there is nothing to give you a guiding hand. I do not want an explanation, because this unravelling of the mysteries is always the interesting thing about art, but some hints would be really welcome. Maybe the physical version of this CD has them.

Well, I could write some additional paragraphs on the music, but I have the feeling that it would be lost energy. Too thick are the layers surrounding this release. Too broad is the attempt and too complex the topic that me, a sole reviewer with none additional sources of information at hand, would be able to reach the conceptual bottom of this release. So, there is nothing left for me to do as give a somehow ambivalent recommendation. Give this release a try. It is intense, confusing and deep; it is well performed, crafted and arranged ... it is all this ... but it is also tough stuff, which might need a lot of time to not only impress the listener but to give to this person an idea of what this album is all about.

In the big sleep you wander down into the Hades. What you find there? Nothing but a world whose mysteries wait for someone to unravel them. A daunting task ... a daunting task indeed.

A Dream of Poe – Lady Shalott (2010)

(Portugal; Gothic/Doom Metal)

5 Tracks (MP3 – self-released) - _ _ - (36:14)

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

This band **A Dream of Poe** is only one in a number of incidents which confronted me with the American poet **Edgar Allen Poe** over the course of the last few weeks. In the previous issue I added a piece of him to my magazine and on the Internet site of the Poetry Foundation I stumbled over a piece of Abigail Deutsch. In it she wrote about a 2009 funeral to honour his birth – 200 years ago – as well as his death – 160 years ago. Baltimore's Westminster Church was the place it took place of course and it is an interesting reading; link provided at the end of this review; (1)

Lady Shalott would be the 2010 release of the Portuguese doom/gothic band A Dream of Poe. Actually, the title refers to another writer: **Lord Alfred Tennyson**; Poe discusses his writings and his attitude towards him in the *Democratic Review of December 1844*. Actually, he praises his works quite a lot, which you can see from the following excerpt:

I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets. [...]

There are passages in his works which rivet a conviction I had long entertained, that the indefinite is an element in the true poesis. Why do some persons fatigue themselves in attempts to unravel such fantasy-pieces as the "Lady of Shalott"? As well unweave the "ventum textilem." If the author did not deliberately propose to himself a suggestive indefinitiveness of meaning with the view of bringing about a definitiveness of vague and therefore of spiritual effect—this, at least, arose from the silent analytical promptings of that poetic genius which, in its supreme development, embodies all orders of intellectual capacity.

[...]

Tennyson's shorter pieces abound in minute rhythmical lapses sufficient to assure me that—in common with all poets living or dead—he has neglected to make precise investigation of the principles of metre; but, on the other hand, so perfect is his rhythmical instinct in general that, like the present Viscount Canterbury, he seems to see with his ear.

Source: <http://books.eserver.org/fiction/poe/marginalia.html>

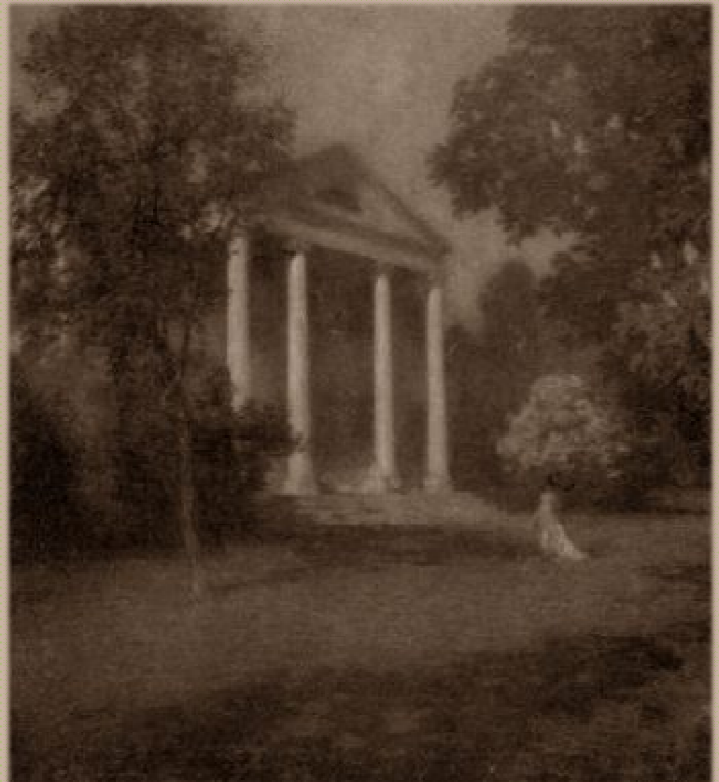
Back on the topic, the title song does not recite the original text but has paraphrased passages; visit the link below to access both versions of Lady Shalott (2). With generally slow and quite atmospheric music the band is able to create quite a chilling and intense atmosphere. This impression is further fostered by the clean vocals, whose part is accompanied by growls, yet the former style has a deeper and more profound impact on how the art or concept is perceived. The electric guitars are heavy, while at the beginning of the opener in the background an additional one – undistorted and rather calm – works as a counter-point; it appears later again solo and works as a transitional piece.

Once also the shorter version of the title track is over, the music offers a **Cure** cover – If only we could sleep. If you compare it with the original, then you will notice the huge difference between them. The hypnotic and surreal atmosphere was replaced by an intense and heavy sound. It may be a matter of personal preferences whether someone likes this or not.

A Dream of Poe play doom metal and they are pretty good at it. Despite a too large amount of vocals at several points and the oddity to find one track twice – the second time three minutes less in length – the music would be of a kind to satisfy a lot of doom metal fans. The vocalist knows how to use his voice the riffs are pretty cool and also the song-writing leaves little to be desired. Heavy, powerful, catchy and well balanced music has found its way on Lady Shalott. Recommended.

1: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/journal/article.html?id=238758>

2: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/shalcomb.htm>



Ater – Arcane Terre (2007)

(Italy; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (MP3 – self-released) - _ _ - (27:26)

<http://www.myspace.com/aterblackmetal>; [http://www.jamendo.com/en/artist/Ater_\(2\)](http://www.jamendo.com/en/artist/Ater_(2))

An ambitious release; this is what this **Arcane Terre** is all about. As it is the first recording of this band, you can expect it to have the obvious and all too common flaws in the music: balancing issues, raw sound and also conceptual aspects. The first can be discovered throughout the entire release – I do not want to go into details, just listen to the music yourself – , the second one seems to be the choice of the band in terms of the music and the third is something I am annoyed by at times: too many vocals.

Even though it was not overdone on this demo, there are moments in which the texts were expressed in such a fashion as to be tiring. So, despite the attempt to vary the style in which these are expressed, it is not always convincing. The way everything had been arranged together simply leaves a lot to be desired. One might appreciate some moments, but from a broader perspective one simply as to point to the following: the band simply feels to comfortable in a done to death concept and avoids anything outside of it that would help to enrich their music nicely.

So, this is underground black metal. If you are familiar with the Italian band **The True Endless** – rather old-school influences black metal –, then take their art but on a lower level. Arcane Terre is not bad, but you might find it tiring to listen to. Even though the music has its moments once the band reaches for faster regions, the raw production, the absence of a second guitar and the inability of the vocals to not annoy me, make it difficult if not impossible to listen to this demo.

Thakandar – Unleashed (2009)

(Germany; Black/Death Metal)

3 Tracks (MP3 – self-released) - - - (12:46)

<http://www.jamendo.com/en/artist/Thakandar>; <http://www.thakandar.de/>

Unleashed on this demo is nothing but the existence of this German band **Thakandar**. According to Metal Psalter the name of the band was taken from the **Wheel of Time** novels and refers to “*a completely lifeless valley covered with fog*”. Well, the choice could have been a worse and just to make one thing clear right from the start, despite this pretty depressive name, the band does not attempt to express such through their art.

Well, I have listened to first demos whose quality had been much worse. Thakandar's art has at least some decent production and sound, even though it is too oriented on mainstream music and lacks therefore identity. Speaking of identity, the band sticks to a quite peculiar type of black/death metal. A mixture of slower and faster passages with vocals whose part tries to avoid the typical timing; the texts are expressed in a slow and somehow intense fashion; in a style which is supposed to sound dark as well as cool, but can fail easily once it is overdone.



Aside from this the music is pretty basic stuff and reminds me a bit on **Non Serviam** and other bands from this period; a bit heavier and a larger focus on the death metal. A bit annoying is the reliance on tremolo-picking as well as the absence of surprising elements or an idea with which the band would break out of the slightly monotony of their music. You can listen and enjoy these three compositions, but do not expect to be fascinated by them over a longer period of time. Well crafted music with a bit too much predictability.

Silence Under Scaffold - Cemetary Gates

(Germany; Dark Ambient, Industrial)

6 Tracks (MP3 – self-released) - - - (32:21)

http://www.jamendo.com/en/artist/silence_under_scaffold; <http://www.silenceunderscaffold.de.vu/>

Yes, I admit it, I have a certain somehow pathological fixation on cover artworks. They are to me some sort of a fixation point and when I spot something that well crafted or designed, then the chances are pretty high that the music will be something I will take a spin of; even if the genre might be a little bit outside of what I normally listen to. Silence Under Scaffold's Cemetary Gates is such an example. This tree on the cover and the dark as well as gloomy style in which it is presented aroused my curiosity. Moreover, a short glance on the tags sparked further interest in it: dark ambient; industrial; funeral; monotonous. Well, if you have some sense of the darker arts, then you will most certainly get an idea of what might await you on this release. But is the band able to stand up to this and deliver what the brain might anticipate already?

First of all, the music is quite intense; not over the whole length, but at certain moments. The first two aspects – see the tags above – describe the music quite appropriate. You have a dense noise-like layer in the background, while on top of it industrial sounds were added in order to create a more intense atmosphere as well as to distract from the monotonous facets. Apocalyptic, this would be a phrase that comes to the mind while listening to the music. This density in the arrangements at times, the throbbing or oscillating of the drone motive, this haunting minimalism ... it really grabs you if you have a certain fancy for this type of music. Aside from this the following aspect should be discussed a bit: in terms of intensity and depth the tracks switch in the level of execution. While the first part of the album – tracks 1-3 – are quite powerful in their execution, the succeeding ones are a bit calmer and less offensive. Moreover, when you listen to the music via headphones, then you will recognize a slight imbalance on the speakers; the right one has more power than the left.

I would see this release as a counter-point to the minimalism of bands like Cities Last Broadcast or a lot of stuff released under the drone as well as the dark ambient banner at the Internet Archive. SUS play music in a style some might perceive as a hit in the face. Nevertheless a bit more of transparency would be much appreciated, but I am able to enjoy this piece of music despite this

flaw. I like the noisiness, especially of the first three tracks and in particular of the second one. If you like intense dark ambient with a good amount of industrial elements in it, then this might be something you will thoroughly enjoy.

How to listen to this release:

Not via headphones! I cannot emphasise this too much ... listen on your normal stereo system and make sure to have a good amount of bass on. Let the earth tremble, let the buildings crumble, let them all fall to the ground ...

Note:

I want to thank the person behind his band for making the music available on such a short notice on a higher quality than I would have been able to obtain via any download I found. Very much appreciated!



Twilight Calm

Oh, pleasant eventide !
Clouds on the western side
Grow grey and greyer hiding the warm sun :
The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood :
The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
But lazily ; pauses ; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the moon :
The grasshoppers are still ; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad lime ;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home :
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats ; and there
The owl opens broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey ; the bat wakes ; and the shell-less
snail
Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Hark ! that 's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was
young :
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain
The passion of her strain ;
And yet we little understand or know :
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein ?

In separate herds the deer
Lie ; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn :
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes ;
The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck :
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly : how the dews fall
damp !
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her
lamp
Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East :
For night has come ; and the great calm has
ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

C. G. Rossetti

Silem – Winter Landscapes (2002/2010)

(Black Metal, Industrial, Noise; Italy)

4 Tracks (MP3 – netlabel – Join this order) - _ - _ - (18:37)

<http://www.jamendo.com/en/artist/Silem>; <http://www.myspace.com/jointhisorder>

What is this? When I downloaded this demo from **Jamendo**, I expected not much of it, but from second one the band was able to catch my attention. Why? Well, this is fast and aggressive black metal of a slightly different sort. Some weird noise, ambient and industrial parts had been woven into the music and a done to death approach is able to create some amount of fascination. Yes, nothing new here; nothing new at all. But guess what, **Silem** got their shit together and progress in terms of a music in a region I have some fascination for: black metal meets noise.

Black abyss my spirit would be the opener of *Winter Landscapes* and while other artists would associate something bleak and desolate with such a metaphor, this band fires barrage after barrage. Just listen at the first second of this track. Would you really expect such? Organs meet white noise and this combination progresses later into some **Setherial** – Hell Eternal – or **Dark Funeral** influenced music. Fast, aggressive, characteristic guitar leads – see: *Vobiscum Satanas* – can be found throughout the entire demo and would these be the sole facets of this release, the you could pretty much ignore it. No, the horse is dead, so please try to suppress your necromantic feelings.

Some words should be spent on the non-metal parts. Unlike in the releases of **Rotorvator** or **Demetrius Grave**, on Silem's debut these were not neatly woven into the concept, but rather appear a bit randomly and surprisingly outside of what a normal listener would expect. You can find these at the beginning, maybe somewhere in between and certainly towards the end. Yet, to describe the way they had been added as convincing would be a bit far from the truth. A miss some sort of a red line ... but as this is the first demo, such might be expected.

This is a good and interesting demo. Even though the idea of combining black metal with influences from other genres is not new and also not executed in an entirely convincing way, the performance is still as such as to motivate the listener to take some additional spins. A bit more experimenting, a bit more daring in the approach and the music could become interesting indeed.



Janne Hanhisuanto – Icescapes (2010)

(Finland; Dark Ambient, Experimental)

8 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel – Earth Mantra Netlabel) - _ - _ - (44:16)

<http://www.archive.org/details/earman131>

Ice and snow are those aspects of my childhood that I like to refer to as precious and special. I liked to run around in the snow in the winter; yes, at the coast of northern Germany, we had winters with a lot of these white and cold stuff; a lot of frozen rivers and it was a jolly to run over the icy drains or canals. Today, such is hardly possible anymore. Climate Chance has shifted the temperature to higher levels and the days of cold winters are almost gone entirely. It is a pity. When writing these lines the summer already unleashes its horrible and disgusting warmth again, so by listening to these minimalist tunes of the Finnish composer **Janne Hanhisuanto** memories of better days of the year are awoken somehow.

The music is generally quite minimalist in terms of the 'melody line'. Complexity does not seem to be an aspect this band really wants to dig too deep into and accordingly was the focus set on the atmosphere. Ambient textures, accompanied by guitars, piano and also some electronic beats are the elements used for the *Icescapes* recordings. Yes, the approach is by no means generic, but those aforementioned facets do not appear in every track and not all at once. A bit of this and a bit of that; sometimes the emphasis more on the former, then on the latter, then something different. Constant in some respect is the calmness and the slowness in which the music progresses. The atmosphere is the important aspect of this release and even though the sadness or the loneliness of the 'icescapes' is expressed properly, the Finnish artists did not stop there. Beats create a welcome counterpoint and give hints on what ice and snow can also mean to some: joy and fun. So, the minimalism was broken up a bit... This is something not too far

away from space ambient – see the Internet Archive – but Janne Hanhisuanto attempted to move slightly towards artists like Jääportit.

It is somehow sad to see/hear that the release varies in a bit in quality. For some reason I cannot stand Movement 4 and its piano oriented style. Maybe I put a too large emphasis on the flow and see in the play of this instrument an intrusion of a certain atmosphere I like to preserve somehow; keep pristine and untouched. Even though in Movement 6 some beat like motive appears and disrupts the tensions created earlier, I perceive it on a different level and I am not that annoyed as by the other aforementioned composition.

When you take a look at the title and also on the cover artwork, then you might imagine a certain type of music, which is then varied to a certain degree in order to avoid monotony. Snow, ice and winter is presented here from a broader point of view and even though the overall direction can clearly be identified, the actual idea behind some of the compositions might surprise some. Those cold realms and cold days are not always depressing. There is more to them and some facets were explored with this release.

MZ-N710 – Paysages Industriels

(France; Field Recordings)

18 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel – Earsheltering) -_-_- (47:29)

<http://www.archive.org/details/earS029>

Similar to the preceding issue of this magazine, also this one comes with a review on a field-recording album. I like to these sound fragments of reality and how they are arranged together. The multitude of sounds and noises, all those tiny bits from different places, obscure machines and abandoned locations, let your thought drift away into a dream world. A world outside of the common one. A world bereft of all the visual images, you normally would have to rely on. **MZ-N710** has recorded the sound of trains as well as of mills and crafted eighteen compositions out of these.

Being rather short in length and without any other manipulation – ambient or drone textures for instance – the listener is thrown into a world of minimalism. Even though the first tracks have some human voices in the background, the latter ones tend to consist of only a few elements and give hardly any indication on where they have been taken, left alone what the original source of the noise could be. A somehow common ‘feature’ is the monotony or better said constancy with which the sound appear. Therefore, it is only natural to try to find some sort of rhythm or texture in the industrial sounds and not surprisingly such so appear. Yet while hidden and because it is necessary to give the ears some amount of time to get used to the environment presented in each of the compositions, patience is needed to dig deep into this very limited ‘audio world’. It should be noted though that the horns of the trains fall out of this category and provide the listener with a neat and, at least to me, fascinating glimpse of the world of old machinery. In Germany we have a series of documentaries called **Eisenbahn-Romantik** (1) – English: railway romance (literally) – and even though I have seen several of these I never really focused on the sounds of the trains or engines. **Paysages Industriels** was able to show me that there is more to them that there design and their history. They have a distinct sound and this aspect might get neglected or ignored at times.

Sadly, the recording is not consistent in terms of the quality. The first track for instance was not recorded in an optimal way as the volume shots up while the train blows up the horn. Not surprisingly the noise level reached a peak and shot off the limit; created some crackling sound and fragments in the flow of the sound. Aside from this, some of the tracks a show a bit too much of a resemblance. Some tracks are also a bit too short.

Nevertheless, some nice sounds and noises can be found on this recording. If you ignore the aforementioned flaw a bit and have a fancy for ‘industrial’ – human artefacts – and what can be made out of them. The focus is rather narrow here, but as the execution appears on a good level, it is possible to find some beauty in Paysages Industriels. Additional manipulation would have brought the field recordings on a higher level, but this was not the intention of the artist behind this project.

1: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisenbahn-Romantik>



And the Willow Weeps – Elegy (Collateral Murder) (2010)

(Germany; ambient, noise, experimental)

1 Track (MP3 – self-released) -_-_- (14:40)

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

The first thing that came to my mind when stumbling about this track was the **Guernica** (painting) by **Picasso** and other ones by painters of the **Expressionism**, which dealt with WWI. This attempts to deal with the horrors of war, death and destruction and to express it somehow through art.

Collateral Murder documents the slaying of several civilians in Baghdad, including two members of the Reuters news staff. In 2010 a video was released by **Wikileaks**, in which the killing was documented. It sparked international outrage, due to the circumstances in which the deaths occurred and how the helicopter crew reacted during the incident. Contrary to early statements by the Pentagon, the helicopter crew had not been attacked by the persons on the ground and used their firepower therefore not as a response to a threat or a shooting. A website made two versions of the video – an edited and a full version – available to the public:

<http://www.collateralmurder.com/>

Elegy (Collateral Murder) is the first release by the German band **And the Willow Weeps**. In style and concept the short version of the video was used – the audio part was taken – and around it the music had been written. So, while there is the nearly constant voices of the several American soldiers, instruments create a counter-point and an atmosphere. These would be pretty minimalist and show a good amount of influences from the post-rock genre. Additional ones would be sound or noise fragments and it would be up to them to create some sort of a background texture. So, the music is as such: an ambient introduction progresses later into the play of an acoustic guitar. Sadness or a general mood of depression is created through this. The sounds were created as such as to support the certain passages or moments in the 'video' – when the shootings take place for instance.

It is a form of manipulation and also a certain perspective is transported through the arrangements. When listening to the track I wondered whether a different interpretation would have also been possible. Imagine something cheering and positive, something that in mood and atmosphere would be on the other end of the scale. Is there a chance to somehow mock the atrocities of the American soldiers through some sort of pop or rock song and what kind of emotion could be created on the site of the listener through such an approach?

Anyway, it is good to see a artist respond to what happened in Iraq and to help deal with it through some form of art. I cannot say I am entirely convinced of the performance – there are some odd crackling noises at some point of the track – and at times I find the calmness a bit too tiring, but the way it was deal with seems quite appropriate nonetheless. I wonder whether And the Willow Weeps will take on other incidents as well on future albums.

Nernes / Skagen – Montreal (live) (2010)

(Norway; Drone, Doom, Noise)

1 Track (MP3 – netlabel -- Drowning) -_-_- (32:15)

<http://www.myspace.com/conceptvirus>; <http://drowning.cc>

I hate name droppings. I really hate it. When you read a review and the writer simply throws the name of some bands around, then those familiar with the genre might be able to get some of this intention, but anyone else will just look at bewildered at this example for bad writing. When you compare an album to **Motörhead**, then every metalhead will get the idea and understand how it is meant, but as other artists tend to change their style and concept over the years, then what good is to come of this word ghetto? Think about it; how would you interpret such a comparison: sounds like Emperor or similar to **Satyricon**. Do we really live in a time of limited internet or web space?

I discovered the release by **Nernes / Skagen** only recently and it was the cover artwork, which caught my attention. Obviously inspired by the black metal scene, I hoped to find something of the sort in the music, but it took not very long to unravel the mystery of this recording. Drone, doom, noise ... these are the elements used the Norwegian bands and they combined them in a quite long live session. The emphasis lies on the guitar and if there is one aspect that will be able to stick into the head, then it is the endlessly and monotonous play of the guitar. Actually, I am a bit reminded on the worst examples of the depressive black metal branch: keep it minimalist, limit variation and repeat everything over excess. Well, Nernes / Skagen tried to deal with the latter aspect by using noise samples or fragments over the course of the track. This way, the limited and shallowness of the concept was attempted to be avoided; but with limited success to be frank. You never get the impression the band would be able to break out of their self-limitation and at least try to create a deeper and fascinating atmosphere. Yes, drone is often crafted this way, but this vague argument should not be used as an excuse for the pretty weak performance of the band.

Well, this is a live recording and the mix lacks the transparency as well as the balancing of the debut studio album. So, to see the atmosphere transported in a similar fashion is not an easy task and also Nernes / Skagen face some difficulties in getting their music across. Thirty-two minutes is this one track long and it is quite boring at times, due to the lack of variation and absence additional elements. There is always the guitar in the background, playing a stupendously monotonous progression of chords. Really, do not listen to the music after a good day's work... you might fall asleep.

Index pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924032185989>

<http://www.archive.org/details/imaginationinlan00hame>

<http://www.archive.org/details/landscapepaintin00greerich>

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

<http://www.archive.org/details/irishlifelandsca00walk>

Index texts:

<http://www.archive.org/details/englishlandscape00bari>

<http://www.archive.org/details/landscapepaintin00greerich>

Outlook:

A discussion of the cover versions of Venom's track Black Metal

A view on the Constant series

Some essays

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