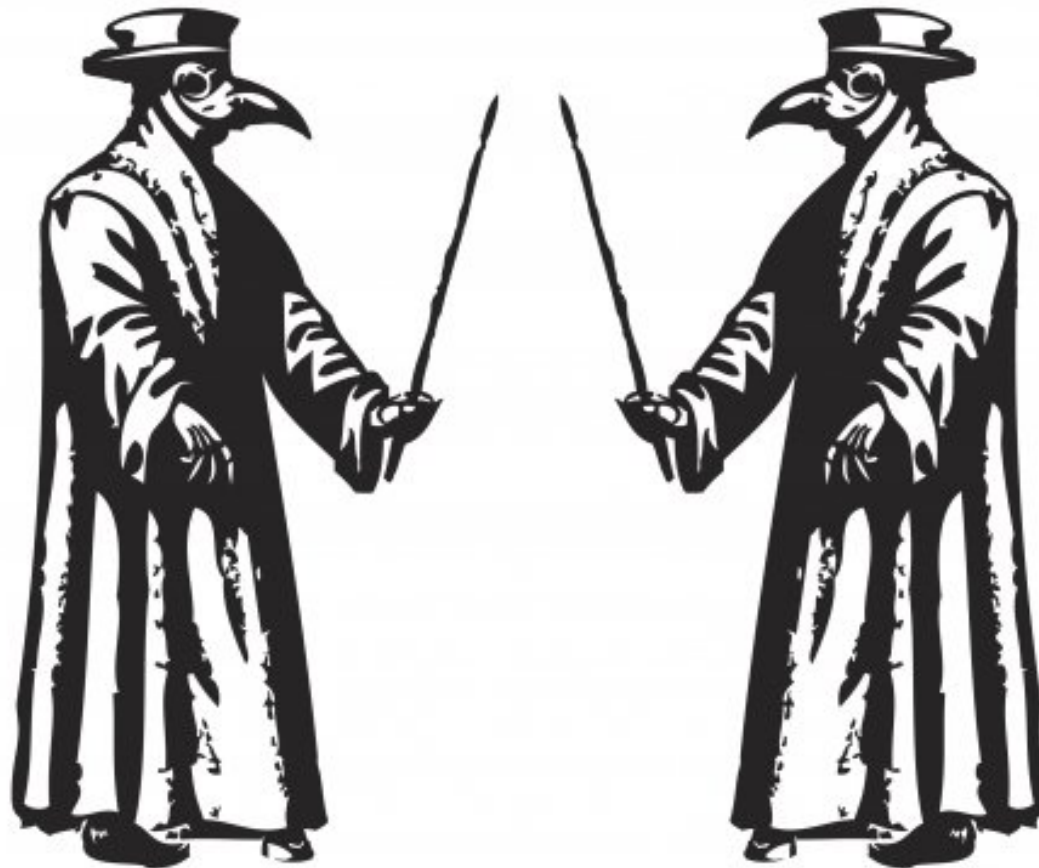


BLACK DEATH

SYDNEY'S UNDERGROUND METAL FANZINE



SPREADING THE DISEASE SINCE 2007

HEAVY METAL UNIVERSE - UNITED AS ONE, NO ROOM FOR INTOLERANCE!!!

MALTA REPORT

Blacktown. The best place in Sydney to meet the Maltese, sadly keeping up their post-war 1950s traditions when the rest of their children and Malta nowadays does not!!! Of course moving on with times has meant that like all countries worldwide, the little island south of Italy known as Malta has also its own document of metal pursuits.

With Aussie heavyweights **MORTAL SIN** and cherished metal export **ALCHEMIST** both bearing Maltese members up their fold, and on the other hand Malta itself offering acts like **BEHEADED** and **FORSAKEN** respectively headlining German metal festivals like Fuck the Commerce and Doom Shall Rise, the metal kindred from Malta, although still minimally exposed to an international level, keep burning the flame it has for so long been burning.

Back in the 80s when hard and glam rock prevailed the isle, bands like **MORTUARY**, **KREMATION** and **VANDALS** tried to push the boundaries one step further by introducing thrash, to be followed some years later by a 2nd wave of bands brushed up with a quest for technique when death metal was the epicentre of the world's tape-trading circles. Such were **BIBLICAL INFAMY** (lyrically also Malta's first black metal act), thrash/death supremists **SEGREGATION**, **PSYCHOTIC IMPULSE** (later developing as **BEHEADED**), and my own avant-gardemetal act **SCEPTOCRYPT**.

To start off here is a recount of all bands that are no more but who definitely have contributed to metal's development over the last 15-20 years.

ACHIRAL: The most honest representation of the good old thrash metal and early death metal days. After releasing an EP *Wander Ignite* and sweeping the pits for years on end, the band sadly put their act to lay.

ARCHEAN HARMONY: A black metal band with an own touch. Mystical and keyboard oriented as much as the best of the Greek black metal lot, yet boasting a technical guitar player whose works elevated their sound to its own unique level. Releasing *Nihilist Mundane Soul* in 2000, they vanished soon after leaving the world with this so precious of a gem. Google up their name to come across their lots of reviews/interviews in hope of understanding their sound.

OBLIQUE VISIONS: Excellent doom/death ala early male-wal fronted *THE GATHERING*, sadly folded due to members pursuing different avenues in their respective lives, one of them actually living in Sydney's own Blue Mountains.

DISINTERRED: The perfect example of playing music for yourself and not the fans. They never believed in promoting the band, they just used to go on stage, play their early *AUTOPSY* influenced gore death metal, and give fuck all about anything else

SEQUELA: From *DISINTERRED*'s drummer, as long as it lasted *SEQUELA* walked its way from a hypnotic electronic project to an all-out menace dance of industrial breakbeats talking about human abduction. Unfortunately no more as the man upstairs abducted its own creator.

ERIE OBELISK: The name stood for itself. Each time they took the stage with their predominantly non-metal image, it seemed like 4 escaped lunatics, ...and indeed the sound spoke the image as they came across as a spooky Mr Bungle with much less technique yet much more vigour. Featuring *DISINTERRED*'s keyboard player and one good bassist from short-lived doom/death stalwarts *UNKNOWN SERENITY*, shows were few but killer!!!

ORBUS VITAE: Band of ex-*FORSAKEN* guitarist Kay, with members who later joined *OBLIQUE VISIONS* and *WEEPING SILENCE*, this band seemed like the school of doom/death metal. Their less retro- but more forward-thinking sound inspired countless bands in Malta to start merging doom with death for years to follow.

NO NAME YET: A moshcorer's living fantasy with live appearances being one hell of a fun time including clubs breakages wherever they played!!! Haha, I still remember *Beast (vox)* going: "Whatever he says, do the opposite" when one organizer once tried to calm down the crowd J Only one recorded testament on the

Core of Creation (Storm Records), but as this song was so pro-pomo and con-censorship, it fastly became a classic!!! *NO NAME YET* were the Anti-band, an epitome of rebellion that characterized the teenage years and memories of many a musician in bands today.

CANNIRIA: Brutal cruncy death metal with some of the remaining members still active in nowadays acts *CORE FREQUENCY* & *ABYSMAL TORMENT*. The name is Maltese for "underground vault".

DREAMSCAPE: Simply over the top! Before they slowed down to answer to their mellow AOR pastures, this band was Malta's closest call to *DREAM THEATRE*!!!

COVENANT: Out of the ashes of *BIBLICAL INFAMY*, picking members from *SCEPTOCRYPT*, *SEGREGATION* and some others, this was *BIBLICAL INFAMY* stripped off their heavy brutality and going so technically *CYNIC*!!! Again short-lived, but managing to keep crowds in awe while active.

REALIDA: The closest to the Bay Area thrash sound Malta had to offer and with one demo out before folding, this trio called it quits when main composer left Malta, the remaining duo teaming up with some *FORSAKEN* members for the short-lived *BORN TOO LATE* doom project. Further on, the drummer joined *SCEPTOCRYPT* and the guitarist *KNOCKTURN ALLEY*, with whom he is still active to date.

STENCH OF NECROPSY: (geocities.com/stenchofnecropsy). The most filthy bedroom project ever, circulated via tape-trading overseas more than sold to locals, *STENCH OF NECROPSY* is to grind NOT what Jenna Jameson is to porn. In the sense that unlike Jenna, *SON* ain't something you dream to lick and cuddle, but rather putrefact and disgusting *IMPETIGO*-induced metal that makes you feel kilt just to own it.

SCEPTOCRYPT: (myspace.com/sceptocrypt). With only a short 5-year lifespan, 2 demo tapes and a couple of tracks on different compilations, this was my main band *SCEPTOCRYPT*. We always welcomed the challenge to redefine our hybrid death/black metal with non-metal influences and cross-language highbrow lyrics, and doing so we garnered positive reviews the world over (including Demo of the Month in Aardshok) as well as interest from musicians, fans and zines out of the metal field. Intrinsic ideas aplenty, our cause seemed too much for the labels back in 1999, when we folded with an unreleased debut album 1:26hrs 7:2mins ...the need to differ) now partly available online.

DYSMENORRHEA: (brutalism.com/dysmenorrhea). My own fun thrash/death/grind side-project with two members from *MARTYRIUM*, and another from *SCEPTOCRYPT*. On one hand lyrically amusing on the verge of a banality we never disowned (think song titles like *Jack* and the Beansperm, or *Bordello of the Undead*), on the other shredding heavy volumes of riff-induced brutality one needs to hear to experience, before folding we managed to wrap an average sounding rehearsal *Bloody Tears of the Big Bad Wolf*, samples of which are audible at myspace.com/dysmenorrhea

Come 2008, and here comes now a recount of the bands that nowadays thrash & bash in the name of extreme metal.

BEHEADED: (beheaded.net). Being the 1st Maltese metal act to secure a record deal with a foreign label, abroad it is their name that is the most synonym with Maltese metal. Their no-hold-bars-outthroat death/grind powered by a one-man-tuned-beast of a drummer never stops short of surprising!!!

X-VANDALS: (myspace.com/xvandals). *VANDALS* (or *X-VANDALS* as they call themselves since reuniting in 2005) owe their inception back to 1985. Their thrash metal meets hardcore has nonetheless inspired a whole scene for years to follow, and their comeback pays its due to their old school fans as much as it continually pulls new fans its way.

FORSAKEN: (forsakenmalta.com). Revered the world over as doom metal's next big thing, *FORSAKEN*'s claim to fame takes them a long road since 1990. Having since played France & Spain (1994), twice the brotherly *Doom Shall Rise* fest in Germany (once as headliners), the *Headbangers Open Air* (2004), *Keep it True* (2005), and *Elements of Rock* (2007).

NORM REJECTION: (normrejection.com). Also a re-united band from the past, Malta's one and only *NORM REJECTION* is a band like no other. With two albums up their fold, I would say their debut demo title caps their style the best - subtly mesmerizing metal!!! A band that back in the day gained more than a handful of good reviews abroad, their reunion delights as much metalheads as punks in Malta. So far their comeback gigs have proved that their fans demand this!!!

MARTYRIUM: (martyrium.net). The much needed hand of Satan in predominantly Christian Malta, MARTYRIUM are best known for supporting *ROTTING CHRIST* in a secret gig in Malta + the extensive 2006 tour of France that followed thereafter. Constantly unrelenting and at no time lacking spite, MARTYRIUM have over the years been THE black metal band on the island. Shows of indecency and of sheer musical bliss, MARTYRIUM's crude black metal, gothic horrordrama, and sexually morbid voices have over the years ensured that one band stands in the face of mediocrity, a definite medium to spit to the sky while showing a middle finger to the system.

APOTHEOSIS: (myspace.com/sauronapothoeisis). Signed to EMPEROR Samoth's Nocturnal Art Productions for two full-lengths, with the 1st being in 2003 and no follow-up since, simply as Sauron (this project's multi-instrumentalist) has never been one to be hasted. Hailing from Malta's sister island Gozo, this is black metal with a call to folk as only the best can produce. Claiming the good old Bathory, Kreator, Sodom, Destruction, Possessed, and early Slayer as musical influences, APOTHEOSIS is as ferocious as can be when it comes to black metal, uncomparable when it comes to folk.

ABYSMAL TORMENT: (abysmaltorment.net). Malta's only contenders to BEHEADED's throne, these youngsters' one intention is to annihilate anything in its way with their dual-vocal low-key death/grind. Their shows always a well-attended brutal slash from start to end, this is brutality at its best no more no less. Guttural maniacal vocal interplays, highly energetic drumming, low-end riffing nothing groundbreaking yet a winning formula when played with the accuracy they do. October/November 2007 sees them live across Europe.

WEEPING SILENCE: (www.weepingsilence.com). Malta's answer to WITHIN TEMPTATION, fronted by a female vocalist to whom many other female-fronted bands look up to. Having chosen to abandon not develop their earlier more morose sound, this new direction sees them sign a recording deal with the Greek label Sleazy Rider.

LITHOMANCY: (lithomancy.net) Due to the fact they never abandoned their Bathory/Venom roots, or as they do not rehearse so regularly since all members are ultra-busy with other bands, or maybe due to the Egyptological reference they have for so many years (pre-NILE) been using but whatever it is, LITHOMANCY have along the years maintained a certain mysticism few, if any, bands in Malta have to their credit. A must to who likes an undercurrent of spooky keyboards haunting his death metal.

ARACHNID: (arachnid-web.net). For years the support band of choice to both leading Maltese metal bands and visiting foreign acts alike, ARACHNID have in the course of same built an own fanbase, also due to releasing 2 CDs. More of a chunk and crunch in a safe mode act as opposed to trying to top the ante, their death metal owes a likeness to early SEPULTURA as much as to more recent CANNIBAL CORPSE.

MEMENTO NOSTRI: (momentonostri.com). Based on the 1566 Great Siege of Malta theme so dear to the Maltese public when the Ottoman Empire tried but failed to take over Malta, this recording project brings together Mark (ex-ARACHNID), Mike (LITHOMANCY vox), Charlie (ex-ACHIRAL bassist) and angelic newcomer Alexia. Only one song online, yet its intensity matches HAGGARD's call to classicism to SEPTIC FLESH's early dreaminess with such ease, that leaving out the narration of one leading Maltese actor collaborating to this project, this is still something so commendable on its own.

THY LEGION: (myspace.com/thylegion). A glimpse at their website all it takes to figure out that THY LEGION's warlike iconography stands for the very purpose that their sound is a black/thrash attack guaranteed. If the frozen sound of early MAYHEM, the thrash breaks of DESTRUCTION, and a rollercoaster rifferama of VITAL REMAINS in between is what you are after, look no further than THY LEGION.

GRIFFIN DEVICE: Out of long extinct slower than death VICTIMS OF CREATION, this reunion sees GD up their ante with stoner and sludge-heavy moments aplenty matching the slower parts off OBITUARY, AUTOPSY & DECOMPOSED. Includes two members of LITHOMANCY.

ANGELCRYPT: (angelcrypt.com). Malta's only power metal band (although they claim to be melodic thrash), with a few releases up their ilk, their latest EP available for free download.

ERYTHURIA: (myspace.com/erythuriametel). Fronted by BEHEADED's vocalist and including some godly skilled musos, ERYTHURIA is a young death/grind act with a miniCD "Annihilate to Repent" launched this October 2007 (supported by PUTRID BIRTH, another young band of the brutal ilk). Besides, ERYTHURIA's drummer and ABYSMAL TORMENT's vox also play in ITEM, a crossover of metalcore and some death metal.

But enough as far as metal bands in Malta are concerned, which at the time of writing might be one band less and two more, due to the usual fact that occurs in each country's scene, that is that old bands fall through while new ones pop out. This final section of this scene report shall now put under its microscope Malta's metal music infrastructure, still a far cry away from modern music meccas like London,

Berlin, Stockholm and New York if you ask me, but nonetheless having its own share of behind-the-scene mechanisms, as I am confident that those of you who have read so far shall continue to inform themselves about herewith.

Back in the early 90s, a number of fanzines like Call of Angels, No Compassion, Metal Manifest and my own Rancid Soup all saw themselves past their debut issue, presenting a variety of bands from BEYOND DAWN to VARATHRON to ANATHEMA alongside Maltese acts. But times change and like most other countries, things have since gone online.

That said, pestilent.net nowadays stands as Malta's undisputed online voice for all that is underground, active also with their own web & flyer design. Covering a more general spectrum including but not necessarily dedicated to metal, other online sources keep one abreast of news about gigs/releases in Malta. yspace.com/eventsmalta, lib666.tk, thealternativejoint.tk and geocities.com/litorocks69 are all good points of reference for either knowing who plays when and where to digging that old band somewhere with some Maltese members included e.g. once again the good old ALCHEMIST.

On the airwaves although both short-lived, the voice of the brutal underground was my own Rancid Soup, and later to a limited extent Rock Analiz. Yet the one to enjoy a 16-year non-stop presence due to the variety it presents was Grinta, sadly put off the airwaves this summer due to its recent decrease in listeners, itself due to Maltese bands, like all others, making the best out of Myspace bulletins, mailshots and online mp3s to promote themselves!

There are other festivals though, with Malta Up D Horns, the Marsaxlokk Rock Festival, the sadly defunct Grim Reaper, and latest newcomer Extreme Metal Malta (extrememaltasemetal.com).

On a different note, my own Bisoul Promotions (bisoulpromotions.tk) concentrate more on presenting events rather than just gigs. Live music not excluded, it has however been usually part of a broader spectrum including art expos, film, fashion, contests and theatre. Going since 1991, our 10 events so far all have had their own distinct dark twist. One of our most revered industrial DJs when living in Malta, DJ Kawk (myspace.com/thekawk), now moved to Sydney where each Saturday night his metalcore alter-ego trashes your senses at myspace.com/trashsaturdays. Check him out!!!

But where would all of this be held one might ask. Over the years many a club have either come and go, or still host live metal bands but only occasionally, with Signals and Rock Café having for years hosted most of the gigs, along Best In Town, The Alley, South Rock, The Edge, Naasha, Wild Ones, Liquid, and others. Metalheads being only a small percentage of any country's youth, running an exclusively metal/rock club in such a small country like Malta becomes next to impossible. Hence comes as no surprise that nowadays Remedy is the 2nd floor of a more commercial music club on the 1st, while Poxx is open to all music styles. For the sake of live extreme music in Malta, this is the only way forward.

When all is said and done, managing to pull it through for so many years on end despite its own market being logistically dictated by the confines of being a small island with less than half a million inhabitants, the very need to perform and experiment within new metal charters is a growing quest the Maltese metal scene is diehard not to abandon. With reduced air fares to/out the country being introduced only in 2006 already proving an increase of foreign bands playing the island, and local acts themselves touring the UK, Germany, France, etc, it will come as no surprise had some label pick up on one of the bands the island has to offer. Not to forget the bands from other alternative music circles, as the "awszawiehaaqawinmunella" (credit: XTRUPPAW) is a thing one shall discover only by visiting the island itself.

MALCOLM CALLUS - NECROGOOL

Ex-RANCID SOUP Radio & Zine, now writer for www.brutalism.com and organizer for Bisoul Promotions

HELLFEST

OPEN-AIR

ÉPIFAN



PHOTOGRAPHY & REVIEW BY:

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HELLFEST 3, Clisson, France - A Festival Goer's Report

"Blue is the colour, football is the game" is an anthem one hears way too often in London city, yet tonight Wednesday June 18 at Victoria station the colour is a resounding black and heavy metal is the game as the amount of black-wearing posse heading to Hellfest in France start to increase the more the 8.45pm departure hour approaches. A delay of 45 minutes later filled up with a beer or two while we entertained ourselves watching 4 police vans line up to pick only one drunkard at the station (very London customary haha!), we head off to Dover where the albatross wave us goodbye as our coach made its way on board the ferry that was to land us at Calais in France the morning after, and subsequently at the festival's camp site 2hrs 30mins before it even opened!!! By no measure of doubt, the "Welcome to Hell" banner at the entrance lived up to its name, because after such a restless ride interrupted only by slight awakenings of viewing cows from the window, no one welcomed the scorching sun!!!!

Understandably, the Hellfest organisers open the gates of hell early to the assent of many a metalhead from various countries being dropped off early by their respective bus trips and thus all setting earnestly to put up their camp and getting themselves organised, including a 20 min walk to the nearby cute Clisson to stock up at the supermarket before close!!! Back at the campsite, at 9pm RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE bursts from the PA so far being tested to the likes of TINA TURNER, so as the festival area and the metal was not due to be forthcoming before noon of the morrow, many start to headbang!!!

Meanwhile, The Metal Corner was busy providing beer, food and parodic acts inside a tent!!! 3 old farts take to the stage late into the afternoon. Welcomed by a "fuck off" by some foreigner alien to the French flair for parody, by huge contrast at their 3rd song half the house is already clapping as with only two acoustic f-hole guitars, an accordion and a voice this trio manage to enchant many a metalhead with their funny renditions of classics by KISS, ACDC, etc.

Later that night, I meet up with my friend Klaus from Belgium and some Maltese friends, and after our round at harassing the chicks, we wrap our night talking to two drunk French in "small English" ("English spoken at a slow pace" if one prefer the grammatically correct vs the quote) and dirty French, including episodes of how a drunk French's roll of toilet paper may make love to his "merde" - intriguing :-)

WELCOME TO HELL

Day 1

At the punctual opening hour of noon, we are surrounded by French from all over who traveled all the way to Clisson to watch **ULTRAVOMIT** open Hellfest. Without any shadow of doubt, the whole parody at the Metal Corner the night before seemed not enough as "hello we are Motorhead" in the brisk Lemmy voice from a guy wearing a Guitar Hero shirt on the main stage came down as popular as any famous football player cheering his home crowd after scoring for his team. These guys, **ULTRAVOMIT**, go through a short but fresh 30 minute set making medleys of songs by more famous acts playing the festival later, yet with funny French lyrics. Soon after on the Second Stage and **BORN FROM PAIN** get the crowds seriously moshing and crowd surfing!!! Despite the already scorching Southern sun, it seems this is going to be a ferocious day for the punters and **BORN FROM PAIN** give the crowd the core they needed. Adios parody, welcome seriously angry music!!! Back to the main stage yet slower paced, **ELUVEITIS** pamper us with their folk-induced metal. These Swiss folk merge wind instruments with their pagan-touched metal, not brutally but with a stream of pomp above acts like **IN EXTREMO**, **TURISAS** etc. I foresee great things coming for them.

However, mid-set I deke off to the Discovery Stage where **AVA INFERI** (including ex-**MAYHEM** guitarist) offer a morose very down-traiden set of atmospheric gothic doom. Despite their frontwoman's strong voice and the unparalleled beauty of the two sisters backing her up, the music is at times too slow for a festival, and comes across as the right thing at the wrong place.

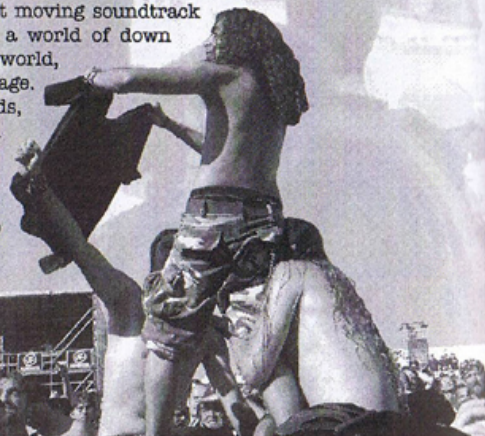
Yet soon come Australia's own **ALCHEMIST** with no problem at all to allure the crowds and have them stand in awe!!! Attracting different music fans for different reasons, **ALCHEMIST**'s unique progressive approach to metal ensures a sizeable crowd not as reactive in moshpit terms, yet if facial expressions had to speak, everyone was interested.

It is now time for **SEPTIC FLESH**!!! And I mean it is TIME for **SEPTIC FLESH**!!! From out of nowhere, the tent becomes packed, packed with believers and unbelievers gathered for the communion. Seth walks on stage and greets all with his monster growl from beyond the grave, and in an instant the band kick off playing track after track off their latest Communion and its predecessor Sumerian Daemons. Personally speaking, I had not felt such an intense pit since **KREATOR** at Wacken 2002, and judging from the intensity of this very pit and the amount of people listening to **SEPTIC FLESH** at the campsite for the days to follow, it is clear that the next time the Dreamlord returns from the dead, his throne shall be waiting on the main stage of Hellfest and similar leading festivals worldwide!!! Simply as **SEPTIC FLESH** just abolished anything in their way with their operatically musical yet resoundingly metal art!!! Bring on the Revelation!!!

So intense were **SEPTIC FLESH** for me as I tore through the barricades of the deadly filmscore they envisage in my mind, that I sought my rest thereafter. From my camp I could still however not avoid the boring **PARADISE LOST** who fail even to reproduce their very best songs vocalwise, so when **MAYHEM** opened with Deatherush soon after, Attila's vocals belonging as the voice of **MAYHEM** was very welcome, as it rang pleasantly in my ears for the rest of their set. As I pulled myself together and made my way to the Discovery Stage, I passed by **SICK OF IT ALL** entertaining a generous crowd, that is however not my thing. So off to watch the dominant frontman Sakis and his lifelong project **ROTTING CHRIST**, another Greek band that has long been fighting for its recognition and is finally getting places.

Back on the second stage, **KATATONIA** offered a morose yet moving soundtrack to everyone's agony. Vocalist Jonas seemingly living in a world of down trodden emotions he prefers not to share with an outside world, he generally comes across as the least present figure on stage.

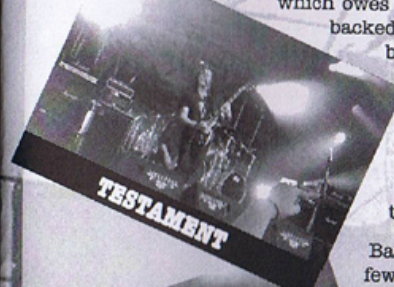
Nonetheless, although a man of few words, in his indifferent stance, he still moved worlds when asking the crowd if they could guess what song was coming next as **KATATONIA** dived into Without God.



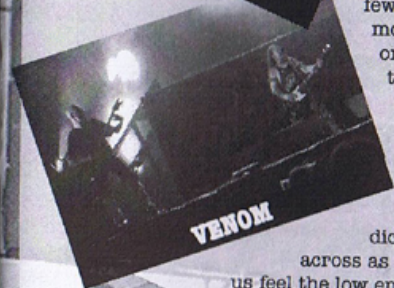
WELCOME TO HELL

Which together with The Funeral Wedding was a very welcome closer for all **KATATONIA** Mk 1 lovers who either went nuts, or were literally caught in a sob!

Next up **DIMMU BORGIR** played their dose of black metal now distinctive of their own sound, which owes to a Hollywood panoply the more it develops. But just like a pornstar backed up by the best in the industry as opposed to better amateurs who fail to break through, **DIMMU**'s is a winning formula that keeps attracting fans to the ways of the devil naughty boys :P



And then? The first band to not utter one word to call out for a pit, yet halfway through their first song, a bird's eye view of Hellfest was bodies flying, slamming, surfing and circle moshing - **TESTAMENT**!! I bet that seeing Skolnick along Billy and the others after so long was a dream come true for many!!! Intense and meaningful!!!

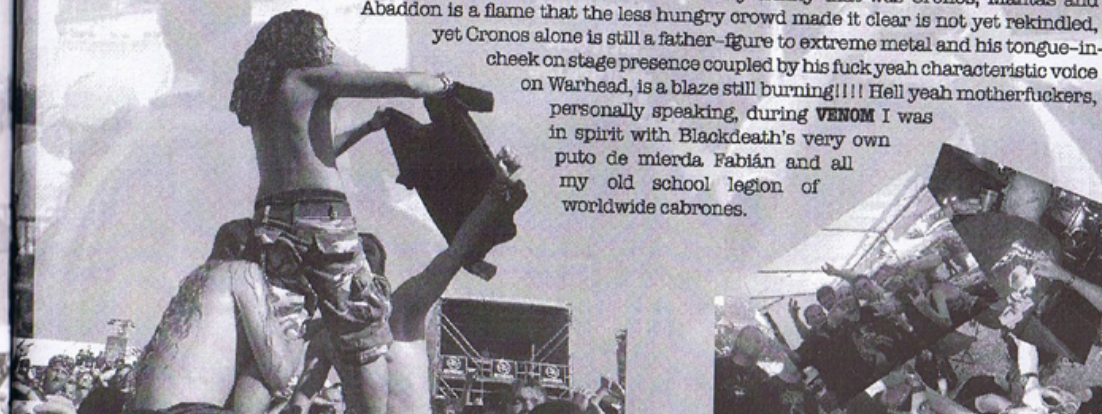


Back under the tent, the rollercoaster that is **KRISIUN** powered by one of the few drummers in death metal to give **MORBID ANGEL**'s Sandoval a run for the money are followed by **MARDUK** whose chilling frosty darkness has punters on the tent's supports fighting for the perfect photo, simply as the pit was too packed to enter. Nemtheanga from **PRIMORDIAL** also makes a guest vocal appearance on one of the songs. Meanwhile kid band **IN FLAMES** thank the people for having them on the main stage. And they should really do it, considering their firework gimmicks and stupid lights do not belong anywhere at a metal show.



Back on the second stage, the reunion that is **CARCASS** offer dictionaries worldwide an updated version of the word "brutal"!!!! Coming across as fresh as their heyday, **CARCASS** just grab us by our intestines and make us feel the low end rumble of our sufferance once more. The down-tuned guitars ripping through tracks like "Corporal Jigsore Quandary", "Buried Dreams", "Incarnate Solvent Abuse" and a couple off their 1st two albums as Bill Steer spews his guts above them was a feeling unmatched. Definitely it was not a safe place to be in their pit and clearly **CARCASS** were the headline neither closers **VENOM** matched up to.

And that is no mean feat considering **VENOM** have for long been what turned this very writer onto extreme metal. But enough credits to **CARCASS** as **VENOM** did after all offer a good show, and I was still shitting my pants in awe waiting for Cronos and co. to appear in front of their mighty wall of Marshall stacks on both sides of the main stage. Finally breaking the silence with Black Metal, the hellion boys cruised through countless classics like "Bloodlust", "Welcome to Hell", "Countess Bathory", "Seven Gates of Hell", "Die Hard", "At War with Satan", "Warhead", and "Witching Hour" along more recent tracks like "Hell", "Antichrist" and "USA for Satan". True that the unholy trinity that was Cronos, Mantas and Abaddon is a flame that the less hungry crowd made it clear is not yet rekindled, yet Cronos alone is still a father-figure to extreme metal and his tongue-in-cheek on stage presence coupled by his fuck yeah characteristic voice on Warhead, is a blaze still burning!!!! Hell yeah motherfuckers, personally speaking, during **VENOM** I was in spirit with Blackdeath's very own puto de mierda Fabián and all my old school legion of worldwide cabrones.



Day 2

Day 2 of Hell in France this scribe is terribly suffering from a sunstroke and hence remembers he has left his sun-protective lotion home. As bandwise it was not going to get busy for me until later at 17:30 hours,

I head to Le Ville de Clisson and discover that unlike other things when comparing the UK to Central Europe, medical products are expensive even here. However all is forgotten once I find a pub sporting a big (rather big) bottle of Grolsch - my favourite lager - a stepping stone away from the pharmacy. So there am I in the pub for a whole hour enjoying my fave Dutch blonde :-)

Time still on my hands, I decide to wander about and I must say that besides the picturesque Clisson valley dwarfed by an overruling mystical ancient castle, I do not complain as my eyes fall on the many passing femme de la ville :-)

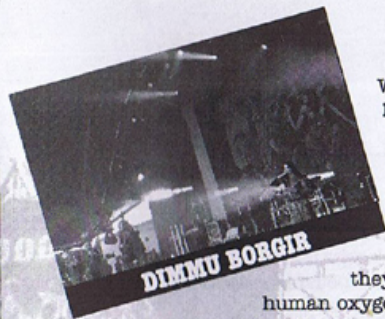
French women? Awesome!!!!

Back at the pub I happen to pick up a programme that actually reflects that here in town, the villagers are enjoying their metal songs in their own way - by converting them into non-metal brass-instrument played covers. One of these so groups The Pastors of Muppets also played the campsite's own Metal Corner and all I can say is "French people rock hard!" Even at the campsite - jesters, clowns, Asterix & Obelix, punters dressed as ducks, Spiderman, or even in a swimming dingy - sometimes too much parody for the metal crowd to take, but surely explains that the reason behind all programmes etc being in French is that the cash cow to this fest is predominantly French, unlike other more internationally attracting festivals (despite Hellfest 2008 had the best extreme metal line-up). On the other hand and on a serious note, although it is impossible to keep such a fest free of a dirt aftermath, the presence of environmental groups passing recycling and trash collection bags in the morning is something to be commended, despite they inevitably look like morons.

Observations of both village and campsite documented, I head to an already packed crowd in front of the Second Stage. On stage, Vinnie Cavanagh of **ANATHEMA** speaks to the crowd in French, which coupled with their strong set, drives the crowd in awe, even more than **KATATONIA** the day before. Despite sadly looking like pop artists in their image, **ANATHEMA** playing through their extensive career still deliver an overall very emotional set that gives distinctive meaning to the word "morose" as one witnesses men crying along women.

Up next came **PORCUPINE TREE**, parading through the harder stuff off their career seemingly obvious to fit an open air metal-fest and to challenge themselves they can still pull it off out of the comfort zone of an own show at a club which always works wonders for their commendable type of prog. Nevertheless, among the many struggling to fight the hot weather, for the portion of the crowd who never saw them before, **PORCUPINE** were still a beautiful dream come true by a good measure.

Not the same could be said for **CANDLEMASS** though, as split between being either mesmerized or confused by **PORCUPINE TREE**'s presence, or not giving Rob Lowe the open arms as Messiah's replacement, the crowd greeting **CANDLEMASS** on the adjacent stage was less sizeable in comparison to other shows where these Swede masters of doom appeared. And I do not blame it, as although Rob Lowe was an apt frontman to **CANDLEMASS** when they played a closed venue in London some months ago, in this open air environment Messiah (who runs more despite his size, as opposed to Rob who walks) has more what it takes to pull a crowd. Clearly, **CANDLEMASS** have had good days and average days, and today's leaned more towards the latter than the former.



With no sign of relentlessness, on the other hand **ANAAL NATHRAKH** smashed all in its way and sight back at the Discovery Stage - a monolithically untepid set, destroying in purely raw Birmingham fashion!!! As their frontman **V.I.T.R.I.O.L.** spat out apathy vs mankind all throughout the set, it became evident that the main reason **AN** was here was to annihilate us all, and sure they did!!! From the tent full to its brim with human oxygen to the sun's encompassing fervor by then consuming the tent, nature seemed to favour **AN**. The aftermath? Some members of the crowd (unfortunately myself included) could not take it no more, and energy had to be restored elsewhere out of the festival site by the end of their set, sadly missing both **SHINING** and **WATAIN**. Apparently, and may I say expectedly to both contenders of the black addressed, many did not as my resting place of choice The Metal Corner was nearly empty.

Some hours later on the main stage, **APOCALYPTICA** took on to repeat what seems to be a wearied off novelty as much as it is the perfect excuse to party. That **APOCALYPTICA**'s set is them running down the same **SEPUULTURA** and **METALLICA** classics on cellos over and over again, is a given still welcome, especially when graced with such interlude's as Grieg's opus magnificent Dovregubbens hall (In The Hall of the Mountain King).

Restored to my senses after a good refreshing of ice, I am ready for **IMPALED NAZARENE**!!! Fronted by charismatic lunatic Mika, this band attracted an audience of all sorts - people dressed as aliens, others with whips, others with tree branches. Fucking sadomasowholic, I am proud to state I was one of the many going nuts in this pit!!!! And we neither did mind when in pure **IMPALED NAZARENE** fashion, they cut their set short and sweet 10mins before their scheduled time. Maybe Mika wanted to check **MINISTRY**? But whatever it was, their set went down brisk and it allowed me to catch 10mins of **MINISTRY**, a usual good loud set which never fails to please in its abrasiveness.

Closing our night is the much awaited reunion of the ex-**SEPUULTURA** founding brothers **CAVALERA CONSPIRACY**. Yet it is not only the crude hardcore thrash of CC that the brothers donate us but also a rundown of the best SEPO classics, what if when played by **APOCALYPTICA** gets a reaction, this time it is hell breaks loose!!! An impressive circle pit piling up song after song, Max commands the pit better than George Bush commands his troops in his wet dreams, and although he still pronounces "Hello Hellfest" in a funny way (even to a Frenchmen next to me observing no difference in Max's pronunciation since he last saw him 10 years back), how he manages to have the pit augment threefold its already remarkable size at a simple "Now! Open the pit!" is something to be commended. And to credit his brother, Igor still plays those old **SEPUULTURA** tracks as strongly as before.

All in the family, a person many a drummer would have loved to be was Igor Jr, Igor's son who in his early teens is here presented by uncle Max for his debut live show - playing what Hellfest's strong crowd was calling for since a while - "Troops of Doom"! Fuckin ace mate!!!

SLAYER | MOTORHEAD | VENOM | CAVALERA CONSPIRACY | ROXY IN FLAMES | DIMMU BORGIR | CARCASS | MINISTRY | ICED EARTH

OPERA TRIUMPH | HELLO WEEEN | GAMMARAAY | SPECIAL OPS

METAL | MORBID ANGEL | TESTAMENT | PORCUPINE TREE | WOLFENSTEIN | APOCALYPTICA | AT THE GATES | SICK OF IT ALL | PARASIDE LOST | SONATA ARCTICA | BAN BRING BORG | BUSTANISI | SAKHO JOSTER | CARLEBASTY | SATYRIAN | SODOM | SCALDIAIN | SCITE SITTUO | SON WILLIAMS ESCAPE PLAN | WATROUX | EVOY | ANATHEMA | NABUCCO | MEGALOMANIA | DEATH ANGEL | ANTIKOMMUNISM | SQUADRA FURIOSE

LEGION OF THE ANIMUS | ANATHEMA | ELECTRIC BLUE | HELLBROTHERS | SON OF A SITH | MORGAN LE FAY | WATROUX | SQUADRA FURIOSE | SONATA ARCTICA | MEGALOMANIA | DEATH ANGEL | SICK OF IT ALL | PARASIDE LOST | SONATA ARCTICA | BAN BRING BORG | BUSTANISI | SAKHO JOSTER | CARLEBASTY | SATYRIAN | SODOM | SCALDIAIN | SCITE SITTUO | SON WILLIAMS ESCAPE PLAN | WATROUX | EVOY | ANATHEMA | NABUCCO | MEGALOMANIA | DEATH ANGEL | ANTIKOMMUNISM | SQUADRA FURIOSE

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WELCOME TO HELL

WELCOME TO HELL

WELCOME TO HELL

Day 3

Kicking off the third day of a fest's flair dictated by an overruling sun tiring all out, this seemed to make no difference to France own's technical supremists **MISANTHROPE** who took to the stage with a massive crowd waiting in front. No violent pits of any sort, but everyone chilled out enjoying the craftsmanship of these musicians playing tracks off their 19 year old fine career. Never such a crowd at noon, and **S.A.S.** Philippe de l'Argilière acknowledges this, saluting all by opening up a bottle of French champagne and pouring some on us at the front!!!

From fine art in French fashion to barbaric thrash ala American in-ner-face-muthafckaness, **MUNICIPAL WASTE** take off to do what they do best - thrash up a riot!!!! Songs with many a hook-up that one cannot but surf and slam to, as did happen. On the main stage, **ETHS** replace **SOILWORK**, their frontwoman sporting a strong vocal presence that easily cross borders among dark avant-garde, hoarse hardcore and even a more accessible Evanescencesque singing style that ends up unavoidingly pulling **ETHS** towards more nu-metal pastures. Keeping things distinctively thrash, **FORBIDDEN** picked up where **MUNICIPAL WASTE** left off earlier!!! They play songs off their long underestimated career as tight as if they are still discovering their heyday, a performance that is rewarded with a big big crowd that gathers to surf and slam without compromise.

Getting things to the more extreme end as such a fest calls for, **ORIGIN** in the Discovery Stage prove that in this world there is still space for ultra brutal technical death metal - the tent was jam packed, and live humans were deliberately piling on each other like a Sarajevo post-war corpse-pit. Back to the main stages, **DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN** are jumping about to the interest of many. Yet, despite all their antics and buffoonery, they remain too "do not know what" for my interests.

On the adjacent side, the crowd was increasing by the minute getting ready to witness Swedish masters of down-tuned polyrhythms **MESHUGGAH**. After a necessary sound-check, Frederik Thordendal's science squad fucked us all up mathematically, emotionally and cerebrally. In no way playing second fiddle to **CAVALERA CONSPIRACY** the night before, they could have easily headlined Hellfest and emerge as exultant. Calling the pagan way of life, **PRIMORDIAL** remind everyone that living as a beast in an ethos calling for revival. Their music the hosting ground of epic, anthemic grandeur characteristics close to a metalhead's heart, these Irish men-of-arms fly a flag of international metal brotherhood wherever they play.

OBITUARY's bio stating that they "ferment like waste in the hot Florida sun bringing blessings of brutality", it comes as no wonder that they are considered to be among extreme metal's best live acts. And here on this side of the pond, they indeed live up to the test of the scorching sun as they pull the biggest crowd so far on Sunday. Up for a bit of booze with one's Sheila, Aussie's **ROSE TATTOO** took to the stage. This being a more dedicated extreme fest, they pull a lesser crowd, but nevertheless, their performance sounded more blisteringly energetic than at other German fests they were billed at. Maybe they were spoiled with less beer here?

OPETH next deliver their best in years with the new members proving they are all for the job. This seems to reflect in Mr Akerfeld's better vibe, as he not only sounds crisper when singing (at times like Dave Vincent from his outspoken faves **MORBID ANGEL**) but even more jovial presenting songs. "This is a song about that little area between the pussy and the ass" What for taking musicians too seriously these days!!!

Followers **MY DYING BRIDE** dig up a real violin player and tracks off their earlier career. But the whole band sound is swamped by a bit too many bass frequencies from the guitar and bass drums, plus new violinist Sarah Stanton does not match up to Martin Powell's thrills, and to add insult to injury, when her keyboard parts manage to get through the muddy sound, they leave much to be desired. On the good side, Aaron's experience as doom personificator supreme manages to divert our attention to think that even on a bad day, **MDB** is to doom/death metal what sugar is to candy.



WELCOME TO HELL

From the downtrodden to a good smile - as if the French sense of humour everywhere on the festival grounds was not enough - **NO FX** up next blow a breeze of American stupidity thrown in as that extra healthy measure of light-heartedness. Unlike **PORCUPINE TREE** and to maybe counter the extreme heavyweights soon to make their way, **NO FX** is still welcome to call people names and abuse them with their dumbness, referring to asshole mustard during same.

With time to spare before our next port of call **MORBID ANGEL**, my Dutch friend Klaus suggests we go for a baguette and maybe half-inspired by **NO FX** he fills his with mustard, and then goes on to complain about how spicy it was. At the point of urging me to grab a bite to confirm his point, we realize that the toll of 4 days partying had kicked in and we had consequently swapped our baguettes before swamping them in different sauces. So far so good, but the story did not end there. With time still on our hands, we decided to approach the First Aid people and report that Klaus' ass was on fire due to the overdose of French mustard. Off course he was playing the actor trying to give them a hard time with their English, but you know words like "asshole", "pussy" and "penis" are international so off they took him backstage..... I was not allowed in (thankfully), but he texted me later that apparently they played a joke back on him as they put him "under sedation".



Meanwhile, Peaceville labelmates **AT THE GATES** are entertaining the thousands unaware of this mustard story and countless other festival craziness being surely held by others - just check out Hellfest on www.youtube.com for a taste. To the band that reshaped Swedish death metal with their melodic outbursts without hindering the heaviness of their bed of downtuned sharp riffs, the crowd is headbanging from the get-go!!!! Another sizeable crowd, only second to **OBITUARY** this day. **MOTORHEAD** dads (or grand-dads) of rock n roll are up next and as many times before, bring out some semi-bare ladies. Of course a still welcome show to ensure an audience stretching out to the adjacent stage, but if you find them out-dated, there is nothing **MOTORHEAD** can do for you, so there I lay relaxed with my Maltese mates preparing ourselves for the outblast next to come in the form of **MORBID ANGEL**!!!!

And with tracks like "Sworn to the Black", "Bill Ur Sag", "Where the Slime Lives", "Lord of all Fevers and Plagues", "Maze of Torment" and crowd-invocator "Chapel of Ghouls", there is no way for the Azagtoth clan to go wrong. Powered by one of death metal's most meaningful frontman, when Dave announces Never Nevermore off their forthcoming album, the track came down to reflect that the composing team of Trey and Dave is back and if the briskness of this track is anything to come by, the new album is going to move mountains.

Unfortunately for closers **SLAYER** coming off **MORBID ANGEL** it was to some extent like **VENOM** two days earlier not matching up to follow **CARCASS**. Not to the extent to not guarantee an enormous crowd gathered in front of the main stage, but at least for me, coming off my all-time faves **MORBID ANGEL** to a **SLAYER** on one of their off-days with a sound seemingly being lost in the early morning breeze and making Tom Araya sound like a narcotic homeless choking for breath, simply did not do it. Yet amazingly at half-set "Dead Skin Mask" seemed to wake up its very own skillmen, and suddenly **SLAYER** seemed to have just started the show, as if something repossessed them or their sound engineer. At this point one could witness the long stream of earnest fans' fists, yet some (even with **SLAYER** shirts) were already roaming elsewhere, even watching Japanese **ENVY** barricade their wall of sound at the Discovery Stage.

Hellfest is over? No way!!!! The party continued that night at the Metal Corner till about 7am. Great fun of saying the last goodbyes to one's new metal acquaintances banging one's head to classics by **SLAYER** (yeah why not? after all they are responsible for zillions of awesome music), **SEPULTURA**, **JUDAS PRIEST**, **MEGADETH**, **IRON MAIDEN**, **AC/DC**, **MOTORHEAD**.... Well you get the grip what makes the French go naked, the Germans hail their pints, and the English destroy the tables - good unadulterated violent fun. Hellfest next year? Bring it on!!! I am sure that in a couple of years Clisson will be another small village on the international metal map!!!!



DAMNATION FESTIVAL 2008

Photography, Review by: **MALCOLM CALLUS** –Necrogool.
Ex Rancid Soup Radio and Zine, now writer for www.brutalism.com
and orginaser for Bisoul Promotions.

DAMNATION fest, Leeds, UK Run to the Hills, as there on those hills is Leeds University

Q: What is Damnation Festival?

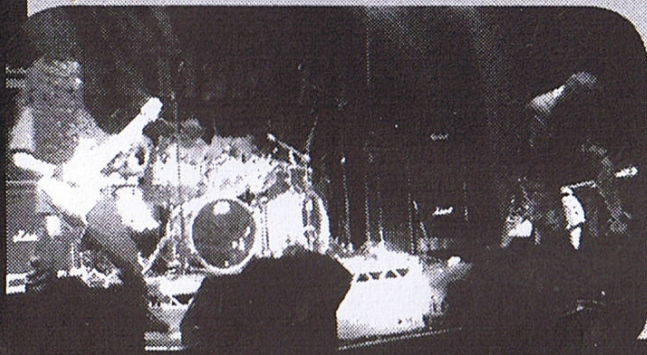
A: The UK's premier heavy metal festival, voted best independent music event by Terrorizer readers, and organised entirely by fans!

Such states the festival website, but more about that later. With many coming to Damnation from all corners of the British Isles, the fest sold out some days earlier, definitely due to the good number of bands listed to play.

To open up the agenda of sweaty afternoon battalions within the confines of Leeds University, Exeter thrashers **RED MIST** kick open the Terrorizer Stage donating their very **THE HAUNTED/ IN FLAMES/ etc.** music to thank the fans that voted them to gain this slot. A song or two in, I can hear a chord coming from the adjacent Rocksound Stage, so off to check **MOUNTAINS BECAME MACHINES**, a trio that might I say left me dumbfold with their post-metal circling of riffs that starts but never ends, yet still takes you to places and back, even so more due to a screen of moving pictures in sync with the moods of their tracks. On the Jagermeister Main Stage, **TAINT** are meanwhile playing their stoner sludge to another portion of the crowd, who like me will sadly be split between which bands to see for the rest of the day, only as there is no spillage at all between bands (except for the Rocksound Stage which inadvertently yet thankfully starts slightly later than scheduled).

And I bring this rather disturbing fact to the fore now, as I would like to get it out of the way to concentrate on reviewing the music. The point being that the running order times were only published 10 days before the event, a gruesome surprise having **CARCASS, PITCHSHIFTER & CATHEDRAL** (the 3 headlining acts of the fest) all playing concurrently, not to mention that similar clashes without any spillage had to occur between other class acts for the course of the whole evening, and thus many fans remained not seeing entire bands they wanted to check out. Moreover, for first time attendees who may not have known the starting time of the event from previous years (not to mention there still lies a liability of change) they might books hotels and train tickets in advance only to discover later they will be roaming about a cold Leeds just killing useless time (hint to organizers can you please state from what time to what time is the fest liable to be running well in advance on YOUR website?) Having said that, **DAMNATION** is undoubtedly the festival with the best line-up in the UK, with a Front of House sound that was generally close to perfection on all stages, but then again, what is the use of having lots of money in a treasure when there is no key? In other words, I have so far not attended any one respectable festival that puts the headlining acts playing simultaneously, so should a festival be not organized "by fans" for someone to have the brilliant idea to

- have the festival start earlier?
- to allow spillages between stages (i.e. one stage kicks off 30mins after the other)
- have the modesty to accept that this is not such a big festival to permit 3 stages? 2 would have been enough and solved it for many "fans".





Now that off my chest, **LATITUDES** are playing their slow-mo post-doom to the Rockstage crowd while the next door Terrorizer stage hosts the Welsh mortician force **DESECRATION**, which from colleagues' words later "brought me back to when I was 18". Meanwhile, I am across the hall having a good time within a growing pit slamming to classics from **ONSLAUGHT**'s 26 year (albeit interrupted) career of thrash anthems. To feel the power of mid-80s songs against more current and still as ferocious war tanks off their recent "Killing Peace" was a good time for all!!!

A delay of sorts with the Jagermeister stage times allowed me a quick snippet off **THE BERZERKER** at the Terrorizer stage. Surely these Melbourne hardcore industrialists need no introduction with the Black Death readers!!! Meanwhile on the Rockstage, Californian ambient rockers ***SHEL**S are followed by UK misanthropic riff monster sewn in a sludge flag **RAMESSES**, who makes way for the austere **DEVIL SOLD HIS SOUL**. Sadly I pass on all three so less to report here.



Back to the Jager room, Dr. Mikanibal, Mirai and the rest of them rumoured to have single-handedly brought many a crowd to **DAMNATION** this year, Japanese black squad **SIGH** are ensuring that everything is in place and order for starting off their one-of exclusive show in the UK for 2008. And as they hit it off playing track after track off their varied musically inquisitive career, the crowd continued to intensify to the genius work of these old school black metal act that manages in one way or another to fuse psychedelic, jazz, Japanese trad music, classical, rock n roll, blues, and more, with their core sound of evil messengers ready to take you to hell. A couple of candle waxing and burnt Bibles later, Mirai announces that black metal "was not created in Norway but here in the UK" as they delve into **VENOM**'s "Black Metal" with a flair not even the originals hold no more. The crowd had been given its climax, and no word to explain a bird's eye view of the pit at this point berserk!!!

Meanwhile, the Terrorizer Stage exchanges hands between **THE BERZERKER** and **BENEDICTION**, a band I have sadly not seen since their earlier days, yet which even today, I have to pass. Phew, these are the choices one has to make when you get **SIGH** play the UK since so long, to be followed by **MY DYING BRIDE** on their Yorkshire home soil. And it seems that the Eride has a good stock of old treasures for their home crowd, as one after the other, tracks off "Thrash of Naked Limbs", "Turn Loose the Swans", and even their debut demo "Towards the Sinister" make way into their set list. I have announced myself before in my Hellfest 08 review that Sarah Stanton on violin (and especially keyboards) is not up to the justice the **MDB** songs require. Yet once again, and this time by a disputable measure, **MDE**



pull a very good show, managing to pamper the crowd with the perfect soundtrack that documents every single one's grief independently. You could see left to right, front to back, just people singing/ sobbing their own - more than one - 5ve tune of doom, and wishing this caress into oblivion (aka set list) will never end. **MDB** bring on the new album "For Lies I Sire"!!!

Now, time to check the merchandise stall as **NAPALM DEATH** are finishing off their bomb-slashing grind set next door. A good time to also find some band members at their merchandise tables and sneak a photo. Here I befriend **MOUNTAINS BECAME MACHINES** who must I add are as modest as their music is otherwise bombastic. I also buy a **CATHEDRAL** T-shirt, which I wear upon my other **CATHEDRAL** T-shirt I was already wearing. Yes, in fact, my mates had come up from Malta, and we were also with Heinrich, a Safe/Dutch metal guru, and on our mind we were all ready for **CATHEDRAL** no other!!!!!! So decision time decision time, we miss **CARCASS** (well at least 2 of us who had never seen them before went for a sneak song or two), but anyway, here am I back in the Rockstage Sound.

Phew, from the 1st riff, the small bar is packed, the sound is heavy, wait, **HEAVY**!!! (note the caps), fuck yeah **HEEEEEAAAAA VVVVVYYYY**!

The rumble of Smee's bass coupled with Dixon's pounding into one's heart keeps the pace as Gaz rifferama gives you the boogie shake to Dorrian's multi-world lyrical piss-takes. I mean **CATHEDRAL** is a band like no other, they have the slower-than-death funeral dige moments (fuck yeah they even treated us to "Equilibrium" off their debut) complimented with their signature "this is doom, but let us boogie" passages! And here at Damnation, not failing to deliver same, **CATHEDRAL** come to prove that we are all gonna die but might as well as well enjoy the groove - a splashing of beer on your T-shirt, a boob in your mouth, et al - on our way to the grave, with Dorrian heading the circus with his jester acts of gibberish that include senseless eye motion and pulling the mic a full circle or two around his neck, but not pulling the final straw as it is time to live again. WeirDOS? Or shamans? Whatever they are, **CATHEDRAL** is an emotional ride, and many were here to enjoy it.

Over? Not yet. As I make my way out, I pass by a Terrorizer stage still half-packed to **PITCHSHIFTER**, so by obvious common sense, something tells me **CARCASS** is not yet over. So off I rush to the Jager, and am in fact treated by Ken Owen (original drummer sadly not drumming on this reunion due to a medical condition) putting all his effort into a personalized drum solo. Once done, he also has a speech to the crowd, which diction however suffers from his impairment so Bill Steer quickly intervenes to clarify that "all he is asking for is free pussy and marijuana after the show J" To see Ken pose for pics with **CARCASS** and go on tour with them is a mean feat, an emotional turmoil for the man I could imagine, yet one which as such strong man of will he is, he overcomes. Bravo! In any case, once the speech was over, **CARCASS** treated the massive (dare I say very massive) crowd to two final death slashers of theirs, and then, so was it, the last **CARCASS** reunion performance, maybe for a while, maybe forever. One has still to see..... ... (anyway I thankfully had seen this reunion already in Hellfest this summer, so at least I did get a taste of it).

Over? Off course not yet!!! We get three more hours of a metal party back in the Terrorizer Stage, where one gets to meet again all the nutters you would have come across earlier in the day, as well as make new friends. And as usual, a metal afterparty is a guaranteed good time as it is made of the best people on earth, the metalheads \m/

Damnation next year? I would give it a thought, mostly for its impressive line-up over the years, and a guarantee for good sound quality.

That alone might be enough for it to claim being the best UK festival, but then again having been to lots of festivals worldwide, I see Damnation as an excellent one-day indoor concert with potential for growth. Little care (eg publishing the running order earlier so the prospective ticket purchases would know what they are buying) would be the leap for Damnation to maximize its potential!

<http://www.damnationfestival.co.uk>

Malcolm Gallus.

