

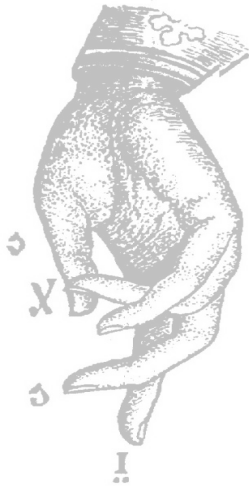


FLAATROUVE NOME

#3

FLAME OF VENOM

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Credits

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Writers: D. O'Mahony, G. O'Callaghan and M. O'Grady.

#3

Having emerged from my 'real life' priorities, I am proud to present the third issue of Flail or Venom. After the two previous issues, which were well recieved, we have decided to move forward and print only exclusive interviews, with the odd review or feature appearing occasionally.

The zine now aims to provide interviews that will only exist within these pages, a minimal design and less bullshit filler pages. We are not journalists.

We are very thankful for those who supported this somewhat archaic hobby.

- D. O'Mahony

KRIFA



Occult black metal act KRINGA talk about their first full-length release on Terratur Possessions and their style of black metal. Words by D. O'Mahony & M. O'Grady.

Terratur Possessions are known for being at the top of their game in releasing quality contemporary black metal. How have you found working with them on your debut full length and has it afforded you any luxuries you previously wouldn't have had?

We first met at the first Prague Death Mass in 2012. I remember we finished the vocal recordings for "The Cosmic Carnage" and "Total Mental Desecration" the night before and put the raw mix on a tape to give to him. I think we exchanged some words and I handed him the cassette, to which he never listened. That's how promos work!

Over the years our paths crossed more often, and he eventually did check out the vinyl release of T.M.D., after seeing us live someday. Not too long after that we started working on the "Through the Flesh of Ethereal Wombs" EP and it seems like he got our ideas and now here we are working with him. Working with the label has afforded us the luxury of releasing our music without compromising on our visions. We don't know much about anything else than playing gigs and releasing our inmost terrors!

With the ever-hypnotic sound that Kringa produces, with mixed vocal styles and ranging tempos, is there anything your music attempts to conjure?

Kringa is but a tool of releasing the powers from within, the unknown forces that drive us to do as we do. The rawness and loudness upon the stage or within the scene, where we can fully live out our rage, spirituality, madness and joy.

Would it be wrong to suggest that there is a punk influence in your sound?

This accusation has been brought up a lot, and it is not entirely wrong, but misses the point. These rhythmic similarities in Kringa are only little related to the punk music we listen to. The goal of our music is to induce a trance through primitive rhythms along with hypnotic riffs, yet simple in their momentaneous impressions. We may share some tools, maybe even with a same purpose, but punk is very much of a political term and not entirely fitting to describe our music. I also think the ideals we share with this movement do not reflect that of punk.



The track titles on the album are abstruse and mysterious. How profound are the lyrics on the album?

The titles along with the lyrics are esoteric in the true sense of the word, but do not follow spiritual, gnostic, or religious doctrines. It's rather a subjugation of metaphors to serve our purpose. In their core they hide warped and distorted formulas for us to gain glimpses through the weaves of perception, knowledge, and existence.

The production on the album is unique and almost sedative at times. Is this how you intended your first full length to sound?

We think the idea of having a totally intentional and perfect sound for your album is a romantic myth. The recording is raw, bare and disarming, which reveals more of us than we

may have intended. Which is a very good thing!

I have admired the simple black and white photographic approach to the artwork of your few last releases. Can you tell us about the image used on the cover of "Feast..." and what it means in the context of the album and/or personally?

Thank you. The photo on the cover of "Feast..." follows the same principles as the previous releases. It is necessary to state that all our artworks



and the releases are simply a vessel to our music, rather than easing the consumption of our visions. The images bear an abstract and convulsive view to mundane nature and fetishes. Being the recipient of both image and music should tighten the concept, but it leaves you hanging somewhere on the way to your comfort zone, as you are lacking symbolism or cues. Somewhere, there is a face to the darkness we dare to bring forth, but one which is not comprehensible through our momentary eyes. It's all connected and if you get it, good for you and nice for us.

My first and only live experience of you was at Prague Death Mass 2013 and I've been wanting to catch you again since with no avail. What plans if any do you have to play live again and does your schedule allow for a full promotional tour of the album?

We have performed extensively in the

last couple years and now it's time to direct the energies inwards once again. We live every concert excessively as the plot thickens in an exchange of energy - from inside our constellation outwards directed. A full promotional tour doesn't sound like much fun, we prefer mixing old and new tracks which sometimes turn out more up to date than expected.

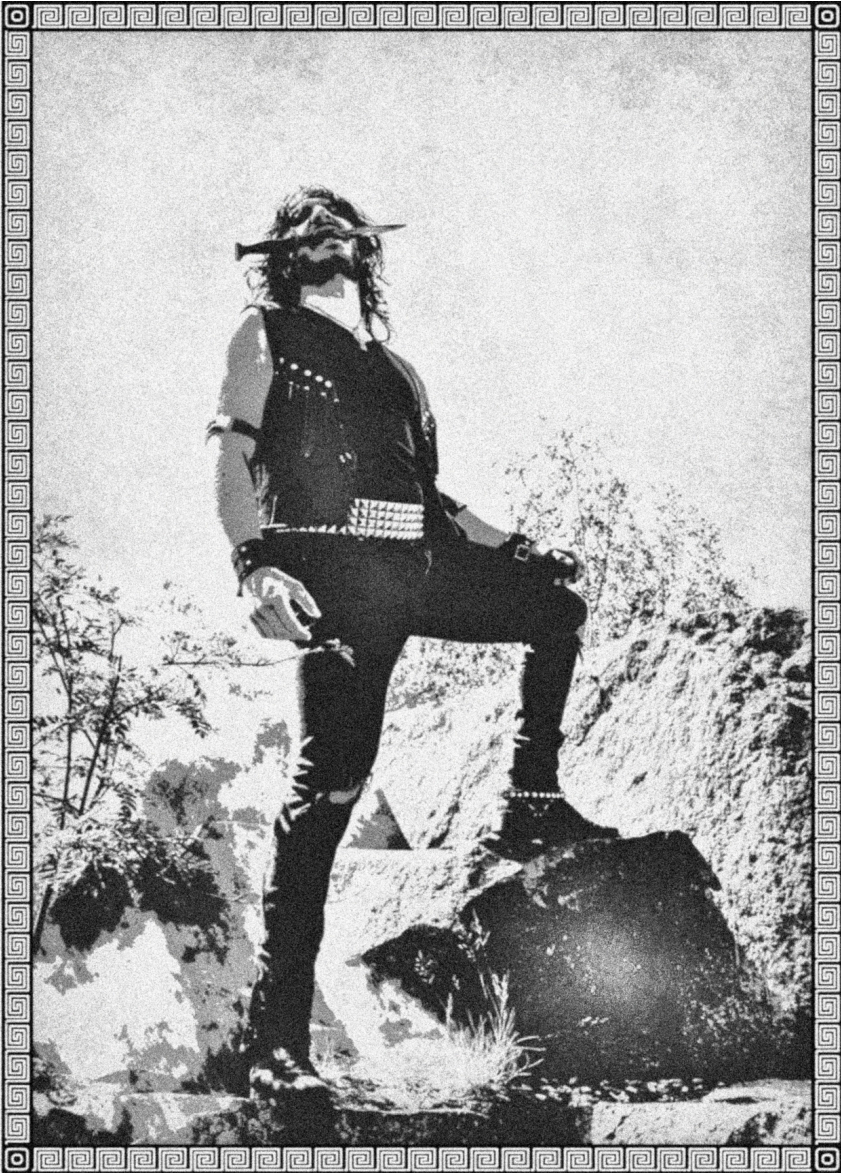
At that same fest I was lucky enough to pick up "Total Mental Desecration" on tape. Do you have any plans to re-release any of the 3 demo/rehearsal cassettes on other formats in the future?

"Rehearsal 2013" would be the only thing that comes to mind. It contains more intuitive and stripped-down versions of 'Vibrant Walls' and 'Eyes of Stone', which have originally been written in contemplation of each other.

Thank you for the interview.



FLAMINGOPEX



Italian one-man epic/black metal band FLAMEKEEPER released their debut “We Who Light the Fire” in late-2019. Marco S. spoke to us about the influences and message behind the music and his relationship with label Invictus Productions. Words by D. O’Mahony.

With a burning passion for music and philosophy, Flamekeeper produces epic metal with uplifting themes and refrains. Using a metaphor of fire, the lyrics behind the band focus on introspection and inner struggles.

Flamekeeper takes inspiration from life itself, from experiences I went through in my life. Its themes are inspired by the values I choose to live my life with, and inner strength is a core value of my life and what I do. Fire is the perfect metaphor as it is a source of power, it can be positive as a source of light but also a dangerous threat.

What I appreciate about it is that it can express the gift we have as humans to do good and bad. Our inner strength is a gift to the world. In another sense we can rebel against a war which is pushing us to be something we do not want to be, and the image of fire helps push that idea, hence the fire can be rebellious too. At the end of the day both are true, they just happen at different times in our life, where both these kinds of strength are required.

Philosophy and reality are at the core of Flamekeeper, while also being influenced by perhaps lesser obvious art, namely “Fight Club”, but musically it is a maelstrom of styles.

In Flamekeeper, message is key. It is not focused on being a proper genre, I don’t care. Musically Flamekeeper is a vortex of everything I like, NWOBHM, epic metal, late-70’s proto-metal, the themes and the artwork. There’s Hellenic black metal in there and even some folk, classical and medieval music. I’m a huge fan of ENNIO MORRICONE and his spaghetti Western soundtracks too.

Undertaking almost everything involved with the project, Marco formed Flamekeeper as an off shoot of his band DEMONOMANCY. With a clear vision for how the band should write, sound and be presented, his hard work has not only paid off, but puts further emphasis on the ideas behind the music through existentialism.

I tend to be a control freak, in this case it is also because my vision is so clear. I have a BA in sound

engineering, I went to a graphic design high school and so on. I happen to have all the abilities to deliver. I did not feel the need for other band members because I have a good network of friends to help me when I am blocked. For example, one thing I was not very good at in the beginning was singing, and my close friend Giuseppe from the band NIGHT GAUNT helped me out as a sort of vocal coach. He ended up adding backing vocals to the album, as I had them on the recordings as guidelines, but I left them in as they were amazing. I plan to have more guests in the future.

With the debut EP “We Who Light the Fire” released via Invictus Productions in 2019, Marco talks of his relationship with the Irish label.

It was about 3 years ago when I went to Dublin to see DESTROYER 666 and I met Darragh from Invictus Productions. I have been a fan of the label for years and we kept in touch. Then we worked together when he released my other bands album. With Darragh it is more than business, we are good friends. I have been at his home and met his family, we have had some great times together and have been in touch ever since. I recorded a few Invictus releases

over the years such as SACRILEGIA’s debut album, who Darragh advised to go to Rome to work with me. I also did work with the great MALOKARPATEN, and my friends in THULSA DOOM, who I recommended to Darragh to put on Invictus. We have this very cool thing going on and I’m able to make a small difference which makes me happy.



Having established the label as his port of call, Marco talks about how Invictus also suits the music and his ideas perfectly.

When the idea of Flamekeeper came up, I sent Invictus two demo songs to listen to and he agreed to work on it. For me, the most important thing is that he stands by what I say in my songs, the relationship between band and label is philosophical and not only professional. I am proud

to have the Invictus logo on the back of my records, which I think fits the aesthetic perfectly. There is extreme synchronicity between us.

The debut EP was released on the back of no previous demos or releases. Ambitious to release his music, Marco speaks of the concept of demo tapes and why he chose to dismiss one for a more concise release. I felt like a demo tape would not fit the concept, as I had a clear structure and plan in mind. I was able to deliver a good product, even though I had many songs. I used to love demo tapes when I was a teenager, a the likes of NECROVORE, INCUBAS,



BLOOD SPILL, etc. The dirty and nasty stuff. That is the archetype of a demo tape. “Demonomancy” by BEHERIT, that’s a demo. They are innocent. Flamekeeper was mature enough to surpass this, it wouldn’t be sincere.

I also had support of the label from day one, so it made sense. I had many songs, I do now. I had a list of songs in which I chose the four songs which weren’t too different or like each other for the debut. A 12” mini album was the obvious choice.

Flamekeeper faced its own journey, relocating from Italy to Sweden during the writing of the albums release. Marco explains the effect this change has had on the music and its production.

The scene doesn’t make a difference to me, as it is all done in my room by me. The plan of moving to another country influenced what I did of course, part of the EP was recorded here in Sweden, so the theme of travel is found throughout (especially in “Dead Sea Waters”). It is quite biographical. My life experience has influenced my view on the world and therefore makes its way into the music. Now with the coronavirus, my life has changed, as has the everyone

else's, which furthermore has influenced the music and society around me will never stop doing so.

Regardless of style, date or country, most heavy music is generally rooted in imagination, good or evil. Flame-keeper rejects fantasy for reality, instead drawing upon more human aspects of myth rather than any fantasy, a more refreshing approach that happens to fit the style of the music.

Our own lives are full of mythology, too often the heroic and epic atmospheres are naturally linked to pagan, fantasy type settings, astray from reality. The reason I want my music to sound so epic is to inspire people to live life with courage and strength and to embrace life instead

of escaping. The expectations we have towards our life cannot be met, as life is too boring compared to adventures in books and film. I often see people hiding in fantasy. We are given one life, and the music pushes us to become stronger in it. I think even in metal, there is a lot of people living vicariously through songs by bands like MANOWAR, the point is not to live this way, it should push you to be braver in your life.

We have real struggles day after day, I don't want to sing about superhumans who can fight dragons, you should not get distracted. You need to fight your own limits and that's the first step of overcoming that, the real mythological act in our life.





US two-piece black metal act MORTUM spoke to us about their EP 'Macabre Incenses', prior to their 2020 album 'Atlantean Ouroboros'.

Words by D. O'Mahony.

With song titles such as "Walker Between Worlds" and "Tidal Waves Dwarf Skyscrapers", you take a misanthropic and nature driven approach in your lyrics. Can you expand on your thematic choices?

We've always been a misanthropic band, embracing the idea that mankind is beyond hope and seems that with each new release that specific subject matter becomes more and more pertinent. "Tidal Waves Dwarf Skyscrapers" was inspired by the ancient writings from just about every culture around the world regarding the great deluge and massive catastrophes, a cleansing of sorts.

We believe that mankind is headed for what befell Atlantis all those centuries ago, that the worship of idols and materialism is getting worse and worse to the point that the only rational conclusion will be that of a massive flood, land upheavals, a natural reaction by the earth to complete toxic action. "Walker Between Worlds" is a song paying homage to the messenger god, Hermès, Thoth and Enki, different names for the same archetype. Specifically this one

focuses on not subscribing to the light or the darkness but in resting upon the grounds between, taking wisdom from both sides and creating your own path.

Perhaps the nature themes of the music are fitting, as the guitar riffs are melancholic. Is creating a memorable melody more important to you than other aspects of the music?

My intention and thought process first and foremost when it comes to writing our music is to simply compose music that I would want to hear. The bands who have had great influence me over the years (particularly bands from Finland, France, and Eastern Europe) have always been projects that blended raw, yet beautifully crafted melancholic riffs that stick in the conscious for days. It normally takes me anywhere from a few hours, to a few months to craft a song. Many riffs end up either in the garbage or recycled for a later time.

To answer the last half of your question, yes, it is more important than other aspects of the music. Without any memorable song writing, you

would have only bland and rehashed, and as they say ‘generic’ black metal that has been on repeat for as long as black metal was put on map. Yet we aren’t reinventing the wheel by any means.



The artwork and EP title suggest human punishment by fire. It stands out against the darker vibe of “Eheieh Chaos” and “Ascending Calamity”, what drew you towards it visually?

We’ve always been fascinated by occult subject matter, purification through fire is somewhat ubiquitous in that once something has run its course, it’s dies, only to come back in another form. Fire is the active element in the universe, and it is instrumental in the continuation of form, energies, etc. and the idea that everything continues up the ladder so to speak until they finally become

reabsorbed into the great nothingness, or Ain.

You play live as a two piece now. Does the minimal approach benefit your set sonically when playing with other bands?

I would say so. There are many benefits to being in a two piece, which has been on an incline over the years across the spectrum. We’ve been fortunate enough for our last few sets to have aid from other bands to enhance the overall sound by including a duplicate head/cab combo for me to play out of. Along with the added amps, it is certainly easier to sound “fuller”. However, it is very hard to top the sound of a three-plus piece band. What has given us more success I believe is the energy overall which transcends the audience. Despite the live setting, management and travel is less complex from an obvious standpoint.

The production on the EP is both raw yet clear, how did you approach this, and did you have a specific sound in mind? It works perfectly.

We were surprised ourselves how well the EP sounded before the mastering. The guitars, drums, and vocals were all recorded live in a rehearsal/recording studio in Northern New

Jersey and I recorded the bass separately at my home. The mix was then sent out to Jeremy, of Beorn's Hall, to The Hall Studios for mastering. As you mentioned, we do try to aim for a blend of raw, yet clear and audible sounding material without sacrifice. I tend to be a purest, and often get tired out of overproduced black metal (if not done properly of course).



Mortum is now 14 years into its existence, how do you intend to spend the next 14?

I've learned over the years that the key to longevity is to not give a fuck about what other bands are doing and not to rush on producing material. The next 14 will mirror the last decade and a half or so and then some. We tend to take a year to write and rehearse material prior to recording. The recording process is rather quick following writing and rehearsing occasionally. Despite being a two piece, we have different work schedules and other obligations in life that must be

taken into account.

Mystic (drums) also plays in two other projects of his own as well. Unlike other bands we associate with, we do not rent out any monthly rehearsal space and tend to gather on a whim to write material. Although we enjoy and believe in the live experience of the project, we don't play live as much as we have in the past. A gig or two a year seems to be the norm, and we're fine with that. It's worth the wait to play with the appropriate line-up.

What are your current views on the USBM scene? It is often one that is looked at differently across the water, but there are some obvious standout acts that manage to push the boundaries of dark and heavy music, without falling too deep into experimentation.

I'll speak with regards to the underground. The USBM scene is an interesting one. It is a scene that is divided by quality bands on one spectrum, and the rest who have paved their way to notoriety through the aid of social media on a popularity and 'who you know' basis. I'm not knocking these bands so to speak, however, it leaves many others untouched and or underappreciated.

The USBM scene I would say over

the years has improved on quality while taking an ode to the past. I'm particularly a fan of SANGUINE RELIC, ORDER OF DARKNESS, DUMAL and NEGATIVE PLANE off the top of my head. Fólkvangr Records has always been a positive platform for many underground bands to receive exposure.

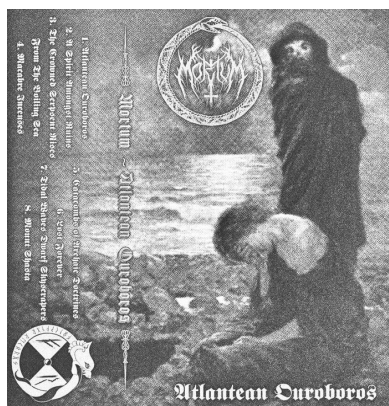
I would personally like to extend a greeting to The Corpse, of CEMETERY LIGHTS (NWN! Productions) and Apparitional Wolf Shadow of ANCESTRAL SHADOWS (Humanity's Plague Productions). Two of my favourite USBM bands from the New England region. So yes, there are plenty of bands to support, but like any regional scene, there will always be a handful of bands who are truly worthy of one's attention.

Do you find FÓLKVANGR as the perfect label for Mortum, should we expect another tape release soon?

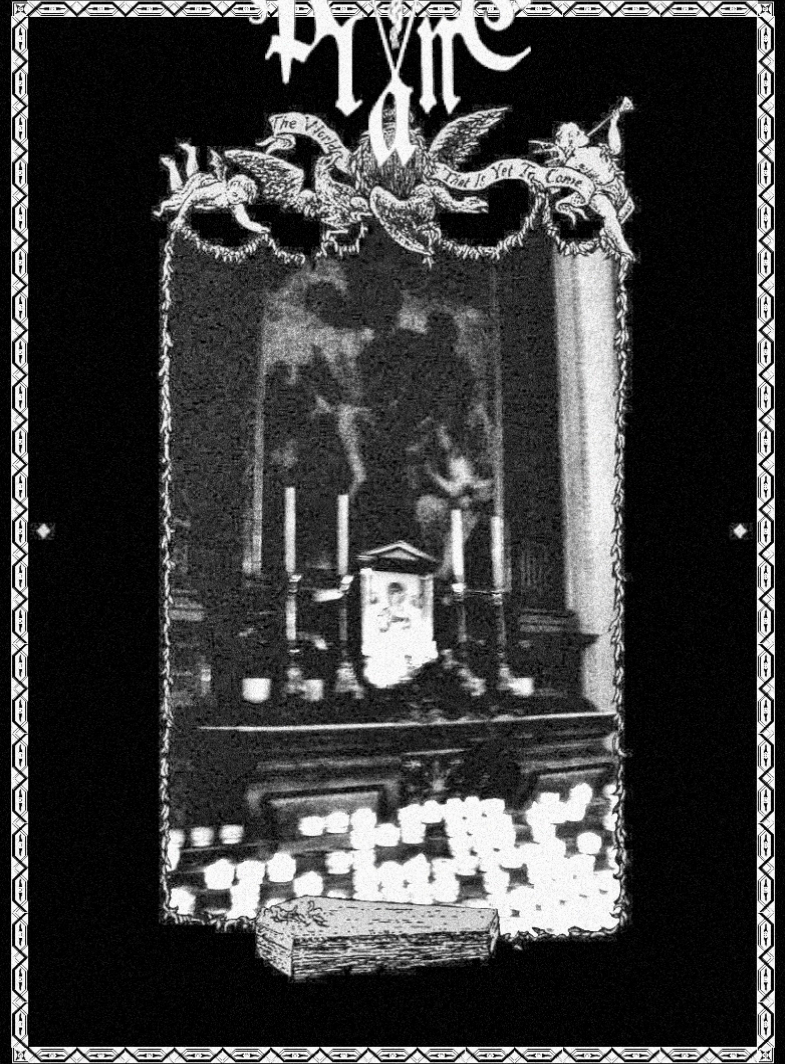
I have nothing but praise for Mark and Fólkvangr. We have received nothing but professionalism and positive promotion and feedback from them. We were more than happy collectively with the re-release of "Eheieh Chaos" on tape, and most recently "Macabre Incenses".

I would also like to have the album released on CD format and perhaps vinyl. Though those formats would either be released independently, co-released, or by a second label. It's always been a dream of mine to have a release on vinyl for we have never had the experience despite the surge in vinyl releases over the last few years. I would like to have either the first or second album re-released on wax, but beggars can't be choosers. Onward to 2020.

Total support to Flail ov Venom for the interview.



Negative's Plans



As featured in the last issue, US black metal group NEGATIVE PLANE took some time to discuss their performance in a church in Limerick, their unique sound and their use of reverb. Words by D. O'Mahony.

Negative Plane boasts an impressive sound of reverb and fill ridden lead guitar work. How important is it for you to project this in a live environment?

Reverb is just as important for us as guitar distortion! The varying degrees to which we use it depend on the setting and the acoustics in the room we're playing in, but usually the more, the better for us! The only time we'll tone it down on a particular instrument is to highlight it's use on a different instrument, so we'll avoid using it on the bass guitar, or certain parts of the drum kit so that it's heard more distinctly on the guitars and vocals.

8 years ago, you released "Stained Glass Reflections", and the sound is still extremely fresh. How content are you with how that album turned out? If we could go back to then knowing what we know now, we'd probably use a different kind of reverb, and mix it ourselves instead of at the studio, as it's quite hard to communicate to other people what we're looking for in an album's sound. We have demo versions of three of the songs on the

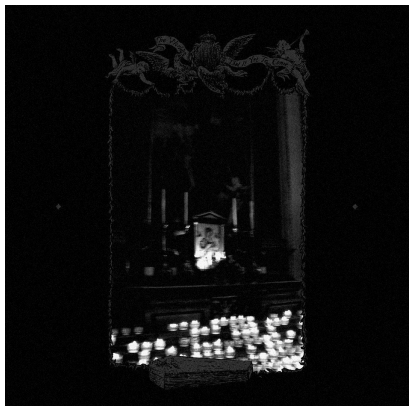
album, which are much much more massive sounding with guitars in our collective opinion, but we're also quite conscious of the fact that once something is released and finished that it should be left alone, rather than being tampered with at a later time.

There are so many old albums that I've tried to purchase again after quite a long time of not owning them, only to find that I can no longer find an original mix that I was quite happy with back then, due to the artist or record label going back and remixing or remastering the album with a different sound that may have possibly been what they had wanted back then, but is nowhere near the sound that I had grown to know and love as a listener.

You headlined the 20-year anniversary of Invictus Productions here in Ireland last year. What was it like playing your music in a church?

Darragh really picked the perfect setting for the 20th year anniversary of Invictus, and for us, this has been a dream for as long as we can

remember, especially since so many of our songs involve churches and cathedrals. We specifically tailored our live show to fit the setting and did our very best to capture the essence of the lyrics while playing. Hopefully, we can do something like this again one day.



The music transports the listener to a, not-so-positive plane of existence and there is a wide range of instrumentation within the music. What other influences have crept in to create the signature sound?

Musically, I can say that we're metal-heads first and foremost, but of course, like most creative people into metal, we will now and then delve into a few other genres, and therefore influences from other kinds of music will occasionally pop their heads out and find their way into our sound.

In terms of themes/art direction, the band covers esotericism ideas, yet is very much obscure. Any comments on the thought process when writing lyrics?

The music is always written first and then the lyrics come afterwards. I usually have a theme in mind when writing, but sometimes spontaneously a line will come into my head that matches a riff and things will develop from there. Also, I'll either have a song title far ahead of time or it'll be the very last thing that I'll come up with. I find that writing lyrics is one of the hardest parts of writing a song, because one needs to fit just the right words with the correct timing in the music, which seems obvious, but it's still a challenge for me to restrict what I want to say to a certain amount of syllables.

How has the band changed since its conception in 2001 to now?

This may take a while, so I'll try to give the shortest version that I can. At the very start of 2001, it was only me attempting to restrict the songs to just bells and organ music, but that was short lived, and then it was just guitars and a drum machine played by hand by a member who left in 2003 around the same time as Matthias joined. Before Matthias joined

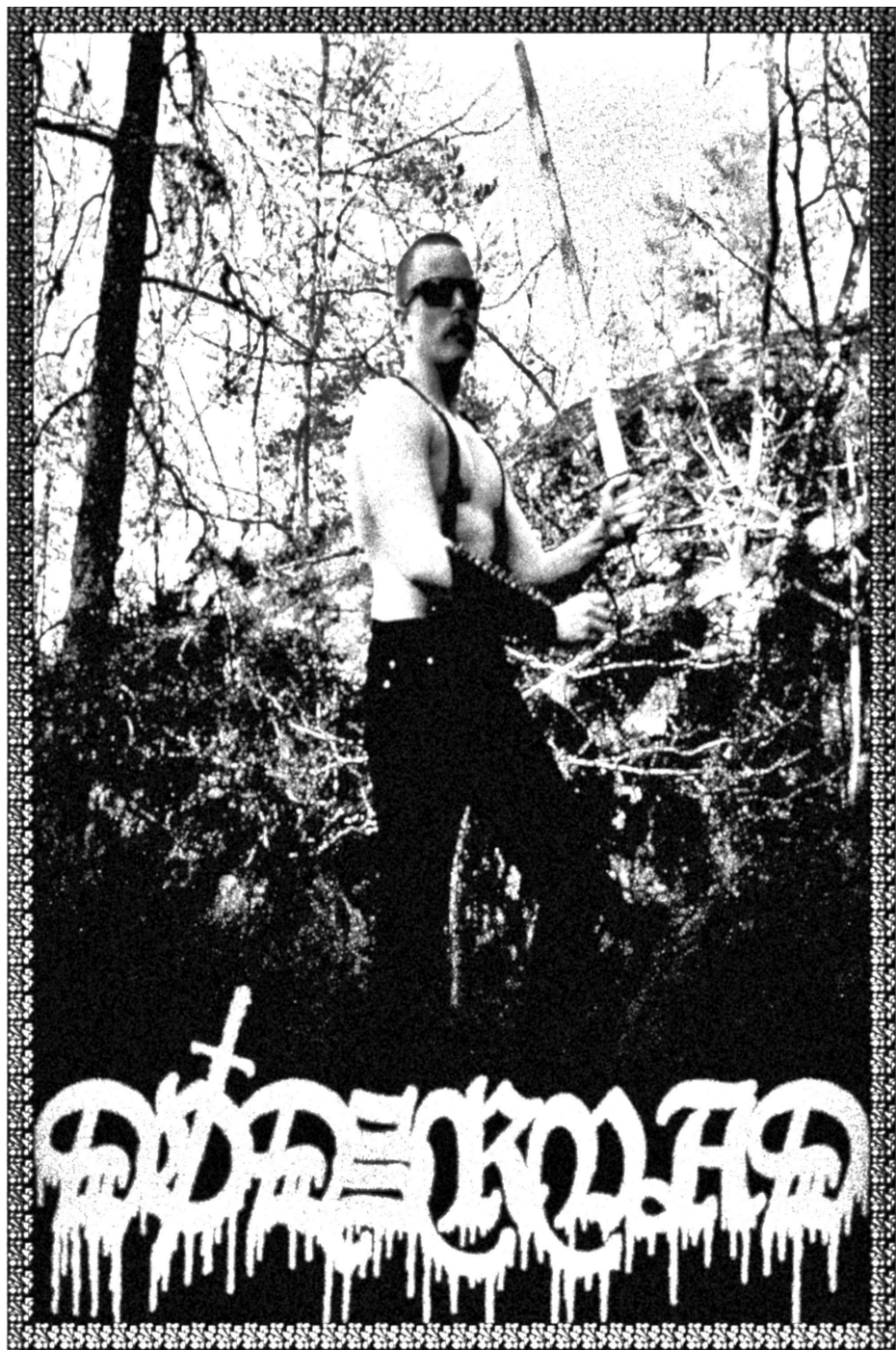
however, the “Surreality” demo was recorded. After Matthias joined and the other member left, Matthias and I attempted to play with a terrible drummer while Matthias did the vocals as I couldn’t play and sing at the same time back then.



Sometime in early 2004 I believe, we realized that we were wasting our time with the terrible drummer, as even without owning a drum set Matthias was far better at playing the songs than this person was, so we let him go and it ended up with him on drums. I finally learned how do both guitar and vocals at the same time. Matthias and I then recorded “Et En Saecula Saeculorum” in the summer of 2005 as a two piece. From that point, we attempted to play with a lot of different bass players, but they were either too lazy to show up to rehearsals or unable to handle playing the material. In 2008, we moved from Florida to New York, and we quickly found Diego to play the bass and we

then recorded “Stained Glass Revelations” with him on the bass in 2010. After that, we were invited to play in Europe, but due to Diego’s visa status in the United States, he was unable to leave the country, so we had Luis take over the bass and had Diego take over on second guitar.

However, Diego’s visa status was finally resolved about 2 years ago, so we can now travel as a four piece and finally, we now have our friend Robert helping us with sound and live keyboards.



Norwegian death metal act DØDSKVAD spoke to us about their latest demo on Caligari Records and provided further insight into their music.

Words by D. O'Mahony.

The demo from earlier this year is quite impressive. Were you contacted by Caligari Records and how was your experience with them?

Caligari Records contacted me shortly after the digital release of our demo. They have an awesome roster of bands and have been a pleasure to deal with. It's good to see such professionalism in a small tape label, and their efforts are paramount to ensure that these marginal genres thrive.

Can you give us more insight into the lyrical themes and artwork behind Kronike I?

Most of the lyrics were written before the music and was originally intended for a synth project. Somewhere along the way, it warped into death metal. The lyrics are meant to guide the listener along a fantastical depiction of old Scandinavia in the Middle Ages around the time after the Christianisation of Norway and up to the plague.

Heathen tribes were forced into the forests and mountains and waged war from their hidden abodes. The fol-

lowing releases will be set in the same realm. The artwork is from Viktor Vasnetsov's 'Knight at the Crossroads'. I've always been captivated by his art and his depictions of nature and mythology, so that choice was easy. The carving on the stone in the motif ties in nicely with the lyrics for 'Rike I Ruiner'.

Considering the success of this 18-minute-long demo, will there be a full length sooner rather than later?

Material for a second release is already written and will be recorded this year. It looks to be around 25 minutes of music at this point. I like the EP/demo format, but who knows, maybe an album is on the cards. There are even more riffs macerating in the vat of decay.

Norway is of course known for its black metal history but is it safe to say the local death metal scene is both healthy, and unique to Norway?

I'd say the death metal scene here is healthy, albeit small. People are getting older, and there seems to be a lesser influx of new blood in the scene. A lot of the older, more

established bands are still churning out good music, though, and there's quality among the newcomers as well. World class acts like DISKORD, OBLITERATION, and EXECRATION are still going strong. I'll implore the good readers to check out the new SAPPOROPHAGE and SOVEREIGN releases, whenever they may appear, for some good, underground Norwegian death metal.

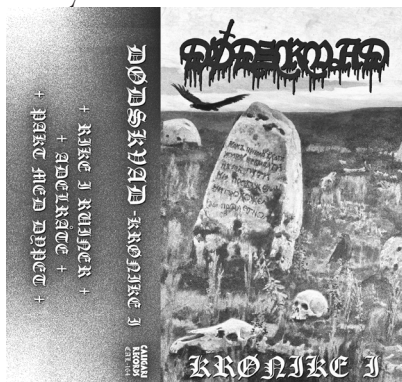
I admire the complexity to your music, but also the understanding that sometimes less is more. When does more become too much in a genre like death metal?

As with everything, it's a balancing act. Much of the death metal from the '90s and '00s lacks any form of dynamic, which is what makes bands like AUTOPSY, INFESTER and TIMEGHOUL so interesting. The youthful and naïve spirit of old MANTAS/DEATH, the first IMMOLATION, MORBID ANGEL etc. is also often sorely lacking. Riff salad is also a double-edged sword in this genre. Chaos is good, but so is the sense of a snaking path through the songs and some sense of coherence. MORBUS CHRON's "Sweven" is a shining star here. These are some of my ideals when

writing for this project, although that might be a tall order for an old troglodyte like myself.

Is there a want to expand beyond your home soil or are bands content with being locally acclaimed? In other words, does traction come with the tag of Norway to extreme metal acts these days?

I think it depends solely on the band in question. I'm perfectly happy with being a smaller entity, seeing as most of us have families or other responsibilities, and time is a commodity. Building a band from scratch can be a chore because of this. The days when we were in our early twenties and could just mess around in the rehearsal space and pound beers whenever we wanted are long gone. I'm lucky to have capable friends that are willing to play with me. Acclaim, local or global, isn't really a worry.



Are there any films or books that influence the band?

National romantic and mythological visual art has always been inspiring, like the Vasnetsov. Fair mention to other classics like Akseli Gallen-Kallela, John Bauer, J. C. Dahl, Gerhard Munthe, etc.

As far as films go, I'd mention 'Name of the Rose', 'Henry V', 'El Cid', 'The Seventh Seal' and 'Flesh and Blood'. I'm into anything with a gritty, medieval atmosphere. There's much inspiration to be found in the physical arts as well. Being outside, hiking, climbing, squatting...whatever you can do to improve the state your corpus will also give your mind and music a keener edge. You are the sword.

Is there a goal or motive behind the band or is it purely passion for musical performance?

This is purely a creative outlet and a good way for me to be able to cooperate with friends and musicians I like and respect. I guess you could say paying homage to the days of yore and the old way of creating death metal is a motive, but the goal is always just to finish the latest project. Interest never drives the creative process.

Finally, do you have any intentions to play abroad soon? I would imagine a European tour slot would go down brilliantly for you.

Most of us are busy with our pointless little lives, so getting together, rehearsing and going out on tour would be a logistical nightmare. It would be fun to play these songs live though.

Give us some time to churn out a couple more releases, and we'll see!

CORR MÓNA



Having been in existence since 2008, we spoke to the West Cork quartet CORR MHÓNA about their past, present, and future.

Words by M. O'Grady.

You have been playing a very unique brand of melodic death/doom since 2008. Can you tell us how the band formulated and of the early days?

The concept of the band arose one night after a SLAYER concert in Cork, 2007. We were up late that night drinking and listening to music. We wondered why, after years of playing music together and with others, we had never gotten around to starting our own band. The Farrowes and the Quinns (brothers) have been friends since our school days, and we were part of the Bandon metal scene. This scene was heavily influenced by early to mid-90s doom, death, and black metal. A covers band was initially started-up and in 2008, and a brainstorming and song-writing session in La Coruna (Galicia) led to the creation of Corr Mhóna.

The band share a broad palette of musical influences beyond metal and a love of natural, historical, and cultural heritage (whether Irish or from other parts of the world). It made sense to combine all of these influences in the new project, which would use whatever style of riff or

melody suited a particular piece of music, and which would be expressed entirely in the Irish language. Natural themes and motifs would be used in the lyrics, sound effects and art. With three songs written, the band began recording what was to become our first demo 'An Chéad Thriail'.

It has been 6 years since your last release and 5 years before that, your debut EP. With the knowledge of a forthcoming new album can you tell us why it is taken such time and what issues arise when writing, recording, and promoting your own material?

While playing in Corr Mhóna has been a strong passion for every member of the band, we also shared an interest in exploring the world. Many of the delays towards completing the various releases were really just time taken to discover new jobs or locations far from the nest of West Cork. Two members lived and worked in Korea in between the recording and release of 'Corrúineacht' and 'Dair'. Similarly, two members currently live in Canada, which makes writing and recording new material a little more difficult, but far from impossible.

Once the songs are written we head to the studio to record drum takes and then lay down the guitar and bass tracks at home. We then head back to the studio to record vocals and acoustic instruments, and to finalise the song arrangements. This allows us to continue working on our music no matter where we are in the world.

‘Dair’ was a big leap up in terms of the quality in writing and production from ‘Corrúineacht’. With your new album can we expect a similar stylistic approach? How did the writing and recording process differ from ‘Dair’?

Stylistically, we would not say that there is a major leap in the approach, just maybe the overall quality of the recording has improved for sure. Trackmix Studio is a well-established resource for recording metal releases, and we were in good hands with the sound engineer there, Michael Richards, who is massively experienced.

What is certain is that having gone through the writing-to-release process with both ‘Corrúineacht’ and ‘Dair’, our songwriting skills have improved and more importantly we’ve a better understanding about

what we actually want to achieve with the end product. Not compromising on creative integrity and always writing what flows naturally through each composition has been a hallmark of Corr Mhóna’s style. This will be evident with our next release more than ever.



In both previous releases I really enjoyed the contemplative interlude type songs/sections. Will the new album contain similar passages, and can you speak to the lyrical content or any thematic approaches without giving away too much?

Like with a lot of bands who have influenced us, passages of peaceful, contemplative music or atmospheric effects feel necessary when you have put the listener through an abundance of heavy sections. You can expect the same from the new release.

We have held so far to having a concept or theme in previous works; it really helps to drive focus with the songwriting, especially lyrically. We feel that any new album we release should have a proper flow running throughout it from start to finish.

One thing that always set you apart was your beautiful sung lyrics (as Gaeilge). It is quite unique, and the music manages to retain its earthy 90's vibe. Can you talk to us a bit of your musical influences and your choice to use clean vocals as well as the Irish language?

To address the language choice, all of us in the band have an interest in our native tongue; we are not just proud of our language, but also love its melodious cadence and tone, and also the unique colloquialisms that are inherent in 'Gaeilge'. Our language has a unique manner in expressing itself that makes direct translations ring a bit hollow; much better to have an idea of what we want to say and then let the natural richness of expression spring forth by using unique phrases in Irish.

Our musical influences are fairly varied. It's true that an early 90's vibe pervades the tracks. As mentioned above, much of our youth was spent

listening to, buying, trading, playing, and talking about the music written by the titans of that era. What is also true is that across band members there exists an interest in classical, contemporary, blues and world music, as well as movie and video game scores. We also love all kinds of metal, from virtually every style that has arisen since Master Iommi created the genre. Considering everything we said above, a quick list of our favourite metal bands could include: IN THE WOODS, CATHEDRAL, DISMEMBER, AT THE GATES, DISSECTION, DARK TRANQUILITY, THE GATHERING, MY DYING BRIDE, AHAB, ANATHEMA and PALLBEARER. In terms of non-metallic music, we love THIN LIZZY, HORSLIPS DEEP PURPLE, DEAD CAN DANCE, THIRD AND THE MORTAL, PLANXTY, HOLST, DVORAK, PROKOFIEV, and MAX RICHTER.

The mix of heavy and clean vocals were always on the cards for us, we were never going to stick to doing clean or heavy styles specifically. At the inception of the band in La Coruna, we decided to make full use of all of our talents; thankfully, we were blessed with members who could do

both. We bring this concept into our live shows and always intend to write music that we can pull off live, including all vocal harmonies and heavy vox. So, it is important to have three members on vocal duties when we play live to cover this.

I was always surprised 'Dair' was never snatched up by a label and I still believe it deserves a vinyl release. With this in mind what are your hopes and plans for the upcoming album?

We were disappointed at the time, as we had put our heart, soul, blood, and tears into writing and recording 'Dair'. However, the process of self-release was another learning opportunity that was actually quite enjoyable in the end, and it is something you have complete control over in every aspect. The other positive to take from the experience is, if we were to independently release again, we would be able to do so quickly

and efficiently. We are hoping to gain the support of a label going forward. This enables a band to reach an audience and gain exposure that is very hard to achieve independently. We will be actively seeking label support for our next release. Whatever happens, Corr Mhóna will always strive to create the best quality music we can, and we will not dilute or compromise the integrity of our creative process.

We are here to make music that we would like to listen to ourselves, to engage people both emotionally and intellectually, and to honestly express ourselves in our art.

This will never change.



HELLBROTHERS



A brief conversation with 'I', the guitarist/vocalist of black metal duo VULTHOOM, who talks of noise and his label Moonworshipper Records.

Words by D. O'Mahony.

"Invocation of Mal Dweb" is a loud and abrasive recording. Its distorted quality gives it a real primitive texture.

The recording process was very simple actually, just one room mic. Other than that, there was a little mixing in the studio and then it went straight to tape.

Is it right to say that the band feeds off of cosmic horror as a thematic, or even sonic, inspiration?

Oh for sure, I would say cosmic horror and related topics are very influential to the sound and lyrical content. Other themes include black magic hallucinogenic and prehistoric theology. We're also influenced by the literature of Clark Ashton Smith, as our name suggests.

Considering the two-piece setup and primitive sound, is playing live on the cards?

We have played live twice so far. Our live line-up consists of a bass player and additional guitar player. There's currently no talk of touring now, but hopefully we will in the future.

Vulthoom has direct connection to Moonworshipper Records. What

criteria does the music have to be on the roster, and what is the motivation behind the label?

Yes, we do have a direct connection with myself running the label and having the duties of guitar and vocals in Vulthoom. Jon, who plays drums, has also worked with mastering a variety of releases on Moonworshipper and has participated as an artist himself.

The label primarily deals in black metal and electronic music - dark ambient, dungeon synth and noise are the main sub-categories on the electronic side of things. And the only real motivation behind the label is to spread creepy music for nocturnal listeners.

Moonworshipper also distributes weird fiction from zines such as 'The Dark Corner' and 'Forgone Ramblings'.

What has influenced the conception of the label?

I would say black metal and noise were the main influence for creating the label, as that was the first music I began releasing. I can't say that I was

inspired by any labels or artists, just the overall idea of DIY music.

With Vulthoom, how does it differ to your other musical outputs? In other words, what compelled you to hit record?

Jon and myself have been making music together for nearly a decade in a variety of different projects. We've done black metal before and we wanted to do a band in the vein of artists like HELLHAMMER, CELTIC FROST, MUSTA SURMA and KATHARSIS.

“Invocation of Maal Dweb” is our attempt at creating that cold and rotten old school sound.





Speaking with Cathal Hughes, the man behind Dublin based black/death band SCÁTH NA DÉITHE, we talked about his latest release and the themes of history and folklore rooted within it. Words by G. O'Callaghan.

How have these last few months been in relation to your creativity and the fallout, following the release of the album?

The last few months have been strange times but have given me an opportunity to focus on being creative and working on new music. During the lockdown, I was able to listen to a lot more music, as well as read much more than usual, which all had led me to be in a focused and creative mindset.

The reception of the album seems to have been positive. For me one of the most rewarding parts of creating albums is that moment when it is finally released and you can fully let it go, just let the album exist, no more thinking over minor production, you can finally let your mind be free from it in a way, let yourself reset and start to think about future ideas.

I think many people I've talked to feel that way, particularly musicians and artists in general so there is some solace in this strange new territory at least. What literature/music are you enjoying now?

I think people involved in something creative have been somewhat fortunate during this latest period of strangeness to at least have some sort of outlet to get involved with mentally and perhaps be a distraction from everything. Now I've been enjoying music that leans more towards the death metal side of things, the latest TEITANBLOOD and KRYPTS are two that spring to mind right now. I tend to be erratic in my choice of reading material, varying from history and to sci-fi or various novels. When I'm in the process of writing lyrics I try to read poetry, "A Season in Hell" by Arthur Rimbaud is something I always return to for inspiration when I'm writing.

After a stunning debut album in 2016, a second emerges; 'The Dirge of Endless Mourning' was released via Vendetta Records at the dawn of this year, can you talk a bit about the thought process or context behind it?

The lyrical concept for the album is continuing the same path that the lyrics have explored since the beginning of the band, drawing inspiration from the darker side of Irish folklore

and history. I try to portray the emotional state or situation of a character who might be caught up in the events of a piece of folklore or history, rather than simply describing line for line the events of the tale. While considering themes for the Dirge of Endless Mourning I found that there were several stories I had taken note of that revolved around female figures in Ireland's folklore, both otherworldly and

the 1800s the church was actively attempting to tarnish her name even while she was still living, fearing her healing abilities as the work of some pagan evil that needed to be condemned. The album title refers to the three other more otherworldly figures. For example, An Cailleach Bhéara was once a powerful deity who over time was forgotten by the people of Ireland, her power and beauty fading while spending her life



historical. The songs on the album take their lyrical inspiration from four female figures: Caorthannach, An Cailleach Bhéara, the Bean Sídh and Bidy Early. For each of these figures their perception has become warped from the original genesis of their legacy, be it ancient or even as recent as the 19th century. Such is the case with Bidy Early, in

in sorrow, left to turn to stone upon a solitary headland.

I feel embodied the ancient pagan beliefs of Ireland that had been banished by the church, she is presented now as a demon like figure who needed to be defeated, but there are some who believe she waits below the waters of Lough Derg in the

hope that perhaps the people of Éire will embrace her again.

This album saw the departure of drummer Stephen Todd. Tom Woodlock did a fantastic job on session drums. Can you tell us how this came to be and the effect he had on the overall result?

Unfortunately Stephen had to step aside from the project as he emigrated in the year following the release of our first album, it would be great in the future if he was able to continue to participate in the band but for the moment it's just not possible.

As you said Tom did an amazing job on the drumming on the album. I have known Tom for several years through playing gigs together around Ireland. Having seen ZHORA perform countless times over the years I knew what a powerful and inventive drummer he is, so I was extremely happy when he agreed to play drums for the album. I really wanted Tom to put his own personality into the drum tracks, so I gave him the minimal amount of direction. His parts added a lot of detail to the rhythm section and the energy he brought to the tracks really takes them to a higher level of intensity.

Listening to the album, as well as the character Tom's drumming brings, to me there are a lot of ideas being played with, it seems more ambitious than the previous record. 'Ochón' for example has a more noticeable death metal feel to it in parts along the lines of the more modern DROWNED or KRYPTS. While Remnant Understanding shows a broader range of vocals with growls and traditional black metal screams like early PRIMORDIAL, I would say. How would you describe your writing process, do you like to challenge yourself or are you more laid back?

I do challenge myself to allow the songs to venture between different styles throughout, the challenge in this is to allow the flow of each song to feel natural and not forced or jarring. I tend to begin writing for an album with specific elements or ideas I want to incorporate over the course of an album and then begin by laying down a first draft of the music which is then refined and ruthlessly cut down into something I feel flows well. The inner self critic is strong in me, so I tend to throw away just as much music as what survives to be on an album. When the music is in its near final arrangement I begin to work on

lyrics, the flow of emotion that develops through the course of what is being portrayed in the lyrics will dictate to which piece of music they will fit and can sometimes lead to the music of a song being reworked to progress more in line with what the lyrics are seeking to convey. You mentioned the song 'Ochón', this song is based on the Bean Sídhé.

The title of the song is taken from a lament whispered by the Bean Sídhé at the window of a Lady Fanshawe, who in the year 1649 was fleeing with her husband from their temporary residence in County Cork, and while seeking refuge in the castle of the O'Brien family had heard the mournful voice of the Bean Sídhé at her window, three times repeating "ochón, ochón, ochón". The Bean Sídhé in her eternal life is doomed to mourn for the soon to be deceased members of old Irish families but her story is now often told to frighten and instil dread. The progression of the music of this song was reworked to match the lyrical content, to convey at first the portrayal of the Bean Sídhé as a foul creature we should recoil from at hearing the faintest note of her dirge, to the realisation she is truly a sorrowful figure we should pity.

You've gone with Luciana Nedelea again for the album artwork. The artwork for the last album is one of my favourite albums covers, beautiful palette, powerful imagery, this time around it features similar subjects but has a different execution featuring text, detailed characters and a symmetrical design.



Luciana has a fantastic ability to grasp what you are trying to portray through your lyrics, so the process I find works so well is to present her with the music and lyrics and allow her form her own vision from what she feels comes across as striking. The main concept of the cover artwork for *The Dirge of Endless Mourning* is essentially that there lies a richer truth beneath the shallow and often warped version of folklore that we are left with. Our main written source of our own Christian folklore and beliefs for

many years had been from texts transcribed by the medieval church in Ireland, and of course these sources are biased, the church often sought to use these tales to paint themselves as our saviours from these pre church traditions. They would also absorb these traditions and beliefs to help the population convert with less friction, an example being how sacred pagan wells were repurposed and are still to this day considered to be holy wells.

The cover depicts the Celtic tree of life tearing through a page of manuscript, on this page the characters you mentioned depict the warped representation of Mná Feasa as some sort of witch or malicious creatures who the clergy demanded people avoid.

Can we ever expect a live performance in the future?

There's nothing planned now of course, but I'm not against playing live if the right opportunity was to be offered. If this music were to be presented in a live setting there would be a lot of consideration given to the visual aesthetics that could accompany the music. I'm just hoping by next year we'll be able to attend live shows again, there was a steady growth of shows and festi-

vals around Ireland over the last few years that hopefully can continue after this plague has passed.

Speaking of visual aesthetic, when I listen to your music, I imagine the landscape that would accompany the stories and characters, but do you have a favourite place in Ireland?

That's a tough question, I try to visit somewhere along the west coast every year if I can. Connemara is a highlight for me. We really are spoilt in Ireland for places to visit. I've been guilty, as I'm sure many Irish people are, of taking it all for granted and not exploring our own amazing country as much as I should have in the past.

I love my hometown of Rush though, like a microcosm of the whole island it has an abundance of scenic areas and historical sites, ranging from Neolithic settlement, Roman activity, 18th century privateers and smugglers, Napoleonic watchtowers, the estate of the 'big house', a White Star Line maritime disaster and much more.

Thank you for the interview. It's great to see the new underground that is emerging in Cork now and this zine is a fantastic addition to that scene, long may it continue.



POISON RUIN



The enigmatic POISON RUIN creates lo-fi punk music that embraces NWOBHM and dungeon synth. The main man behind the project gives us a brief insight into the music. Words by D. O'Mahony.

Where did the idea to fuse lo-fi punk and dungeon synth come from?

It started with wanting to do a sort of Wipers-style band- not directly copying their sound as much as aiming to achieve a similar thing. That is, to make songs that are musically evocative without stepping outside the bounds of loud, fast, simple rock. I'm a big fan of dungeon synth, but struggle to make music in the method that is sort of required by dungeon synth. I can't sit there and toil away making long-form compositions. Making punk music is physical and energetic, and I rely on that to see an idea through. The 1-2-minute dungeon synth passages are basically just the maximum length of time I can sit there and do it right before losing direction. Lyrically and aesthetically, I wanted to use dark brutal fantasy imagery to represent aspects of our current world. The dungeon synth intros just clicked to tie all these things together.

With the inclusion of dungeon passages, do you find yourselves writing specific themes to suit the sound?

There is a loose 'rule' for writing Poison Ruin songs that the parts need

to have some aspect that gives them an ancient or mystical quality. This is usually achieved by using certain harmonic modes or cyclical meters. I hum and whistle a lot of ideas into my phone. These ideas are often developed on a keyboard because I've found it's easier to adjust the melodies and harmonies that way. Once I like the part, the next step is to translate it into a riff that is comfortable enough to play on guitar and fits more into some punk or metal context. The idea usually needs to be simplified or altered in some way to suit the style. So basically, the dungeon synth passages are an opportunity to reinject a song with that initial aesthetic quality if it feels like it's lost something in translation.

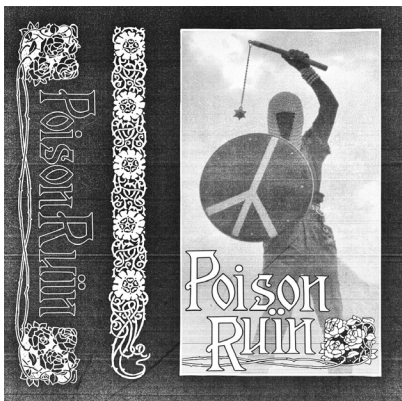
Are there any plans to release the demo to a wider audience via a label?

There is a second demo that will be released later this year. There is going to be a 12" record that compiles the two demos.

How was the demo recorded, can you give us some insight into production choices?

I record in a shared practice space in

a warehouse in West Philadelphia. I overdub the tracks myself. Some of it is recorded digitally and some is done to tape. The microphones and equipment I have access to is pretty modest, so while I can get decent quality recordings, they can be inconsistent. So basically, I try to record everything at the highest quality I can, and then “glue” the sound of everything together by fucking it all up a bit afterwards. I master things to sound darker and run the tracks through cassette decks. I think “lo-fi” recording can heighten the sense of a recording as an artifact. It can help it to feel more physical and otherworldly at the same time.



The mystery behind the band remains, but will Poison Ruin ever perform live?

There is a live band in the works. But right now, it feels strange to make too many plans about playing shows. The

US is still very much dealing with this plague, so large gatherings feel like a distant dream. Soon enough.

How would you explain using books, film or other music to an unfamiliar listener?

Zounds demanded “Demystification” while MANILLA ROAD wanted “to keep thee Mystified”. Why not both? A major goal of Poison Ruin is to inject the symbolic order of fantasy, horror, and the occult with the ideology of anarcho/peace punk.

Finally, do you identify the band as a ‘dungeon punk’ act, or are labels redundant? I believe the charm to the music is that it stands alone with a multitude of influences.

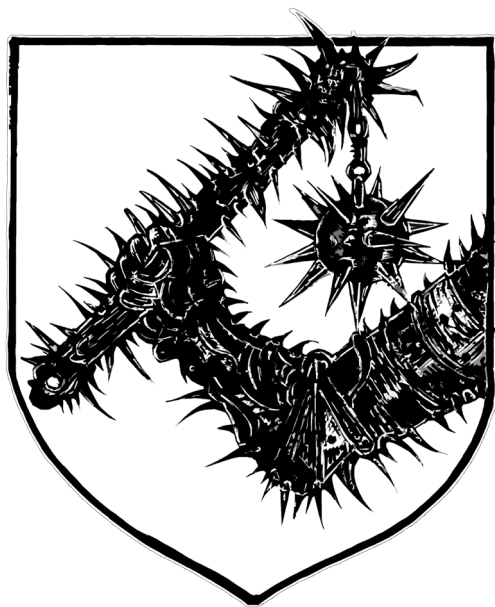
The songs cover a wide range of styles and influences; anarcho punk, neo-psych, oi, deathrock, crust, NWOBHM, etc. There is an overarching aesthetic that helps tie it together, a combination of everything I like. I think calling it “dungeon punk” is maybe trying to identify the aesthetic more than the music itself. I don’t have any personal need for the label, but if it helps someone else describe or compare the sound that’s fine with me.

Labels

Terratur Possessions
Moonworshipper Records
Fólkvangr Records
Caligari Records
Invictus Productions
Vendetta Records

Thanks

John O'Brien
Emmet Casey
Marc O'Grady
Gerard O'Callaghan
Jim Morrish
Oliver Reed





October 2020
Issue #3

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