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MYRKGRAV / FEJD / ALVÉNRAD / DYNFARI / STILLA / ASCENSION / ALCHEMYST
VÄLLENDUSK / ÅURVANDIL / MAMONT / OCEAN CHIEF

the releases of »Nekromanteion« I know (tape and vinyl) are pretty perfect to me. I already know that I will enjoy playing the vinyl in years to come – what are your thoughts on that topic of releases and the general decline of the appreciation of music? Do you have »special plans« for Alchemyst releases in the future or are you satisfied with the production level of today?

Inkantator Koura: I like simple edition for CD. I need a jewel case and a good booklet, and a CD featuring all tracks of the session and I'm fine. Bonus issues like documentaries, interviews or something like that, I dislike. But I really enjoy the art-book releases from Prophecy Productions, that's something worth for it and something special, especially because of the extended booklet concepts. For vinyl editions I cannot answer this question, because I'm not a vinyl collector. I really enjoy unique audio-tape editions, handcrafted or something like that, this gives the whole thing, and normally it's a demo on it, a personal touch.

I want more depth in Alchemyst and more atmosphere and a brighter sound, that's my vision of how the second opus of Alchemyst has to sound.

Abgal Ibbur: I've been into hunting for vinyls many, many years ago. But I've never been into buying this or that special edition just for the sake of owning something. In the very end, you cannot take anything with you beyond the gates of Hades. What remains are the glorious moments you had when listening to certain kinds of bands. And this is the most important point, I think. Of course I'm looking for the vinyl version in the first instance if I want to get hold of a new record. But in the end it doesn't matter if I only got a blank copied tape featuring rare demo stuff or something like this in my hands. The music is all that counts. Lyrics and booklets are there to complete the overall-impresion of a band, nothing less, nothing more. This is at least my way of thinking connected with Hellish Crossfire. In Alchemyst however, there's a much deeper sense for the artwork as a whole, including music, lyrics and artwork...

Well, maybe we should finish the small talk now before we go on illuminating why Dark Throne's »The Underground Resistance« turned out as one hell of a great metal record?! Thanks a lot for enflaming dark and heavy beating hearts with your passionate tunes and for enlightening our readers with your answers! And if you think we stole your time – it's all Björn Thorsten's fault...!

Inkantator Koura: Thankz Thor! And at least I want to thank for the honor to be part of your great 'zine and want to welcome you back on wood-woven paths and spreading your trollish thoughts and exhibitions again through Mørkeskye and Trollmusic, it was a loss in the past years of your inactivity!

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FEN
»Dustwalker«
(Code666)

Yes, I'm a bit more prejudiced when it comes to these scalds of fog-ridden metal from East Anglia, especially since their vocalist / guitarist The Watcher delivered such a deeply human and forthright performance on De Arma's debut full length. Honestly I hadn't been too fond of Fen until the split-album they did together with the aforementioned band. »Epoch« has been solid through and through, and now »Dustwalker« could become a make-it-or-break-it kind of recording, meeting the high expectations of an ever growing fan base residing somewhere in the nebulous outskirts of atmospheric dark music between post black metal and dreamy drifting heavy music. Once again Fen deliver an album which takes its time to unfold its many shades and which hustles the listeners into sitting down and enjoying the long tracks with unconfined attentiveness. You could pick certain passages out of the context of the whole album, in order to let people with a certain background in rock music listen to them and they might agree that those fragments sound close to God Is An Astronaut, Gruenewald or Alcest. Yes, indeed, the POST factor on »Dustwalker« is irritatingly high. You ask why it is irritating? At least for me, who has forgotten the entire world around me while losing myself in "The Hound Of The Baskervilles", fog has always been a harbinger of something inscrutable, probably inscrutably evil. Fen obviously know more than well enough into which direction they head off, and they do so with inspiring enthusiasm. Here the fog is your companion which empowers your imagination and which makes you feel safe on your way through the neverland in which the schemes clear away... sometimes I listen to »Dustwalker« and find myself flying away, daydreaming, leaving the conscious behind. In that state I don't KNOW whom I listen to on a rational basis (I probably wouldn't name the band), but I would FEEL right at home. For me, that's exactly what makes music universal: you »know« it by your heart if it connects with your inner self. That was the case with a small Dutch band called The Gathering and (better-known) Swedish Tiamat in 1992, and 21 years later it's no difference with FEN. Their music is far from being "perfect" in a technical sense, yet it perfectly hits the listener on the dramaturgic level. There are many wonderful melody lines and stirringly arranged details, moreover Frank's vocal performance once again turns out so deeply human that it almost hurts. This is for sure heart's blood turned into music.

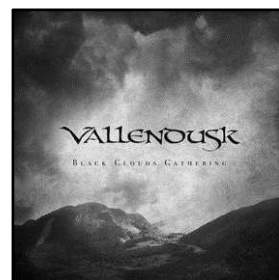


SONIC REIGN
»Monument In Black«
(Apostasy Records)

If there's something to criticize about Sonic Reign's second full length album, it must be its frighteningly perfect focus on the purely hateful clichés of black metal grimness. »Monument In Black« turns out as sequence of seven merciless frontal attacks which have one single aim – to leave the listener with his ears bleeding, down in the dark gutter with no hope left. Already with its MCD »The Decline Portrait« and the debut full length »Raw, Dark, Pure« the German duo had constantly to fight prejudices and silly argumentations, and I guess this won't stop with their new effort. Nevertheless the question whether Sonic Reign have been heavily influenced by Satyricon and Secrets of the Moon leads into the wrong direction – you should better ask whether there are many bands left on similar levels of precise metallic aggression and destruction?! The answer must be »no« and »Monument In Black« is – although being much less complex and sophisticated – the most remarkable »modern« German black metal record since Odem Arcarum's »Outrageous Reverie...« and Ascension's »Consolamentum«. It has an almost pop music kind of approach when it comes to catchiness, just like in the best days of Slayer; I mean everybody can easily take up a line like »it's just so fucking cold« in the album's mighty opener »Abhorrence vs. Scum«. Most of the riffs are simply killer riffs, most of the melodies have earwig qualities, the vocals are perfectly understandable and deliver grimness, grimness, grimness, hatred, despise and rebellion (in »The Whisperer In The Dark«), the drums are massively killing as well, thus Sonic Reign are probably the most powerful seducing gateway drug to the black metallic destruction of your brain. (Yes, this includes the idea that it won't seduce long time addicts that easy...!) I guess Ben (vox & strings) and Sebastian (drums) must be thankful for Azathoth's input concerning the lyrics, because they fit like a thunderstorm of fists in the fuckface, so really everything on this album fits together more than well and serves the scurrilous aim to overrun the listener. Nevertheless it's also obvious that refrains like »Raise Your Fist« have been written for metal heads in a more than drunk state on festivals or other gigs, and Sonic Reign must ask themselves whether they stay a studio band which offers almost too perfect albums every now and then without challenging itself in the live surroundings which would probably impress the guys enough to add some less clean edges to their songs. Thus this album leaves me as well and again behind with the irritating notion that Sonic Reign still lack some characteristics that help them overcome the image of the perfect clone. »Monument In Black« turns out awfully good in its catchiness, yet it can't compete with classic albums like the first Graupel LP or the Alchemyst debut – you guess why: the sublime personal undertones are just missing on this outburst of cold aggression. Still many other bands would probably die for once in a lifetime being able to compose and play a hymn like »Daily Nightmare Injected«...

VALLENDUSK
»Black Clouds Gathering«
(Pest Productions)

Only short time after their well-received three-track-debut-EP Vallendusik present their first long playing effort featuring roundabout 70 minutes of solid black metal with roots in the Mid-Nineties as well as in contemporary progressed forms of atmospheric »post« metal. It's a remarkably strong album, although at first it might seem a bit unspectacular in regard to the many similar releases which typically hit the market. Again you don't hear that Vallendusik is a band based in Jakarta since there's no special Indonesian vibe on »Black Clouds Gathering« when it comes to the music itself which is free from folk influences as far as I can say. But this doesn't mean Vallendusik plays a faceless international easy-entertainment-stylo-metal, not at all! The seven songs on this album turn out as one long hymn with different chapters, building up on each other, all together forming a powerful thunderstorm raging for at least 70 minutes. As it is often the case with severe weather, you even don't recognize your nearby surroundings in details, and with their unremitting walls of riffs and thundering drums Vallendusik really draw a curtain of thick dark clouds around themselves through which the guitars come dashing with epic heaviness every now and then. Many of the arrangements attract with a rough beauty, some are indeed a bit foreseeable, and if there was a slight weakness on »Black Clouds Gathering«, it must be the quite monotonous vocals which don't comply with the forceful guitar work, especially in the second half of the album. The production is powerful, clear and state of the art. All in all it's astonishing to realize in what short period of time the Indonesian quartet achieved to focus on seven new long tracks and to masterfully craft them into an album which reminds more than just in its title of metal recordings with rather timeless quality.





TIGHT PATTERNS LEADING INTO GREYISH & MYSTIC REALMS

At first sight Vallendusk from Indonesia might be an unimposing band. It surely doesn't build up an image around its heritage and the kind of post black metal it plays, is said to be performed by some good handful of other bands around the globe. So what makes this quartet from Jakarta worthwhile to discover? For both us, Volkmar and me, it's a question of strength and authenticity of the music. Both of us being confronted with zillions of new metal releases each week, we just enjoy the almost calm power evoked by the energetically drifting sound of thundering drums and stirring guitar riffs. Thus Volkmar conducted an interview for the Rock Hard magazine which we reprint with kind permission. It was done when Vallendusk released their debut EP (spring 2012) and answered by their guitarist Mithos.

When did Vallendusk come together? Was it easy to find band members with that love for that sound?

It was in September 2011 we had a discussion to form a new band different both in musical and aesthetic than any of our previous bands. It wasn't easy to have friends or members who share mutual taste in this specific style of sound. We're just the lucky ones.

How long did it take to compose the music, where did you record?

It took us three months or so to get the composition and arrangement done and ready for a debut EP release. We recorded the songs in late January with the help of our friend from TearGaslab studio.

Your sound is very much inspired by old European Black Metal bands like Windir or Borknagar... do you agree? Indonesia is more well known for Grindcore and Punk bands, is there a big Black Metal scene at all?

We're okay and take that as a compliment, thanks! Our first influences were of course the early black metal bands from the mid 90's and a few ones from the later era by the likes of Ulver, old Satyricon, Windir, Taake, Angantyr, etc, but we're basically also influenced by anything; anything that we hear and that's not just metal, as long as the music gives us some state of mind that we appreciate. We have also been influenced profoundly by folk music in its various forms, shoegaze/post rock, as well as pastoral ambient music. Black metal is not people's cup of tea here, but we do have our own small community separated in different provinces/regions. We won't call it a »scene« or whatsoever. We do our own thing DIY,

sharing and discussing about music on the nets. We occasionally make also a small event/gig/festival which is financed collectively by the community members. The atmosphere is more like a gathering group of people from all over regions who share the mutual love for the music.

Are you all from Jakarta? How is life there? Is it hard to find rehearsal rooms?

Yes, we are. It's a big capital city and pretty much urban, surely that kind of place where most black metal fans would feel silly to live. It's not that difficult to get a rehearsal room, not that expensive to have one either. Being in a metal band means spending more money on the band than you can ever make even from your regular job.

Did you ever had problems with authorities, because you live in Muslim country and Metal often is not a music that authorities like?

Not at all. There's no law banning metal in our country. Some religious people can have disrespect on us but that's their problem. Authorities seem not to care much about music and art, they're more interested in politics, economy, sports, etc. However, there can be a situation where we firmly believe that every time the government needs to distract people from strategically important issues, they will start an attack, and unluckily, we're their easiest target to hit, just because of our look.

Where did you take your band pictures with all those great mountains? It is really tasty composition and not this typical photos of bands...

It's a recreational spot, 350 km away from home. It's really a nice location surrounded by mountains

and lake. Just like any other Black Metal bands, we love to cite nature and the elements as inspiration for our work, but in the end, we go back home to our air-conditioned bedroom, order a pizza, and check music on Youtube. We're all just typical bunch of hypocrites to some degree or another, haha.

You played at this Humming Mad event. What exactly is this, where did it happen?

Humming Mad is the name for the event held in a regular basis by the small group community called We.Hum Collective. It is made up of people who have pretty diverse musical interests, although they all tend to like aggressive music. Our friend, Pratomio, invited us to play there. It was our first gig and we shared a great experience.

How you came in contact with Chinese label Pest Production?

We contacted Deng for a promo submission back then. He did show a great interest in our music and seem very easy to cooperate from the beginning.

What are your plans for the next time? Is a full length album already in sight?

All songs (riffs) for our debut full length are being written already. We just need some time to work with the structures; lyrics; arrangements etc. If everything goes according to the plan we'll record the album sometime in July/August this year.

Final words from you to all readers in Germany?!

Dank viel für die Unterstützung, Volkmar! Wir würden uns freuen sie wirklich! (Hope the german is correct, hehe) To all readers thank you for spending your time reading this. We don't share much about ideology and philosophy here. Hope you won't find this interview is kind of boring. If you want to know more about Vallendusk, official news, etc, go to facebook.com/vallendusk.

- Part II -

In the second part of this article we concentrate on the band's new album »Black Clouds Gathering« which has been recorded in the meantime. Mithos answers now the questions of yours truly troll cadaver.

Merry meet, Mithos! It's been just a bit more than a year since your band was founded and now you already recorded the debut full-length album after a pretty well-received EP, thus you really waste no time! Does Vallendusk play such a big part in your life that you can invest so much time into the creation of music and the things surrounding it?

Hello Thor! Yes, the band has been taking such an important role in our life, but not that consuming most of the time as we have also other things to deal with in daily life. I work a full time job while others are both studying and working as well. But when we meet and work together, we seem to focus. This is the cause of integrity and commitment as a band.

How prepared did you feel before recording »Black Clouds Gathering« - were you forced to adjust quite many arrangements in the studio or went most of the work smoothly?

All the material was practiced meticulously beforehand, so we had quite a clear picture of what we wanted before recording. Coming into the studio was crucial however, partly because we financed the whole thing ourselves but wanted also to make the process as smooth as possible. The recording was a long and exhausting process, though it was an experience which regarded by us as challenging as it's enjoyable. Good determination while carrying it into execution is one of the key that we learnt from there, it's something that comes from your experience. We're just feeling grateful on how

everything went. We're still growing and learning as musicians.

What are you most proud about when you reflect the recording session – that you realized such a powerful production, that you created some whirlwinds on the guitars taking the listener with them through a blustering night sky or that you survived recording such a long album anyway?

The fact we've survived working on the ideas that we have at each given time, both in the rehearsal and in the recording session, the ongoing development throughout the process (ups or downs, expected or unexpected) is something that we're most proud of. We get what we intend for, you know, the process of getting there. The result is a matter of measurement of course, but what we feel about it may change from time to time.

»Black Clouds Gathering« is a strong title which certainly wakes specific associations in metal heads' minds, be it the beautiful cover artwork of Primordial's »The Gathering Wilderness« or personal remembrances of trips into the wide open landscape and the malign darkening of the horizon – what do YOU link with the title?

The reason we picked that title is because it sparks quickly all this vivid imagery and storytelling, especially when you look into the definition. The words are eventually leading us to venture into more greyish, somewhat mystical realm... channeling the emotion we want to portray with the music perfectly. We just really dug it and felt it was an appropriate name for the album, something to get the right atmosphere.

I would tend to describe your album as »tour de force« far from easy listening. It really needs time and concentration, yet there are some remarkable passages here and there which lift songs like »Among The Giants« (btw: again a strong title) on a completely different level than the standardized so-called »pagan« metal which has flooded parts of the scene. How do songs like that develop, with what do you start and how do you discuss them – do you use concrete pictures for example?

We wanted to make music that suits us the best, but can't deny also it's always flattering when people can feel a sort of comfort with our music. We worked on the ideas and the result is what you get. There are a number of details within the songs which might seem not for everyone to catch up easily or maybe needs couple of listens to fully grasp the idea. But still we think this album is accessible enough with clear direction from start to finish. It's far from the idea you might get when listening to Opeth or latter Moonsorrow albums, just for example. But again, the production value favors many times, due to the fact that we jammed so much ideas, sound and everything else into the mix that the competition among them makes things a little cloudy, or become not clear enough for some reason. The process of creating the songs was typically like with other musicians... we just sit down and write... if find some good riffs turn up, we



just record or just remember them somehow individually. After that, we work together to spend time with the song, elaborate some ideas as we go through... sometimes we know immediately if the song or composition is good enough to go or needs revision.

Can playing a downright heavy and fast long track (instead of a radio-friendly tune) be compared to running ten kilometers instead of five? Do you also reach a state of "flow" where you have the perception that everything just happens very naturally and the music flows through your body?

The only thing we're truly conscious of writing a song is creating a collection of moments that we aimed for, intentionally. Some of the songs were a matter of combining different things, getting woven deeper into the structures and riffs. It also became a matter of picking which ones we thought were the strongest, though most of the time we ended by using all of them, made them fit in together and



“Music has always been a great healer for us, and so has nature. Both are significant mood changers and relievers.” - Mithos

moving along nicely. That's probably why most of our songs become quite lengthy in duration. What makes us (hopefully) stand out from rest of the crowds which play long track music is, neither our song have so much gimmicks added on, nor clichés in its structure of building up in a lazy way. All the riffs and melodies are in flow, extrapolated from each other, release their energy, send you through ups and downs with smooth joints/breaks between them, and climax several times. You don't have to wait that long to discover a real thing. So, I'd say it's like running ten kilometers with an excitement of a pure joy.

How important is it for you to visit the places which we can see in your gallery on Facebook? Is there an inner need to sometimes leave the city behind and to put the focus on more primal matters?

Music has always been a great healer for us, and so has nature. Both are significant mood changers and relievers. They're possible to get us to some state of mind that we always appreciate. Being raised and/or living in a city-industrial environment, we'll most likely need some sort of escapism. It's a healthy way of forgetting about our daily trivialities and just go on a trip.

Black metal, especially the nature- and mythology-inspired style, starts to get discussed as global music style with people in countries outside the Western world taking up the influences from Northern Europe in order to dig for their own cultural and spiritual roots. Is that an idea you can relate to? What is the potential of music, and of black metal in special?

People have the right to take any pride in their

heritage and that's certainly not a bad thing. But it's just something that we won't represent here as an iconic impression within our music. What we're trying to express is something that isn't so narrative, symbolic, or historical in tradition. We don't limit the term nature as something derived from any cultural point of views whatsoever shaped from its respective place and time. Nature in the sense of beauty and the connection between man and nature. When we speak about nature, it refers to home actually, in its purest-most primal perspective. Home is where you live and where you feel secure, inside the heart, not in the sense of exaggerated feelings in loving the fatherland. The expression and the arousal of emotion by black metal music is pretty much the same like any other art found from the Renaissance to the Romantic era. It's an outlet for somebody to recreate, stimulate, awaken their sense somehow... above and beyond.

If a stranger asked you to take you to a place which you consider as perfectly Vallendusk-ish in its atmosphere, whereto would you take him?

Any place where he/she will find fulfilment of his/her inmost dreams.. anywhere is could be.. depends on the person.

What do you plan for the release of »Black Clouds Gathering« - any shows, parties, trips?

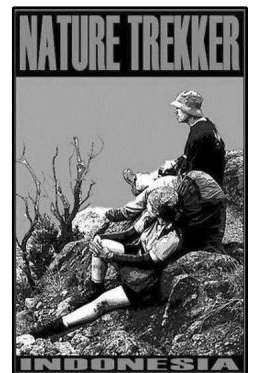
Just a regular promotion set up basically, mostly through the internet.. making people aware of the release... hoping for some positive feedbacks afterwards. A release party or a small tour would be cool but nothing fancy has been set up yet as of now.

What does friendship mean in Vallendusk?

Loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, willingness, not to say the least sacrifice. Friendship is one the most amazing inventions in the world, as it makes life much easier to live.

Where would you like to see Vallendusk in ten years? How far do you want to get with the band?

As time marches on we all pretty much live and learn, being conscious of what we've done in the past and how things could improve, being capable of more... we'll give more of ourselves by delivering our work in a more confident and mature way perhaps. We don't want to speculate that much, we'll just have to wait and see what's up... do everything that we can do best at present moment and enjoy the ride as much as possibly much.



Okay, Mithos, thanks for taking the time to do another interview for a lousy German fanzine! I wish you all good luck and that Vallendusk first two chapters will be followed by some more!

No, thanks to you Thor! It's really an honor for me to do this. Nice to see someone keeping the old-fashioned underground publication alive. Our warmest greetings to all Mørkeskye readers there, cheers!

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