

## Hellfest 2017- friday

---

After filling French breakfast in hotel (fresh croissants with jam), we went from **Nantes** placed 30 km away from the event. We reached gates of hell (literally and figuratively) at noon. Crossing VIP entrance always gives me feeling of honor. Three of us, and two journalists from “**Gitarzysta**” press, we’re composing an elite team representing **Poland**. Other part of our group is already mixed up with all of international company.



Weather reports on next three days were merciless, cloudless skies and heat waves. Will this be my quest of survival? The **French** seemed to prepare for such possibility. In the press enclave a pretty big pool was waiting for us, so the 30 degree, desert like conditions for a moment weren’t too big of a deal. The courtyard changed too, now with “grass rugs”, parasols, tables and chairs were perfect for a break and relax. Behind the pool there were steel hangars, which were supported by a humongous spine with a ribcage, extraordinary! Hangars were filled with bars, telebims and places to hide from sun’s blaze. Press’ tent with conference room, and workspace for journalists, equipped with local laptops and internet access, that’s a standard here. New addition to the interiors, was a fountain on a pedestal decorated with a group of hooded monks. Disappointing was a lack of hammocks that were present last year, on which I’ve had plenty of regenerating naps between the concerts. Vision of stroke and spine pain was real once again. Oh well, time for work! First one on my list was **TRUE BLACK DOWN**, conveniently playing on **TEMPLE** scene, placed near to exit from press’ area. Finnish black metal impressed me in only one way, their makeup was flawless. Their repertoire didn’t leave any trace in my memory. I checked their website afterwards, it consisted only of poor quality photos and their nicknames. Well, they’re probably not aiming for wider audience or I’m not persistent enough.



My inauguration photos from Main Stage captured **TEXTURES** performance. Since 2016, the **Dutch** present their last production – “**Phenotype**” which was supposed to be first of two albums based on the same concept. Sadly, “**Genotype**” didn’t work out, and in addition to that, it will be probably their last concert due to their disagreement on band’s recent rather simple sound. **Daniel de Jongh** and his progressive death/trash metal band still managed to pull off their performance, disregarding their internal mishaps. With professional zeal in their play, dressed in jeans and shirts they gave quite show, performing wide selection of their hits.



In the sweat of their brow they played:

1. Drive
2. Regensis
3. Storm Warning
4. New Horizons
5. Shaping a Single Grain of Sand
6. Awake
7. Singularity
8. Laments of anlcarus

Shortly after, I made it to the finish of Spanish **WORMED** performance, right in **ALTAR** tent. Their experimental and quite brutal death metal, lured quite an audience. Sounds striking from behind of curtain were teasing and intriguing. For a while I stood there, wondering what connects “deworming”

with cosmos, mathematics and human evolution, which all of it was mentioned by long haired shrimp **Phlegeton**, but that's not quite important, because what he does on the stage is really convincing. His growl arranged with these chaotic, low-tuned guitars and really technical drums, composed into thrilling and refined experience. Just a glance on my trusty list and there is no more time for wondering, in five minutes **VALKYRJA** and their newest addition on vocals. **RSDX**(his nickname) is mostly associated with amplifier **ROTEL**. Not without a reason, because **RSDX** as a front man of **VALKYRJA** strengthened the image of whole band as well as their unique sound.

They also managed to be the most vivid band from **TEMPLE's** photo gallery .



Time is running out, but Swedish flood is nowhere near stopping. On the big stage **AVATAR** just appeared, it's a clique from **Goteborg**, specialized in melodic death and nu metal! Very attractive in camera's lenses men, dressed in identical uniforms, completely unpopular in **Poland**, a fact which I'm not particularly fond of. Stunningly catchy and melodic while simultaneously strong and a bit industrial sound matched tastes of mostly Americans, that's **AVATAR's** main target. The vocalist **Johannes Eckestorm**, whose lips were decorated with black lipstick, his smile reminded me of Joker. Overall he looked like rather less disgusting **Marilyn Manson** from his music video "**Lunchbox**". I must admit his physiognomy and movements on the stage matched my preferences really well. And similarly to other performances, their set list consisted of "the best of" their band.



1. *Hail the Apocalypse*
2. *Paint Me Red*
3. *New Land*

4. *Bloody Angel*
5. *The Eagle Has Landed*
6. *Tooth, Beak & Claw*
7. *Let It Burn*
8. *Smells Like a Freakshow*

After Swedish **AVATAR**, once again start to wonder about the phenomena of **SABATON's** popularity, for me it's completely ridiculous, especially when taking into account that they're playing right before the real star - **ROB ZOMBIE**. Just for the record, I'm curious if all of Swedish bands came here together? One last look on the press' tent, where all of conferences took place, and after that, once again trip towards scene.

Meanwhile in **TEMPLE** tent **TYR** was playing. Whew, I managed to get here on time, I didn't want to miss it, besides obvious mythological fundamentals of this band, I was curious about their Faroese language. Very active audience, and familiar Polish faces in the moat, dulled my senses a bit. I'm not sure in what language the vocalist was singing, but simply by looking at runic writing gave me a feeling of ancient powers. You might not enjoy the Viking stylization from Sheep Islands, but their unique charm, consisting on power of symbols, authenticity and commitment of **Herie Joensen** to his lyrics was overall enough for me to like it. **TYR**, a bit pompously, but gives an honest message- keep steady on your feet, and have faith in yourself.



Revitalized by the teachings in "temple", I headed directly towards the arms of the legend, on the huge stage there was already an enormous banner with **"QUEENSRYCHE"** written on it. Once again I'm struck with a feeling of sentiment from my collage days. To be true, **Geoff Tate** expelled from the band will be always their true voice for me, but Todd La Torre since 2002 is doing pretty well on high notes on **"Eyes O A Stranger"** and **"Take Gold Of The Flame"**, and what's interesting even in **"Operation Mindcrime"**, not giving any thought in mind for supposed copyright of **Tate's** album. Maybe after the concert **Geoff** called to festival's organizer with a question about his right for royalties?



Organizing my marchroute, I asked my group: what exactly is **DODHEIMSGARD**? Their answer was: go, they're pretty dope freaks. Sadly it wasn't the only reason I went there, I didn't managed to get on **DEVIN TOWNSEND** performance, who was playing on similar timeframe on the main stage. **DGH** is a black metal band, now changing their theme into more avant-garde, Hindu route, dressed in colorful costumes. On vocals, so called **Vicotnic** - aka **Yusaf Parvez**, also known from guest appearance in **DIMMU BORGIR**, I don't remember him doing any singing, he mostly jumped around, making weird expressions. This whole bizarre arrangement wasn't too convincing for me. I didn't even do any research on why the bass player changed his race(his head was painted black, pretending not to be white), but what does it all have to do with Hindu scenography and band's costumes. Somehow I still had an impression I've seen all of this somewhere before.



With this turn of events, I let myself go for a trip to nearest food truck, a phenomenal local dark beer (I don't remember the name), a rare beef steak on baguette with a touch of spicy paprika sauce and fries. It sounds ridiculous, but taste is magical! I couldn't accept it until I tried. Deliciousss! Powered by raw meat I was ready for **POWERWOLF**. This German-Romanian powermetal group of werewolves and vampires is doing great. Fantastic and spectacular scenography, great makeups (I always wonder how it holds up in this kind of heat) are always a key element in their concerts. Band's popularity is over years constantly powered by **Greywolf** brothers, supported by Romanian opera voice

of **Atilla Dorn**, is for me much more accepted compilation than for example **NIGHTWISH** or **WITHIN TEMPTATION**.



Friday's main concert for me was probably **MINISTRY**, again going back in time to my collage days. Mechanical sound pulses drilling down into my skull felt better than any other strong liquor. We were drunk on newest industrial noises coming straight from America, made by **AI Jurgensen**, whose infamous journey through new wave and synth pop to success, was later fruitful thanks to cooperation with **Jello Bifara** and **Trent Reznor**. Everything seemed so fresh and tasty, straight from production. What a beautiful times. Now when I was given a chance to hear them again, live, I started to worry if this jump into the past will be a disappointment. But **AI** is simply a charismatic character, not only he stayed in music industry, but he still records and gives performances live. **MINISTRY** of mechanized metal sounds still shows their controversial points of view on current events. Politics are in once again, so are social dilemmas from the front pages of newspapers. Once again we can hear **Jurgensen's** personal voice in the matter. They started with a psalm, which conjoined with my soul like a warm knife and butter, I melted. This piece is so powerful! Just like in mantra, with a technical precision I surrendered to monotonous noises of **MINISTRY**. **AI**, decorated with countless piercings and dreads, he looked like **Boris The Animal** from "Man In Black". He threw lines with a power of a machine gun, he conducted whole crowd and his crew on stage. Brutality and simplicity of each next piece, caused in me some kind of transformation to a higher state. My thirst disappeared, sun didn't scorch my skull as much. I loved these sounds this much. Tasty performance, I wish to experience much more, and recommend for all of those who didn't have a chance.



**MINISTRY** played:

1. *Psalm 69*
2. *PermaWar*
3. *Punch in the Face*
4. *Antifa*
5. *Rio Grande Blood*
6. *Señor Peligro*
7. *Lies Lies Lies*
8. *Waiting*
9. *Worthless*
10. *Bad Blood*
11. *N.W.O.*
12. *Just One Fix*
13. *Thieves*
14. *So What*

When **MINISTRY** minced the air with their rhetorical “**So What**”, as a final chant, I glanced at the old good **CORVUS CROAX**. Not too many fan know that these veterans of German folk scene owe their name to a peculiar incident. They’re guilty of unsuccessful theft of NRD’s crow, and crossing steel curtain with it. Who remembers things like that? Today, this 8-member band, loyal to their medieval instruments and stylized outfits, plays with a great cheer. Things like rebellion or controversy doesn’t connect to them in any way. Public just loves their shenanigans straight from some kind of Slavic/Balkan battlefield historical reconstructions. A simple phenomenon and a break from daily routine.



I had to get back to the main stage, where in a mere minutes **BEHEMOTH** will appear. Well, as a humble patriot, I had to visit our export star. Even though nothing new occurred, the multinational crowd cheered simultaneously when **Nergal** appeared on the stage. I did feel involuntary shiver of proudness. There is nothing special to drag on, nothing to complain about, it's just this time to wait around for a new material and a worldwide tour of our black metal “ambassadors” of art. AMEN to that.



**Hellfest's** repertoire is comparable to Quiche (a kind of a casserole in a shortbread) with it's surprising “stuffing”. So I wasn't startled by a fact, that **BEHEMOTH** played just before the scene veterans, **DEEP PURPLE**. The French are in a way masters of incredible juxtapositions, for example, liqueur wine **Sauternes** served in a company of the most reeking and hardcore blue cheese **Roquefort**. Ladies and gentleman the **France** itself!

**DEEP PURPLE** announced some time ago their musical retirement, alongside newest record “**Infinite**”. Staying true with current trend, they went on their goodbye tour with an eloquent title: “**The Long Goodbye Tour**”. Their logo stylized in a shape of infinity symbol doesn't clarify the length of this last tour. But does this all actually worries anyone? **Ian Gillan, Ian Paice, Roger Glover, Steve Morse** and **Don Airey** – still brisk and high in musical form, with an absolute joy of performing, let us hope for a lengthy journey!



Few static frames capturing immortal **DP's** hits, and I was able to get to the next attraction. Austrian **BELPHEGOR**. **Helmuth Lehner** on front of the stage ripped apart with a mighty growl his last connection to black metal, proving that death is closer to his heart. Quick riffs, technical momentum on percussion, and as always, subtle makeup. I love to freeze these details.



And now it was time for the next part of Swedish series, **SABATON**.

Question is, did I really want to see them? I already quenched my thirst and the sun was setting, so I had a choice between lying down on the grass in the press' area or once again go and admit that power of catchy and moving songs from the same old show still connects and unites all metal heads. My

colleague asked me if **SABATON** is really Swedish, her son, who is a big fan of theirs, was complimented by his history teacher on his knowledge of **Battle of Wizna**. Well, they're Swedish. In their case saying "we like what we know" is really fitting. There's nothing more to argue about, especially after seeing the winner of contest, where fan stands along the idol on the stage, allowed to sing "**Swedish Pagans**" with all of his might.



Their set list

1. *In the Army Now* (Bolland & Bolland song)
2. *The March to War*
3. *Ghost Division*
4. *The Art of War*
5. *Carolus Rex*
6. *Screaming Eagles*
7. *Sparta*
8. *The Last Stand*
9. *Winged Hussars*
10. *Swedish Pagans* (with Laurent Fabisz as singer)
11. *Night Witches*

Encore:

12. *WWII*
13. *Primo Victoria*
14. *Shiroyama*
15. *To Hell and Back*
16. *Dead Soldier's Waltz*
17. *Masters of the World*

Nearing the second bis of "**Primo Victoria**", I parked myself in the line to photo pit, **ROB ZOMBIE** was next. It was probably the most colorful show today. Artistic pseudonym of the main star claimed a special place in my memory, since my viewing of famous hallucination scene from "**Beavis and Butt-Head Do America**", creator of which is **Rob**. I didn't really follow his doings, and I'm not even a fan of his music, but I do pay him a dose of respect, earned by his contribution to pop culture. He's known for his perfectionism, and his concerts are of the highest quality. Lights, visualizations, special effects refined in every way, so no wonder it's as popular as it is, gathering big crowds on each performance.

Addition of a great crew (**Manson's** phenomenal guitarist and drummer) only improves it. It's wasn't easy to capture the whole picture, due to fluorescent colors, and stunning ending. A simple recipe for a splendid mega production from US.



**ROB ZOMBIE** performed:

1. *Dead City Radio and the New Gods of Supertown*
2. *Superbeast*
3. *In the Age of the Consecrated Vampire We All Get High*
4. *Living Dead Girl*
5. *Scum of the Earth*
6. *Well, Everybody's Fucking in a U.F.O.*
7. *More Human Than Human (White Zombie song)*
8. *Never Gonna Stop (The Red, Red Kroovy)*
9. *The Hideous Exhibitions of a Dedicated Gore Whore*
10. *House of 1000 Corpses*
11. *Guitar Solo*
12. *Blitzkrieg Bop (Ramones cover)*
13. *Thunder Kiss '65 (White Zombie song)*
14. *School's Out (Alice Cooper cover)*
15. *The Lords of Salem*
16. *Get Your Boots On! That's the End of Rock and Roll*
17. *Meet the Creeper*
18. *Ging Gang Gong De Do Gong De Laga Raga*
19. *Dragula*

Steady and unsophisticated image of "**IN FLAMES**" came out really miserable and wan, after overwhelming fireworks. Their melodious, death metal touch was the last one on today's show on the big stage. While looking at sympathetic **Anders Fridén**, and his buddies, I couldn't resist the impression that you wouldn't be able to tell what are they playing if you muted the performance. It was weird to notice how their repertoire didn't match their looks. Hip-hop like outfits were a bit off putting. But maybe that's just me? Performance sadly wasn't thrilling. The only piece I recognized was also their greatest commercial hit, only two songs from record "**The Jester Race**" were played: "**Moonshield**" and "**The Jester's Dance**".

The sheer difference between **ROB's** and **Anders'** performances made it look so bleak, even though the show itself maybe wasn't that bad?



Being back in the car again I finally felt the great exhaustion. Tomorrow was said to be even hotter, I should slow down, save my energy. Two days of hell before us.



*Text and photos:*

*Justyna "Justisza" Szadkowska*

*Translation:*

*Borys Szadkowski*