

Hello Dayal! Let's go back to the beginning when the idea of Evolution of the Cult was born. Why did you choose Black Metal? There are so many kinds of metal and you chose only one?

I didn't have a particular desire to write a book before that so it wasn't like I was looking for possible subjects, rather it was the other way around - ie. that my fascination with black metal actually made me want to write a book in the first place. But I think it was also more important to write a book about black metal than any other genre at that point because so many other people were writing books, articles and making films about the genre, and the truth in the genre was being lost because mostly these people were outsiders to the movement. A very different situation to that of, say, death metal, which has several good and accurate books written by people from the scene. So my aim with Evolution of the Cult was to finally give the artists involved a proper voice and tell the real story of how this genre was born and developed.

Structural composition of black metal joins primitive and multilayer set up. From one side it is an anti-these and from the other it is like tornado, which destroys everything in its path. Composition is as important as the delivery. Can black metal exist if we remove one piece of the two elements of this music?

I think what makes black metal the most fascinating genre of metal is that it is full of these opposing and contradictory tendencies. It combines the violent and the tranquil, the experimental and the traditional, the open-minded and the conservative, the technical and the primitive, the intellectual and the primal. Black metal music can be either very basic and simplistic or very accomplished and musically complex, and still be indisputably black metal. The potential is immense.

Some people believe that Black Metal began when Mayhem began. Others think that Black Metal was created by bands like Venom, Bathory or Hellhammer. Who created black metal?

I would say that black metal was created by the bands of the eighties; Venom, Bathory, Hellhammer, Sodom, Destruction and later Samael, Rotting Christ, Master's Hammer etc. But Dead-era Mayhem are almost certainly responsible for resurrecting the genre in the early 90s (kicking off what is often described as the 'second wave' of black metal) and are probably the most influential band in terms of global influence, with Burzum and Darkthrone sitting alongside them.

The world recognizes many kinds of black metal. The first one coming to my mind is a Greek one, like Varathron or early Rotting Christ, but there are also ones coming from Sweden, Norway or Poland. Which one is closest to you?

At this very moment it is probably Poland and Norway, because I have been concentrating heavily on these subjects in my two books Black Metal: The Cult Never Dies Vol. One and Black Metal: Into The Abyss, listening intensely to bands featured such as Sacrilegium, Arkona, Mglá, Mastiphall, Blaze Of Perdition, Mastiphall, Evilfeast, Helheim, Kampfarr, Urgehal, Tsjuder, Vemod, One Tail, One Head, Koldbrann, 1349, Satyricon, Manes, Tsjuder and so on. But Greece and Sweden, as you mention, are definitely other important territories and ones I am also writing about for forthcoming works.

In your first book, you described this kind in a lot of details. You start from the birth of the music and you end by presenting its branches. I am sure you met in your life many crucial musicians, who are responsible for creating this music. Please tell me whom you met in person. Who made the biggest impression on you?

That's always the hardest question to answer in interviews because there have been so many interesting people involved in these books. And I'm not just being polite - having interviewed various musicians from various genres for various magazines over the years, I think I can say that black metal has some of the most compelling protagonists of any genre of music. It

attracts genuine *characters* and usually people who actually care and have some belief or vision beyond the music – sometimes that vision might actually be bizarre or even flawed, but it's a lot more interesting to hear than talking some guy playing technical death metal who just wants to talk about how fast his band's blastbeats are or guitar techniques or whatever. To answer your question, some of the people I've interviewed for this project who still stick out in my memory are: Venom, King Diamond, Snorre Ruch of Thorns, various members/ex-members of Mayhem, Fenriz, Ravn of Strid (and Ravn of 1349 for that matter), Blasphemy guys, Mysticum guys, Hades guys, Kampfara guys, Infernus and Gaahl, Armando of Mystifier, Kristoffer of Ulver, Tom of Celtic Frost, Sakis of Rotting Christ, Nergal of Behemoth, Einar of Wardruna, Jan Erik of Vemod/One Tail, One Head... list could go on for a long time actually.

Have your interview ever been rejected or your interview was not allowed to be published because of the musicians did not like it?

This only happened once. Without going into too much detail, one member of a band was unhappy with some comments given by his bandmate and we had to talk things through and ended up doing some further interviews so we could give another side to story. I think in the end this was not such a bad thing, but obviously it meant that chapter took a lot more time, work and stress than usual. Thankfully the 150 or so musicians involved in this project have tended to be happy with the interview process and I think it is one of my biggest achievements (at least on a personal level) that several artists I interviewed for the Black Metal Cult books have gone on record to say that it was the best (in some cases *only*) interview they did in their career.

In EOTC you paid the most attention to the Polish bands, like Graveland and Behemoth. Why these two?

Right - well I think these two illustrate very well the very different faces of black metal in Poland during the nineties, and Evolution was mostly concerned with the formative days of black metal and the artists who had made the most impact and/or influenced later generations. Although there are Polish bands that I listen to more than these two bands, they are/were probably the two most iconic and historically/socially/culturally significant bands overall.

Long time tension between these two bends divide them into to camps. Graveland was always associated with NS scene and Pagan, and Behemoth was influenced by Scandinavians from the beginning of its creation. Today the tension is gone; however, they both create a lot of controversy. Especially Behemoth, because it is popular all over the world. Nergal was on the cover of all every-day papers in Poland very recently. Where is the line of black metal? Do you think Behemoth today is a black metal band?

Today I would probably describe Behemoth as a crossover between black and death metal - 'blackened death metal' I guess. But even though Behemoth are leaning more toward sounds associated with death metal, they are also a part of black metal culture in many regards and their visual approach and philosophical/anti-religious position is informed by that. Indeed, as you suggest, they are very much on the front lines in many regards because of their size and status and are one of the main bands being actively being targeted by Catholic organisations for example.

In your second book, the Cult Never Dies Volume One, you expanded presentation of Polish scene. You introduced bands like Xantotol, Mastiphal, Arkona, Mgła or Kriegsmaschine. What is so fascinating about the Polish music?

Well part of the reason I've been looking at Poland a lot in recent years is because I want to really go into depth with each scene I'm writing about before I move on to the next subject, and I had already started with Poland in the first book. But I do find the Polish black metal

scene to be very memorable generally, both in terms of the bands from the nineties and the newer groups that have emerged. And the new book adds several names to the list you give; **Sacrilegium, Besatt, Black Altar, MasseMord, Furia, Mord‘A’Stigmata and Blaze of Perdition.** Of course there are many great bands not discussed yet (Oltre or Non Opus Dei, to give but two examples), but still, I think anyone interested in the Polish scene will get a lot from the last two books, particularly since a lot of the people involved have, by their own admission, not spoken as openly or thoroughly before.

What comes to your mind when you think of Poland? Of course, except for metal.

There are a lot of Polish people in London and since I've lived in the city fifteen years, it is not surprising that I become friends with many people from Poland. Actually metal is actually one of the main things I associate with the country, but that's because I've been listening to Polish metal for twenty years! After that it would have been a bit of a random combination of vodka, forests, mustard, football, history and other things I experienced or talked about with these Polish friends. However, I have a slightly better sense of the country now that I have visited and stayed with friends there and seen the coast, historical/Pagan sites, nice bars, etc not to mention these huge housing blocks. Actually, this was something I had never really seen before, this communist era housing. I stayed in this sort of place with my friends, ate at one of the old milk bars and so on, and it put a lot of things people had told me in the past into context.

When the borders opened, everybody could have left this country. When Poland joined the European Union, many Poles left and went to England. What is your opinion about Polish people in England?

As mentioned, I have many Polish friends and spend a lot of time with Polish people, so I don't have any problems with it. The only time there is a problem (and this applies to all groups of people) is when the character of a town/city changes dramatically because there are more Polish people living there than any other group (perhaps even including English) and I don't think this is healthy. I also have to say that I often hear Polish friends complaining about immigration etc, and this is a bit strange, because when the average British person hears this word, they will usually think of Polish migrant workers first of all.

Sacrilegium played recently in Gdansk. I mention this concert, because I think you were there. Please tell us about your experience with Sacrilegium.

I was indeed! It was a great experience. There were quite a few of us on the trip and in addition I had a chance to talk to people such as Tomasz and Maciej of Pagan Records, and of course Sacrilegium themselves. It was good to speak again to Nantur and his wife, as I met up with them in London earlier this year. And I enjoyed all the bands that night; Non Opus Dei, Dreadnaught, Martwa Aura and Sacrilegium in particular, as I am a big fan. I also thought the venue location in the old shipyard was very interesting. Lots of drinking after the show as well of course... actually that whole trip was basically fuelled with Polish beer.

What do you think about the most recent music by Anima Lucifer?

I actually like this album very much, although it is not what I was expecting from the band after Sleptime and Wicher. But after the initial surprise I listened again and found it to be a very good work.

Your newest book Into the Abyss will be released soon. Do you think it will be well accepted as your other ones?

I hope so of course, especially because I think this may be the best book so far. It also has a bit more of an 'old school' flavour because of the presentation and the more direct style of interview. The reviews have always been extremely positive so hopefully the same will be true

this time. The biggest challenge is making people aware of the book in the first place because I am still hearing from people who are only now finding out about the first book some three years later!

Have you known from the beginning this will be a multi-volume book? Or was this idea born with time?

A bit of both. The first book, Evolution of the Cult, I had in mind as a larger book (or *even larger*, I should say) or as a two-book series. So as soon as I realised it would be cut down, I knew that there would be space for a follow-up. But it was only after that first book was published that I decided that I still had a hunger to interview and write and that I would make this a really in-depth series and use this more methodical approach, selecting only three scenes at a time and really digging in deep.

The last word belongs to you. Thank you so much for devoting your time to Kvlt Magazine!

Thank you very much for the support and for the thoughtful questions! I hope people reading this will take some time to look at www.CultNeverDies.com and the store at cultneverdies.myshopify.com to get more information about this book series and maybe have a look at the exclusive shirts we've created with bands like Ulver, Beherit, Blaze of Perdition, Manes, Rotting Christ, Necromantia and so on. We remain completely independent so all support is appreciated! Salute!