

What's pretty funny doing interview, is that you listen to an old record from your collection and think "hey, why not interviewing this band now they're no longer part of the scene?". That's what happened with GEHENNAH. I guess some of you remember this band had a pretty short and exciting story through rather great old school Venom/Motörhead's like retro Thrash Metal. Primitive Art and Osmose Productions allowed them both vinyls and tourings. Who can't remember the 12EP "No Fucking Christmas" with the funny cover? Even though this band never changed the Metal side, they opened gates to many retro Thrash combos such as Desekrator, Infernö, Dekapitator and so on. Actually, when I started Franang Zine as a paper zine, I had planned to interview GEHENNAH but never got feedback or contact from Primitive Art. Now, in 2008 I got in touch with The Reaper (bass) and discovered that he's a fucking nice Metalhead and totally die hard fan. Follow his answers and get a try to his new combo Turbocharged. (done in Octobre 2008)

Do you remember how did GEHENNAH start? Was it just for fun in the beginning? The band name was GEHENNA at first and you changed it as there was another Norwegian band with the same name, wasn't it?

Yeah, I remember how it all started actually. Me and Mr. Violence had talked about starting a Venom-cover band for a long time but never really got the line up to work properly until a gig in a nearby town on December 13 – 1991 where we met Stringburner for the first time. We started talking to him and realized that he was also a diehard Venom-fanatic and we asked him to join us and he accepted. We looked around and saw a guy we knew had no experience in drumming and we asked him too on that same evening and he too joined the ranks. And voila: GEHENNAH was born! If you read the biography it's always written that the band started out in 1992 though, we choose to count from the first rehearsal which took place in February 1992.

Do you remember how and when you started listening to Metal, what were the early albums you had and the early gigs you saw?

I grew up with two elder brothers that were in the right age to listen to both Black Sabbath and the NWOBHM so I guess I have always listened to Metal to some extent. Too bad though I lost my interest in music all together for a few years and more or less only watched old war movies in the middle of the 1980's but then in 1988 I opened my eyes again and from that day my life had been Metal around the clock. If I could have those years back and could have picked up the bass guitar earlier I would surely have missed out on a few war movies though ;)

I've never listened to the first demos "Kill" and "Brilliant Loud Overlords Of Destruction" how did they sound? Are you still proud of them?

Actually, the first demos didn't sound very much like the albums at all, they were more Black Metal oriented and had a lot of the typical Celtic Frost/Burzum-riffs on them but still we did things dirtier than most bands at the time. We just didn't know how to write songs in the Venom-vein yet, ha ha – skilled musicians indeed ;) But still a few of the songs featured on the two demos came back on "Hardrocker" – one of our trademark songs was first featured on the second one, namely "Piss off, I'm drinking". Proud you ask? Hmm, I guess you can say that we're still proud of them, not in a musical way but for the fact that they made us what we are and that they came out in a time that no one else

was really doing the same thing... Sure, the music may be typical for that era but our attitude was really out of order even back then ;)

All along GEHENNAH's discography you've always published vinyls, I guess that according to you Metal can only be listened to through vinyl, is that right? If so, what is GEHENNAH's LP you're the most proud of? For me, it's the excellent

"Hardrocker" cover that sums up all the GEHENNAH's ideas...

Yeah, we were fortunate enough to see all our stuff be released on vinyl which is awesome! We have all been vinyl collectors the greater part of our lives but speaking for myself I must admit that I don't buy vinyl anymore. During one period I was about to be kicked out from my apartment and needed the money so I had to sell off a bunch of my collection and my cash flow never really recovered since then so I just don't have the economy or the room for an extended collection in my home. Since I put Metal before anything else in life I am constantly out of work and broke so there's no room for collecting vinyl, I'm sorry to say. About which album we like the most, and I think I speak for the whole band now: "Hardrocker" is THE album of GEHENNAH – 1. It was the first time Hellcop beat the skins in the band and: 2. this was recorded before we had a plan so it's all very rough and primitive in a way that really can't be rehearsed... We didn't know how to record an album and this gave us an energy that we never reached again, I think.

Let's keep on this topic, I think that you're a die hard of the 80's and probably collect every vinyl possible from this time, if so how large is your vinyl collection and what are the jewels you're very proud of?

True, but as I said: I had to sell off a lot of albums to pay my rent and all so my collection is not what it once was. At most I think I had about 1200 of the most obscure pressing that has been made out there – I was never into buying the usual bands like Judas Priest, Iron Maiden or Manowar unless I found some cool limited edition of them, so I always bought a bit more odd stuff like: Black Death, Chainsaw, Bulldozer, etc (sure, you might think that these bands are common but they were at the time very hard to find around here) so I was going for quality instead of quantity I guess.. I always saw myself buying the usual vinyls later on but in time the most usual bands got more expensive and harder to find so I never reached my goal so to speak. The last couple of years has been only digital for me so the vinyls are filed away in my closet to make room for sleeping and eating (a small apartment housing three persons don't give you that much freedom) and my collection is reduced to maybe 500 albums now. But in my defence I have to tell you that there are some parts of my collection that will never leave my possession: Venom, Motörhead, Sodom, Raven, Warfare, Slayer, Thor, etc – if I don't keep the vinyls of those I can't call myself a diehard Metalhead ;)

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I've always like the humorous touch you had all along your songs and releases. I mean you praised Metal with a certain funny touch as for instance in the hilarious "Merry Shitmass ", "Six Pack Queen" and so on. This touch was in total opposition to the seriousness from B.M of the time, I guess it was done willingly ?

Ha ha, yes, it's no big secret that we have taken on the role of the black sheep of the scene so you're correct there, man – everything we have ever done has had an intention to piss some people off and be too messy for some to listen to us. We'd rather have a few listeners that really like us than having thousands that "can enjoy GEHENNAH whenever they feel like it". Sure, we have been called clowns and comedians throughout our whole existence but this always comes from people who are turning themselves inside out to keep up an image on their own and pointing out GEHENNAH as the bastard is a textbook example of making yourself look better when you know you're not.

GEHENNAH was active while Black Metal was at its peak, I mean that ever Metalheads were looking for grim Black Metal, and you were offering pure mayhem Thrash Metal with a strong Mötörhead/Venom touch, thence how were the 1994/1997 years as a band and how were you looking at Black Metal ?

We were actually around even before the whole Black Metal thing exploded but you're right, we were first heard of when it was getting really big so we didn't really have our sound working in our favour at that time, he he. The thing is that the ones who were releasing albums and had been around for years, the ones that are considered the CREATORS of the 90's Black Metal wave didn't really mind us, it was the followers that had no self irony and didn't think it was cool to have a good time that threw shit on us for having a sense of humour – but if you look at them now: most of them have probably put Metal behind them and cut their hair, got a job and are now stuck with 3 kids, a garden and a fat wife somewhere in the suburbs. The ones still in the scene are now veterans and knows that we need all kinds of bands and that Metal is all about living a free life. GEHENNAH has always stood up for drinking and behaving like there's no tomorrow since that's what we think Metal is all about. If you wanna cut yourself and feel depressed all the time there's something called EMO that would fit like a glove, if you're drunk, fat and prepared for war: stay in the Metal scene ;)

Let's keep on the Black Metal topics, many people who were active in the early 90's are nostalgic of this era, there was something magic in the air, a new sign of the horn was rising, so now are you nostalgic of this period of time ?

Hmmm, you've got a point there but I don't know if I'm very nostalgic about it myself... Of course, this was the era where my bands started to get a name in the scene and that means the world to me but since I am a product of the 80's I must say that the 80's are my nostalgic era where the biggest sign of the horns was raised... There was a completely new scene rising in the 90's which was probably the last scene ever to bring something new to the world but it was still a small step in music if

you compare to the ten years before that... When Venom and such bands released their first stuff there was NOTHING to compare it to while the Burzum, Darkthrone, etc, -albums was a more extreme version of the Bathory-albums I think. These bands are worth credits for everything they brought to the scene, I'm not trashing them, it's just a matter of what was there and what they created on top of it. But sure, I can find myself be thrown back 15 years in time when I put on an album released in that era though.

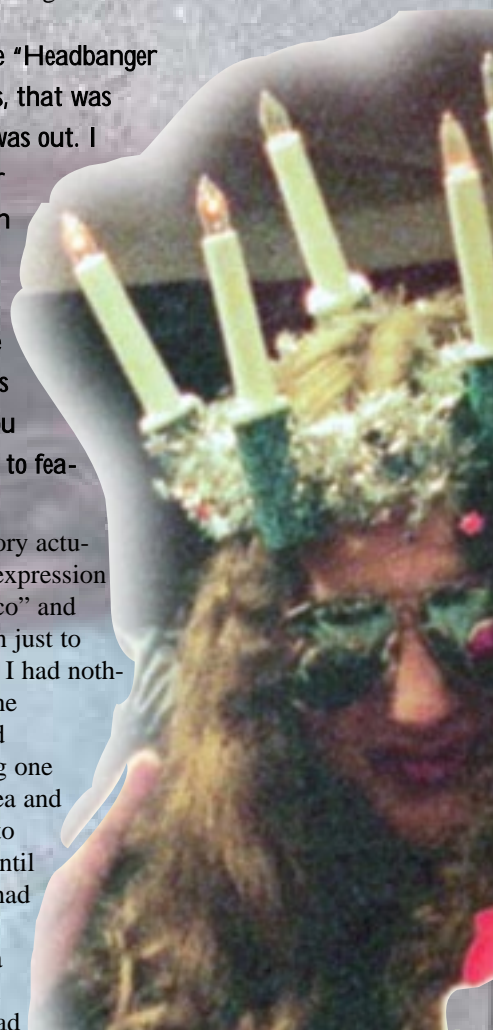
You're the man behind the "Headbanger Against Disco" 7EP series, that was fucking awesome when it was out. I rushed through mail-order lists to buy them back then !!! Do you remember how did you get the idea and was it hard to convince Primitive Art Records back then ? Was it you who choose the bands to feature on these series?

Ha ha, that's a weird story actually! I came up with the expression "Headbangers against disco" and the idea to start a campaign just to see what it could bring but I had nothing to do with the rest of the progress ! Stringburner and Violence had been drinking one night and picked up the idea and wrote the original manifesto and I didn't hear about it until the first member-requests had dropped in – and from that point it all went public in a flash. The 7" EP collection series was another step I had no idea about until it was almost out, Paulo at Primitive Art Records had this brilliant idea and we could all see the result once they came out – the bands featured on them is simply the bands that deserved to be called non-disco at the time.

GEHENNAH featured on Bathory "In Conspiracy With Satan" tribute through "The Reaper", how did you get hooked with this project and according to you what are the best tunes from this tribute ? What was your reaction when Quorthon passed away ? And what is your favourite Bathory's LP ?

I actually don't know really what triggered our appearance on that one, I guess it was David (Blackmoon) from Dark Funeral that asked us and we recorded it along with the "Decibel Rebel" album. It was mostly a good opportunity to drink together that made it all come real from what I remember, he he... I don't know if there are any highlights on that one, I think all the bands got their own version straight and that the whole album is good – but keep in mind that I haven't listened to it for many years now, there could be some version I liked less though... When Quorthon passed away I didn't know it before about 6 months afterwards – even though I know his sister quite well. I also

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heard that he died in a motorcycle accident at first and then the truth about his heart failure. It was of course a great chock for us all, Bathory and the man behind it is something we all have grown up with so it's bound to have an impact on the scene I guess. My favourite Bathory album ? Well, up until "Blood Fire Death" I like it all but if I have to pick only one I must pick the first one ! It has an atmosphere that no one ever copied and it just reeks to high heavens with plain and simple evil intent if you ask me, he he...

Your lyrics dealt about poser hunts, getting fun with females and drinking alcohol. But were you really the kind of

guys haunting streets to beat down posers and disco fans ? Could you tell us some funny stories about this everyday life ?

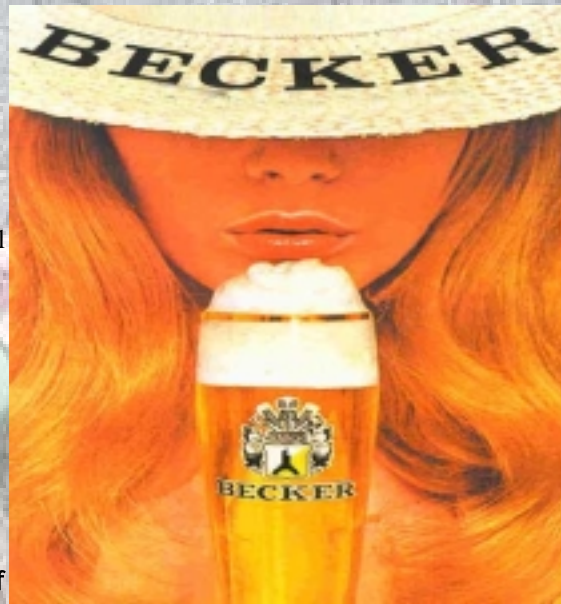
Hmm, I wish I could say YEAH to all that but no, we live in a small town and there were not many posers to fight off actually... And it would be stupid to think we could beat down everyone we thought deserved a good beating, it would be more than a full time job doing it and it would have landed us jail and robbed us of both drinking and playing live you know ;) But saying this I must add that Hellcop is the fighter in the band and he has never backed down from anything so you can say that he kept the spirit alive when it comes to violence, ha ha ! The drinking and fucking was no big deal to keep up, in a small town everyone drinks every weekend and everyone sleeps with everyone, at least it used to be like that here – somehow we are all related by now here, ha ha ! There are stories to fill a book but I have no particular one right now, it involves people that would kill me if I told you all the dirt, he he...

What is the strongest alcohol you ever drank ? I know that Aquavit is pretty well known in Sweden, but not the strongest boose, have you ever checked the French Green Chartreuse, Czech Absinthe, that was in actually the old French one ?

I used to only drink homemade booze for many years but that's only about 40-50% so I'm not a "strongest there is" kind of guy. I also had a period when I only drank wine too but that fucked me up in every possible way so I stay away from that crap now. Since I'm an old bastard now I settle more or less for beer exclusively, I get just as drunk on that but I have a fun trip into the mist – booze just hits me across the face and I have a huge hole in my memory and that was fun years ago but now I'd rather be drunk as hell but remember most of the evening... The strongest I have tasted is surely "hospital booze" which is 96% but that's one sensation I never do again, it was more like inhaling gas than taking a sip, ha ha ! I just stick to the beer however boring that might seem !

There were rumours back in the middle of the 90's that GEHENNAH was an impossible band to manage and to deal with as you were always drunk, didn't care of anything and labels just got fed up with you... I can't remember in which fanzine I read that but what's the reality in fact ?

It's all true, we decided to have a good time at any cost and it did cost us our career eventually, ha ha ! We have no remorse or feel bad for it though, we never claimed to be good little boys that did a job – where's



the fun in living like that ? We tried to not fuck up TOO much but drinking is as we know no exact science so we did a few really bad gigs along the way and for that we deserve no trust. But keep in mind that we actually did some really good gigs too despite our habits of getting pissed in the early mornings. I think we kept up the Rock and Roll myth really good without even trying but I can also understand promoters and labels that weren't too happy that we acted like we had no cares in the world because they had put time, money and effort in us that we didn't follow up like we were expected to. We'd never apologize for any inconvenience that we may have caused but if we were to reform the band later we'd try to make a better job as a BAND, not in the bar...

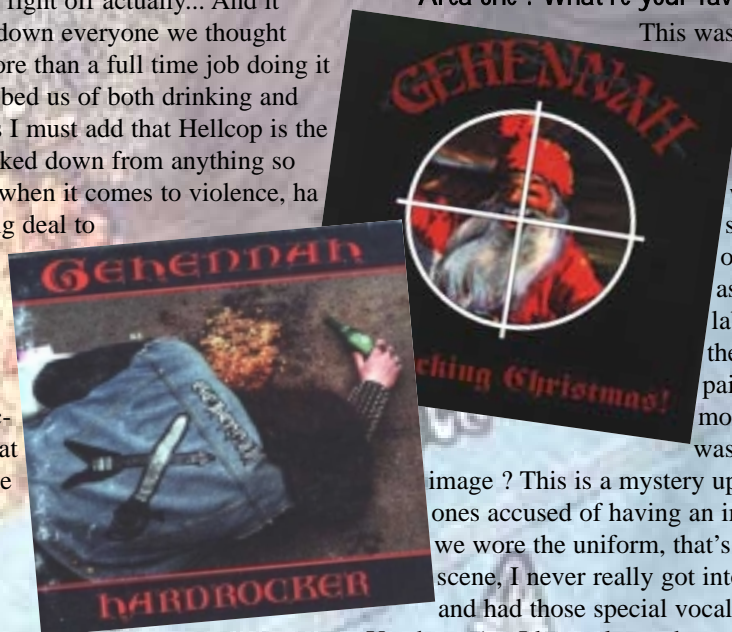
In GEHENNAH you always had a kitch-retro look and pushed the Thrash Metal dressing code to nearly a parody, do you agree with me ? And how do you look at the early 80's Thrash Metal, especially the German 80's and the Bay Area one ? What're your favourite combos from these times ?

This was actually what we looked like day and night at the time, you could never catch any of us without the same stuff we had on during photo shoots since we never left home without it. Needless to say that we stood out in a crowd but that's all part of the lifestyle, right ? If people saw it as a parody it's their problem – we got labelled an "band with an image" while the Black Metal bands in their corpse paint and their capes, howling at the moon with a medieval axe in their hands was never questioned about having an

image ? This is a mystery up to this day for me why WE were the ones accused of having an image, he he... We lived the life and we wore the uniform, that's it. Hmm, about the Bay Area Thrash scene, I never really got into that since they were too technical and had those special vocal styles (think: Testament, Wasted Youth, etc.) – I have always been more into primitive and dirty Thrash so the German 80's has always been more close to heart. In the German scene (or more the European scene based on the German one) there were so many great bands so it wasn't possible to avoid getting stuck to it: Exumer, Sodom, Destruction, Chainsaw, Bulldozer, Hammerhawk, Vulcain, Iron Angel, Killer, etc, etc, etc... As you can see I can't just name German bands but I guess it all started in the working class suburbs of Germany back in the days and spread throughout Europe. There are of course great bands from all genres/areas where Metal expanded but for me personally the German scene has always had a class of its own...

Thanks to Osmose Productions you had the opportunity of touring, how were these gigs as unfortunately I never attended to any of them ? What was the most memorable gig you played ?

Yeah, they put us on the road in December 1996 and it was totally awesome, every day for 12 years I have wished I was back in that bus ! The tour was also a wakeup call both for Osmose and Metallisé (I don't know how to spell it right now, ha ha) (as far as I remember it was "Metallisé", but not really certain too-ed) since the main band, Impaled Nazarene, was out on their third tour in a year on the same places and GEHENNAH and Angelcorpse had just released their Osmose-debut one or two months prior to the tour. It was a poorly timed tour and the booking agency had to rethink their whole deal after that tour, how to not lose more money than they put into it. But to pick up OUR side of the story: It was totally brilliant to go on tour with





those three bands and I guess everyone thinks the same, the gigs GEHENNAH did was of various quality but in general I think we delivered some decent gigs along the road. Both Angelcorpse and I.N. was top of the class every night though so I guess people could be pissed on paying for it, he he. The most memorable gig was the final gig on the tour since it was then all hell broke loose with eggs, shaving cream and duct-tape on everything, ha ha! I don't know how to tell the story in short version but the roadies had planned to fuck with us during the gig since it was the last night together: in the middle of the gig we got egged, tape was placed on the drum pedals and the necks of our instruments and on our effect pedal – all to make us get stuck in the damn things. Some of the guys from the other bands jumped out on stage and danced in their underwear and loads of stuff went on that night, ha ha ! I wish we could have it on video but who knew that this would take place that very evening ! It lives on our minds though – I only wonder what people thought about it in the audience, it must have been quite strange to see this going down in front of them...

I'd like to know your view about your mates from Norway, Infernö, that had also a deal with Osmose Productions ? Do you like their two albums as I remember that back in time they didn't get that much overwhelming reviews ?

I think they would have deserved so much more than they actually got in reviews and attention – sure, they had borrowed a lot of influences (and even riffs, ha ha) from Destruction and they aimed on a feedback on the bass guitar that could cut your ears off on their first album but they really captured the spirits of Thrash perfectly so they should have been much more than “just another band”.

Ronnie, you also did the vocals in a Swedish Death Metal band called Vomitory, you featured on “Raped In Their Own Blood” album. Thence if I'm not wrong you recorded this album the same year than “King Of The Sidewalk”, I guess 1996 was a pretty busy year for you. How do you see this D.M experience now ?

That's right, I was part of the band for about 7 years – right up until the first album was released. I also think you're right about the year – but for me two albums in one year is not even close to what I would hope to do in a perfect world. (The last year I have recorded almost 200 songs here at home, should give you a clue, he he). From the very beginning not even Vomitory was totally Death Metal, we played only Sodom covers on our first gig with the same line up as Sodom (one guitar, bass/vocals and drums) so this was fitting my profile up to this day but along the way we got more and more into the Swedish Death Metal sound and I guess that's where they still stand with Vomitory. I think they are a bit too modern now but that's only me and my opinion. The whole Death Metal thing was never put behind me in the sense that I didn't want to do it anymore, I just didn't feel comfortable with the band anymore and decided to quit while we were ahead you know – but there are no hard feelings or anything, we just parted ways in January 1997. With the “Raped In Their Own Blood” album I felt that I had reached the goal with Vomitory and my part of it so what happened just happened. I was actually approached by an old pal and he asked me if I wanted to take on the vocals in a real Death

Metal band again and I really would have liked to but the distance between us made it impossible I'm sorry to say...

Let's keep on the Death Metal topic, as you played in Vomitory I'd like to know your view on the Swedish D.M scene and this typical sound early combos such as Entombed, Dismember, Carnage, Morbid or At The Gates had back then ?

I think the Swedish scene has delivered the best Death Metal acts there are, at least in that special sound. Entombed really put a milestone in “Left Hand Path” and set the standard but there are so many great bands that were around even during the Nihilist years that deserves eternal glory for their work in perfecting the Death Metal style. Grave, Traumatic, Interment, Obscurity, Abhoth, etc – the names are too many to remember just like that...

Could you introduce us to your new band Turbocharged ? How does it sound and how different is it from GEHENNAH ?

Well, Turbocharged has been around since March 2000 and has had a few line-up changes along the way but is now a trio in the old fashion of Motörhead, Venom and Sodom. The sound is dirty and massive and you can find influences of the bands mentioned earlier in this answer. We used to have female vocal as well as my battered voice but she left the band a few months ago so it all has gone back to basic again. The band is not to be confused with the fact that “the bass player from GEHENNAH” plays in it, this is a completely different setup than everything else I have ever been involved in. Sure, the sound is maybe similar in some ways and my passion for raw music forms my part of it but the direction is far from GEHENNAH. All I can say is that it's worth checking up if you like old school Thrash'n'roll !!

Do you think that GEHENNAH could come back to the scene one day ?

I've always wondered either GEHENNAH was just a fun band or you had serious plans to be well known....?

I actually have no idea if we'll ever get back together but I find it hard to believe right now... We've always had the same plans as any other band, to make a living from the band and just live to record and play live – but the bad manners we approached the whole thing with probably speaks of an awareness that you can't make it in this genre and we hurried up to live as much as we could in the short time we were trusted, ha ha ! But only time can tell if we'll ever get up on that stage again though.

Thanks a lot for answering the interview, it brought me lot of memories from the good old GEHENNAH's times...horns up dude !!!!

Thanks yourself for showing the interest in what I had to say ! It's always a nice walk down memory lane to answer these interviews and they don't come too often these days so I salute you for a nice job done !!!

Keep the flame burning and I'll see you all out there one day !!! / The Ripper

