

## MALAKHIM – IT'S GOOD TO REMIND OURSELVES WHO THE ENEMY IS

With an excellent demo and EP under their belt, we were very eager to hear more music from Swedish orthodox Black Metal outfit Malakhim. On January 8th, the time has finally come and their first full-length *"Theion"* will shine its divine fire upon humanity thanks to Iron Bonehead Productions. We contacted frontman/lyricist E for a state of affairs and an insight into the universe of Malakhim. (JOKKE)

*All band pictures (c) M Norman*



Finally, Malakhim's debut full-length *"Theion"* is about to be unleashed upon mankind. It took five years, and this debut was preceded by a demo and an EP. Were these smaller releases necessary to study Malakhim's musical path before releasing *"Theion"* today?

I think they were necessary steps for us in our creative process. The demo/first EP was the output of the first few years, it took longer to craft the songs and there is a distinct age gap between the first and the final track of that particular release, while the second EP was crafted with relative speed after the first one had been released on CD/LP format by Iron Bonehead – and in a way they helped solidify our writing and our chemistry within the band and prepare for the full-length. We'll see if this pattern will repeat itself for the new cycle of songwriting.

While awaiting the arrival of *"Theion"*, you decided to release the *"Hic Rugitus Cavernarum Terribilis"* live tape. What does the Latin title refer to and was this tape originally planned to happen or was it rather a way of killing time due to a lack of live shows until *"Theion"* would be released?

The phrase comes from the Carta Marina by Olaus Magnus – it's one of the first accurate maps of the Nordics. The phrase is printed at the geographical coastline of Umeå/Västerbotten which is our hometown

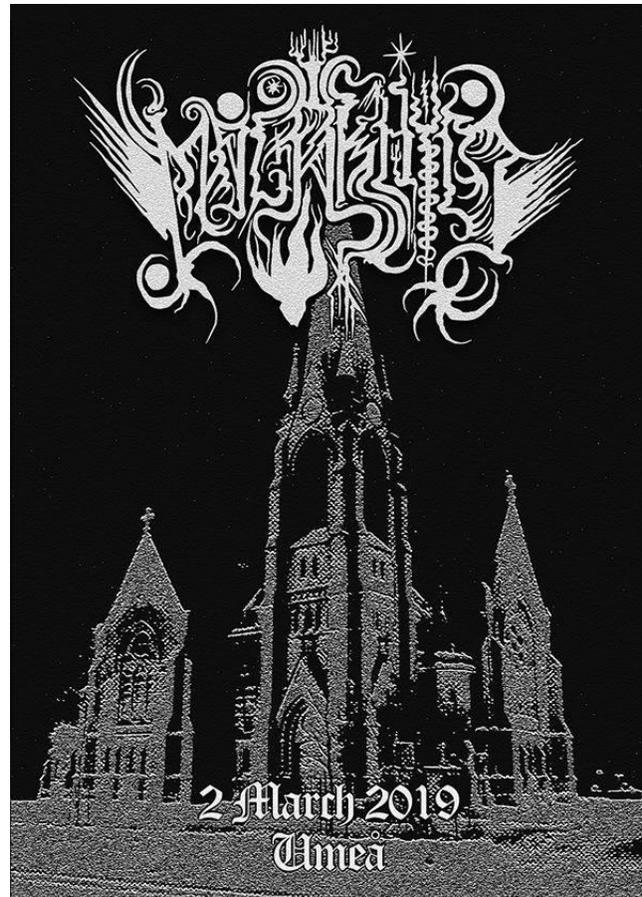
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and also the site where the first gig of the band took place. The phrase roughly translates to “Here roars terrible beasts” or “From the depths, a terrible roar”.

I’ve always liked bands putting out their own material alongside label backed releases, so this was a way for us to put something out while waiting for “*Theion*” to be finalized. We had access to the whole soundboard recording from the gig and the quality was good. It was a bit of a spur of the moment decision and one that I think turned out very well in the end.

**There is a shitload of records being released every week. How hard is it for a band of your size to be noticed in this flood? Did you notice an increase in merch sale now that people can’t attend live gigs?**

I can’t say it’s increased or decreased to be honest; we didn’t have much physical goods stocked up when gigs started to cancel/move. We’ve got some stuff left but not in any massive quantities.



It’s also difficult to gauge how well we’re noticed, I’m not even sure where to look for something like that. I think we get a decent amount of attention, but we’re obviously not social media savy in the way other bands might be, and we’ve no intention of being super active there either.

**Now that also at least for the first half of 2021 live shows remain uncertain, many bands focus on writing new material. Is this also the case for Malakhim or are you a band that only writes when there is a need for a new record?**

We write whenever the inspiration comes along I guess. I’m personally really difficult to motivate to write towards a deadline, and I would say that goes for the rest of the band as well. We’re constantly bouncing ideas between each other, so there’s an ongoing creative process that is more or less active all the time.

**I often hear people talk about Malakhim as “the other band of Naglfar guitarist Andreas Nilsson”. Is it a blessing or a curse to have a relatively well-known musician in the ranks? Is this why in the beginnings you tried to keep the ine-up more or less a secret?**

I’ve personally not seen much mention of it online, but of course it’s something people will latch on to. The idea has always been to let the musical output be at the forefront, we’ve no interest really in riding the tailwind of pedigree in the band, and it’s not “the other band of” but rather a band on its own merits and creation.

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I must say that it took a while before it clicked with “*Theion*” whereas I was immediately blown away by the demo and EP. There are less catchy hooks and the melodies are more hidden into the massive and less breathing production. But slowly “*Theion*” grew on me and in the end these kind of records often prove themselves to be the best ones. What do you think of this observation?

We went for something similar to the second EP in terms of production, but grander and bigger, more punch in the drum. It is a quite varied album, so I would expect it to take a few listens to get into fully, and obviously the album art and booklet design of the album is meant to complement all this as well, so yes, it is something to spend a bit of time with.

**The artwork of the demo and EP was done by Karmazid. The demo artwork was a black background with silver print while the EP cover had a white background with golden print. Is there a deeper meaning behind this use of contrasting colour schemes between the 2 releases?**

At the time it was just used to create that contrast you mention. It’s something we’ll continue exploring should the EP format be revisited in the future, but there is no greater hidden meaning behind the choice of color other than trying something different from a design perspective.

**For “*Theion*” you decided to work with Mitchell Nolte. What made you switch and what can you tell us about your first full colour artwork cover?**

The idea was always to use a full colour “bigger” artwork for the album, and keep smaller releases like EPs more barebones. We’ve not switched as Karmazid contributed a fantastic piece for the album that links with the first two Eps, so there is an ongoing thought there still. We approached Mitchell as we wanted something quite grand visually and his style was very fitting. We discussed the themes for a while and provided the lyrics and gave him free hands essentially. One inspirational piece that we based our discussion around was *The Great Day of His Wrath* by John Martin.



**The album title is derived from Greek and can mean ‘sulphur’ on the hand or ‘divine’ on the other hand. What meaning does it hold for you and how is the title related to the songs?**

The dual meaning was one reason for the choice – the divine fire that both illuminates and burns, a fitting metaphor for the Devil being both liberator and annihilator. It is, as you have noted in this interview, an ongoing theme in some of our lyrics and a common theme through the whole album.

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**The band name is inspired by the Hebrew Bible where a Mal’akh was an angel, a messenger of God. The band logo and artwork contain many occult elements and symbolism and lyrics often mention Satan. How important are occultism and satanism for Malakhim? Do you practice what you preach?**

As a source of inspiration and as a creative muse the Devil will always be an immeasurable source for my own lyrical craftsmanship. Do I practice what I preach? That is a very open question – my simple answer is yes.



**Do you consider Satan to be an objectively existing deity, supernatural being, or force worthy of worship or praise, rather than just an archetype, metaphor or symbol as in LaVeyan Satanism?**

That’s a very big and quite personal question that really merits sitting down at a table and talking it through, but I’ll attempt to distil the broader picture of it here.

I view Satan as a very real and existing force, given many names in other regions and religions of the world, but with the same kind of aspects attached. It’s beyond the shallow symbol that Mr LaVey used, however the aspects attributed to Satan are quite correct. To me it’s both a source of some of our human things, like hatred or love, things that typically have been repressed by the dogma of Church or Clergy and the more destructive aspects of nature – but also the whisper in the shadows that draws us towards the unknown. Is it the horned humanoid we see in church windows? Most likely not, but it’s a fitting visual representation or attempt by the human mind to describe something alien and otherworldly, similar to how we draw or paint cherubs or angels.

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**Which type of Satanism best describes your views and how does occultism or satanism affect your everyday life?**

There’s so many different “types” of Satanism and I’m far from familiar with them all, so it’s difficult to perhaps convey in text. It’s something I’ve personally formulated over the years, and might as well be just regular viewpoints, but there are some themes related to antinomianism and strife, an opposition to norms that I will apply in my everyday life. It might sound dull, but there’s more to it than just the metaphysical aspect in my mind.

For the metaphysical/spiritual side of things I explore some paths that from a strictly religious sense could be labelled Satanic as well – and as with everything that’s an ongoing lifelong journey so what impacts and effects that has is difficult to say now. It’s made me into who I am today – what the future brings we’ll find out eventually.

I would really say that once you walk this kind of path it will be with you in one way or the other regardless of the ebb and flow of your activities and what you do and when. It is a lifelong journey.



**Many musicians or fans claim Black Metal has to be satanic or occult per definition, while in more recent times I hear many people getting fed up with all these bands who have a ritualistic and pseudo-intellectual take on the genre and lose themselves in a shitload of attributes to cover up their average music.**

Hear hear! I agree with the definition that black metal needs a satanic element, whether this manifests in a direction veneration of the forces of hell or more subtle topics that spring forth from that hideous divine source is less important, but black metal is and will always be music that carves its inspiration from such dark topics.

With this said, there is an oversaturation of this intellectualism as well, I think. Many bands push grand words and make very big and bold statements, and in the process of this they forget that not only is the music BLACK metal but also METAL, and there is a distinct lack of riffs or songwriting that gets hidden in layers of sound instead. It’s a razor’s edge though, there are some bands that have taken the ritualistic approach and made something very sincere and special out of it too, but those are far and few in between.

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**Do all Malakhim members share the same views and is that something that is necessary for a Black Metal band with a certain ideology?**

It’s safe to say that no, we don’t share the same ideological views within the band, but there is a general consensus in how we present our art and how the lyrical content is presented as well. All members have a say in the creative process, and in doing so we can say that we agree with the sum of the individual members input, but not necessarily all the components therein. And I wouldn’t have it any other way.

**Black Metal is a music genre often fuelled by an ideology ‘against’ something. Is this also the case for Malakhim or is it more important for you to state the things you want to fight for instead of against?**

I don’t really think in those terms when I write lyrics for the band or answer interviews. I agree that black metal is an antinomian form of art, often directed against tradition and moral panic but also with its feet firmly on a number of rules and traditions itself. However, it is good to remind ourselves who the enemy is.



**E, you’re the lyricist of the band. How hard is it to come up with good lyrics and where do you get inspiration from?**

It’s difficult. I can’t force a lyric out of my head, it needs to start naturally before I can work with it. I get a lot of inspiration at random times, usually when zoning out a bit on a walk or run or commuting. Sometimes it can also hit when really engaged and stimulating the mind with a book or a record as well. I draw a lot of inspiration from classical old religious texts like biblical passages, psalms, sacred harp music or the Zohar (the foundational work in the literature of Jewish mystical thought known as Kabbalah;

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ADDERGEBROED), horror, art and more modern occult writers like Aleister Crowley, Kenneth Grant, Peter Grey and Andrew Chumbley.

**While the majority of the audience doesn’t care about lyrics, there are also the ones who dissect all lyrics and words to see if the message and symbolism used is correct. Do you often receive questions about the meaning of your lyrics and do you have to go in discussion with people who have another view on things?**

Not really, no, but I would welcome discussion around these things. I don’t claim to have the correct answer or interpretation of anything, but it is my own viewpoint and something I would welcome discussion around to further my own understanding or impart my own interpretation upon.



**You made a guest appearance on the debut record of Calvin Robertshaw’s Many Suffer. How did this collaboration with the ex-My Dying Bride guitarist get to happen?**

Calvin has been very supportive of Malakhim from the beginning, so we connected when he was inquiring about some merchandise, and when we eventually met up at Beyond the Gates 2019 we were talking about the creative process and how things were progressing for his own solo output. We then spoke about collaborating on this as a guest appearance, and he sent me a track in May that he thought would be a good fit. I listened to it, had a burst of inspiration for lyrics and sent a draft over and then recorded everything for him a few weeks later. I think the material on that debut album of his is fantastic, and it was a great honour to be able to contribute to it. I think everyone should check it out obviously.

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**You seem to be a fanatic record collector. Which is the rarest album in your collection? Which item has the highest financial value and which item holds the highest emotional value?**

It’s hard to say really, I’m not a good collector because I’ll play the fuck out of the albums I own, haha. I’ve got a small collection of mainly black and death metal, so in terms of the broader record market nothing too extraordinary, but there’s a Katharsis - 666 LP in there that I’m incredibly happy to own and play regularly – the first press of Storm of the Light’s Bane is another real gem that I treasure, it was also one of the first vinyl LPs I got and an album that has an enormous impact on myself. I think those two sell for quite disgusting amounts on Discogs as well but I wouldn’t ever dream of offloading them.

**With 2020 coming to an end, what were your favourite releases from this plague year?**

Shit, that’s a big question, I usually end up with a shortlist of some 20-30 albums that get constant rotation at home, so it’s impossible to really pinpoint everything. I’ll shout out some off the top of my head that I think deserve a lot more attention though (and maybe one or two that is on everyone’s lips I guess):

Shitfucker – *“Sex With Dead Body”*: Totally abrasive and in your face fuck you kind of approach that I really enjoy and appreciate. Not for the faint of heart, but behind all that primitive essence there’s a lot of great rock’n’roll going on.

Sodality – *“Gothic”*: I think the album description by NED really captures the essence, it’s pitch-black darkness in aural form.

Abigor – *“Totschläger”*: Biggest surprise of the year, but a perfect black metal album in all senses.

Malokarpatan – *“Krupinské Ohne”*: Continuing to deliver some absolutely fantastic riffs and mood.

Eternal Champion – *“Ravening Iron”*: Heavy Metal total!

Impure – *“Damned...”*: Filthy and ferocious EP, really great followup to 2019s fulllength.

Fides Inversa – *“Historia Nocturna”*: Another really great black metal album this year and a great followup to their last one. They continue to develop and add to their already strong foundation.

Omegavortex – *“Black Abomination Spawn”*: Death metal violence – a great album and one I’ve been waiting for a long time since the Ambeivalence 10” and the demo/promo material from Omegavortex.

Hexenbrett – *“Zweite Beschwörung”*: It’s got that east block feeling merged with some really killer riffs and arrangements.

Odraza – *“Rzeczom”*: It’s kind of like a brick in the face. Punishing and full of vitriol and anger.

Ars Magna Umbrae – *“Apotheosis”*: Great third fulllength from this polish band, and certainly one of those that grow with each listen.

Enevelde – *“Enevelde”*: Solo output by the Misotheist vocalist, and a really great piece of black metal.

There’s a lot more to add to this, but I’ll stop here to avoid making it too long.

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