



SUNN O))) BOOKING:

Europe

Vincent Royers / Conspiracy
vincent@conspiracyrecords.com

USA

Angela Means / Eclipse
angela@eclipsebooking.com

United Kingdom & Ireland

Jodie Cox / Mammoth
jodie@mammothbooking.com

Japan

Tadashi Hamada / Daymare
hamada@diskunion.co.jp

www.ideologic.org **www.southernlord.com**



[pic: Chris Scala]

SUNN O))) was created in 1998 by Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson. Their collaboration and direction continues to exist through expanded constellations and various forms with maximum loyalty to the power of electric amplified sound. SUNN O))) produce explorations in drone, psychedelic and experimental minimalism/maximalism as well as fusions with such underground metal cultures as Black, Death and Doom Metal – the former defined by its encompassing guitar sounds, uniquely musical stylings and dark, dramatic and contemplative content, Life & death defined by excessive adhesion to the heaviest guitar sounds possible, and the latter often characterized by low and slowly played tones and meditative conceptual and ceremonial content. SUNN O)))'s emphasis on collaborative practice sees them working with an array of artists from different traditions, performing with experimental composers and sound artists, as well as musicians deeply rooted in underground music, sound and art cultures. SUNN O)))'s dedication to the power of living music has resulted in over 200 concerts to date, occupying venues as diverse as underground caves in Paris, Volksbühne theatre in Berlin, the massive Roskilde rock festival in Denmark, Borealis contemporary music festival at Bergen's Cathedral, The Walker Art Center, legendary improv music venue The Tonic in New York, Maureen Paley art gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Lunario at Theatre Nacional, Lyric Hammersmith theatres in London to name a few.




[pic: Kerry O'Sullivan]

Sunn Discography:

The Grimmrobe Demos (demo 1998, CD 2000, 2xPictureLP 2003, 2xLP 2004, 2xCD Japan 2007)
 ØØ Void (CD 2000, 2xLP 2003, 2xCD Japan 2008)
 Flight of the Behemoth (CD & 2xLP 2002, 2xCD Japan 2007)
 White1 (CD & 2xLP 2003, 2xCD Japan 2007)
 Veils It White (12" 2003)
 The Libations of Samhain (live CD 2003)
 Live Action Sampler (promotional mix 2xCD 2004)
 Live White (live 2xCD 2004)
 White2 (CD & 2xLP 2004, 2xCD Japan 2007)
 Cro-Monolithic Remixes for an Iron Age (12" 2004)
 Candlewolf of the Golden Chalice (12" 2005)
 Black One & Solstitium Fulminate (2xCD 2005)
 Black One (CD 2005, 2xLP 2006, 2xCD Japan 2007)
 Angelcoma (12" 2006)
 WhiteBox (3xLP & Picture LP set 2006)
 La Mort Noir dans Esche/Alzette (CD 2006)
 Altar (SUNN O))) & Boris CD, 2CD 2006, 3xLP & 3xPictureLP 2007, 3xLP Japan 2007)
 Oracle (CD, 2xCD & LP 2007)
 Dømkirke (2xLP 2008)
 (初心) Grimmrobes Live 101008 (Cassette 2009)
 Che (Sunn O))) & Pan Sonic do a Suicide cover, pic 10" 2009)
 Monoliths & Dimensions (CD & 2xLP 2009, CD Japan 2009)
 v/a The Beast of Attila Csihar "Decay: The Symptoms of Kali Yuga" (CD 2003)
 v/a Let There Be Doom II "Hell-O)))-Ween" (demo) (CD 2004)
 v/a Darkness Hath No Boundaries "It Took The Night To believe" (CD 2006)
 v/a Darkness Knows No Boundaries "Etna" (as SUNN & Boris) (CD 2006)
 v/a Jukebox Buddha "BP//Simple" (CD 2006)
 v/a Within The Church of Thee Overlords "Orakulum (edit)"
 v/a VISIONARE 53 SOUND "Ultra Orthodox Caveman" (4xPictureLP & 2xCD magazine 2007)
 v/a Bad Bonn (LP 2009)

WIRE

The background of the magazine cover is a photograph of two men standing on a dark, pebbly beach. They are both wearing black hooded robes. The man on the left has a long, dark beard and is looking directly at the camera. The man on the right has long dark hair and is looking slightly to the side. In the background, there is a body of water and a cloudy sky. A piece of driftwood or a small boat is partially visible on the beach.

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Magma
Adrian Utley

Sunn O)))
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The gathering



storm

Through their diverse enthusiasms and ritualistic staging, Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson of

Sunn O)))

have reimagined Heavy Metal as an open, collaborative platform. Their seventh album *Monoliths & Dimensions* sucks in thunderhead drones, cosmic jazz, Deep Listening horns, female choirs and spectralist harmonics, melded together at crushing volume.

By Joseph Stannard.

Photography by Tom Hunter

"One of the working titles we had for the new album was *Man*," laughs Greg Anderson down a phone line from the Southern Lord offices in Los Angeles. "There are just so many *burly* moments, we were just like, 'Man, this is... *Man!* This is a men's record!'"

They're not quite Coil, but masculinity – or a model thereof – certainly has its place in Sunn O))). Partly in celebration of their decade-plus of riffs, drones, robes and camaraderie, partly as a release following the intensive recording process of their seventh album *Monoliths & Dimensions*, Anderson and Stephen O'Malley have recently taken to playing duo shows devoted solely to the note for note exhumation of their 1998 debut album *The GrimmRobe Demos*. Observing such a performance at London's Corsica Studios elicits mixed feelings. It's an effective reminder of Sunn O)))'s core values, as cathartic and cleansing as one has come to expect from the duo's reliably thorough exploration of volume and density. Though there's no synth, vocals or percussion, the sound itself is as physically affecting as ever, with post-gig reports of hearing loss, tinnitus and nausea, not to mention the vibrational disintegration of photographic equipment. But as well as being genuinely transformative, the Sunn O))) live experience is partly characterised by its glorious absurdity.

Cowled throughout, both guitarists communicate shifts in the music with flamboyant hand signals. They wield their instruments at each other in a manner that makes a Freudian reading almost unavoidable, eventually concluding their performance with the ritualistic hanging of their guitars from the venue's wrought iron rafters. "The album's called *GrimmRobe*, c'mon," splutters O'Malley, a week before the London show. "You've gotta be a little bit mature to be able to use a title like that, to not be overly serious about what you're doing, but still have the confidence that it's *killer*." The last word is spoken with a broad, infectious smile.

The fact that Sunn O))) are named after their amplifier of choice speaks – pardon the pun – *volumes*. The project began life as a tribute to Seattle group Earth, who arguably kicked off the whole Ambient Metal genre in 1993 with *Earth 2*, a three-track collection of extended, droning riffs that took Black Sabbath's slow 'n' low blueprint and crawled with it, depositing it in a heavy hinterland located some distance from the lewd phantasmagoria of mainstream Metal. Sunn O))), as O'Malley is fond of pointing out, revolves around Earth. But over the course of six albums, *The GrimmRobe Demos*, *00 Void*, *White1*, *White2*, *Black One* and *Altar* (a collaboration with Japanese group Boris), the duo have provided the catalyst for Metal's recent emergence as a credible avant garde strategy, their vast waves of distortion radiating out towards

the fringes of other genres including electronic composition, Black Metal, Noise and jazz. Although not a Metal group per se, these self-confessed 'Metalheads with smart friends' compel the genre to face itself by acknowledging worlds existing beyond its self-imposed parameters. For musicians and listeners alike who wish to see their own restless curiosity reflected and satisfied, yet who find edification in the ritualistic aspect of performance, Sunn O))) are irresistible. And their openness has been rewarded with shows promoted by London's Frieze Art Fair, collaborations with fine artists and quizzical articles in *The New York Times*.

Inevitably some Metal fans deride what they consider Sunn O)))'s gentrification of Metal. But the duo prevail through an equal blend of radicalism and classicism. Their aesthetic combines a fixation on Metal's sonic immensity and thematic darkness, derived from exposure to the works of Celtic Frost, Morbid Angel, Burzum, et al, with a belief in the physical properties of sound more often associated with early 1980s Industrial music and contemporary bass-heavy dance subgenres such as dubstep. They have also had the effect of drawing attention to radical aspects of Metal hitherto unnoticed by commentators outside the genre while encouraging musicians within it to expand the scope of their creativity. The self-awareness evident in their use of Metallic imagery also extends to sound. O'Malley and Anderson direct their attention to the earthshaking sonic qualities that attracted them to loud, heavy music in the first place, while their much touted theatrical aspect was developed in order to better facilitate the music following an unsuccessful UK debut in 2000, when they faced hostile, uncomprehending audiences.

"Halfway through the tour I started playing behind the amps," relates Anderson. "And I got way more into what we were doing. It worked. After that tour there was kind of a negative tone, like, 'Well, maybe this just isn't the right thing to play live – but in order for people to really feel this music, we have to play live, we gotta figure something out.' That's when we came up with concealing the identities, having ridiculous amounts of fog onstage, increasing the amount of cabinets and amplifiers so we can increase the physical presence of the sound. And I think it really works, because when we're onstage and we really can't see the audience and they can't see us, it just puts us in a different mindset. This sounds cheesy but it helps you to channel the tones."

The duo's pragmatic approach, possibly derived from Greg Anderson's formative years as a player in the US hardcore scene, can also be appreciated on an interpersonal level. Forgoing the permanent adolescence that characterises Metal and rock in general, they confront the world not as a tight-knit gang but a disparate clan, forming offshoots such as Gravetemple and Burial Chamber Trio when one of the two core players is absent. The pair's old haunting ground of Seattle, where they first bonded over a shared interest in hardcore and Metal, is no longer home to either – O'Malley is now based in Paris,

Anderson in Los Angeles – yet they remain united by the entity they have created.

The walls of O'Malley's Paris apartment stare back, as he plays me *Monoliths & Dimensions*. Gazing glassily out of mounted photographs are the empty eyes of the childlike mannequins used in the 2006 performance piece *Kindertotenlieder* (*Songs For Dead Children*), which was devised by the French choreographer and director Gisèle Vienne, and scored by KTL, aka O'Malley and Mego founder Peter Rehberg. The rest of the apartment is a regimented chaos of books, CDs, vinyl, DVDs and pieces of artwork, the latter portraying the occupant's distinctive aesthetic, familiar to followers of Greg Anderson's Southern Lord label, for which O'Malley has designed since 1998. Given his parallel career as a graphic designer and artist, it's no coincidence that O'Malley has ended up in Paris, for the time being at least, lured by a soundtrack commission from Gisèle Vienne.

The final track on *Monoliths*, "Alice", begins quietly, gradually gathering itself, recalling the gritty, graceful film scores of Ennio Morricone and Bernard Herrmann. There are atmospheric echoes of recent Earth, whose guitarist Dylan Carlson appears elsewhere on the album; so far, so lugubrious. Minutes from the end, however, an unexpected shift occurs. The tolling guitars recede and the listener is guided to a space somewhere between the ecstatic harp-adorned reveries of the song's subject, Alice Coltrane, and the bittersweet haze of Miles Davis's "In A Silent Way/It's About That Time" and "He Loved Him Madly". Into the space vacated by the song's stunning, climactic trombone solo, O'Malley projects a single word: "Priester."

He's referring to Julian Priester, veteran jazz musician, alumnus of Sun Ra's Arkestra, John Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* ensemble and Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi group, and initiator of two fine examples of spacious electric jazz, 1974's *Love, Love* and 77's *Polarization*. That Priester should deliver the final note on an album by this particular duo is surprising; that his musical heritage should prove so influential on their music, doubly so. There has often been a kind of lumbering, monumental grace to Sunn O)))'s music, but it has seldom produced anything that could so readily be termed soulful, or even beautiful.

Now seated by the window in a rowdy local cafe, O'Malley is relaxed, patient and highly talkative, currently holding forth on the mechanics of Tamla Motown and his intention to use a gospel choir on a future album project, *Kannon*. "One of the pieces is *dying* for that," he says. "That's where the idea came up originally for a women's choir. You know this band, Slab? They were an Industrial band, I guess. They were amazing, but especially their last album, which had backup singers, with a kind of Motown vibe. As much as a choir could be obvious for Sunn O))), having like a Motown or gospel-type situation with a choir would be... *unusual*."

Sunn O)))'s previous album – aside from the Boris collaboration – was 2005's *Black One*, a bleak,

"We came up with concealing the identities, having ridiculous amounts of fog onstage, increasing the amount of amplifiers so we can increase the physical presence of the sound. It helps you channel the tones"

Greg Anderson



abrasive work featuring vocal contributions from US Black Metallers Wrest (of Leviathan) and Malefic (of Xasthur). Some took the album's seething nihilism to signal the beginning of a new, perhaps ultimate direction for the group. "It was actually more of a culmination of a longer interest than any of the other influences of Sunn O))) except for maybe Earth and The Melvins," sighs O'Malley. "And I'd been doing fanzines in the early 90s focusing on Black Metal, designing records, working with record labels, all this stuff. So it's not like it was a new concept to me. Looking back, maybe it was finally a release, a purging."

"It was also the peak of Greg's and my parallel interest in Black Metal," he adds. "I think it has more in common with the first two tracks of our third album *Flight Of The Behemoth* than with Burzum, Emperor or Immortal. You can exercise a lot of aesthetics on an abstract music and get a lot of different results. We could have tried to exercise a different aesthetic on that record and come across not Black Metal at all."

Indeed, *Black One* served as an abstraction of Black Metal's spirit, rather than a faithful approximation of its sound, and it was hardly designed to sit comfortably alongside the likes of Satyricon and Darkthrone. Certain aspects, such as the involvement of US Noise artist John Wiese and Australian guitarist Oren Ambarchi, were overlooked at the time, as well as the possibility that the album, rather than being

an exercise in pure atmospheric, could have had genuine emotional resonance for its authors. O'Malley is reluctant to provide details, but nonetheless hints that the *Black One* period was not a particularly happy time for him or his group. "That record has a pretty obvious atmosphere," he bristles. "I think it's a pretty stark exploration of some of the emotional qualities Sunn O))) has. The thing that always blows my mind is that each time we have a new period of work, whatever's going on with the band personifies itself with the album. It's amazing how multifaceted the emotional feeling can be. All the records to me are very, very different in that way."

O'Malley describes *Monoliths & Dimensions* as "the most honest and open album we've ever made". It certainly benefits from a broader perspective than its predecessors. Two tracks in particular, "Alice" and "Big Church", witness unforeseen light flooding into Sunn O)))'s previously murky world, albeit in contrasting ways. While the conclusion to "Alice" offers redemption, the crunching, riff based "Big Church" (its title, like that of opener "Aghartha", a nod to Miles Davis) is altogether less forgiving. The song is based around a Hungarian compound word offered up by Sunn O)))'s de facto frontman Attila Csihar, *megszentségteleníthetetlenléteitől meneküléskért*, the meaning of which is apparently difficult to translate, but is best explained as 'the act of behaving as

though one is unable to be de-constructed', directed by Persian vocalist illuminates the song at strategic nothing. "Big Church" recalls a conversation O'Malley had several years ago, in which he recalled the origin of the word doom. "It derives from the Saxon 'dōm'," he told me, "which

The honesty of *Monoliths & Dimensions* is to be divined in something as apparent as its guitar sound. Whereas on previous albums, layers of electric noise, smearing thick, mucoid miasma, on *Monoliths & Dimensions* riffs sound played, ground out by the band. The album is a confrontational listen for the first time, every element is most involved production in terms of resources," says O'Malley. "And I think it's the most collaborators we've had."

The aforementioned Kenney, Ambarchi, Priester and Carlson are joined on the album by composer and viola player Eyvind, multi-instrumentalist Steve Moorhead, guitarist Rex Ritter and trombonist Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening Project choir members, string, brass and woodwind. The increased possibilities were realized by O'Malley, by the time and effort not



realisation. "For example, on "Alice" the whole flow of the reeds into the horns into the strings coming off the guitar feedback," he offers, "there's a whole blending technique that happens between orchestral instruments that you need to take advantage of. That takes 15 players, or at least 15 takes of different instruments."

Monoliths & Dimensions is the first Sunn O))) album to significantly feature acoustic ensemble players, with the bulk of the arrangements handled by Eyvind Kang. According to O'Malley, among the inspirations for this augmentation was the Romanian spectralist composer Iancu Dumitrescu, who has spoken of distortion as a means to "release or unveil the god that is living in every piece of base matter".

"Dumitrescu is someone who hit me in the face in a big way when I discovered him," he explains, "mainly because he's done these different pieces for multiple basses. A friend of mine turned me on to that stuff. He was like, 'I thought that's what Sunn O))) was based on!' It sounds like huge guitar feedback."

The track "Aghartha" simulates the sound of fissures cracking open beneath the shifting crust of the cyclical guitar riff, as Csihar intones the legend, popularised by 19th century French occultist Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, of a city concealed in the Earth's core. The effect, like that of Dumitrescu pieces such as 1983's awe-inspiring "Grande Ourse", is one of cumulative magnetic disorientation. The opening track of the new album, it marks a distinct evolution in Sunn O)))'s music, moving further from grinding monotony to spectral polyphony.

Each consecutive Sunn O))) album has witnessed an increase in the number of auxiliary players. This, along with O'Malley's numerous external activities including but not limited to KTL, Ginnungagap, Lotus Eaters, Æthenor and the now defunct Khanate, has gained the band a reputation as compulsive collaborators. Over the past decade, they have accrued allies from several distinct camps. From the experimental fringes of rock, Julian Cope, Rex Ritter and Dawn Smithson (Jessamine), Joe Preston (Melvins/Thrones), G Stuart Dahlquist (Burning Witch/Asva), Pete Stahl (Scream/Goatsnake), Petra Haden (that dog), Kim Thayil (Soundgarden), Thomas Nieuwenhuizen (Beaver/God), Justin Broadrick (Godflesh/Jesu/Final) and Carlson; from the grim universe of Black Metal, Malefic, Garm (Ulver), Attila Csihar, Wrest and Sin Nanna (Striborg); from contemporary composition, Eyvind Kang, Jessika Kenney and Stuart Dempster; from the Noise underground, Masami Akita, Lasse Marhaug, Kevin Drumm and John Wiese; from jazz, Julian Priester. Sunn O))) certainly have their collaborative comfort zone – the one closest aligned with rock – but each release has seen a leap in confidence, to the point where the group now feel capable of working with a musician of Priester's considerable experience and ability. As for the guests, they seem to relish the opportunity to surrender themselves to the monolithic.

"What's important is the *reason* for people coming together and collaborating," confirms O'Malley. "It's always about the music. So it might seem eclectic

personality-wise, but ultimately everyone on the new record came into the album based on the music. And the *idea* of the music. When you start getting personal ego involved, it starts becoming a big problem because it's restrictive. The sound itself supersedes all that. I think that's attractive to the people involved on the record too. I mean, how else do you get Dylan Carlson to write a choir part? Y'know, he writes a guitar part and it's transposed for the choir. It's bizarre. Or have Priester be willing to play a conch shell while Attila's rambling on about subterranean tunnels?"

Some collaborators find their way onto recordings, others merely don the mandatory robes for live appearances; some become semi-official group members, others contribute only briefly. To their credit, Sunn O))) forge connections between apparently disparate musical dimensions without appearing selfconsciously eclectic. Given one perception of O'Malley and Anderson as magpie-like cultural appropriators, it's worth noting that the process is, in fact, reciprocal. Southern Lord, remember, staged Earth's 2005 return to action with *Hex; Or Printing In The Infernal Method*, while Lasse Marhaug's Noise outfit Jazkamer released the Metallically inclined *Metal Music Machine* in 2006; and Attila Csihar's other group, Norwegian Black Metal unit Mayhem, released an album in 2007 entitled *Ordo Ad Chao*, which bore a striking textural resemblance to their vocalist's extracurricular group. Aside from those directly involved, Celtic Frost's 2006 reunion album *Monotheist* incorporated blackened drones, and New Zealand noise veteran Campbell Kneale melds ponderous riffage with electronic interference as Black Boned Angel. Further examples of Sunn O)))'s influence abound, the point being that in reality they never *steal*. Honouring the tried and true underground tradition, they *trade*.

"When I first heard Sunn O))) it reminded me of the experimental and Industrial music I listened to in my youth," explains Csihar. "Swans, Coil, Current 93, Laibach – I was not always a Metal kid! So it was fascinating to become a part of it. And live, when you have seven or eight people on stage, with the waves of sound and the synth, it's so spacy... and *spicy*! It's so heavy, so enormous, and very psychedelic for me. I just love it. To sing with them is very challenging, and it has forced me to develop new techniques, which I've later used in Mayhem and my solo work. I have much to thank them for."

Ambarchi, who began his collaboration with Sunn O))) as a guest on *Black One*, echoes Csihar's sentiments. "Since I began working with Sunn O))) I've learned a lot about sound pressure, resonance and feedback, and how pleasurable it can be to bathe in physical soundwaves. In this sense the only other comparable artist that I've worked with that has had the same impact on me would be Phill Niblock. Whenever I played one of Phill's guitar pieces I always felt like it was some sort of ecstatic experience – I would most definitely get 'high' from the sounds during the duration of the piece, and as a player I had the ability simultaneously to control and shape the high. Whenever it was over I always longed to have

"I'm
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meet
in
the
middle
and
it's
Sunn O)))"

Greg Anderson



that experience again. Phill definitely gave me the bug for this kind of physical, trance inducing experience, and with Sunn O))) I get to experience a similar meditative feeling."

The general rule in rock music, though arguable, is that ten years of anything is quite enough. 11 years down the line, it's testament to the continuing flexibility and openness of Sunn O))) – and their freedom from the bounds of rock convention – that their plans stretch at the very least three or four albums ahead. "We constantly have ideas on the backburner," says Anderson. "We have three ideas for albums that we wanna do in the near future, some of which we've already started tracking. We did an amazing recording session in Oslo with Daniel O'Sullivan from Guapo and Garm from Ulver, and we're hoping to get Runhild [Gammelsæter, vocalist in O'Malley and Anderson's pre-Sunn O))) group Thorr's Hammer] in on that as well. She came by for the sessions and expressed an interest in doing vocals. I've been wanting to do something with her again for a really long time. Also, these *GrimmRobe* shows have been energising in this very strange way. We were like, 'You know what, we should do a recording like this: old school!' No vocals, no added synths, no percussion, no nothing. So that's an idea we've talked about, doing something super raw and primal like the early stuff."

Anderson's use of terms like raw and primal might suggest that his taste for the atavistic is the flipside to his partner's more rarefied interests. In Paris, O'Malley related an anecdote. Having booked a *GrimmRobe* show in New York, the duo allowed themselves one support act each. O'Malley chose Tony Conrad, while his partner opted for Louisiana Sludge Metallers Thou. Anderson lets out a chuckle of recognition. "Totally," he laughs. "In fact, we're doing shows in Japan and he picked Jim O'Rourke for one show, and I picked Coffins, a Japanese Death Metal band. The funny thing is, we both like either of those bands, but we just thought it was a really cool way to also show the dynamics in our choice of bands. These days, I'm always joking that I'm the caveman and Steve's the art fag, then we meet in the middle and it's Sunn O))). But truly, he's as much into the primitive stuff as me, and I like a lot of the more experimental stuff as well."

This is evident from Anderson's fondness for lengthy panegyrics to the early 70s albums of Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock – "The grooves on those things are sick, man!" he enthuses. You can only imagine the look on his face as he contemplated a collaboration with the venerable Pepo Mtoto/Julian Priester. "I almost cried when I heard his solo on 'Alice'," he continues. "It's so moving. I was blown away. To have a person of that calibre, with that history, on our album, is incredible,

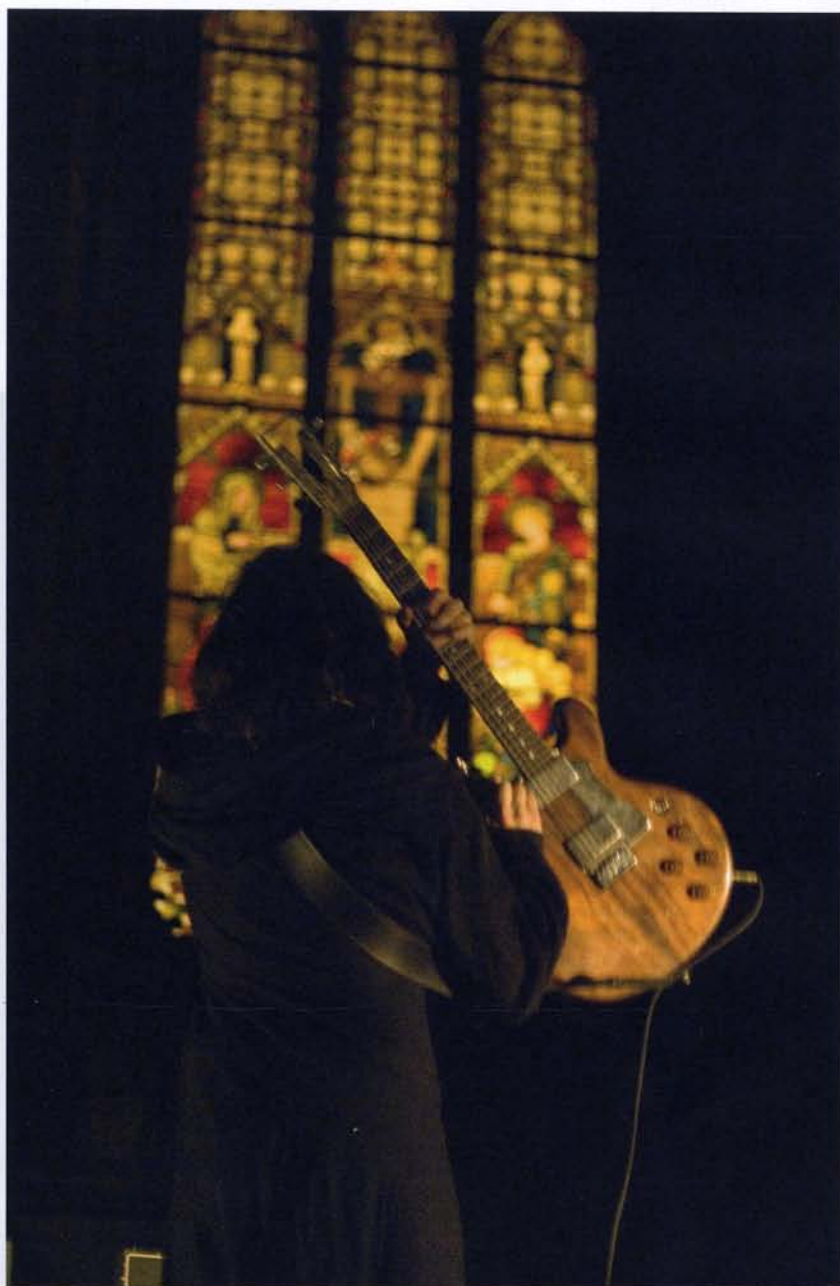
and then what he created for it... it's not like it was just some 12-bar blues thing he whipped out so that he could go home and chill out. He went for it and created something beautiful. I think it's the first time ever that I've been involved with a record where with the last note, I felt this *uplifting* feeling. Every time I listen to that, by the end of the song, I actually feel energised. It's a good feeling."

While the good feeling that Anderson describes is a new development in the *music* of Sunn O))), it is evident that the survival of the group has always depended on a subcurrent of positivity. Now, with both members fulfilled in ways they could scarcely have imagined a decade ago, perhaps it is natural that their music, previously an entity to which its creators were required to submit, has begun to communicate much more than simply its own presence.

"Absolutely," affirms O'Malley, concluding, "I think it's true now more than ever that the music is like a mirror, you know: you project your emotional state into it and derive a certain amount of your emotional state from it. As far as being a player in the music, the main emotion is transcendence, when it's done right. And usually transcendence has a *joy* attached to it. Even *Black One*, that's an incredibly blissful and joyful album, actually. And to play it at the peak of energy in the live setting, it's *bliss*. It's *paradise*." □ *Monoliths & Dimensions* is released this month on Southern Lord

l'expérience des seuils

Christophe Kihm



Sunn O))) en concert à Bergen, Norvège, mars 2007. (Ph : DR)
Sunn O))) in concert in Bergen, Norway, March 2007



■ La théorie des médias de Marshall McLuhan est l'une des premières, mais aussi l'une des seules qui accorde une place prépondérante aux phénomènes électriques dans l'histoire. Son ouvrage *Comprendre les médias* (*Understanding Media*, 1964 [1]) se propose ainsi d'élucider les conditions posées par l'emprise des médias – considérés comme « prolongements technologiques de l'homme » – sur le monde contemporain. Cet état des lieux s'appuie sur l'opposition de deux ordres techniques issus de la révolution industrielle, dont l'hégémonie et la domination se sont succédées aux 19^e et 20^e siècles : le mécanique et l'électrique.

Ces deux ordres impliquent, selon McLuhan, deux constructions de l'homme et du monde radicalement différentes : l'ordre mécanique repose sur un principe de fractionnement, son organisation est linéaire, centralisée, son temps est continu. L'ordre électrique repose sur un principe d'instantanéité, son organisation est englobante et décentralisée.

Vitesses électriques

L'auteur considère la vitesse comme l'opérateur principal de ce changement : plus précisément, ce sont des variations de régimes d'intensités qui déterminent le passage d'un ordre à un autre par le franchissement de « limites de rupture », de seuils où se produisent des chocs. Deux phénomènes sont alors avancés par l'auteur : l'« amplification » et la « saturation ». L'amplification, ou modification d'ordre intensif produit par les technologies, implique des changements d'échelle qui sont aussi des changements d'organisation dans la vie et sur nous-mêmes (par exemple l'avènement de la « multitude des centres » résumée dans la célèbre formule du « village global »).

Les thèses de McLuhan sont connues : l'humain, avec l'électricité, est « traduit en système d'information » ; l'implosion structurelle et la saturation culturelle conduisant pour leur part à une homogénéisation.

Si l'on peut discuter ces thèses – ce qui n'est pas l'objet de ce texte –, on doit accorder raison à l'auteur sur deux points : pour le mécanique comme pour l'électrique, il est important de qualifier des vitesses par leurs effets ; il faut impérativement distinguer, dans la vitesse, l'intensif (pour McLuhan, propre au régime électrique) et l'extensif (propre au régime mécanique).

Sunn O)))

El ritual sonoro del Apocalipsis

Por Abraham Díaz

PROVENIENTES DE LA CUNA del grunge, Seattle, la banda integrada desde hace más de 10 años por Stephen O'Malley y Greg Anderson, exploran en sonoridades más allá de las etiquetas, buscando que su música sea algo que debe sentirse tanto como escucharse, por lo que ofrecen un espectáculo único.

Estos maestros del drone metal (mezcla de noise y música ambiental, con guitarras distorsionadas y con largas canciones), en voz de su líder, Stephen O'Malley, no se consideran estrictamente una banda de metal, pues aseguró que dentro de Sunn O))) hay muchos tipos de música: "Creo que la música evoluciona más allá de este género".

"Me parece que la diferencia es que venimos de escenas musicales distintas, pero nuestra música es mucho más abierta, es por eso que usamos humo, cierto tipo luces o simplemente actuamos en la obscuridad, porque pensamos recrear una atmósfera oscura en nuestra ceremonia sonora, que va más allá de un simple concierto de rock, es más que eso, es una experiencia", afirma tajante quien formara parte de bandas como Khanate y Burning Witch.

Noise, ambiental y metal, se fusionan en un viaje lisérgico y las bajas frecuencias auditivas, lo que ha llevado al *New York Times* a calificarlos como heavy metal, por su disposición para hablar del mal como la semilla que crece en cada ser humano, que como el fantástico icono del mal: el macho cabrío.

Entre sus colaboradores e integrantes, la banda ha contado con gente como Joe Preston (ex Earth, Thrones, The Melvins y High on Fire), los maestros japoneses del noise Merzbow, el guitarrista Justin Broadrick (Napalm Death y Godflesh), entre otros. "De eso se trata, de este grupo de mutantes que se juntan para hacer música que define a Sunn O)))", lo que hace que cada presentación sea única", explica Stephen.

Sunn O))), acompañado por Attila Csihar (ex Mayhem) en la voz, actuará el sábado 14 de marzo, a partir de las 22:00 en el Lunario, como parte del Festival de México en el Centro Histórico, en su ciclo Radar. Los acompañarán los noruegos de Jazkamer, integrada por John Hegre y Lasse Marhaug.

El Festival contará con la presencia de Mike Patton, La Orquesta Silenciosa y Guy Piccioletto (Fugazi), entre otros.

Más información en festival.org.mx



AQUELLARRE sonoro

IT'S THE WHOLE ENCHILADA : DAVID LYNCH ON MEDITATION

JANUARY
2006

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BLACKER SABBATH

DOOMBRINGERS
SUNN O)))

AND EARTH JOURNEY INTO THE VOID

BY BRIAN EVENSON



THIS TIME IT'S SYRIA: DANIEL CHAMBERLIN IN THE MIDDLE EAST
UNDER THE BLANKETS WITH COLLEEN * WHAT IS THE BUDDHA MACHINE?



HADE OF DOOM

metal bands **Earth** and **Sunn 0)))**
ething out of nothingness?

Y BRIAN EVENSON

SUNN 0))) HEARING DOUBLE

At first it feels great to be imitated; it makes you feel relevant, necessary, important. But if it goes on for too long it can start to feel a little creepy, like your imitator is trying to become you, to take whatever claim to originality you possess. Ultimately, having someone around who acts like you makes you wonder who you are. It erodes any firm foundation of identity. And if he becomes you, then what exactly is left for you to be? That's the problem, French philosopher René Girard says, with doubles. They're at once the same as the thing that they're doubling and weirdly out of focus, at once something and nothing.

Most of the time it doesn't get that far. Most imitators are polite and controlled, respectful of the person or thing they're modeling themselves after. But sometimes there's a ritual aspect of imitation that seems to be trying to short-circuit the way we perceive the world. Take Elvis imitators: the

best ones are not interested in being so much the next big star as in—by repeating his vocal patterns and gestures—bringing Elvis back to life. Through a process of ritual and repetition they open their bodies up to the King's energy: the whole process is about getting to that brief moment where both they and the audience forgets that they're not Elvis, where the repetition of a certain flick of the head and a signature gyration of the hips take them out of their bodies, leaving a kind of Elvis aura behind. When this happens—and it only rarely does—it's uncanny as hell. It feels like time and space are being cracked wide open.

Cover bands and most tribute bands end up fitting into the polite and controlled category. The ritual is there—the repetition of certain vocal patterns and repeated notes—but you never get to that point where the musicians are transformed into the music. The ritual of repetition isn't leading

anywhere, identity is neither built nor eroded, and the experience at best is a pseudo-faithful version watered down with nostalgia.

Real artists, on the other hand, often transform someone else's song to such a degree as to appropriate it and shift it into an entirely new space: there's enough difference between Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix's versions of "All Along the Watchtower" that you can enjoy both without feeling like you're betraying one or the other. The same is true of Bowie's "Let's Dance" and M. Ward's "Let's Dance." But how often do you find a band that's able to remain slavishly faithful to their mentor and still get anything done? Such a band would, like a double, be in that strange space between being and non-being. You'd feel what they're imitating almost constantly. Their act of ritual and repetition would be at once destructive and transformative: something that builds and builds

so that by the time they reach that thirtieth signature gyration or signature chord, something suddenly happens that makes the air buzz.

If anybody comes close to doing this, it's Sunn 0))).

Sunn 0))) started in 1998 as a side project for former Burning Witch partners Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson in honor of the band Earth [see left]. Both Anderson and O'Malley had witnessed Earth live in the '90s, and repeated playing of Earth's two albums turned them into diehard Earth fanatics. Sunn 0)))—pronounced Sunn, the "0)))" is silent—named themselves after Sunn amps, Earth's preferred amps and then set about paying tribute to a band they felt had changed musical history.

Sunn 0)))'s first two albums sound like, well, Earth. O'Malley and Anderson learned their lessons well from *Earth 2*, taking

(continued on page 35)

SUNN O)))'S WORK GIVES YOU
PERMISSION TO STOP BEING
YOURSELF FOR A WHILE.



(continued from page 33)

full advantage of the aesthetic space Dylan Carlson created. Sunn O))) acted like a fairly well-behaved tribute band, remaining faithful to a particular moment in Earth's career. They were very good at capturing both the mood, the feel and the sound of Earth. It was enjoyable stuff to listen to, but you had less the feeling that musical history was being made than that musical history was being repeated, that the albums weren't quite reaching the point where the ritual was releasing the more intense energy of transformation and negation.

But something changed around the time of their third album, 2001's *3: Flight of the Behemoth*. The music wasn't that different, but Sunn O))) no longer seemed to be looking quite so adoringly at Earth's past. Instead they were looking farther along a track that Earth discarded in favor of their very different evolution today (again, see left). It was like as if Sunn O))) were imitating the Earth songs that had never been written.

This shift was audible in the tracks Japanese Noise-drone veteran Merzbow mixed on *3: Flight of the Behemoth*. "))) Bow 1" and ")))

Bow 2" play like metal run through a noise ringer, moving a purer and crueler sonic attack straight out of the Noise tradition and then back out to metal again, with occasional pounding, dissonant piano. In the two albums that would follow, 2002's *White 1* and 2003's *White 2*, there's still an incredible faithfulness to early Earth's doom/drone, but there's also different kind of attention, a sense that Sunn O))) were starting to hear an imaginary future. The difference, perhaps, was due to Sunn O))) becoming a collaborative exercise involving outside musicians—O'Malley and Anderson had figured out a way to bring other people in to the mix, not so much as add-ons but as catalysts to mutate the band's sound.

What's amazing about Sunn O))) is that the changes that have occurred feel almost like micro-adjustments. For someone who isn't that familiar with Sunn O))), the similarities between the albums is likely to far outweigh the differences; it's only on repeated listening that one hears the progression slowly welling up. So, the ritual of imitating Earth demands also from the fan an almost ritualistic listening with greater and greater care,

a real desire to find the strange and almost microscopic gaps where deviations both reveal a new direction for Sunn O))) and reinforce their connection to Earth everywhere else. That's the twist that makes Sunn O)))'s later work like a double: it's at once like Earth and slightly out of focus.

Sunn O)))'s *White 1* (2003) goes on record as the only album that's ever inspired me to go out and buy new woofers (it's also responsible for blowing out a lot of headphones). Because you're listening for minute changes within a soundscape, the louder it's played, the better it sounds. If you can locate the right spot a few decibels before your ears bleed and your speakers self-destruct, you begin to experience the uncanny.

I have a fond spot for *White 1* since it's the first Sunn O))) album I heard. A few years ago a reader my fiction writing got in touch with me; one of the first things he asked was whether I knew about Sunn O))). I'd never heard of them but went out and bought *White 1*. I was prepared for a metal band, but what surprised me was that I immediately could see connections between what Sunn O))) were doing and what artists in other genres—noise,

experimental, drone, ambient, and krautrock—were up to. It was the first metal band that I could listen to without feeling nostalgic, and also the first such band that I felt had a sense of negativity and nothingness and ritual that my own fiction was very sympathetic to. I felt like Sunn O))) was emptying themselves out to make way for Earth, and I felt that the repetitions gave me permission to do the same as a listener. *White 1* gave you permission to stop being yourself for a while.

On *White 1*, O'Malley and Anderson were doing the solid slow-motion metal riffs that they'd done on earlier albums, but they'd added a few guests: former Melvin Joe Preston and guitarist Rex Ritter embellishing O'Malley and Anderson's rolling sonic sea; Julian Cope reciting a narrative; Runhild Gammelsaeter singing a traditional Norse poem. They moved away from metal and toward experimental music in the last of the three tracks on the album. Instead of taking the drone away, they augmented it, throwing other things into the mix. "At one point," says O'Malley, "we had to decide where to take it, so we started inviting people to perform on a song, perform live,

(continued on page 37)



"SMOKE AND ROBES MAY SEEM OVER THE TOP, BUT IT'S A VERY DIRECT SET OF TOOLS TO EVOKE THIS VIBRATIONAL ENERGY, TO STEP OUTSIDE THE EVERYDAY."

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etc. It's very comfortable for us to try out different things and move in directions we like. The character of the people doing it is really the tone of what happens."

I've never seen Sunn O))) live, but everyone I've talked to who has suggests that it's uniquely powerful in the same way the recorded music is, using a combination of effects to try to get to that moment in which reality is transformed. The performers wear hooded robes, and in some cases have their faces hidden. There are candles and rolling fog, and a decidedly ceremonial feel that combines with the dirge-like drone to loosen your joints and make your body vibrate.

On the one hand, it sounds like watching the Stonehenge sequence in *Spinal Tap*; there's

something comic and over-the-top about it, something silly. Sunn O))) also never perform sober which, admittedly, is part of a long rock tradition, but in this instance seems to have a more serious, consciously ritualistic component: it is an attempt to get outside of oneself. O'Malley and Anderson are both smart enough to see the potential goofiness of their performance and I think that taking the risk of being considered goofy is part of the performance for them, a way of becoming vulnerable. If you are willing to go along with it, the ritualistic quality of the performance and the music allow you to become part of something much more amorphous.

For O'Malley, it's less like a religion than learning how to be part of a rhizomatic sound machine:

"We are tagged with the words camp, ritualistic, ceremonial, cheesy, theatrical, etc. These all could be valid as a point of view of the live performance. In the best-case scenario the audience is part of the experience, part of the vibration and the altering of space. Aspects of trappings like smoke and robes/costumes may seem over the top, but to me it's a very direct set of tools to allow the actual method of evoking this vibrational energy to step outside the everyday and individualized aspect. All people in Sunn O))) at that moment become subservient to the sound itself, not to the humanity of the people creating or accessing that sound. I strive to have an experience in a different perspective of space and time with every Sunn O))) event."

Selfhood dissolves. Your body

and mind is transmuted into an annex of the sound. The audience, watching O'Malley and Anderson move into that vulnerable space, watching them give themselves up, is willing to become much more vulnerable themselves.

Both live and on their releases, Sunn O))) is playing up this uncanniness more. While the recently released *Black One* has a healthy dose of the drone and feedback of *3: Flight of the Behemoth* and *White1*, it incorporates additional elements and takes new risks.

The short opening track is especially surprising in this regard; it plays like a mood piece. Says O'Malley, "The idea with the first track was to make a framework for the album, like those black metal

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Or does he still feel an affinity for the kind of music, like Sunn 0))) , that seems to have spawned from *Earth 2*?

Says Carlson, "I respect what Sunn 0))) is doing and other bands that are working in similar areas—I view them all as unique and important to music...." But at the same time, "Country is the genre I have the most interest in at this moment, mainly from a purely technical guitar-playing standpoint. It uses a lot of drones (as pedal tones) in banjo rolls and oblique bends (bends against static notes). It is also one of the genres in which the Telecaster guitar has dominated and become most associated with. I have never considered *Earth* to be a genre band, although many seem to consider us metal or ambient or noise/experimental, so if people want to call us country too [because of the use of lap steel or banjo on *Hex*], that's fine. Maybe having one more genre added to our output will hopefully help out in sort of a niche-marketing kind of way. I used to tell people when they asked me where I saw myself in 20-25 years that I would be playing electric guitar or pedal steel in a little country group in some bar somewhere like Oklahoma."

Hex, to be fair, is still a long way from being the kind of music you can see in a bar in Oklahoma, even though Dylan has appropriated a lot of instruments commonly associated with country. It still has the moodiness of *Earth 2*, but there's a landscape being built up as well. It's much closer to the latest moody Dead Hollywood Stars EP than to doom, but the doom connection is still there. The darkness is more sober, calmer, but it's still there, and it builds slowly and compellingly. Sometimes, like in "An Inquest Concerning Teeth," it takes a momentary upbeat turn before slipping down again. The darkness is given a setting that lets it breathe rather than making it claustrophobic. Rather than the more aggressive and flailing darkness of *Earth 2*, *Hex* has an occult feel to it, like a spell, with full knowledge and with open eyes. The results are at once haunting and incredibly listenable, the sounds rich, rather than oversaturated.

And though I'm a huge fan of *Earth 2*, an album which I only discovered a few years ago due to Sunn 0))), I'm convinced *Hex* is the best and savviest of several very strong *Earth* albums. *Hex*

is one of those few albums that make me think about music I thought I knew in a radically different way. It not only makes it possible rethink everything that *Earth*'s done before; it allows a glimpse at the hidden connections between diverse musical styles that have always been there but have never been so masterfully revealed. It makes me hear music differently. Carlson catches the hints of drone that have always been in country-western and makes me listen to them, starting to reveal the mysticism buried in the history of the West. *Earth* has moved from blowing out eardrums to rearranging the musical world I thought I know.

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(continued from page 37)

records in the early '90s with intros and outros that use completely different instrumentation from the rest of the album." The first piece on *Black One* was composed and performed by experimental musician Oren Ambarchi and is what O'Malley calls "A blatant attempt to drive into a cinematic space: '70s jungle cinema, voodoo, dark tribal."

Black One has a very filmic feel to it, more of a sense of cohesiveness than previous Sunn 0))) albums, as if each song is a different scene within an overall theme or storyline. O'Malley managed to get the album's genre listed as "Soundtrack" in on-line music stores, something which on one level is tongue in cheek but on another level gives listeners a clue about how to approach the album.

There's still plenty of drone and doom on *Black One*, though the sound is slightly cleaner, and several of the tracks, such as "Bathory Erzebet," cross borders between metal and experimental music, shuttling back and forth between the two territories. Perhaps this isn't surprising, since one of O'Malley's favorite labels currently is Mego, the Austrian home of experimental musicians Kevin Drumm and Hecker. An experimental music festival that Oren Ambarchi runs in Australia led to the opening of a lot of musical doorways for the band. "It's funny who you end up meeting on tour and festivals that you are connected with," says O'Malley, right before he tells me about getting in touch with the Finnish electronic band Pan Sonic, who are not exactly doom metal, but do things with static and fuzz that Sunn 0))) feels connected to. It's this willingness to look for allies in unexpected places that's allowed Sunn 0))) to move from being a tribute band into being an uncanny double.

Black One has more of a vocal element than any previous Sunn 0))) album, but the vocals are screamed, distorted and buried in sound. They're very difficult to actually hear, something that ties the band to black metal and doom metal music, but goes beyond, as if the voice is being used to embroider the drone and guitarwork. At the same time all the vocalists are actually performing lyrics: there's a narrative quality, a story being told, a song being sung. A syntax is operating, but it remains mysterious and partly hidden, something that can't be

extracted completely from the music. In that sense, like some of the most interesting fiction writers working today, Sunn 0))) is dealing with abstraction, with the shimmer that comes in that ambiguous space between something that has all the structures of meaning but remains just out of the perceiver's touch.

O'Malley says, "Live, we've done a lot of vocals with Attila Csihar, a Hungarian guy with a love of Indian music and opera. He has a physiological appreciation for being a vocalist, the way he uses his body to project his voice." Vocals are an obvious way Sunn 0))) can change their sound, but they've done so by choosing vocalists who express themselves in a way that's very instrumental. This attitude plays very well with the cinematic quality the album is after.

Sunn 0))) has a penchant for putting numbers into their album names is perhaps in part an homage to *Earth 2*. *Black One* recalls *White 1*, Sunn 0)))'s breakthrough album. Should it be seen as a kind of darker side? For O'Malley, it's more a "phonetic connection, slightly a joke. The *White* albums are very shadowy. The word 'black' in this album is more the void, no light, absence, negative space." While most doom is searching merely for darkness, Sunn 0)))'s original relation to *Earth* has allowed them to understand nothingness in a way that very few bands do.

The fact that some of Sunn 0)))'s more recent stuff is stretching it for doom metalhead guys has enabled Anderson's Southern Lord label, which releases Sunn 0)))'s work, to expand their range and include, for instance, the newest incarnation of *Earth*. And Sunn 0))) has served as a kind of reverse doorway, bringing non-metalheads who are interested in noise, ambient and other kinds of drone to doom metal.

Says O'Malley, "Doom stuff gets to a regressive state of mind, stepping back into a more subconscious, primitive state of mind. But there's a lot of different ways you can enter that state of mind. Drone is probably one of the more natural forms of music, in terms of what exists in the world." It's Sunn 0)))'s ability to walk the line between the void and the natural world—not to mention the lines between originality and imitation—that make them the real thing.

Or maybe it would be better to say the real nothing.

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Humiliations for all creatures great and small on *Animal Planet*.



THE SHOPGIRL
AROUND THE CORNER
 Don't ask the artist about the book she inspired. Or the movie, for that matter.

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DANCE
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ART

His new work is his most political in years.
 Will anyone notice that it's also his most solicitous?

By GINIA BELFANANTE

Bill T. Jones addresses what he calls a national atmosphere of "toxic certainty" in "Blind Date," which has its premiere this week.

EARLY one evening, at the end of a long rehearsal for his latest piece, "Blind Date," the choreographer and dancer Bill T. Jones made his way to one of the soaring windows in the studio he has been occupying over part of his fabled musculature from public appreciation.

Among the 20-year-old dancers scurrying about him, were those trying to banish the aches from their rotator cuffs or maneuver handgrips on their lower joints. Mr. Jones is 53, and although he endured a knee operation last year, his body bears no signs of occupational hazard, no evidence of illness (he has been H.I.V.-positive for two decades), no suggestion that he is squarely situated in middle life. Physical modesty would seem an unreasonable demand to make of him.

warned that terms like honor and valor had been cuneiform, emptied and recast as purely anachronistic. The speech resonated with Mr. Jones, he said, at a time when he had been trying to understand what patriotism meant in early 21st-century America.

The last presidential election brought his relatively vague ideas about civil malaise into sharp focus. "I'd really thought that the values of the counterculture were moving more into the mainstream of American life," Mr. Jones said one recent afternoon. "But the election really proved to me that I was wrong. I'd begun to have a very strong response to this 'us' and 'them' mentality, and I had become exercised by the kind of discourse we were having in this country."

He responded not with a screed calling for the dismantling of the Bush White House or the secession of the Northeast. Instead, invoking Bach, he set about to create a work of choreography endorsing the values of the Enlightenment, a piece that would cast a critical eye on what he described as a national atmosphere of "toxic certainty." And he has done so with a series of segments that question the expediency of war, reflect on limited opportunities for the urban poor and remark on the central-

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Heavy Metal Gets an M.F.A.

How did headbangers become the headiest genre in popular music?

By JON CARAMANICA

YOU might not have known it from looking at the audience, but when the Chicago instrumental band Pelican performed at the Knitting Factory in late July, it was playing metal.

Instead of long hair and all-black outfits, the crowd was displaying the trappings of brainy, slightly neodymium rock. Young men wore artistically cropped hair and tight-legged jeans, and there was even a smattering of young women in libertarian glasses and worn-out Chuck Taylor sneakers.

This is not your older brother's metal crowd, "I've been wearing my Def Leppard T-shirt on tour recently," said Laurent Lebec, a guitarist in Pelican and a fan of that archetypal 1980's metal band. "People come up to me and ask, 'Is that a joke?' I have to tell them that I don't wear T-shirts as a joke."

The particularly dark and aggressive strain of rock called heavy metal has been around for more than three decades. In that time, it has spawned a range of offshoots, but none have been as unlikely as the recent wave of bands using metal as a jumping-off point for a range of experimental styles, dabbling

in free jazz, minimalist post-rock, noise and even modern classical music.

This is art-metal, a curious scene populated by a new generation of metal acolytes onstage and younger fans often unfamiliar with metal's headbanger heritage.

"Metal in general has long been unjustly maligned as solely the province of knuckle-dragging meatheads," said Aaron Turner, a founder of the influential Hydra Head Records, which has released three CDs by Pelican, including, recently, "The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw." "That said, there's never been a group of musicians like there is now, who are helping to advance the form."

Heavy metal reached a commercial apex with the hair-metal bands of the 80's, but those spandex-and-lipstick aficionados were often maligned within the greater heavy metal scene. Metal, many argued, should be punishing and morbid, not girly. So while the flashy acts caught on in the pop arena, the metal mainstream focused on technique and form, honing a high

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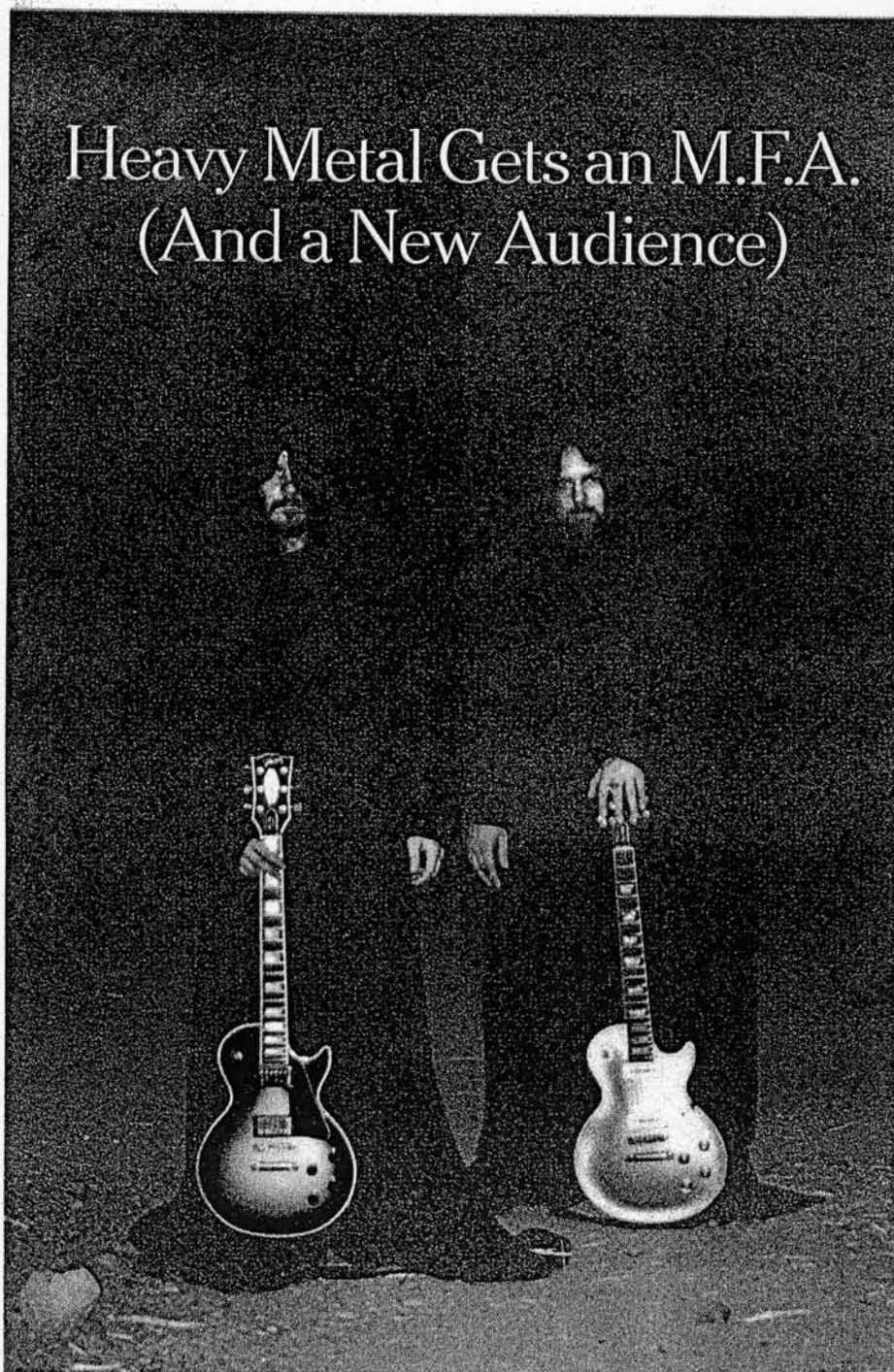


Nathan Baker

NY TIMES
 ARTS

MUSIC

Heavy Metal Gets an M.F.A. (And a New Audience)



Jenn Garrett

Stephen O'Malley, left, and Greg Anderson of the punk-influenced Sun O)))

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Jenn Garrett

Stephen O'Malley, left, and Greg Anderson of the punk-influenced Sunn O)))

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degree of technical complexity. By the outset of the 90's, eccentrics like the Melvins and the Flying Luttenbachers were acting on the belief that heavy music was compatible with an avant-garde sensibility. Their peers didn't all agree.

"For years, I felt we didn't have any common ground with anyone — I felt like I was on the inside of it, but not always a welcome visitor," said Justin Broadrick, a member of the pioneering experimental metal bands Napalm Death and Godflesh, who this year released an album with his new band, Jesu, on Hydra Head.

A decade later, those early acts have given rise to others. "Those bands laid the groundwork for us," said Mr. Turner, who also plays in the highly digressive post-metal band Isis. "We're part of a recognizable lineage."

It has produced a scene as noteworthy for its traditional aggression, power and growling guitars as for its appetite for experimentation.

Orthrelm, described by its founder, Mick Barr, as making classically influenced jazz-metal fusion, has just released "OV" (Ipecac), a one-song, 45-minute trancelike tour through seismic noise, North African music and guitar riffs that suggest a needle skipping on an early speed-metal record. Four years ago, the band released the fascinating "Asristir Veldrioxe" (Troubleman Unlimited), which was hypnotic in almost the opposite fashion: 99 tracks lasting a collective 12 minutes. These weren't songs, but rather brainy guitar-and-drum outbursts, each one incrementally different from the others. Mr. Barr called it "the alphabet record, and on our later records, we would use those letters to make longer songs."

Just as influenced by metal, but in wholly different fashion, is Sunn O))), which borrowed its odd-looking name from the logo of a well-regarded amplifier company. "We take the atmosphere of metal — the barbarism, the unrelentingness — and we apply it to getting the room actually vibrating," said Stephen O'Malley, who also plays with the scabrous and pensive band Khanate. Accordingly, the band's songs, as heard on the slow burn of the forthcoming "Black One" and the just reissued "GrimmRobe Demos," are vast seas of gurgles and drone.

On records, the band haunts. In concert, its members, who perform in druid-style robes and typically use industrial smoke machines, actually alter the feel of the room.

"In that way, the entire space becomes the performance," Mr. O'Malley said.

Greg Anderson, a member of Sunn O))) and, with Mr. O'Malley, a founder of Southern Lord Records, which releases Sunn O)))'s albums and has become one of the scene's key labels, argued: "A punk rock ethic has been injected into the metal scene. There's far more room for what we do now, which is good, because what we do wouldn't fly on more traditional metal labels."

Perhaps more than any genre, metal has historically been exceedingly tribal. "When I was growing up, you wore bands' names on the back of your jacket," Mr. Broadrick said. "You would die for them." Throughout the 90's, fierce battle lines were drawn between the metal styles — doom metal, black metal, death metal — that were generally indistinguishable to an uninformed outsider.

But thanks to generational shifts, the current wave of metal experimenters has been less burdened by scene loyalties. "These are people who probably grew up being into metal, but also were into or played in post-rock bands in the 90's, and have finally reconciled the fact that you could fit those two things together," said Andee Connors, co-owner of Aquarius Records in San Francisco, a retail store that specializes in metal.

For a time, as if to drive home its conscientious-objector status, Hydra Head even used the

ONLINE: WHEN HEADBANGERS EXPERIMENT

Audio clips from bands mentioned in this article: nytimes.com/arts.

slogan "Thinking Man's Metal."

"It was self-deprecating, but it also exemplified what we wanted to do," Mr. Turner said.

Albert Mudrian, editor of the year-old metal magazine Decibel and author of "Choosing Death: The Improbable History of Death Metal and Grindcore," asks: "Is art conscious or unconscious? Up until now, there was art in metal, but there wasn't for the most part a self-awareness about it. Now, these new artists have that, and they want to be painted as such."

Case in point: When Atsuo, the single-named singer-drummer for the sludgy Japanese post-metal band Boris, was asked recently in the online magazine radcompany.net about the influence of Satan on the band's work, he gave a predictably high-minded answer, engaging the question's absurdity — heavy metal's Satanic influences are one of the genre's great clichés — and then trumping it. "It's simple to talk about Satan as a symbol, but it's important to consider the deeper meaning of the symbol," he said in one of his rare interviews to be translated into English. "To me, the Devil is not a symbol, but a moment that touches on morals. The moment when a person changes — that is the Devil."

"People often mistake us for an ordinary metal band," he warned. "We're not."

The flourishing of art-metal comes as its big brother is beginning to creep its way back into the mainstream. In the last year, acts like Lamb of God and Killswitch Engage have sold several hundred thousand records, and bands that combine the emotional catharsis of emo with the aggression of metal — My Chemical Romance and Coheed and Cambria, for instance, along with

Experimenting with a lighter side, including free jazz and even modern classical music.

several bands on the roster of the Chicago label Victory Records — have begun to appear with regularity on the Billboard charts. Additionally, MTV, which cancelled its metal showcase "Headbangers Ball" in 1994, revived it in 2003 on its sister channel MTV2.

But there are signs that even traditional metal bands are becoming more eccentric. Recent metal albums have paid tribute to authors from Melville (Mastodon's "Leviathan") to Tolkien (Blind Guardian's "Nightfall in Middle-earth") to Blake (Ulver's "Themes From William Blake's The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"). For good measure, the metal legends Sepultura are preparing an album based on Dante's "Divine Comedy."

Some fear, though, that the self-conscious positioning of art-metal bands has done a disservice to worthy acts who stick closer to tradition, and who are often ignored, if not outright scorned, by outsiders. John Darnielle, the singer-songwriter who performs as the Mountain Goats and writes frequently about metal, said, "People want to listen to harder stuff, but they don't want to venture far beyond their own backyard."

The result is audiences for whom a Def Leppard T-shirt could only be a sign of irony, though there may be hope for further indoctrination. "We never imagined we'd have kids into us who'd never listened to metal at all," Mr. Lebec of Pelican said. "But maybe we can be their gateway."



Heady Metal

SunnO))) and its L.A.-based label, Southern Lord, have turned heavy metal into the latest avant-rock. By John Wray

You might have been excused, if you were standing in the crowd at the Knitting Factory in New York on a Wednesday night in January, for thinking you were at a heavy metal show. The room was filled with smoke from two fog machines turned on full blast, the stage was an unbroken wall of speakers and amplifiers reaching almost to the ceiling and the men in front of the speakers — there could have been as few as two of them, or as many as five, it was impossible to tell through the fog — wore jet black robes with hoods that hid everything but their disquietingly gothic boards. The audience certainly seemed to think it was at a heavy metal

Photograph by Jill Greenberg

Under the hoods: Anderson (left) and O'Malley of SunnO))).

show: as the robed figures (druids? warlocks? inquisitors?) picked up their guitars, shouts of "Satan!" could be heard, and hands were raised in the classic devil-horns gesture everywhere you looked. The Knitting Factory is by no means a metal venue (it's known mainly for indie rock and avant-jazz), but on that night it was clear that the head bangers had taken over. That is, until the robed men started playing.

One of the two men at the front of the stage took hold of his guitar in a businesslike way and played a single chord: a classic metal chord, a down-tuned A or C-sharp, outrageously bottom-heavy and distorted, not unlike the opening of Black Sabbath's "Iron Man." That, however, was where the similarity ended. A full minute later — an impossible length of time by any conventional musical standard — the same chord was still building on itself in the packed, airless room, complicated now by a second guitar line and at least three overlapping waves of feedback. No drums had kicked in, no singer had appeared and if any heads in the crowd were banging, they were doing so in extreme slow motion. The music was unbelievably loud — so loud, in fact, that the sound waves made your rib cage vibrate like a stereo cabinet and your teeth literally rattle in their sockets — but the effect was somehow more meditative than violent. The overall experience was not unlike listening to an Indian raga in the middle of an earthquake.

On closer inspection, you would have noticed that surprisingly few people in the room had the look of genuine metal heads; big hair was in notably short supply, and the ratio of button-downs to heavy metal T-shirts was approximately one to one. What unified the two camps, disparate as they appeared, was an almost studious devotion to the music. Most people had their lips pressed together and their eyes tightly shut, as if standing in a heavy wind. At one point there might have been a voice droning somewhere behind the feedback, or possibly the squeal of a Moog synthesizer, but for the most part there were simply the guitars. For the next 70 minutes the wall of noise continued to reconfigure itself, as much a tactile phenomenon as an audible one. Time decelerated, began to wobble and eventually ceased to apply altogether. Then the music suddenly ended, seemingly in midprogression: the robed figures disappeared, the houselights came on and a Gustav Mahler symphony began to play over the club's severely traumatized P.A. system. The crowd stood still for a few moments longer, emerging from its trance, then dispersed in a quiet and orderly manner. The night's SunnO))) performance was over.

Our first few records were met with complete indifference," Greg Anderson, one-half of SunnO))), told me a few months after the Knitting Factory show, grinning good-naturedly. "No one cared, you

know?" We were sitting in a deserted sports bar on a slightly down-at-the-heels stretch of Hollywood Boulevard, not far from the offices of the band's label, Southern Lord Recordings. "We just did it because it was our stuff, and we really believed in it. So now, to see SunnO))) as the biggest thing on our label, really kind of freaks me out. But it's a testament, I guess, to the fact that there's been a change in the way that people are thinking about music." In his black boots, jeans and battered plaid shirt, his face all but hidden by his dark brown beard and nearly waist-length hair, Anderson certainly looked the part of a satanic-rock demigod; our conversation, however, didn't fit the bill at all. I discovered that he was a devoted fan of bebop, that the thing he valued most about his music was

John Wray is the author of the novel "Canaan's Tongue." This is his first article for the magazine.

the improvisational freedom it allowed him and that the volume of SunnO)))'s live shows was intended, at least partly, to relax the crowd. "I think low-frequency sound, when played above a certain volume, is very conducive to a meditative state or a trance," Anderson said. "That's how I got into playing this kind of music. I was into feeling it: not just hearing it but feeling it, all over my body. After every show we play, I feel totally exhausted — my brain and body are like jelly. It's a wonderful feeling." Anderson paused briefly, running his fingers thoughtfully through his beard, looking positively Thelonious Monk-ish. "And I believe that sensation can transfer to the audience as well."

At this point, I felt obliged to point out that I couldn't imagine Lars Ulrich, Metallica's drummer and promotional mastermind, extolling the soothing qualities of his band's live shows. Anderson laughed brightly. "I can't, either," he said. That fact didn't seem to bother him at all.

The members of SunnO))) — pronounced "sun" and named after a rare brand of vintage amplifier — are not an isolated group of obscure heavy metal dissidents. Like many forms of popular music, metal has a family tree that began to branch virtually at the root. After Black Sabbath's self-titled 1970 debut, which more or less single-handedly defined the genre by marrying the heavy blues of bands like Cream and Iron Butterfly to apocalyptic, darkly Christian lyrics, a brief period of stability ensued; soon, however, competing strains began to emerge. Black Sabbath's most orthodox disciples, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, essentially established heavy metal as a movement, codifying the sound (monolithic guitar riffs, aggressive, bass-pedal-heavy drumming and strident, operatic vocals) that we associate with the term "heavy metal." At roughly the same time, bands like Motorhead were developing the faster, punk-influenced sound that would eventually lead to "thrash metal," "death metal," "grindcore" and a dozen other subgenres and make bands like Metallica millionaires. By the 90's, there were arguably as many rival sects in the international metal scene as there are in the Protestant Church, with the dominant paradigm tending toward faster, harder and generally as frightening as possible. Parallel to all of this was a dissenting tendency — too loose-knit to be called a style — toward slower, darker, more melancholy tempos and a greater interest in melody and mood: bands like Trouble, Witchfinder General and Cathedral. This alternative tradition came, largely after the fact, to be referred to as "doom metal" and is as close as SunnO))) comes to a pedigree.

As metal was integrated into the cultural mainstream, it was perhaps inevitable that a full-fledged, card-carrying avant-garde would come into being. The experimental metal community that began to emerge in the mid-90's, centered in major cosmopolitan centers like Tokyo and Los Angeles and Oslo, set its sights not on MTV or commercial radio but on the limits of the genre itself. In the process, bands like SunnO))) won themselves an audience as far removed from the old-school stadium metal crowd as possible. This is music played in small urban venues for sophisticated crowds with anything but orthodox tastes: the sort of clubs Glenn Branca, not Glenn Danzig, would have played in. And the bands themselves are more likely to discuss Satan as a social construct than bite the head off a bat onstage, like Ozzy in his prime.

When I asked Anderson about SunnO)))'s stage theatrics, his response was almost Warholian in its mastery of spin, laying claim to absolute sincerity while playfully allowing that a certain degree of camp might be involved. What about the robes? I asked. Anderson frowned. "The robe makes it easier for me, personally, just to forget about the audience and concentrate on what's going on onstage — the chemistry, the tones, the sounds." What about the fog machines? "The idea is that this is a ritual, somehow: not a 'gig,' not a concert, but a sort of invocation. That shifts the expectations of the audience." What about the final track on "Black One," the band's breakout 2005 album, for which one guest vocalist, the legendary "suicidal metal" recluse known only as Malefic, supposedly recorded his vocals while sealed inside a coffin? This, finally, prompted Anderson to smile.

"That was about capturing a certain kind of claustrophobic, isolated

tone. There was actually a hearse, painted purple — like, well of course we have put contact mikes inside it, and shut the lid. Malefic side too well. Eventually how we got the tone we wanted, the lid, saying: 'O.K., I'm a tongue-in-cheek? I asked, 'What this group's about, then his smile suddenly fessing a closely guarded secret."

Stephen O'Malley, the other in a slightly different way, think it's completely honest. Greg and I have a good relationship having fun with these cliché center-parted hair and Meg his bandmate's twin brother more unorthodox than Ar O'Malley cited no less than ip Glass, Japan's hard-rock heavy-music icons the Mel an santoor player Shivkum den called Dissection.

"We're really interested in it composers," O'Malley said, ble progression, or series of that were latent there. The lot." When I asked whether check someone like Philip C a deadpan look and shrug heavy music has progressed of music, nontraditional structure. "That said, there's a bit doom metal," who do have; we don't have melody, harm elements. We're just like, 'W professional envy might be I'd seen on Anderson. "I'm "Ever heard any?"

SunnO))) isn't the first band together. O'Malley, 31, met Ar O'Malley was in high school at Central Community College brother, whom Anderson and Rockets and Bauhaus — was friends with O'Malley, crash course in heavy metal, hair and sideburns, and I'm me, laughing. "My girlfriend Steve. I didn't really know Steve was into all this fresh 'Check this out, and this, an covered, like post-rock and j

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tone. There was actually a hearse parked outside the studio — a Cadillac hearse, painted purple — that belonged to the studio owner. So, we're like, well of course we have to put the coffin in the hearse! So we actually put contact mikes inside the hearse, and inside the coffin and on top of it, and shut the lid. Malefic's a tall, lanky guy, and he didn't really fit inside too well. Eventually he started feeling claustrophobic, and that's how we got the tone we wanted. There are outtakes of him knocking on the lid, saying: 'O.K., I'm done! Let me out!' " Might that not qualify as tongue-in-cheek? I asked. "Tone first," Anderson said, holding up a finger. "What this group's about is tone." He watched me closely for a moment, then his smile suddenly widened. "I love metal," he said, as if confessing a closely guarded secret.

Stephen O'Malley, the other half of SunnO))), explained things to me in a slightly different way. "We're really serious about what we do, and I think it's completely honest, but a part of that honesty is the fact that Greg and I have a good sense of humor about the whole thing. We're having fun with these clichés and stereotypes of metal." With his long, center-parted hair and Mephistophelean goatee, O'Malley could pass for his bandmate's twin brother; if anything, however, his tastes are even more unorthodox than Anderson's. In the course of our first meeting, O'Malley cited no less than 43 direct influences, including Sun Ra, Philip Glass, Japan's hard-rock pioneers Flower Travellin' Band, the Seattle heavy-music icons the Melvins, La Monte Young, Celtic Frost, the Indian santoor player Shivkumar Sharma and a black metal band from Sweden called Dissection.

"We're really interested in Tony Conrad, Steve Reich, all those minimalist composers," O'Malley said. "They took a point — one point in a possible progression, or series of notes — and elaborated all of the possibilities that were latent there. The microcosmic approach — SunnO))) does that a lot." When I asked whether it was good P.R. for a metal band to name-check someone like Philip Glass in a national magazine, O'Malley shot me a deadpan look and shrugged his shoulders. "In the last four or five years, heavy music has progressed a lot. It's opened up to non-guitar-based types of music, nontraditional structures." He took a slow, thoughtful sip of his tea. "That said, there's a bunch of bands, who consider themselves 'true doom metal,' who do have a problem with us. They object to the fact that we don't have melody, harmony, song structures — all the traditional rock elements. We're just like, 'Why do you even care?' " When I suggested that professional envy might be involved, O'Malley smiled the same shy smile I'd seen on Anderson. "I'm really into Ethiopian blues right now," he said. "Ever heard any?"

SunnO))) isn't the first band O'Malley and Anderson have played in together. O'Malley, 31, met Anderson, 35, in Seattle in the fall of 1991, when O'Malley was in high school and just before Anderson dropped out of Seattle Central Community College. Anderson's first girlfriend had a little brother, whom Anderson converted from effete post-New Wave — Love and Rockets and Bauhaus — to the glories of hard-core punk; the brother was friends with O'Malley, who returned the favor by giving Anderson a crash course in heavy metal. "I remember meeting this kid with superlong hair and sideburns, and I'm like, 'Who the hell is this guy?'" Anderson told me, laughing. "My girlfriend's brother introduced him to me as Metal Steve. I didn't really know about the underground stuff at that time — Steve was into all this fresh, new, extreme metal, and he basically said, 'Check this out, and this, and this.' Later, I turned him onto stuff I'd discovered, like post-rock and jazz."

A series of fairly straightforward metal bands followed, with names like Thor's Hammer, Burning Witch and Goatsnake. The bands were fun for a while, and reasonably successful, but over time each of them grew confining — like any pop-music subculture (and perhaps more so than most), metal has a clearly defined sensibility, with a surprisingly strict set of rules governing everything from songwriting to the cut of your leather pants. After an extended musical hiatus, in which O'Malley tried his luck in England as a graphic designer and Anderson drifted south to Los Angeles, the SunnO))) project took shape. The only rule for the new band — other than "heaviness," which, given its members' tastes, was likely to take care of itself — was that there should be no rules at all.

From the beginning, the SunnO))) sound was connected to prevailing notions of heavy music by only the slimmest of threads. "We wanted absolute freedom," Anderson told me repeatedly. "Freedom to improvise, freedom to try stuff out, freedom not to worry about being entertaining." The first track on the band's 1999 debut, "The Grimm Robe Demos," makes the band's philosophy clear. Clocking in at just under 20 minutes, "Black Wedding" is immediately recognizable as a kind of manifesto, a declaration of radical intent, boiling down the traditional metal riff to its aural and conceptual essence. If Deep Purple had released an album showcasing the moments of pure bottom-end feedback between actual songs on "Deep Purple Live," it might have sounded something like "The Grimm Robe Demos." It's hard to imagine any music being heavier or, for that matter, very much slower — the first chord change happens four minutes and four seconds into the song. One fan wrote in an online chat room that the band waits for glaciers to roll by and then flags one down and hitches a ride.

In 1998, Anderson and O'Malley founded Southern Lord, largely in order to find a home for their own music; no metal label, no matter how "underground," seemed to know what to do with SunnO))). "The Grimm Robe Demos" had sold less than 700 copies, and the follow-up in 2001, "00 Void," had sold just over 2,000. Even for the embryonic experimental metal scene — a subculture within a subculture — those were discouraging numbers. Anderson and O'Malley's response was surprisingly pragmatic: they found an affordable office space on Hollywood Boulevard, printed up some T-shirts, pressed a reasonable amount of records, then quietly built a following.

"Three basic types of people come to see us play," O'Malley told me. "First, the people who are really into experimental music or metal — the passionate music lovers; then you've got the spectacle crowd, who come for the robes and the smoke machines; last, you have a group of people who are more interested in the physical aspect of it. Those are the people who are just like, 'I'm going to stand at the front of the stage for an hour and a half — can I take it? Will I wet my pants? Will I puke? I'm going to be at the very front, in front of these amps for 75 minutes, and then when it's done I'll feel liberated, or I'll feel like I've beaten the band or whatever, no matter how tortuous it is.' " I pointed out that it's fairly uncommon for a band to divide its fan base into the aural, the visual and the tactile: I'd expected him to make a distinction between metal and experimental-music fans. O'Malley nodded politely, then did his best to bring me up to date. "In the past three or four years, since the point when the Internet started becoming the primary source for discovering music, the lines between different styles have really begun to blur." He spread his arms as he said this, looking at me almost slyly, as if he were about to perform a magic trick. "There's so much access to so many different

world. Take Elvis imitators: the ritual of repetition isn't leading something that builds and builds

types of music now, it's no wonder that people aren't categorizing themselves so sharply. It's pretty awesome, really."

Southern Lord Recordings had no particular ideology or purpose at the beginning, other than to advance the cause of music that its founders made or liked — but there was no question, ultimately, what genre of music that would be. "I like heavy music," Anderson told me simply. "That's where I come from." When I asked O'Malley to explain the label's name, he looked down at his fingers with something verging on embarrassment. "You know that Slayer album from the 80's?" he mumbled. "South of Heaven?" I was beginning to understand. "I see," I said. "So, then, Southern Lord would be another name for—" "That's right," O'Malley said quickly, clearly grateful that I hadn't made him spell it out.

Over the last five years, Southern Lord has become something of an independent-music success story. As awareness of "drone metal" — as SunnO)))'s take on doom metal has been labeled — and of other forms of unconventional heavy music has grown, both on purist metal Web sites and on college campuses, record sales for the label have risen exponentially. Eight years after its founding, Southern Lord has arguably become as closely associated with the experimental metal scene as Blue Note was with the hard bop movement of the 50's.

"They've got a good thing going with that label," says Ian Christe, author of *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal*. "It's become a known brand, the way that Sub Pop was in the early 90's — people will check out a record they've never heard of just because it's out on Southern Lord." The label's discography is diverse, as you might expect of Anderson and O'Malley: two Saint Vitus reissues; a much-acclaimed comeback album by the minimalist post-grunge band Earth (which once briefly featured Kurt Cobain on vocals); and a strangely beautiful suite of songs called *Triste*, by the Australian experimentalist Oren Ambarchi, largely made up of single guitar notes played over gentle static. One band more than any other, however, has helped to put Southern Lord on the map: a well-mannered three-piece from Tokyo with the slightly improbable name Boris.



f SunnO))) is the ZZ Top of experimental metal, with matching beards and Gibson Les Paul guitars, Boris might be the Kraftwerk, or the Ramones, or even the Jimi Hendrix Experience, depending on the album. The members of Boris, each of whom goes by only his or her

given name — Wata on lead guitar and vocals, Atsuo on drums and Chinese gong and Takeshi on Cheap Trick-style, double-neck guitar and bass — approach heavy metal with the seriousness of theoretical physicists. Like SunnO))), they have the requisite long hair and black tour T-shirts; unlike SunnO))), they are clearly and undeniably a rock band, with identifiable song structures, singable lyrics and a charming and welcome willingness to pay tribute at the altar of Black Sabbath. The fact that Boris's lead guitarist is a graceful, soft-spoken woman who occasionally wears Victorian blouses onstage is unusual, certainly, but in no way outside the realm of your run-of-the-mill head banger's fantasy.

At first glance, therefore, you might wonder where the common ground with a band like SunnO))) would lie. The answer, of course, is simple: Boris is omnivorous in its taste, obsessed with surprising its audience and, in the words of Greg Anderson, makes "beautifully ominous" music. Not only that, but the kids seem to like it. Boris is currently second only to SunnO))) in total record sales for Southern Lord artists, and the band's new album, *"Pink,"* has been winning ecstatic reviews from 20-something metal heads and middle-aged critics alike.

Boris's success in America — which, though still fairly modest, is building up a remarkable head of steam — seems at once unlikely and in-



NOISE or noise? Boris, an art-metal band from Tokyo, plays both uppercase (Black Sabbath meets the Melvins) and lowercase (acoustic strums amid the din) versions.

evitable. It seems unlikely not only because its members are relatively old (all of them are well past 30) and speak very little English but also because the band's identity shifts drastically from album to album: so much so, in fact, that a visual code has been developed for its record sleeves, the aesthetic equivalent of a parental advisory sticker. From CD's on which "Boris" is printed in uppercase letters (as in the case of *"BORIS:Pink"*), fans can expect Black Sabbath-by-way-of-the-Melvins heavy rock; if the CD in question features the band's name in lowercase lettering, they may need to check their expectations at the door. A recent lowercase Boris album, *"Sun Baked Snow Cave,"* featured an hour-long collaboration with the Japanese experimental "noise" pioneer Merzbow, in which softly plucked acoustic guitar chords alternated with ear-piercing cascades of, well, noise.

"Boris makes both commercial and uncommercial rock," Atsuo, the band's drummer, told me proudly. "To make only one kind is not interesting." We were sitting in the corner booth of an immaculate Denny's in the depths of Tokyo's seemingly infinite western suburbs, a few blocks from the band's bare-bones rehearsal space. In Europe and America, Takeshi chimed in, people seem to want the lowercase boris, at least at the live shows; in Japan, the fans want to be rocked. "But the uppercase BORIS always sells more records," Atsuo observed between mouthfuls of cheesecake. Later, the conversation turned, perhaps inevitably, to the once-almighty Metallica and the fact it seems to be making only one type of music, especially lately. "They should try making both kinds," Takeshi said earnestly. "That would be very much more cool."

Like SunnO))), Boris is almost startlingly cosmopolitan in person. The band members first met at art school, so I asked whether visual art had influenced their music. Atsuo considered this for a moment. "The Dada movement, and the neo-Dada movement, did not have very much influence in Japan," he said finally, bringing his fingers thoughtfully to his chin. "But what Dada did is like what Boris does. Our goal is to make people think — to bring about a change in their consciousness, to create a new way of listening, of hearing. Something like the music of John Cage." Atsuo has become an ideologue of sorts for the experimental-metal movement, famous for statements like the one he made during an interview with the Web zine RadCompany.net: "The moment when a person changes — that is the devil. ... It's simple to talk about Satan as a symbol. But it's important to consider the deeper meaning of the symbol."

A little over a month ago, on a humid Sunday evening, Boris performed at a club called Shelter, in the Shimokitazawa district of Tokyo. Shimokitazawa is well known for its legion of "live houses," clubs where bands in every popular genre from hard-core punk to country and west-

ern perform each night of night's show — which "fangsalsatan extra" on last-minute party for the l gills, as it must be virtually ger than your average sub dience, which looked su can't wait to tell my ex-bo ta, a 24-year-old cultural-i ous!" The crowd waited j piece with a waifish lead si Rim Julee Cruise — to l stage. Then a fog machine fiers, the U.K. metal band mosphere in the cramped extremely drunken English his eyes and grinning.

The hour that followed l the Knitting Factory — the rupted sound, the occasio were easily as striking. The had been — for want of a plored and returned to in music remained clear from of the musicians, though lutely key to the event: Ta Wata's beatific presence at its 45-minute set the bani might have been lifted ou bangers Ball." There were classic rock opera, like the by the 70's stadium rocke both more feverish and mo

Stephen O'Malley first demo on to his bandmate. Greg Anderson says. "It w pletely, because it was insp ticularly the Melvins and and I couldn't always fol sounded different than the It's clear that Southern Lo Boris album, which had its combination of all the Bori ing that heavy element ali melody — this new album When I expressed surprise of SunnO))), Anderson see says quietly: "Stevie Wond

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punk to country and west-

ern perform each night of the week, occasionally on the same bill. That night's show — which had been listed, somewhat alarmingly, as "fangsanalsatan extra" on the club's Web site — was an intimate affair, a last-minute party for the band's inner circle. Shelter was jammed to the gills, as it must be virtually every night: the performance space is no bigger than your average suburban basement. At least a quarter of the audience, which looked surprisingly conservative, were Westerners. "I can't wait to tell my ex-boyfriend that I saw Boris play," said Ariel Acosta, a 24-year-old cultural-studies major from Virginia. "He'll be so jealous!" The crowd waited politely for the opening act — a pretty four-piece with a waifish lead singer who might best be described as a Pacific Rim Juliee Cruise — to finish its set, clapping dutifully as it left the stage. Then a fog machine was turned on somewhere behind the amplifiers, the U.K. metal band Venom began to play over the P.A. and the atmosphere in the cramped room changed perceptibly. "Here we go," the extremely drunken Englishman next to me whispered to himself, closing his eyes and grinning.

The hour that followed had a lot in common with the SunnO))) show at the Knitting Factory — the fog, the volume, the hypnotic flow of uninterrupted sound, the occasional devil-horns gesture — but the differences were easily as striking. The Boris show was symphonic where SunnO)))'s had been — for want of a better word — tectonic: progressions were explored and returned to in unexpected ways, but the architecture of the music remained clear from start to finish. What's more, the personalities of the musicians, though occasionally obscured by the fog, were absolutely key to the event: Takeshi's metal flourishes, Atsuo's fanatical grin, Wata's beatific presence at the front left corner of the stage. For much of its 45-minute set the band was starkly backlit, and Takeshi's silhouette might have been lifted out of an early video clip from MTV's "Headbangers Ball." There were other moments when I was put in mind of a classic rock opera, like the Who's "Tommy" or even "Kilroy Was Here," by the 70's stadium rockers Styx, except that Boris's performance was both more feverish and more elegant.

Stephen O'Malley first heard Boris in England and quickly passed its demo on to his bandmate. "The first stuff I heard of theirs was amazing," Greg Anderson says. "It was really, really heavy. I could relate to it completely, because it was inspired by the same bands that inspired us — particularly the Melvins and Earth. After that, they started experimenting, and I couldn't always follow where they were going — every record sounded different than the one before. But I respected that completely." It's clear that Southern Lord expects great things from "Pink," the latest Boris album, which had its U.S. release this month. "The new record is a combination of all the Borises of the past," Anderson says. "They're keeping that heavy element alive, but they've really developed their sense of melody — this new album is the most tuneful thing they've ever done." When I expressed surprise at hearing "tunefulness" praised by a member of SunnO))), Anderson seemed almost hurt. "I am totally into melody," he says quietly. "Stevie Wonder is one of my all-time favorites."

Of all the parallels between SunnO))) and Boris, none are more essential than their shared belief in collaboration. Partnership with like-minded musicians, however far-flung the genre, has emerged as a hallmark of the new metal avant-garde. Starting with "90 Void," SunnO)))'s second full-length release, each of the band's albums has made use of guest vocalists, ranging from the Hungarian "black metal" singer Attila Csihar to England's Julian Cope, whose band the Teardrop Explodes rode the British New Wave to brief fame in the 80's. Boris, in turn, has collaborated with Merzbow and Keiji Haino (two of the legends of Japanese experimental music), with a member of the psychedelic folk band Ghost and, most recently, with Anderson and O'Malley themselves. A Boris/SunnO))) album, titled "Altar," is scheduled to be released in October. "Altar" is not a split LP — something quite common in the indie-music world — but an actual merger of the two bands, with musicians from each contributing to every song on the album.

Perhaps no collaboration better illustrates SunnO)))'s distance from traditional metal, and its proximity to the avant-garde, than the band's current project with a 32-year-old metal fanatic named Banks Violette. Violette is not, strictly speaking, a musician at all (though he's covered in tattoos, keeps a drum kit in his apartment and claims that metal is more important to him than art), but a sculptor and an installation artist. O'Malley, who now lives in New York, has written music for two of Violette's pieces, the first of which, "Bleed," is now in the collection of the Guggenheim Museum.

"Bleed" consists of a mound of lacquered wood fragments, reminiscent of Robert Smithson's broken-glass sculptures of the 60's, across which low-frequency sound is pumped at extremely high volume by a loose ring of speakers. "Greg and I have always been into the idea of sound as a sculptural element, something that you feel as much as hear," O'Malley told me. "So the project made sense to us." Violette, who has collaborated with other metal bands in the past, including Norway's Thorns, explained his interest in SunnO))) in similar terms: "For me, what Steve and Greg are doing bears comparison to Donald Judd's work, particularly his

**'What Dada did is like what Boris does.
Our goal is to make
people think — to bring about a change
in their consciousness, to
create a new way of listening.'**

boxes of the 60's and 70's. Their sound is serial, repetitive, plays off of mass and is as much a physiological phenomenon as an acoustic one. It stops being an aesthetic experience and becomes a body experience. There are exact, direct parallels there."

Visual artists have allied themselves with heavy metal before — Mike Kelley's most recent exhibition, "Day Is Done," referenced 70's metal iconography, and Matthew Barney's film "Cremaster 2" famously featured Dave Lombardo, formerly of Slayer, playing a drum solo — but Violette's investment in the genre borders on the obsessive. For his latest project, a one-man show at the Maureen Paley gallery in London, the artist has cast the entire SunnO))) back line — the Moogs, the guitars, the towering wall of amplifiers and speakers — in industrial salt. "Salt's a little tricky as a medium," he confessed, smiling boyishly. "It's hydrophilic, which means that it attracts moisture. A puddle tends to form along the bottom. Some galleries don't appreciate that." The band will perform at the opening, playing at its customary bone-rattling volume, but the audience won't be able to see the musicians: they'll be in a closed-off room one floor below the exhibition space. "The idea is absence, nonparticipation, missing the event," O'Malley told me, clearly excited by the concept. "On the second floor, where the piece is showing, you'll just have the residual sound, the ghost of the actual performance."

The day after we spoke, SunnO))) was scheduled to fly to Brussels for the Domino Festival, in what was yet another first for the band: a guitar-free show, performed entirely on Moog synthesizers and oscillators. I should have known better by this point, but I couldn't resist: I felt duty-bound to mention that most people wouldn't consider a band without guitars to be a metal band at all. "That's exactly why we're doing it," O'Malley said, as patiently as possible. When I asked Anderson about the coming gigs, he sat back in his chair and gave a quiet laugh, looking something like a well-intentioned pirate. "Steve's the arty guy in the band," he said. "I'm the guy that likes to stay home and watch 'Seinfeld.'" But an instant later he was as serious as the grave. "I totally respect Steve's interests," he said. "I may just be a metal head, but I'm definitely always up for something new."

world. Take Elvis imitators: the ritual of repetition isn't leading something that builds and builds

kultur

Nyhetsleder Cathrine Krane Hansen
tlf. 55 21 46 93 - epost: kultur@bt.no
vokttelefon: 55 21 46 70

Flat krigs-kavalkade

bok roman

Erik Bakken Olafsen
«Turisten»
Gyldendal

Roman uten personlig signatur

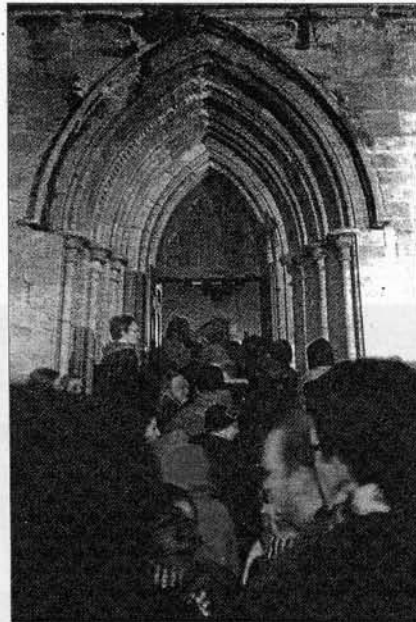
Pseudonymet (men ikke mer enn at forfatterens kontrafei



er offentlig kjent) Erik Bakken Olafsen treffer helt klart en nerve i moderniteten når han i sin andre roman skildrer virkelighetshunger, og det på et relativt fremskredent stadium. Hovedpersonen, som kokett nok deler navn med pseudonymet, er en rastløs, hverdagsforaktende sjel som kun kan få fyr på livsfølelsen i dødens umiddelbare nærhet, blant forkullede lik og annen bunnløs elendighet. Denne hangen til å oppsøke og forlyste seg med det ekstreme, det som overskrider selv det mest sinnrikt uttenkte og reality-innrettede dataspill, fremstår som et langt fra uforståelig svar på et eksistensielt vakuum midt i velferdens etegilde. Det fører gjennom en tiårsperiode vår antihelt til konfliktområder som Nagorn, Karabakh, Rwanda, Jugoslavia og Irak.

Begynnelsen lover godt, med en hylende morsom og sosiologisk skarpskodd beskrivelse av hjemstedet Solbergelva, delvis sett fra paraglider, med bandykultur og andre særegenheter typisk for det barskogbelte romanens Erik har langt opp i halsen. Når han så er på plass ved fronten, enten alene eller sammen med en likesinnet kompis, er det som om fortellingen mister grepet om seg selv. Riktignok er nærbildene fra eksempelvis Irak sterke og poengterte, men samlet sett løper altfor mange av opptrinnene ut i sanden og/eller har et umotivert skjær over seg. Vi bringes fort inn i situasjonene og like fort ut igjen, uten synderlig nyervervet innsikt med på kjøpet. Erik er et flyktig kamera i tråd med sin natur, men få – eller retttere sagt ingen personer – setter det han opplever i perspektiv, tilfører den flakende krigsturismen hans dybde og undertekst, noe han bare unntaksvis er i stand til på egen hånd.

Hans omgangskrets består grovt sagt av anonyme snakkehoder med tegneserierypikker, og dette «avpersonaliserte» trekket bidrar til å gjøre «Turisten» til en merkelig nummen bok, uintendert sådan, tror jeg, der den avslutningsvise erkjennelsen av krigens sanne vesen ikke blir stort annet



KØ FORAN KIRKEN: Borealis-lederen har fått mange telefoner fra folk som er skeptiske til metalkonsert i kirken, men det var nok nysgjerrige, åpensinnede sjeler til å fylle benkeradene.

Dyster metal i Domkirken

Det har kanskje vært munker i Domkirken tidligere, men de spilte neppe metalmusikk.

GURO ISTAD
ODD MEHUS (foto)
guro.istad@bt.no

Lange toner – droner – drønner ut fra orgelet, men det er ikke organist Magnar Mangersnes som får vinduer og lamper til å klirre denne kvelden. Selv om

han er fullt ut i stand til det, han også, skal vi tro Borealis-leder, Nicholas Møllerhaug.

Det er Sunn o))) Det amerikanske metalbandet som vanligvis stiller som headlinere på metal-festivaler.

De er som vanlig kledd i munkkutter, men festivalscenen er byttet ut med kirkerommet, og et av Norges kraftigste kirkeorgel er en sentral aktør i konserten.

På tide med forsoning

Hadde en itetatenende, fast kirke-

gjenger stukket nesen innenfor kirkedørene i Domkirken i går kveld, ville han nok satt altervinnen i halsen.

Metal og kirke er oftest ikke ord som klinger godt sammen i vestlandske ører. Det er på en måte historisk forankret.

Borealis gjorde sitt for å rette på denne fastgrodde holdningen og skape forsoning under avslutningsarrangementet i går kveld.

– Forsoning høres pompøst ut, men jeg håper vi klarer det. Vi må videre, sier leder for Borealis, Nicholas Møllerhaug.

– For meg personlig er dette en kombinasjon av to sterke interesser; jeg har gått i kirken siden jeg var seks år gammel og sang i Domkantoret i syv år, men jeg er også en stor metalfan.

De siste dagene har han fått flere telefoner fra folk som er skeptiske til å slippe denne typen musikk til i kirken. Borealis-lederen forstår uroen, men mener at det ideologisk sett ikke er noen konflikter mellom Sunn o))) og det kirken står for. Metalbandets tematikk er dyster, mens underholdning i kirken i dag helst skal



RISTET KIRKEVEGGENE: Ikledd munkkutter fikk det amerikanske metalbandet Sunn o))) «keveg»



BURKAEN ser latterlig ut for oss. Så kan en naturligvis diskutere om det har

Den nakne sannhet, men uten p

– Vestlige kvinner gjør seg litt syndige. De liker å kle seg halvnakne, sier kunstneren Rolf Groven.

Hans siste oljemaleri «Tre kvinner» ble laget på bestilling til Kvinnedagen 8. mars og solgt for 50.000 kroner samme dag. Bildet er, som mange andre av Grovens bilder, politisk i sitt budskap.

Menns eiendom

Bildet viser én kvinne kledd i burka, én som katolsk nonne og én

Groven sier det er en kvinne fra Vesten.

– Det er mannfolkene som i enkelte kulturer bestemmer hva kvinner skal ha på seg. Patriarkatet betrakter kvinnene som sin eiendom, og det er vel redsel for fristelser og syndighet som er årsaken til alle klesplaggene. Burkaen ser latterlig ut for oss. Så kan en naturligvis diskutere om det har «bikket over» den andre veien for vestlige kvinner, som går halvnakne omkring, sier Groven.

bt.no/bergenpuls: Les mer om kulturnyheter, film, musikk, litteratur, spill, tv, scene og utstillinger

Vesaas-pris til lyriker

Thomas Marco Blatt (27) fra Sjørumsand er vinner av Tarjei Vesaas' debutantpris for 2006. Han er allerede i gang med en ny diktsamling.

KJELL T. BARDØY, NTB
Oslo

– Jeg er tidlig i arbeidet, og kan derfor ennå ikke si sikkert om min neste diktsamling blir veldig forskjellig fra den første, sier Blatt til NTB.

Han følte seg både beåret og ydmyk over å ha fått prisen. – Begivenheten vil jeg bearbeide med tålmodighet og hardt arbeid, sa Blatt og leste to av diktene i debutverket fra 2006. «Slik vil jeg måle opp verden».

– Egen løype

Blatt er født i Pusan i Sør-Korea og oppvokst i Oslo og på Sjørumsand. Han har gått på Skrivekunstakademiet i Bergen og forfatterstudiet Litterær Gestaltning ved Göteborgs Universitet.

– Blatt får prisen fordi han våger å trekke opp sin egen løype. Han er oppfinnsom, har utforskertrang og avdekker et språklig overskudd som begeistrer og smitter, sier juryen i sin begrunnelse for tildelingen.

Tarjei Vesaas' debutantpris blir delt ut hvert år til den beste skjønnlitterære debutant etter innstilling fra Den norske Forfatterforening. Prisen ble innstiftet av Tarjei Vesaas i 1964 med pengene han fikk som vinner av Nordisk Råds litteraturpris samme år. Roy Ja-



THOMAS MARCO Blatt har i Skrivekunstakademiet i Bergen forfatterstudiet Litterær Gestaltning ved Göteborgs Universitet.

FOTO: HEIKO JUNG

cobsen, Lars Saabye Christensen, Tor Obrestad og Jan Vold er blant dem som har fått Tarjei Vesaas debutantpris.

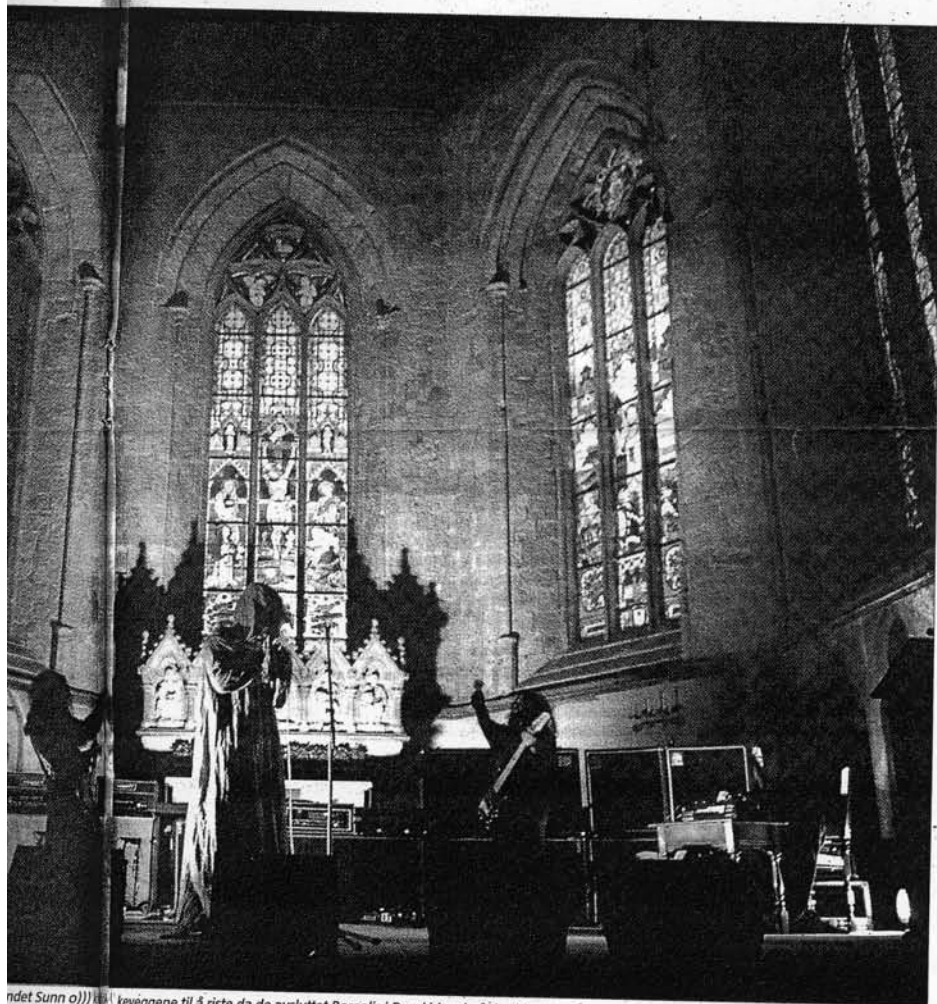
– Først og fremst poet

Blatt sier til NTB at han har noen planer om å se seg som romanforfatter, poesi som fascinerer han.

– Jeg har lest mye norsk, og setter særlig stor pris på Tone Hødnebo og Tor Ulven. Han har noen planer om å se seg som romanforfatter, poesi som fascinerer han.

– Blatt overbeviser ikke om sitt særegne litt talent, men også om moden forfatter er kom i verden, sier Ann Kavlén i det litterære Råd.

31 skjønnlitterære for debuterte i fjor. Av disse 23 menn, og debutantgjennomsnittsalder var 3



ndet Sunn o))) i kevggene til å riste da de avsluttet Borealis i Domkirken i går kveld.

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være av mer positiv og lystig art, men ...

– Jeg tenkte dette var en fin måte å trekke tilbake til røttene på, sier Møllerhaug og viser til middelalderens langsomme og dystre sakrale toner.

– Men jeg kunne aldri invitert for eksempel et black metal-band, forsikrer Borealis-lederen.

Koselig ...

Det er ikke ofte en ser nærmere 200 mennesker i kø utenfor en kirke i Norge.

Amerikanerne i Sunn o))) har

åpenbart mange fans – eller kanskje var det rett og slett kombinasjonen metal, orgel og kirkebygg som gjorde nok mennesker nysgjerrige til å fylle nesten alle benkeradene i Domkirken.

Sikkert er det i hvert fall at Sunn o))) sørget for at mange som aldri har satt sine ben i en kirke før, tok skrittet i går. Publikum var fordelt på alle aldre, og her var alt fra svarte skinnjakker med dystre emblemer til røde jordbærler.

Johannes Due Enstad hadde reist fra Oslo for å få med seg kon-

serten sammen med kameratene Andreas Lamberg Opsahl og Thomas Larsen.

– Jeg har sett dem to ganger før, så jeg hadde nok ikke reist hit dersom de skulle spille en vanlig konsert.

Men nå er det et spesiallaget sett for denne konserten, hvor de skal benytte kirkeorgelet, sier Due Enstad.

Kompisen Andreas Lamberg Opsahl forventet følgende for konserten: Dystert, avslappende, tungt og koselig.

Han ble neppe skuffet.

en uten pekefinger

fra
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bur-

ven har forsøkt å få frem i dette bildet. Han sier at det må bli opp til den enkelte å tolke budskapet.

– Fra min side har det ikke vært hensikten å rette noen pekefinger mot vestlige kvinner, sier han.

Slik er vi

gangspunkt og en helt ulik livssituasjon.

Så kan en kanskje spørre hvorfor Groven har latt kvinnen fra Vesten være totalt avkledd. Si-vertsen snur på spørsmålet og sier at de to andre kvinnene fremstår som minst like sterke fi-

Ikke lettere å bli medlem

Flertallet i Den norske Forfatterforening (DnF) gikk mot å senke opptakskravene under årsmøtet søndag. Dermed får ikke serieforfatter Frid Ingulstad bli medlem til tross for at hun selger flest bøker her i lan-

Vanhanen anmelder eks-kjærestens bok



Finlands statsminister Matti Vanhanen (bilde) be politiet etterforske utgivernes motiv da i eks-kjæreste Susan Kuronen ga ut bok om forholdet deres. Vanhanen anmelder boken ettersom han anser at avsløringene i den bryter med pippet om privatlivets fred. – I boken publiserer uautoriserte og svært private opplysninger om statsministeren og hans familie. Opplysningene har ingen samfunnsmessig betydning, men s på folks nysgjerrighet, sier Vanhanens advokat Petteri Sotamaa. NTB

Oslo-ungdom tek over i Norsk Målungdom

Det er ingen motsetnad mellom å vera frå Ullevål Hageby og kjempe for målsak, seier nyvald leiar i Norsk Målungdom, Jer Kihl (20) frå Oslo. På Norsk Målungdoms landsmøte i helga g Synnøve Midtbø Myking frå Lindås i Hordaland av og Jens Kih overtok leiarplassen. – Nynorsk passar like godt for alle i Norge meiner den nyvalde leiar. Ida Ulrikke Lind Sægrov (19) frå Os vart ny dagleg leiar. Av dei viktigaste sakene for målungdom framover er sikring av nynorskboeker til skulestart, forsvar av s målsundervisinga, kamp for nynorsk på kino og satsing på nynorskopplæring for innvandrare. NTB

Iver Jåks er død

Den samiske kunstneren Iver Jåks døde i går, 74 år gammel. Jåks regnes som en av de mest betydningsfulle samiske kunstnerne. – Vi har mistet en viktig og en utvalgt

puls

Avd. leder: Per Haukaas Epost: pulsen@ba.no Tlf: 55 23 51 23

Vinnere av «Rock12-24»

Sent i dag kveld ble vinnerne av årets rockefestival for unge kåret i Asane, melder festivalleder Terje Birkeland. Jurys favoritt ble LYD, prisen for beste egenkomponerte låt gikk til The Runaway Puppets, og fjorårets Eggstock-vinner, Selene, stakk ikke overraskende av med prisen for beste sceneshow.



SELENE

DEBUTANTPRIS:

Thomas Marco Blatt (27) fra Sørumsand ble tildelt Tarjei Vesaas debutantpris for 2006 søndag. Den unge debutanten er allerede i gang med en ny diktsamling. – Jeg føler meg beæret, men framfor alt føler jeg ydmykhet, sa Blatt og kvitterte for prisen med å lese to av diktene i debutverket fra 2006, «Slik vil jeg måle opp verden».

Mørk middel- alder i Domkirken

Det er jo absolutt noe utenom det vanlige

ANDREAS LILLEHEIE, publikummer.



GOTISK: Alice Welsh gledet seg til konserten.



PARAPLY: Linn Homtvedt og Rasmus Hungnes stod spent utenfor og ventet for publikum ble sluppett inn i kirken.



FORSTE BENK: – De må høres live, sier Ørjan Nordvik og Heidi Thorbjørnsen på første rad.



SMÅFAN: – Jeg håper på å være stor fan etter konserten, sier Ivan André Paulsen (t.h.). Han har med seg kompisen Andreas Lilleheie (t.v.) og Benjamin Mortensen.



TREKLOVER: Kompisen Frans I. Svendsen (t.h.), Nikolai Schulstad og Karoline Finnema.

Det var både dystert og mørkt Domkirken da det amerikanske bandet SunnO))) holdt årets siste Borealis konsert.

– Det går frysninger nedover ryggen på meg, kommer det fra en publikummer nede i den mørke domkirken, som er nesten fullsatt for anledningen.

Sekunder senere lyder en mørk og monoton tone fra domkirkens orgel. Kirkerommet fylles av et preludium utenom det vanlige og oppe på galleriet dukker en svartkledd skikkelse opp. Ikledt en rød hette som

skjuler ansiktet stemmer han i tonen fra orgelet

En dyp middelaldersk vokal fyller rommet, og hele salen snur hodet. Plutselig blir alt lys slått av. Bare stearinlysene langs den ene kirkeveggen blaffer med svake flammer.

Høytidelig ankommer SunnO))) alteret sakte i sine lange svarte kapper.

De spiller høyt – veldig høyt. Publikum sitter helt stille, noen holder hodet bøyd og ser ut til å suge til seg musikken.

– MÅ OPPLEVES LIVE

Flesteparten av de oppmøtte hadde hørt om bandet og musikken, men mange var her mest for den helt spesielle opplevelsen av å høre et slikt band i en kirke.

– Jeg er vel halvveis fan, men håper å bli så imponert at jeg går ut fra konserten som en enda større tilhenger, sier Ivan André Paulsen.

– Det er jo absolutt noe utenom det vanlige, legger kamerat Andreas Lilleheie til.

Han så SunnO))) på Inferno i Oslo for første gang.

Ørjan Nordvik og Heidi Thorbjørnsen har store forhåpninger til konserten.

– Vi har hørt om dem, og det skal vist være musikk som må oppleves live, sier Nordvik. Som hadde skaffet seg og venninnen plass på første benk.

Fakta

SUNNO)))

■ SunnO))) (uttales sun) er et amerikansk «drone metal»-band. I går avsluttet de årets Borealisfestival i Domkirken. ■ Bandet består av (Stephen O'Malley (Khanate, Burning Witch) og (Greg Anderson (Goatsnake). Til gårsdagens konsert hadde de med seg Stephen Moore fra bandet Earth, til å spille kirkeorgel. Den norske elektronikamusikeren Lasse Marhaug var også med.

BA

INGVILD TELLE

SUNNO))) er navnet på det omdiskuterte bandet

SEXNISBRUKER: Svenske Ulfina Jonsson (bildet) har selv spillet i avisen News of the World hver søndag, og i gårsdagens spalte inntreffe hun at hun selv misbruker sex. Den svenske Jonsson reiste nylig til USA for å lage en TV-reportasje om sex-misbrukere, og det var der hun fant hun ut at hun selv misbruker sex, på lik linje som andre misbruker piller og alkohol.

Kast ord- boken i bosset !

kan ikke lenger betraktes som
snarere som en språkfamilie. Ulik-
tig del av engelsk som
mener initiativ



ANETTE YOUNG o
Omdal Karlsen gikk t
dag kommer saken c

Se og Hør til Høye

Boken «En helt van
lagt frem som bev
Anette og Rodneys:

Se og Hør vil forsøke tingretten og lagmannsrett skal ta stilling til privatlivets fred i sene, skriver NTB.

Den mye omtalte Hør, Håvard Melnæne som sto på trykk bok «En helt vanlig ver han også saker Brother-paret.

Advokat Kyrre Eggen, som representerer Young og Omdal Karlsen har lagt ved utdrag fra boken til Melnæs som skal leses opp i Høyesterett.

- Det er opplysninger i boka som beskriver hvordan de arbeider i bladet. Dette er informasjon vi sikkert ikke hadde fått dersom Melnæs fremdeles jobbet i

De to saksøker deltakerne i det om realitykonseptet «E

Under oppholdet i 2001 ble de to kjærestpar som hadde sex på de samme stedene. Etter å ha stilt frivillige spørsmål ville de etter hvert bli publisert i bladet, eller andre steder.

- Spørsmålet handler som selv har sagt skal ha, sier advokaten som fører den tredje og Hør.

Han sier det er v
og at det vil bli lag
og Hør skal frifinn
Ifølge dommen fr
rett i fjor må Se og
paret til sammen 7:
ning og saksomkos

• som spilte mørk, dystert og meget høy musikk i Domkirken i går.

FOTO: CAMILLA SMISTAD-TOFTERÅ




AMPLIFIERS ANONYMOUS

*Three parentheses in the band name, and a reason behind each one of them:
Sunno))) is not a guitar band, neither is it a noise band.
Sunn is an amplifier brand and Sunno))) is an amplifier band.*

BY: SVEIN EGIL HATLEVIK (TEXT) / METALION (PHOTO)





"There is also a ceremonial aspect to our concerts".

"Refurnish this room using only sound and smoke." If your boss put you to this task, you might think that she (or he) is being somewhat unreasonable. But if you've ever been to a Sunn0))) concert, this doesn't quite seem that difficult after all.

Two years ago this band played a concert in Oslo. By the time they were about to start playing, there was nothing left to indicate that one was standing inside an ordinary concert venue. The smoke was so thick, you could not even see who was standing right next to you. And from somewhere deep inside this smog came a deep, protruding and threatening sound covered with spikes. Like a huge sea urchin made purely out of sound. Little else to do than just wait and hope that this unlikely freak of sonic waves doesn't want you for supper. Then wait even a little longer, then a blast of thunder, and the guitars start pouring down.

"Our concerts are not just concerts", says Stephen O'Malley, guitarist and founding member of Sunn0))) alongside fellow stringsman Greg Anderson. At the moment he's talking on the phone from a Swedish hotel room after having spent one week in Oslo playing at the outdoor festival Øya. O'Malley and the rest of the crew had been scheduled at the very end of the festival while the sun descended behind the pine-covered hills around the Norwegian capital. Here Sunn0))) spent a couple of days in the studio working on recordings "the point of which is not predefined", as O'Malley himself puts it.

But in between recordings, Sunn0))) also performed their only concert this year.

"There is also a ceremonial aspect to our concerts. We hope for the audience to be spiritually open and receptive, to be willing to reach an ecstatic meditation state. When I use the word "spirituality", I mean what you have access to beyond what can be explained in everyday logical terms. You tap into that archaic vibe of something that's existed way before you were born", says O'Malley.

Given this, it's not so hard to understand why Sunn0))) are hesitant to do concerts in the open air. Apart from the fact that an outdoor festival like Øya is all about entertainment and hanging out rather than ecstatic meditation states. And how on earth do you fill outdoors with thick smoke? Locations like the Bergen Dome Church (where they performed last autumn), bunkers and subterranean caves make much more sense, because the music that is Sunn0))) is all about sound and acoustics. Or perhaps one should phrase it the other way around: "The sound and acoustics that is Sunn0))) is all about music".

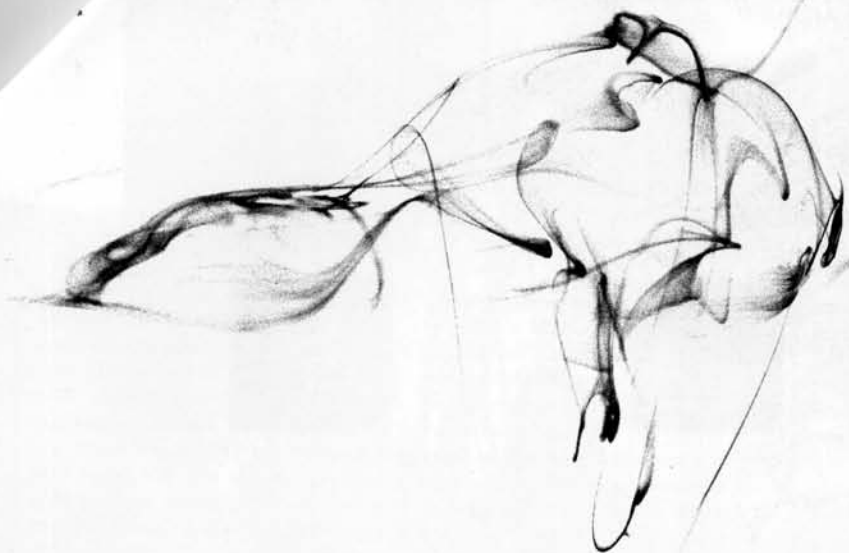
"You have no acoustic space outdoors", says O'Malley. "A lot of bands have their balls cut off when they play outdoors, and we are definitely in the danger zone. When we were invited to do this concert we looked upon it as a challenge. We had to define what we're doing and to question ourselves."

While Sunn0))) weren't busy questioning themselves, they spent long days in Crystal Canyon studios working with Christophorus Rygg and Tore Ylvisaker from Ulver producing and supervising the process.

"We've known Ulver's music for years, and they did a remix of one of our tracks a couple of years ago. But we just recently got to be friendly with them", says O'Malley, at the current time not able to reveal much of how these new recordings will sound when they eventually become available. However he is able to shed some light on the progress of their upcoming seventh album, which in all likelihood will bear the title "SUNN 7".

This time around the sound and acoustics that is Sunn0)))'s music will be further broadened with strings, brass and choir arrangements – and more exotic instruments such as Tibetan horns and conch shells. "It's not going to be our epic or symphonic album. It will be more integrated into our sound with elements from contemporary spectral music and work more systematically with some of the phenomena that we have experienced a lot of times on stage with amplified instruments like guitars", O'Malley elaborates.

So, what on earth is "spectral music" anyway? Unsurprisingly it has to do with acoustics and sound; we are after all talking about Sunn0))) here. More detailed it has to do with utilizing the physics of sound



DOM

waves and to combine these waves in such a way that new sounds occur. This can be done by manipulating the sound within a computer, but also by combining the unique characteristics of each different instrument and each different note. For this purpose, Sunn0))) recruited the assistance of composer and violist Eyvind Kang, who has previously worked with notabilities like Mike Patton, John Zorn, Laurie Anderson and Beck.

"We are just about to start mixing the album in Seattle. That city is such an amazing pool of talent. We have also been able to work with Julian Priester who plays the trombone. He's in his seventies and used to play with John Coltrane, Sun Ra and Herbie Hancock, the old jazz legends", O'Malley enthuses. Priester, however, is not the only veteran trombonist to be featured on the upcoming album. The other one is Stuart Dempster, retired university professor and academically merited composer.

"These new people that we are allowed to work with are approaching the process with absolutely no ego. Stuart just walks into the studio and is immediately down with the vibe. If someone had told me five years ago that these individuals would exist in the same reality as us, I wouldn't have believed it. For us, individuals are not as important as this entity that arises through our music, and these people grasp that perfectly."

Anonymity certainly is an important

part of Sunn0)))'s performances. Faces are hard to spot within the constantly cloak-wearing unit veiled in smog up on the stage. Or to use Norwegian noise musician Lasse Marhaug's words when confronted with a member of the audience who had no idea that he'd been standing on stage two hours earlier: "Didn't you see me? I was the one wearing a cloak!"

But the band also depend on more advanced pieces of equipment than mere fabric. Sunn0))) took their band name from a specific type of amplifiers: Sunn. This not just a name, it's a clear signal that they know that what they do is dependent on technology. "This is one of the things that separate the music we make from noise music, apart from the fact that we don't sound like Merzbow", says O'Malley. "We are totally dependent on amplifiers – the older, the better. We are a dinosaur band in that sense. I'd also say we are more of an amplifier band than a guitar band."

And unlike a band like Slayer, who puts dozens of amplifiers on stage for the visual effect, every amplifier on the same stage as Sunn0))) will have to do its chores. "We use technology to create a feedback circuit, and all the players on stage become a part of it. It becomes an amplification of the atmosphere", says O'Malley. ■

so that by the time they reach that thirtieth signature gyration or signature chord, something suddenly happens that makes the air buzz.

If anybody comes close to doing this, it's Sunn 0))).

Sunn 0))) started in 1998 as a side project for former Burning Witch partners Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson in honor of the band Earth [see left]. Both Anderson and O'Malley had witnessed Earth live in the '90s, and repeated playing of Earth's two albums turned them into diehard Earth fanatics. Sunn 0)))—pronounced Sunn, the "0)))" is silent—named themselves after Sunn amps, Earth's preferred amps and then set about paying tribute to a band they felt had changed musical history.

Sunn 0)))'s first two albums sound like, well, Earth. O'Malley and Anderson learned their lessons well from *Earth 2*, taking

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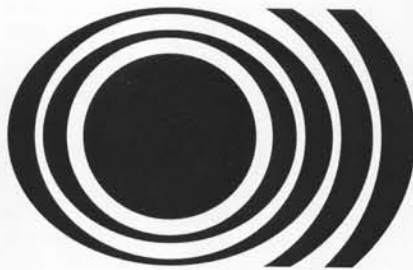
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Several years ago, in 1998 to be exact, Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson entered the studio inspired by early Melvins and Earth records, with two guitars, one bass and a stack of amplifiers in tow. What they didn't expect was that the improv session would lead to a minor revolution of sorts, a sound that they themselves appropriated from Melvins and Earth and turned into a musical phenomenon. Fast forward to today, and artists from all walks of life regularly name-drop them as the single-most important influence on their work. Practically every new experimental and improv release today comes with the obligatory 'sounds like SunnO)))' tag, they play sell-out shows in front of thousands, share the stage with artists playing virtually every conceivable style of music, and have become, for want of a better word, true superstars in the world of independent music.

"It's kind of been back almost as far as Greg and I have been playing together, which was about thirteen years ago" Stephen recalls. "There's been an incarnation of SunnO))) in one form or another at various times since. SunnO))) didn't actually start as SunnO))) until 1998 and that impetus was based on Greg and I ending up living in the same city again, and deciding to play music together again. Prior to that we had done some other incarnations of this group called Mars which was Greg and me, and Rex Ritter who ended up playing in SunnO))) later on. That happened in Seattle a few times. Greg and I had also been in a few bands together, Burning Witch and Thor's Hammer, and SunnO))) basically began because we were in the same place, wanting to do music again together after about a year and a half of not doing so, and decided to start playing as a duo. Very simple beginning really, just another rehearsal room with a bunch of amps and a couple of guitars and a lot of pills [laughter], just playing riffs, being inspired by the Melvins and Earth and Burzum and stuff like that."

"Thor's Hammer was basically the first time that we played together" Greg adds. "It was Stephen and I, our friend Runhild Gammelseter on vocals and Jamie Sykes on drums,

and a bass player from the local Seattle area. That was a really short-lived band. It was just kind of a project that Stephen and I put together with Runhild. And when she left for Norway and the band disintegrated, Stephen and I kept on playing - we formed Burning Witch and played around for almost a year, then I decided to move to Los Angeles. Stephen continued with Burning Witch in Seattle and I formed Goatsnake in Los Angeles. Eventually Stephen made his way down to L.A. as well and SunnO))) was really an excuse for us to keep collaborating and playing music together, very low key and casual with very minimal expectations of what we were gonna do or what it was gonna be."

What emerged from the early sessions was a raw recording in the shape of *The Grimrobe Demos*, something the band intended as precisely that - a demo - but Aaron Turner's Hydra Head label eventually released it as an album proper. Their first foray into recording as SunnO))) was rooted in their mutual admiration of Melvins and Earth, but it also resulted in the band being labelled an Earth tribute band, the pair going as far as naming one of the tracks 'Dylan Carlson'.

"I think there's a really strong magnetism to them, especially with the guitar playing" says Stephen. "I mean, Greg and I are both guitar players and speaking for myself I love listening to a good guitarist no matter where they stand technically. If someone's got the spirit and some soul of spirituality in their playing and their approach to playing music it's really interesting, usually. But Dylan is just always a fascinating guitar player to me. When we did that recording it was a pretty basic re-interpretation of Earth in a lot of ways, mainly because it was just two guitar players, or two guitars, and bass. I don't know if it would've been the same if we had a drummer or a singer. We've done other bands which had very slow riffs also influenced by Earth and the Melvins that had drummers, so that kind of puts it out of the context, but I think, especially at that time, when you're playing heavy, down-tuned guitar riffs that are sort of pseudo-metal in their style, there weren't

a lot of reference points for that kind of music. Earth 2 personified that style. Nowadays there's a lot of other reference points for that kind of stuff and that sort of stripped-down version of metal has become a lot more popular than in 1998. There were a lot of heavier bands more influenced by the Melvins and Black Flag, like Grief, Eyehategod and 13 for example... But I think there is a tremendous increase in the amount of that type of music today as compared to then. A lot of the interviews I do finish with these kind of questions, like: 'How intentional was this? How literal was it as a concept?' Actually it didn't have that much weight at that time. I think the more conceptual part of SunnO))) has emerged in the past five years. At that time it was very simple, the pleasure of playing the guitar, playing loud and playing slow, and one of the god-heads of that style of music was Earth. So in some ways it's just a tribute to that, and using that title suggests that. But it's also a little bit of humour - like, how close can you get without burning yourself?"

"Being from the Northwest I got a chance to see the Melvins early on quite a few times" Greg recalls, "and to me they were the first band that I was aware of that was really stretching time with their music and playing the slowest that I've ever heard anyone play, and really kind of experimenting with sound in a lot of ways, with feedback and I guess you could call it 'drone'. The Lysol record to me was one of the first times I'd ever heard anything like that. I was aware of that record around the same time as Earth 2 and those two records and those two groups are sort of my first exposure to that kind of style or technique of playing music or manipulating sound."

When SunnO))) first broke into the public eye, mostly through exposure via the metal press and tours with metal acts, people were quick to pigeonhole them into the genre of extreme metal, throwing such labels as 'doom', 'art-metal' and eventually 'drone'. While early shows attracted a more metal audience, in no small way buoyed by the imagery the band used on their cover art, post-

ers and, of course, their records being released through Southern Lord, the label run by Greg that mostly dealt with the blackest of the black and doom metal sub-genres, their music actually originated from the early experimentation by bands who were at the time associated far more with grunge than metal.

"Earth was an anomaly. When it came out on Sub Pop it was like 'what the fuck is this?'" laughs Stephen. "They released *The Fluid and Supersuckers* 7-inches, and then there's *Extra-Capsular Extraction*, almost as a joke. I really think the reason why it came out on Sub Pop was because Dylan was best friends with Kurt Cobain, and he was Nirvana's roadie. He was in the scene there and also played in bands with some of those people. Earth's line up before that record is kind of interesting, there were other people involved who were from Seattle or Portland or Olympia, so I guess it's like - where do you fit in your musical scene? And for Earth, they lived in the Pacific Northwest, the music scene at that time consisted a lot of so-called grunge bands, but there's a whole debate about whether that term is even appropriate as well, considering how different a lot of those bands were. And that's kind of how I see a lot of musical labels, like 'drone'. Drone music is kind of an absurd label to be applying to a metal band that play slow. It's just absurd to have labels. Labelling music is something more useful to distributors and record labels, so they can make a connection to the consumers. As far as extreme metal fans, when SunnO))) first started putting records out they actually came out on Hydra Head Records. I wouldn't describe that label as an extreme metal label - I would describe it as more of a hardcore label. Personally, I've been involved with black metal for quite a long time and maybe that had something to do with that association, or just the imagery and the vibe of our artwork and aesthetic lean toward that a bit more. With touring and playing shows, especially in different countries, the people who are actually interested in our music and coming to our concerts are a pretty diverse group of people. It's more about people who are into listening to new sounds and stretching their comprehension of what music is. And I especially realized how little of a metal audience we have when SunnO))) did a tour opening up for Celtic Frost, and it became very obvious what a *real* metal audience is versus what a SunnO))) audience is."

These days, however, you'd be hard pressed to find 'real' metalheads at their shows. In fact, the eclectic crowd SunnO))) have attracted over the past couple of years have included people of all ages and all walks of life, even one Jarvis Cocker of indie /pop outfit Pulp fame, an unlikely new fan who eventually invited them to play at the eclectic Meltdown Festival in London in June. "The first offer that he extend-

ed to us was really cool actually" says Stephen, "but it's too bad it didn't work out for logistical reasons. He offered us to open for Motorhead at the Royal Festival Hall, but it turned into us headlining a date at the Queen Elizabeth Hall which was a really, really important and incredible experience for us, and I think the concert is one of the best we've done, in England certainly."

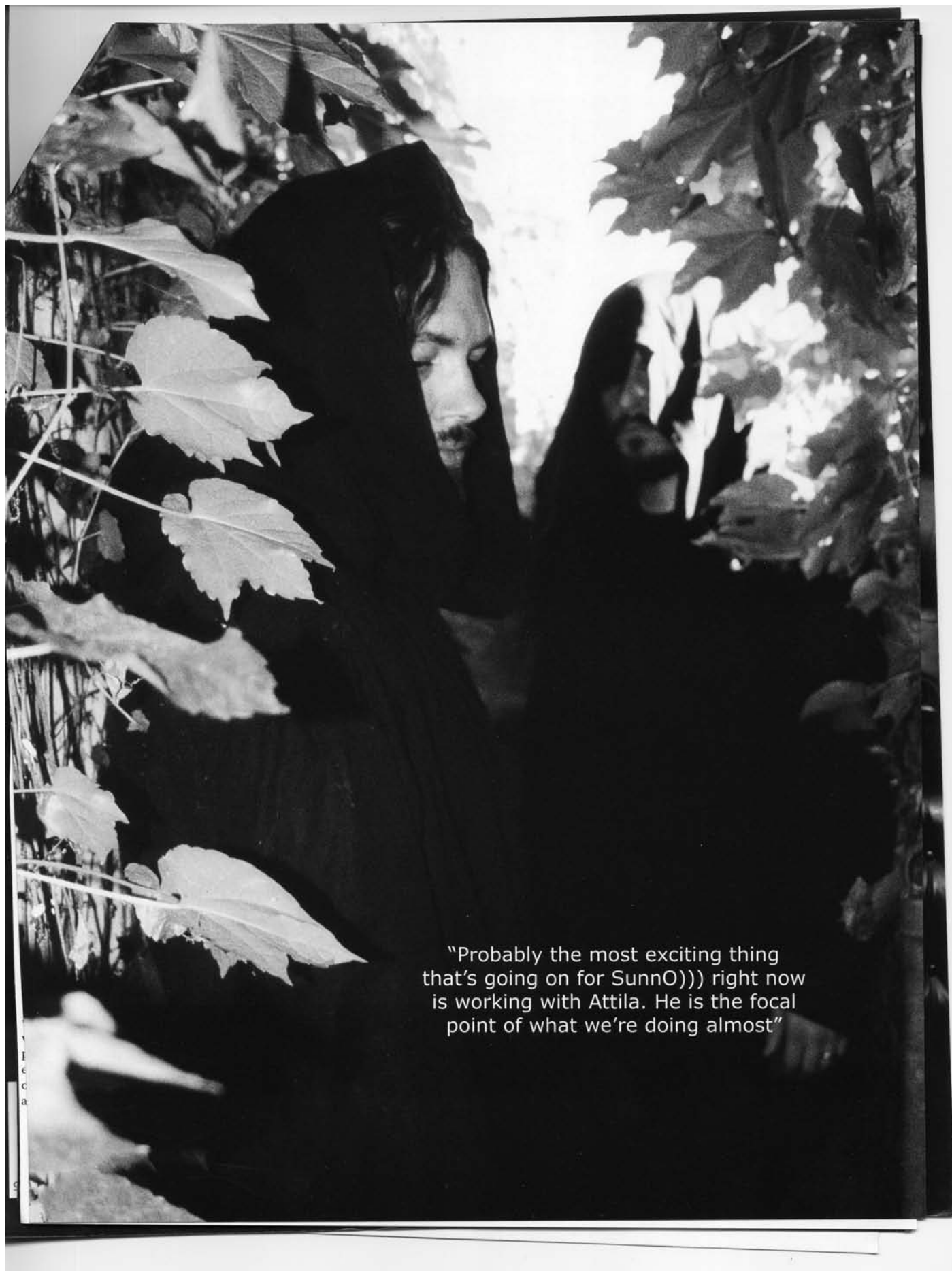
"I heard he came to a gig we did last year in London and I didn't really know who he was but then some of the other guys who were with SunnO))) were like 'Pulp was a pretty huge pop band for a while and he's this really weird personality', this really enigmatic rock guy" Stephen continues. "As far as I'm concerned, from the little that I got to hang out with him after our concert, he's totally cool. He seems like a really interesting dude. Obviously he has a cool taste in music and he's making the most of the festival offer. It must be an amazing position to be in, to be offered to curate a festival like that, in those venues, and to put together such an off-the-wall collection of music. Devo played, and stuff like that, but I'm not familiar with Pulp too much [laughter]. But I honestly don't know what that has to do with us being somewhere. We've been lucky enough to do a bunch of festivals with curators. It may seem from the outside that it's bizarre that we're playing these festivals, but it's very much a compliment to be invited because the people inviting us have a very similar viewpoint on music as we do, obviously - they're open to new music and different things and they're interested in sounds. It's a lot more appropriate than playing a very genre-specific festival."

"It's pretty funny actually. My wife was a Pulp fan years ago and I didn't even know who he was" Greg laughs. "I mentioned his name to her and she was like 'oh yeah, I've got all his records'. Apparently he came to our gig in London last year, the Frieze Festival, and I guess we made an impression on him there [laughter]. I actually got to meet him after the show and he seemed a lot like Stephen and I, a real genuine music fanatic and into all kinds of different music. It was really strange that on the plane ride over to London they showed this documentary on Scott Walker and Jarvis was in this documentary talking about Scott Walker. So I really get the impression that Jarvis, even though I'm not personally a fan of some of his recorded works, is like-minded and he's a big music fanatic. I can totally relate to that."

The performance at Meltdown was also a perfect example of SunnO)))'s continuing evolution as a live unit, driven in large part by the constant absorption of different artists into the live line-up, in this case Guapo's Daniel O'Sullivan and Steven Stapleton of Nurse With Wound. "Daniel O'Sullivan collaborated with

Stephen before with Aethenor" Greg says. Stephen had told me about him and we decided to have a mutual interest in sounds. And actually, players like Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, which I'm really obsessed with and a fanatic of, especially the 70s stuff. He just seemed like a really great person and Stephen had some good experiences collaborating with him with his other projects so we decided to give it a go for that show. He is an incredible player and he wanted to play Fender Rhodes, which is something that we have always wanted to incorporate with SunnO))), so that was really a great opportunity. Steven Stapleton is somebody that Stephen had met and was a really big fan of Nurse With Wound, and he turned me on recently to some NWW recordings. We met him at a festival SunnO))) played at and he played at, and we discussed the possibility of doing some collaboration. He was up for it so we made it happen."

SunnO)))'s ongoing collaborations likewise opened up another new avenue for the band - applying their signature sound to other forms of art, like last year's work with sculptor Banks Violette. This was one of the defining moments for the pair, where the idea of SunnO))) was abstracted outside of the realm of music and into the world of art. "I don't think it has anything to do with SunnO)))" Stephen explains. "It has to do with out personal progression as people and artists, you know? Living what we do and following our interests. The paths that you cross with people who share a viewpoint or interests or personality, it leads to really cool things, new things. For me personally, I've always been interested in art and I've always been involved with art, mainly from drawing. I'm certainly not a successful artist [laughter]. It's just something that I can't disassociate with music, it's part of a bigger creative process that I'm lucky to be able to follow. And maybe we had opportunities to do those things because we do believe in what we're doing on a personal level. It kind of puts things like rewards and sacrifices into a different perspective, the actuality of where you are. SunnO))) is a very special thing in my experience, on the musical side of things, and I think the same is probably true with Greg. It doesn't really exist as a band with a lot of the normal dynamics of a band and a music project. It exists as this other thing. It certainly has all these elements of being a touring band and putting out albums, doing merchandise and dealing with recordings and all these things, but just the spirit of what SunnO))) does is to a certain extent outside of, at least, a lot of the structures of music that I've lived and experienced. It seems to exist more in a free-standing space that allows a lot of different interpretations of what angle you want to experience the music and the sound with, and the concept and space where all that takes place, whether it's in a worldly atmosphere, on



"Probably the most exciting thing that's going on for SunnO))) right now is working with Attila. He is the focal point of what we're doing almost"

a stage, or if you're able to transcend the experience with the sound. Or if you can have a complete transformation, as Attila seems to do. It's got a lot of special characteristics which I haven't tried to define exactly, but some of those may be interpreted as art."

The collaboration with Banks Violette likewise resulted in two recorded pieces, now released as Oracle. "Oracle was originally these two tracks which we created in conjunction with Banks Violette, actually" Stephen explains. "I've personally done four other collaborations with Banks Violette, but SunnO))) had just done that one. SunnO))) created these two tracks in a studio with the intention of the music being released as a programme to accompany an exhibition which was happening in London June of '06 at the Maureen Paley Gallery. What actually resulted from this collaboration became much different. SunnO))) ended up performing at the exhibition opening behind closed doors to an audience which existed on the street but didn't actually witness the performance directly. The programme idea was eventually scrapped for one reason or another and those two pieces of music became the Oracle album. I wouldn't even call it an album - the Oracle release. We don't consider Oracle a new 'proper' SunnO))) album, like Black One for example, or White 1 - those are proper albums. We've done a lot of other 12 inches and stuff in-between, which are all significant, but the significance of each thing is relative to the amount of copies released [laughter]. Oracle is the result of those

sessions. We decided to release it as a double CD for a special tour item but this is also being released as a gatefold LP, which will be available in stores. It features Attila Csihar, Joe Preston, Atsuo from Boris, Greg and myself."

"It was an interesting concept. To be honest I don't quite grasp what it was" Greg laughs, "but he's coming from a totally different mindset and it was interesting to take part in it. We're not really approaching it as our new album. Basically, the last record that we released, Altar, that record to me was probably one of the most important, and my favourite album that I've ever been involved with. I think on so many levels it was such an achievement for me personally. The result of that album was really monumental for me and I think the next album that we release as SunnO))) needs to be in league with that or at least have some sort of monumental statement that is equal to that. We haven't recorded that record yet and we just started actually talking about the ideas."

"SunnO))) is actually alive when we're doing concerts, because that's the only time when the music is actually happening. That's the manifestation of the creature."

And is it true that Attila performed in a coffin? "Yes it is true" laughs Greg. "It was a salt coffin that Banks had created specially for it. It's kinda hard to understand especially 'cause no one was allowed to see it, and really the only thing that can be seen is the photos after we were done playing. It's a pretty bizarre concept. But that's the other thing about the 12-inch, that there's really great photos of his sculpture within the gatefold sleeve and some really nice photos of his work. Really, not many people got to see the sculpture because it was up for a little while and before he even installed it it was sold to a collector, and now it's sitting somewhere in some collector's warehouse [laughter]. I don't know if it's gonna be brought out to be shown again. Hopefully this 12-inch will be kind of a souvenir or a documentation of what happened."

"We did it in a studio in Los Angeles last summer" he continues. "Stephen and I did some initial tracking and we had a couple of guests come in, we had Joe Preston come in - he actually plays jackhammer on it - and we sent material to Attila in Hungary and Norway where he was. He did the vocals from there and we assembled it in Los Angeles. We've kind of been sitting on it for quite a while because we weren't

sure exactly what to do with it, and there were a couple of ideas that were being kicked around as far as it being more a part of Banks' sculpture that was gonna be shown somewhere else. It was in limbo for a little while. I thought it was an important recording, I didn't want it to get lost but, like I say, we didn't want it to come out as our next album, so it was like, well we'll do a nice gatefold 12-inch - it was a good representation of it."

Recent performances have also seen two offshoots emerging from the SunnO))) camp, Grave Temple and Burial Chamber Trio, containing the same line-up with Stephen in the former and Greg in the latter. "Grave Temple is Stephen, Oren Ambarchi and Attila, and those guys had an opportunity to go to Israel and play some shows. I think it kind of started with Oren, he'd been to Israel before to play and they'd asked him about SunnO))) performing, and at that time I wasn't able to do the shows. They went together as a trio and they called it the Grave Temple Trio then they shortened the name later to Grave Temple. The Burial Chamber Trio happened in January 2007. Basically, Grave Temple had been asked to do a couple of festivals in Europe and Stephen couldn't do it. They were already booked, flights were already purchased and Oren was like 'would you like to come out and do these shows?' We changed the name 'cause it wasn't Stephen involved and we were obviously not calling it SunnO))) because for it to be called SunnO))) Stephen and I both have to be involved in it. So that's the politics of the different names [laughter]."

"Grave Temple, we released the CD version of that on Southern Lord" continues Greg, "and to me personally what the difference is between that and SunnO))) is it showcases some of Stephen's playing that's a little bit more angular sounding, playing with a lot more cleaner tone or a wire-y tone, and it's a little bit more free-form in some ways than SunnO))) and Burial Chamber. I play bass in that, and that was really focusing on the bass tone and really overblowing that as far as we could. Burial Chamber is a lot more focused on bass subsonics rather than with guitar. I think both groups really benefit SunnO))) in the end because it allows each player to stretch out in a different way without any restrictions at all. Not that SunnO))) has very many restrictions, but it just sort of puts you in a different mindset where you're able to explore different territories, especially Attila. I noticed that after these side projects and the work that he's done with SunnO))), or even on the new Mayhem record, his voice and what he's doing with it has just progressed so far and it's incredible what he's doing now. Probably the most exciting thing that's going on for SunnO))) right now is working with Attila and seeing his pro-



Grave Temple



SunnO))) with Boris, 2006

gression from where he started to where he's at now. To me he is the focal point of what we're doing almost. It's so incredible."

Attila, the vocalist behind black metal legends Mayhem has become a permanent fixture in SunnO)))'s live performance. Back when SunnO))) released *White 1*, Attila provided his unique vocal talents to one of the tracks, and since then the band have made him an honorary member of sorts, one of the many artists absorbed into the revolving line-up that is SunnO))). "We came out with the *White 1* record and when we recorded *White 2* we basically had enough material for two records" Greg recalls. "We didn't want to come out with a double record, we decided to come out with a single, and that was *White 1*. When we started putting together *White 2*, the group had actually transformed into playing a lot more live shows. Before the recording of *White 1* we had barely played live at all. After *White 1* came out we had a lot of opportunities to play live and we really got into the whole performance aspect of SunnO))), so that kind of transformed everything and we tried to feature some of that on *White 2*. We've been in contact with Attila and we've performed with him and we wanted

to make him part of this record as well. We sent him some of the material that we'd worked on and he came back with the vocals for the track 'Decay2' which was the third track on *White 2*. And then after that, every time that we played in Europe if he was available we'd try to make the collaboration happen with him on vocals. Within the last year it's really kind of exploded, we had some really great opportunities, we had some really cool events and festivals and that's made it possible for him to take part, even though he's really busy with Mayhem. Now I kinda think he's really enjoying himself with SunnO))) and the freedom to experiment with his voice - it's something that he's really into."

The past two years especially have seen SunnO))) expand their live shows substantially into full-blown events, taking on theatrical aspects that have evolved as the band has evolved over the years. Back in the days when Greg and Stephen first started SunnO))), live performances were kept to a minimum, and the now-standard robes and fog weren't always part and parcel of their live performances, as Greg explains: "We used to play shows without the robes. I was having a hard time performing with SunnO))) live because I felt too obligated to en-

ertain and, with the kind of sound that we were doing, the audience's reaction was affecting my performance. A lot of people, especially at first, didn't understand SunnO))) and they just didn't get it. It was such an abstract idea. And I also played in Goatsnake - that was more traditional guitar, bass drums and vocals, and you're kinda entertaining the crowd in some ways and you're doing the normal things that normal bands do. Then stepping into and playing with SunnO))) it was totally different, totally abstract, and the audience that is coming to see this kind of thing, they don't expect it, so their negative reaction or their non-reaction was really affecting my enjoyment of what we were doing. It didn't seem to be appropriate, so we actually considered not playing live ever and keeping it a studio project."

"But then we realised that what we were doing has a very physical presence that you couldn't get from listening to a CD or vinyl!" he continues. "You just literally could not turn up what we were doing loud enough and that was one of my favourite things playing with SunnO))) - standing in front of a stack of amps and feeling it on the back of my neck, the whole vibration aspect of it. You can't do that really by putting



Altar with Burial Chamber Trio. Pic: Eva Nabon

on a record or a CD so we were like, how can we transfer these ideas in a live setting and be comfortable with it? And we realised that that was an important part of playing live. We tried to find a balance between us being comfortable playing this material live, playing it in this manner live, versus audience expectations. So basically we decided to kind of complement what we were doing with the sound, which was sort of experimental, and we decided to make the live shows experimental as well, something different rather than just a bunch of dudes in t-shirts and jeans up there playing. We tried to treat the whole thing as a performance and as a ritual, have it give out a ritual aesthetic, so that's when we came up with the idea of the fog and the robes."

Which then brings us to the dreaded D-word. As SunnO))) grew in stature and popularity, so did drone, and much of music released today tagged as 'experimental' sooner or later boils down to the common denominator: that long, drawn out passage of reverb and wall of sound that's increasingly becoming the result of virtually every improv exercise. And with the sheer number of artists releasing their own permutations of this sonic phenomenon, often with little or no variation, how much is there really left to explore within this style of music? "The idea of drone as a noun is kind of hilarious" laughs Stephen. "Drone is the proper idea of where drone is, it kind of exists outside of beginning or end anyway, so I don't know if it can be something that you move past. It's something that's kind of existing there, like light, or electricity or magnetism, something like that, it's just that it exists in the sound area of things. Drone is probably the most common, regular type of sound that exists that can be interpreted as music. I think drone done as a marketing technique is pretty stupid but it also has a lot to do with magazines trying to create new trends and stuff like that and a new cool style of music. Eight years ago people were

getting bored of black metal. Why do you have to be bored of something that's constantly offering new and interesting personalities? Drone is an aspect of music, it's not a style - kind of like rhythm or melody."

Greg shares this view. "First of all by classifying it, which I understand is a necessary evil, it kind of limits it in some ways. I sort of look at it in a broader picture, I look at it as more experiments within sound and to me that is unlimited. You can go anywhere with it. I don't see SunnO))) and what we do as having any sort of boundaries so I really don't know what our future directions will be, but I know that there's definitely more to explore and I am constantly discovering stuff all the time, and especially with the different collaborators that we're working with. It really opens up the doors for things to go further."

And certainly, for this abstract form of music to reach such a wide ranging audience comes as somewhat of a surprise to Greg. "It's kind of overwhelming in some ways because our expectations and aspirations for this group have always been very minimal. We never really expected to do much with it other than just kind of continue playing together. It has been really surprising and I'm really grateful for all the attention and all the success the group has had. It's kinda refreshing to me that this kind of music, being as abstract as it is, is connecting with so many different people because I would've never expected that. Typically experimental music is really kind of just for a very small group of people that are into it, and for it to reach into a wider audience is very bizarre, but very inspiring, too. It gives you hope that there are people out there who aren't complete idiots [laughter]."

The last time SunnO))) put out what they would term a 'proper' album, what emerged from their collaboration with Boris was a record that surprised a lot of people, chiefly due to the departure on half of the songs from, for want of a better word, drone, something SunnO))) themselves popularized. "To me it wasn't a departure at all" Stephen says. "It's just continuation of a process. It's the next step. It's not like 'OK, we're gonna stop doing this; now we're gonna try and reinvent this'. I mean, maybe the only way that SunnO))) is linear is the fact that things happen after each other. It's not circumstantial but it is a very natural progression. Not to say that it's not meditated, or has a plotting or planning behind it. I would never consider Altar to be a departure from anything. I would consider it a progression and a state that we were at the time with SunnO))) and also where Boris was at the time, us working together with our different creative processes, and we created this new thing. SunnO))) is always the result of the chemistry of the people involved so in that sense it's very much continuing that tradition."

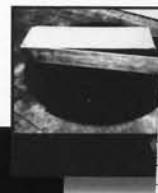
And what about the follow-up to Black One?

"We're gonna start working on it in October," says Greg. "We've spent a lot of time recording and discussing some ideas and where we're going with it and we've had some really good meetings about what we're gonna do and who we'd like to collaborate with. We're gonna try put all that into motion in October and I'm guessing that we'll probably have something ready to go sometime in April or May or summer for the actual release of new material."

"It's a new album" Stephen adds, "but I'm not sure what the relationship will be to Black One, if at all. SunnO)))'s been doing a lot of live performance in the past year, more than we ever have before. This year's been really amazing in the fact that over the Spring we've been able to do all these unusual, for us, types of performances. In March we played in a contemporary music festival in Bergen, Norway where SunnO))) headlined a concert in a cathedral - that was an incredible experience and the results were amazing. Also in April we played at the Donaueffest in Austria which was curated by Current 93, and David Tibet, and we did that as a trio in a huge church as well. That was an incredible experience and also a new direction for the group. We were able to go to Japan this Spring for the first time ever, we toured in Australia, we've done some other festivals like Sonar and Meltdown, and then we're doing the SuperSonic festival and Dour in Belgium. So we've been doing a lot of live performance. The idea of SunnO))) is actually alive when we're doing concerts, because that's the only time when the music is actually happening. We don't rehearse or really have writing sessions as a group. That's the manifestation of the creature. Black One came out quite a while ago now but SunnO)))'s been very alive since, it's just we haven't really documented it proportionately to the amount of live performances we had."

And will there be another collaboration with Boris? "Yeah, I think so" says Stephen. "We did Altar live in Japan, and we're trying to figure out if we're going to do more of that. I think there's going to be something really special happening in the UK this year with the Altar line-up. I'd love to do more. We have a really cool relationship and it's really fun to work with them. I don't know if there will be an Altar Part II album or anything, but our relationship as musicians is certainly stronger than it's ever been, and probably will continue as long as we're working."

vv

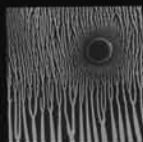


Oracle is out now on
Southern Lord

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Greg Anderson discusses the band's catalogue...

THE GRIMMROBE DEMOS



"This was our very first recording - it actually was supposed to be a demo. That was the result of some jams that Stephen and I had together, kind of holed up in a rehearsal studio, playing with as many amps as we could get our hands on. Really influenced by the Melvins and of course Earth. We set aside one day in the studio basically just to put on tape what we had been rehearsing and we invited Stuart Dahlquist down to play bass. The result was us getting pretty bombed out on wine and weed and just blasting out the riffs [laughter]."

OO VOID



"OO Void was a little more developed. The concept behind OO Void initially was for each member, Stephen, myself and Stuart, to come up with a piece or some riffs and we would rehearse those live in the studio, kind of see what happens, work on it together. And there was also a Melvins cover, an obscure song that I had on a live cassette from like 1985 that never really got recorded by the Melvins but I loved it since I was a kid and we basically re-hashed that riff. It's kind of a true collaborative effort between each person where each person brings something in and we'd work on it together. That was a very special recording and album for us because we actually went into a pretty nice studio here in Hollywood and we had Scott Reeder engineer it. Scott was a friend of mine and somebody that we really admired because he was the bass player for Kyuss and Obsessed, so we thought what better person to work on a recording that's very bass-conscious than someone who's a master of playing bass. I still love listening to that record because it sounds so huge."

FLIGHT OF THE BEHEMOTH



"It was sort of a compilation of different recordings. We had a chance to go back to the same studio that we recorded Grimmrobe in. At that point Stephen had moved to New York so basically whenever he would come to Los Angeles to hang out we would try to play music, and we went into the same studio and spent a day or two in there working on some new stuff. That became the core of that record. The first two tracks were new recordings and one of the tracks was a Merzbow remix. Stephen was in contact with Merzbow, gave him some material and he basically fucked with it, tweaked it and sent it back. The fourth track on there is actually form the very first Grimmrobe session but didn't

make it on the album for time constraints. At that point we had this concept like, let's try and put one record out a year and keep this project moving, keep it flowing. And since Stephen and I had been living in different places at the time we didn't have a lot of time or resources to create an entire album together, so that album was like, well we've got these two elements so let's put them together and keep with this concept we had of releasing something every year. And that's what Flight Of The Behemoth became."

WHITE 1



"We still had not played a lot of shows live and with White 1 we had this idea of recording somewhere completely different which was in Portland, Oregon with an old friend of Stephen and mine, Rex Ritter. He had a studio in the basement and he was close friend of ours and he basically offered us to come there and record. He ended up playing on a lot of the material. The very loose concept we had at the beginning was to kind of make a record that was dynamic and different. We felt that the three records that we had before it had kind of made a statement, very heavy on the riffing and very repetitive, pretty full-on all the time. And with White 1 we were like, let's experiment with the dynamics and maybe have some pieces that are quiet that build into something loud instead of having it full-on on ten all the time. That was also the first record where we brought in a lot of different people to collaborate with, and one of those persons was Julian Cope who Stephen and I had been corresponding with via email, and someone who was very like-minded to us. He was a music fanatic, kind of like the Jarvis Cocker thing. We sent him some material and he came back with the first track from that record which was 'My Wall.' And we also had vocals from Runhild Gammelsæter who was the vocalist for Thor's Hammer, and she did vocals on the second song and also on the third song. And Joe Preston was also involved very heavily on the record. Joe was somebody that Stephen and I had a lot of respect for because not only was he in the Melvins but he was also in Earth at one time [laughter]. It's not what you would expect from Joe Preston and the members of SunnO))) playing together. I don't think it was derivative of Earth or Melvins as much as the early recordings were [laughter]. That was a very important time for us because we really opened up with experimenting and not being concerned about putting out another record that was super-heavy and derivative of what we'd done. We really tried to stretch the boundaries and go to a different place with that record. That kind of set the tone for where we are now."

WHITE 2



"Initially the idea was to have White 2 be a nice complement to White 1 and very similar in some ways, but like I said we started playing live a lot more and by doing that the group was developing into something else. White 2 is kind of a combination of some of the White 1 sessions material and some of the new direction, new sounds we

developed on tour and live performances. Another important thing about that record was the Attila Csihar vocal contribution to the third track. The difference between White 1 and White 2 might appear to be subtle but it was this loose concept that we have where each record shouldn't be derivative of the one before it. And that's where we were going with White 2."

BLACK ONE



"Again, we didn't wanna keep beating a dead horse so to speak, or make the same record that we made before. That record to me is highly influenced by black metal in some ways. Stephen and I were really into, at that point in time, a lot of the aesthetics and some of the tones of black metal and we thought it would be an interesting experiment to incorporate that aesthetic and some of those tones with what the SunnO))) core was, which is heavy on the subsonics and bass and on riffing. You listen to a lot of black metal records and they're not really too concerned with low end or bass, and that was something that I felt was lacking in some of the black metal recordings that I liked. That's kind of what Black One is to me - injecting subsonics into the black metal foundation. Or combining our core with the black metal core. What I really liked about that record was the different vocal contributions to it. Wrest who put out records as Leviathan and Malefic who put out records as Xasthur. Working with those two vocalists was really interesting, and continuing the concept of having collaborators on the record help create the direction of where things are going. That's a perfect example of it."

ALTAR



"I put out a few of Boris' records on Southern Lord and we played a bunch of shows with them. Their drummer Atsuo had actually performed with SunnO))) live, doing vocals and percussion, mostly gong, and we just thought it would be a really cool idea because we are very like-minded in a lot of ways. One thing I really respect about Boris is that every record they put out seems to be different than the one before it. They're constantly moving into new directions, which is something that we also attempt as well. So it made a lot of sense for us to work together on a record. We played a lot of shows together but what we actually came up with in the studio was completely different. We basically threw any preconceived ideas out the window and started extremely fresh and just hashed out everything in the studio. Each group brought with them a few ideas to get things going, kind of like a springboard, or a foundation to work off of, but what was most interesting to me was where it went, and when we actually came up with stuff that was completely in the moment. That was what was exciting about it - it sort of sounds like SunnO))), it sounds like Boris, but to me it also sounds predominantly like something completely different that you wouldn't expect from both bands."

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HEAVY DRONE MUSIC

華音戰線震撼



sunn O))) & Boris

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Jan Akkerman Terry Bozzio SOLID GROUND QUEENSRYCHE AMORPHIS AKA MOON etc.

411 CD/DVD/LP Reviews!

August 2007

Vol. **34**

特 集

HEAVY DRONE MUSIC 重音戦線震撼

Live Report

sunn O))) & Boris

Japan Tour 2007

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13th May, Niigata LOTS / 15th May, Shin-Okubo EARTHDOM / 16th May, Nagoya CLUB
QUATTRO / 17th May, Shinsaibashi CLUB QUATTRO / 20th May, Kawasaki CLUB CITTA'

Report ● 山崎智之 Photos ● Miki Matsushima





Atsuo



Greg Anderson



L to R : Tos Nieuwenhuizen, Atsuo, Greg Anderson, Attila Csihar



Stephen O'Malley



Takeshi, Oren Ambarchi

日本が揺れた。これは誇張ではない。SUNN O))) & Boris ジャパン・ツアーは、その轟音で文字通り日本各地を揺るがした。

しかしほんの数年前、SUNN O))) が日本の地を踏むとは誰が想像しえたろうか。ひたすら大音量とヘヴィネスを追求。リズムもなく歌詞もない、ある意味ビュア過ぎる音楽性はコマーシャリズムと対極の位置にあり、“アンプ3段積み10台フルボリューム” “眼球が揺れる” “妊婦は流産する恐れがある” など、噂だけが膨れ上がっていった。だが5月、盟友Borisとの来日公演が実現したのである。

スティーン・オマリーとグレッグ・アンダーソンの不動のギター・デュオに加え、今回のSUNN O))) ツアーに同行したのは現代音楽界でのユニークな活動で知られ、来日経験も豊富なオーレン・アンバーチ (g, electronics)、BEAVER や35007 といったオランダ・ストーン・ロック界で活躍してきたTOSことトス・ニューウェンフイゼン (electronics)、そしてノルウェー・ブラック・メタルの神盤と謳われるMAYHEM「De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas」でヴォーカルをとったアッティラ・チハーという面々。これまでSUNN O))) のツ

アーにはジュリアン・コープやジョー・プレスト (EARTH ~ MELVINS ~ THRONES) といった錚々たる顔ぶれが参加してきたが、まったく遜色ない最強の布陣で日本初上陸に臨んできたことになる。

スモークの立ちこめるステージ上でオーレン・アンバーチの不穏なノイズを出し、アッティラがハンガリー語の歌詞を呻くイントロに導かれ、メンバー全員が登場。観客の多くが生まれてから体感したこのないだろう轟音が押し寄せた。しかも、いつでも持続していく重低音は逃げ場のない責め苦にして襲ってくる。耳栓をしても無駄だ。全身が鼓動と化したように、ビリビリ振動を続けるのだから

苛酷なまでにストイックな音楽性の一方で、約80分におよんだステージ・パフォーマンスは意外なほどにショウ・アップ(?) されたものだ。赤・緑・黄色と変わっていくライティングに彩られ、バンド全員が僧衣に身を包み、高々と腕を突き上げてからギターのパワー・コードをかき鳴らす。顔を白黒に塗ったアッティラは呻き悶えながら倒れ込み、準メンバーと言っているBorisのAtsuoも連日銅鑼を乱打、「ヒエー」と叫びながら観客の中に飛び込んでいく。自分のおばあちゃんを連れていくことはお勤めできないが、ヴィジュ

15th May
at Shin-Okubo EARTHDOM:
L to R: Atsuo, Greg Anderson,
Stephen O'Malley, Oren Ambarchi,
MERZBOW, Attila Csihar (Front)

L to R: Greg Anderson, Attila Csihar, Oren Ambarchi

Attila Csihar

BURIAL CHAMBER TRIO

28th May, Shin-Okubo EARTHDOM

PERSONNEL

SUNN O)))

Greg Anderson (g)

Stephen O'Malley (g)

Oren Ambarchi (g, electronics)

Tos Nieuwenhuizen (electronics)

Attila Csihar (vokills, invokations)

Boris

Atsuo (dr, vo)

Wata (g)

Takeshi (b, vo)

MERZBOW

BURIAL CHAMBER TRIO

Oren Ambarchi (g, analog electronics)

Attila Csihar (vokills, invokations)

Greg Anderson (b, subsonics)

「ル性・娯楽性をとっても楽しめるのがSUNN O)))のライブなのだ。これぞエンタテインメントの極である。

観客にしてみれば、これまでにない新しい音楽【念であるがゆえに、どんなライブが繰り広げられるのか、まったく予測不可能。どんなノリ、どんなアクションをすればいいかもまだ定まっていない。ある者は陶酔し、ある者は暴れ、ある者は白目をむきながら昏倒する。期待と戸惑いがパノプティコンの音楽とないまぜになった混沌空間はカタルシスを伴い、また恐怖すら感じさせるものだった。

そういう意味でも、SUNN O)))の初来日公演がBorisとのダブル・ヘッドライナー・ツアーだったことは重要だった。Borisがまず最初にステージに立ち、ヘヴィなロックの本質と言うべき攻撃性やスピード感、大音量を兼ね備えたサウンドで知覚の扉を大きく開け放つことで、SUNN O)))の音楽を頭でなく肉体で吸収するための橋渡しをしたのである。Borisが国境の壁を超えて多くの信者を生んでいるのも、重くて激しくてうるさい、理屈を超えた音楽をプレイしているからだだろう。彼らの演奏には我々の心をグイと掴み、感覚の世界に引き張り込む力があつた。

5月13日・新潟から始まって東京、名古屋、大阪、川崎をサーキットする行程は、まさに轟音のオデッセイだった。新大久保ではMERZBOWとの共演が行われ、7人編成SUNN O)))が実現。忘我の境地に陥った観客が前に押し寄せて秋田昌美の機材を乗せた机をひっくり返すアクシデントもあった。そして20日、川崎クラブチッタ公演ではBorisとSUNN O)))がプレイした後、コラボレーション・アルバム「Altar」のステージ史上初上演という大団円を迎えたのだった。さらにグレッグ、オーレン、アッティラからなるBURIAL CHAMBER TRIO、オーレンのソロ公演も行われ、怒涛の1週間+αは終わりを告げたのだった。

「日本の観客は嘔吐したり、途中で帰ったりしない」とご満悦だったSUNN O)))のメンバー達。スティーヴンは早くもプライベートで再来日、9月にはKTLの一員として日本を訪れることになった。SUNN O)))が再びこの国を蹂躪する日も近いだろう。

SUNN O)))のモットーは“Maximum Volume Yields Maxim Results”。彼らは最大の音量で、最大の結果を残していったのだ。

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「轟音のせいで、失禁したり嘔吐してしまう人も多いね」(ステイヴン)
 「俺たちのライブは耐久テストだから、
 日本の観客はすごい忍耐力があると思ったよ(笑)」(グレッグ)

SINGULAR DIALOGUES #4
轟音とドローンの儀式
 SUNN O))) インタビュー

インタビュー：中原昌也 構成：編集部 写真：押尾健太郎
 Interviewed by Masaya Nakahara Text by Studio Voice Photography by Kentaro Oshio



SUNN O))) (サン)

グレッグ・アンダーソンとステイヴン・オマリーが THORR'S HAMMER, BURNING WITCH という前身を経て、98年佐賀のヘヴィ・ロック・バンド EARTH のトリビュート・プロジェクトとして結成。バンド名は EARTH に対する SUN. そして愛用するアンプ・メーカーの名前に由来 ("O)))" はアンプのロゴにもある音波を図案化)。ヘヴィ・ドローン、パワー・アンビエントの第一人者であり世界的にカルト的な人気を誇る。

大手音楽 CD 販売店で最も扱われていない音楽ジャンル、それは間違いなくドロウムメタルと呼ばれるものだ。音楽ジャンルの細分化の果てに出現した。音楽のようなものが、ドロウムメタルであり、さらにエクストリーム・ミュージックの新たな地平を垣間見せてくれるグループが SUNN O))) である。中世の異端宗教を思わせるコスチュームで山積みになされたギターアンプから繰り出されるその音楽は、轟音とドローンで淀んだ、まさしくリチュアル (儀式) な響きを湛えている。先の5月に初来日公演を果たしたの SUNN O))) の二人に、会場 (新大久保アースダム) の最前列にいたせいで両耳をフツ壊されたと満足気に笑う中原昌也が話を訊いた。

——ライブ最高でした！本当に迷惑なまでに耳が聞こえなくなりましたよ。でも、純然たるメタル・ファンなんかはカタルシスを得難い音楽だと思いませんか？
 グレッグ・アンダーソン (以下、G) いわゆる、メタル、というものを演っている意識はないし、ピュア・メタル・ファンが俺たちの音楽を理解できなくても仕方ない。特定のリスナー層を満足させようとは思っていないし、とてもパーソナルなものだからね。

——キャリアの初期 (00年頃) はどんなスタイルでライブを演っていたんですか？

SUNN O))) Live Performance History
220 performances to date

04/98 – Garage, Los Angeles CA (Live Planet Of The Apes Screening During Set)
08/98 – Long Beach (W/ Dragpack)
15/05/99 – Gabah, Los Angeles CA (W/ Angelrot)
18/05/00 – Rio's, Bradford (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
17/05/00 – Cathouse, Glasgow (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
16/05/00 – Victoria Inn, Derby (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
15/05/00 – Hop & Grape, Manchester (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
14/05/00 – Foundry, Sheffield (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
12/05/00 – The Underworld, London (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
11/05/00 – XL's, Birmingham (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
10/05/00 – Princess Charlotte, Leicester (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
09/05/00 – JB's, Dudley (Uk) (W/ Orange Goblin, Goatsnake)
08/09/02 – Blackbird, Portland Or (W/ Blevin Blectum, Aspects Of Physics)
14/03/03 – Room 710, Austin Tx (SXSX Southern Lord Showcase W/ Earth, Earthride, Sourvein, Weedeater)
20/03/03 – JH Friesenstrasse, Bremen (Ger) (W/ Thrones, Shepherd)
21/03/03 – Knaack Club, Berlin (Ger) (W/ Thrones, Shepherd)
22/03/03 – East Club, Bischofswerda (Ger) (W/ Thrones, Shepherd)
24/03/03 – Stadtwerkstatt, Linz (Aus) (W/ Thrones) As {Sunn & The Judgment Day Arkestra}
25/03/03 – Rhiz, Vienna (Aus) (W/ Thrones) As {Sunn & The Judgment Day Arkestra}
26/03/03 – Kerosin, Augsburg (Ger) W/ Bohren Und Der Club Of Gore, Thrones
27/03/03 – Reitschule Dachstock, Bern (Swiss) (W/ Thrones)
28/03/03 – Ptr L'usine, Geneva (Swi) W/Odio Terz
30/03/03 – 109, Tubize (Bel) (W/ Troum)
01/04/03 – Worm, Rotterdam (Ni) (W/ Thrones)
02/04/03 – Lintfabriek, Kontich (Bel) (W/ Isis, Thrones)
03/04/03 – Underworld, London (Uk) (W/ Boris & Russell Haswell HDJ) {Sunn & The Judgment Day Arkestra}
05/04/03 – All Tomorrow's Parties, Camber Sands (Uk) (Saturday Night Opening For Aphex Twin)
28/08/03 – Curve Bar, San Francisco Ca (W/ Porn (Men Of))
29/08/03 – Barbatis' Pan, Portland Or (Shod5 Festival W/ Yob, Graves At Sea, Floor)
30/08/03 – Hell's Kitchen, Tacoma Wa (W/ Playing Enemy, Floor)
30/08/03 – Dunes, Portland (Mars=Sunn O))) + Fontanelle)
31/08/03 – Graceland, Seattle Wa (W/ Your Cell Yourself, Graves At Sea)
03/09/03 – Spaceland, Los Angeles Ca (W/ Easy Action, 25 Suaves)
26/09/03 – Empty Bottle, Chicago Il (Wire Adventures In Modern Music Festival W/ !!!, Pulseprogramming, John Butcher, Kaffe Matthews And Andy Moor [The Ex])
27/09/03 – Cactus Club, Milwaukee Wi (W/ Silkworm, Pelican)
28/10/03 – Cumberland Arms, Newcastle (Uk) (W/ Marzuraan, Trollmann Av Ildtoppberg, Jazzfinger)
29/10/03 – Rescue Room, Nottingham (Uk) (W/ Hrvatski [Cancelled])
30/10/03 – Bassment, Leeds (Uk) (W/ Red Right Hand, Red Star Parade)
31/10/03 – Underworld, London (Uk) (W/ Russell Haswell, DJ Set From William Bennett Of Whitehouse)
01/11/03 – Lyric Hammersmith, London (Uk) (Rome Wasn't Burned In A Day Festival W/ Julian Cope Band, The Sons Of T.C.–Lethbridge)
29/11/03 – Dunes, Portland Or (W/ Fontanelle)
01/01/04 – The Loft, Brattleboro Vt (W/ Sunburned Hand Of The Man)
02/01/04 – Tonic, New York NY (W/ Sunburned Hand Of The Man & Chrome Hoof)
01/01/04 – Khyber Pass, Philadelphia Pa (W/ Warhorse & Chrome Hoof)
07/01/04 – Soundlab, Buffalo NY (W/ Orodruin)
07/02/04 – Detroit Arts Space, Detroit Mi (W/ 25 Suaves & Lair Of The Minotaur)
07/03/04 – Empty Bottle, Chicago Il (W/ Wolf Eyes & Kevin Drumm)
07/04/04 – Triple Rock, Minneapolis Mi (W/ Lair Of The Minotaur)
07/27/04 – Ottobar, Baltimore Md (W/ Comets On Fire & Earthride)
07/28/04 – Northsix, Brooklyn NY (W/ Andy Hawkins + James Plotkin, Coptic Light, Hototogisu)
07/29/04 – Knitting Factory, New York, NY (W/ Comets On Fire, Unearthly Trance)
11/18/04 – Knitting Factory, Los Angeles Ca (W/ Earth, The Hidden Hand, John Wiese)
11/21/04 – Independent, San Francisco Ca (W/ Om, Hidden Hand)
11/29/04 – The Custard Factory, Birmingham (Uk) (W/ Black Galaxy)
11/30/04 – Cabaret, Nottingham (Uk) (W/ Hototogisu, Opaque, They Live!)
12/01/04 – The Cluny, Newcastle (Uk) (W/ Atavist & Marzuraan)
12/02/04 – Oran Mor, Glasgow (Uk) (W/ Sunburned Hand Of The Man)
12/03/04 – The Spring & Brake, Belfast (Nr Ireland) (w/ Captain Insano, Killing Spree)
12/04/04 – Whealans, Dublin (Ire)
12/05/04 – All Tomorrow's Parties, Camber Sands (Uk) (Saturday Night W/ That Night, Pelican, The Fall, Violent Femmes)
12/06/04 – Satan's Hollow, Manchester (Uk) (W/ Atavist)
12/07/04 – The Scala, London (Uk) (W/ Whitehouse)
12/08/04 – Thekla, Bristol (Uk) (W/ Moss, Geisha)
12/10/04 – AN Club, Athens (Gr)
03/03/05 – What?IsMusic Festival, Hifi Bar, Melbourne (Australia) (W/ Pan Sonic, Children's Hospital)
03/04/05 – Onathon Festival, The Forum Theatre, Melbourne (Australia) (W/ Pan Sonic, Gang Gang Dance, Black Dice, The Residents, Chicks on Speed, Growing)
03/08/05 – Onathon Festival, The Metro Theatre, Sydney (Australia) (W/ Pan Sonic, The Residents, Chicks on Speed, Growing)
03/09/05 – What?IsMusic Festival, Gaelic Club, Sydney (Australia) (W/ Dead C, Kevin Drumm, Reverend Kriss Hades, Jim Denley + James, Heighway + Peter Blamey)
03/12/05 – Onathon Festival, The Powerhouse, Brisbane (Australia) (W/ Pan Sonic, Gang Gang Dance, Black Dice, The Residents, Chicks on Speed, Growing)
03/19/05 – Jugendzentrum Saarlouis (Ger) (W/ Boris, Switchblade, Shora)
03/20/05 – K4, Nurnberg (Ger) (W/ Boris)
03/21/05 – Twisted Robot, Berlin (Ger) (W/ Boris, Urdog)
03/22/05 – Rumor Festival, Utrecht (Ni) (W/ Boris)
03/23/05 – Vera, Groningen (Ni) (W/ Boris)
03/24/05 – The Rock, Copenhagen (Den)
03/25/05 – Pusterviksaren, Goteborg (Swe) (W/ Skull Defekts)
03/26/05 – Inferno Festival, Oslo (Nor) (W/ Dissection, Gehenna)
03/27/05 – Mondo, Stockholm (Swe) (W/ John Wiese)
03/28/05 – Bastun, Mariehamn / Åland, (Fin) (W/ John Wiese)
03/29/05 – Klubi, Tampere (Fin) (W/ Circle)
03/30/05 – Nosturi, Helsinki (Fin) (W/ Circle & Skepticism)
04/01/05 – Inkost, Malmo (Swe) (W/ Suma)
04/02/05 – Molotow, Hamburg (Ger) (W/ John Wiese)
04/03/05 – CC Luchtbal, Antwerp (Bel) (W/ John Wiese, Troum)
04/04/05 – Molodoi, Strasbourg (Ger) (W/ John Wiese)
04/05/05 – Bad Bonn, Dudingon (Swi) (W/ John Wiese)

04/06/05 – L'usine, Geneva (Swi) (W/ Odio Terz)
 04/07/05 – Nouveau Casino, Paris (Fra) (W/ Nautical Almanac)
 04/08/05 – Domino Festival, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels (Bel) (W/ John Wiese)
 04/09/05 – Roadburn Festival, Tilburg (Nl) (W/High on Fire, Electric Wizard, Space Ritual)
 05/03/05 – Bottom Of The Hill, San Francisco Ca (W/ Wolf Eyes)
 05/04/05 – Lobot Gallery, Oakland Ca (W/ Wolf Eyes, Yellow Swans)
 06/25/05 – Kunstencentrum, Hasselt (Bel) (W/ Wolf Eyes)
 06/26/05 – Furyfest, Le Mans (Fra) (W/ Motorhead, Slayer, Green Carnation, Neurosis)
 06/27/05 – Instants Chavires, Paris (Fra)
 06/28/05 – Paradiso, Amsterdam (Nl) (W/ Lugubrum)
 07/01/05 – Roskilde Festival (Den) (W/ Enslaved & Isis)
 09/01/05 – Arthurfest Los Angeles CA (W/ Earth, Circle, Merzbow, Growing)
 10/26/05 – Brickyard, Vancouver BC (W/Boris & Thrones)
 10/27/05 – Neumos, Seattle Wa (W/Boris & Earth)
 10/28/05 – Yes Yes, Olympia Wa (W/ Boris & Thrones)
 10/29/05 – Barbatis' Pan, Portland (W/ Boris & Thrones)
 10/31/05 – Slims, San Francisco Ca (W/ Boris & Thrones)
 11/01/05 – Echo, Los Angeles Ca (W/ Boris, Thrones, Nachtmystium)
 12/16/05 – First Unitarian Church, Philadelphia, Pa (W/ Jack Rose, Growing)
 12/17/05 – Ottobar, Baltimore Md (W/ Nachtmystium, The Hidden Hand)
 12/18/05 – Northsix, Brooklyn NY (W/ Nachtmystium, Growing)
 12/19/05 – Middle East, Boston Ma (W/ Nachtmystium)
 12/20/05 – American Legion, Wallingford Ct (W/ Nachtmystium)
 12/21/05 – Knitting Factory, New York NY (W/ Nachtmystium & Queens)
 02/08/06 – Gebauede 9, Koln (Ger) (W/ Earth)
 02/09/06 – 4AD, Diksmuide (Bel) (W/ Earth)
 02/10/06 – Islington Academy, London (Uk) (W/ Earth)
 02/11/06 – The Cockpit, Leeds (Uk) (W/ Earth)
 02/12/06 – Abc2, Glasgow (Uk) (W/ Earth)
 02/13/06 – Roadkill, Liverpool (Uk) (W/ Earth)
 02/14/06 – Thekla, Bristol (Uk) (W/ Earth, Consumer Electronics)
 02/15/06 – Custard Factory, Birmingham (Uk) (W/ Earth)
 02/16/06 – Alzette Kulturfabrik, ESCH/ALZETTE (Lux) (W/ Earth)
 02/17/06 – Pointe Ephemere, Paris (Fra) (W/ Earth)
 02/18/06 – Mephisto, Barcelona (Spa) (W/ Earth, An Albatross)
 02/19/06 – Vents Du Sud, Toulouse (Fra) (W/ Earth)
 02/21/06 – Bad Bonn, D dingen (Swi) (W/ Earth)
 02/22/06 – Spazio 211, Torino (Ita) (W/ Earth)
 02/23/06 – Auditorium Flog, Firenze (Ita) (W/ Earth)
 02/24/06 – Jail, Milano (Ita) (W/ Earth)
 02/25/06 – Bronson, Ravenna (Ita) (W/ Earth)
 02/27/06 – Galerija SC, Zagreb (Cro) (W/ Earth)
 02/28/06 – Szene, Vienna (Aus) (W/ Earth, Pita)
 03/01/06 – Star Club, Dresden (Ger) (W/Earth)
 03/02/06 – Volksb hne Berlin (Ger) (W/ Earth, Shit and Shine)
 03/03/06 – Tegentonen Festival, Paradiso (Nl) (W/ Earth, Espers, Wooden Wand, Sir Richard Bishop)
 03/04/06 – Markthalle, Hamburg (Ger) (W/ Earth)
 03/05/06 – Lopp n, Copenhagen (Den) (W/Earth)
 03/07/06 – Bl , Oslo (Nor) (W/ Earth)
 03/08/06 – Debaser, Stockholm (Swe) (W/ Earth)
 03/10/06 – Ideal Festival, Nefertiti, Gothenburg (Swe) (W/ Earth, Pita)
 03/11/06 – Voxhall, Aarhus (Den) (W/ Earth)
 03/12/06 – Vera, Groningen (Nl) (W/ Earth)
 03/14/06 – Casa De Musica, Porto (Pt) (W/ Earth)
 05/18/06 – Middle East, Boston MA (W/ Grief, Sin Of Angels)
 05/20/06 – FIMAV Festival, Victoriaville Qc (W/ Haino Keiji)
 05/22/06 – Music Gallery, Toronto On (W/ Nadja)
 05/23/06 – Institute of Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids MI (w/ Oren Ambarchi)
 05/25/06 – Walker Art Center, Minneapolis MN (W/ Boris)
 05/26/06 – Logan Square, Chicago Il (W/ Boris, Kevin Drumm)
 05/27/06 – Columbus Walker Center W/Boris
 05/28/06 – Emissions From The Monolith Festival, Youngstown Oh (W/ Boris)
 05/30/06 – Avalon, New York, NY (W/ Boris)
 06/02/06 – Maureen Paley Gallery, London (Uk)
 10/03/06 – Fillmore, San Francisco, California (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/04/06 – House of Blues, San Diego, California (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/05/06 – House of Blues, Anaheim, California (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/07/06 – House of Blues, Los Angeles, California (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/08/06 – Marquee Theatre, Phoenix, Arizona (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/09/06 – House of Blues, Las Vegas, Nevada (W/ Celtic Frost)
 10/13/06 – Hippodrome/Frieze , London (Uk)
 10/15/06 – ABC2, Glasgow (Uk)
 10/16/06 – Black Box, Belfast (Ire)
 10/17/06 – Crawdaddy, Dublin (Ire)
 10/19/06 – Richards Bar, Galway (Ire)
 10/20/06 – Cyprus Avenue, Cork (Ire)
 03/18/07 – Domkirke/Borealis Festival, Bergen (No)
 04/20/07 – Donnau Festival, Krems (Au) (W/ Current 93, Baby Dee)
 04/22/07 – Roadburn Festival, Tilburg (Nl) (W/ Neurosis, OM)
 05/03/07 – Totally Huge New Music Festival, Perth (Aus) (W/ Boris)
 05/05/07 – The Columbian, Brisbane (Aus) (W/ Boris)
 05/06/07 – Factory Theatre, Sydney (Aus) (W/ Boris)
 05/09/07 – HiFi Bar, Melbourne (Aus) (W/ Boris)
 05/13/07 – Lots, Niigata (Jp) (W/ Boris, Ai Aso)
 05/15/07 – Earthdom, Tokyo (Jp) (W/ Merzbow)
 05/16/07 – Quattro, Nagoya (Jp) (W/ Boris)
 05/17/07 – Quattro, Osaka (Jp) (W/ Boris)
 05/20/07 – Citta, Kawasaki (Jp) (W/ Boris, together with Boris as ALTAR)
 06/15/07 – Sonar Festival, Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona (Sp)

06/18/07 — Meltdown Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London (Uk) (W/ Chrome Hoof)
07/02/07 — Casbah, San Diego (W/ Earth, Wolves in the Throneroom)
07/03/07 — El Rey Theatre, Los Angeles (W/ Earth, Wolves in the Throneroom)
07/04/07 — Independent, San Francisco (W/ Earth, Wolves in the Throneroom)
07/06/07 — Mt. Tabor, Portland (W/ Earth, Wolves in the Throneroom)
07/07/07 — El Corozan, Seattle (W/ Earth, Wolves in the Throneroom)
07/08/07 — Nighttight Lounge, Bellingham (W/ Earth)
07/14/07 — SuperSonic Festival, Birmingham (Uk) (W/ Om, Mogwai, Miasma)
07/15/07 — Dour Festival, Dour (Bel) (W/ Wilco, Merzbow, Wolf Eyes)
11/01/07 — Capitol Theatre, Olympia (W/ Earth, Wolves in The Throneroom, Grey)
11/02/07 — Neumos, Seattle (W/ Jesu, Eluvium)
11/03/07 — The Hawthorne, Portland (W/ Jesu, Eluvium)
12/09/07 — All Tomorrow's Parties, Mine Head (Uk) (W/ Portishead, GZA, Julian Cope, Boris, etc)
12/10/07 — The Forum. London (Uk) (W/ Earth, Boris & together with Boris as ALTAR)
12/12/07 — Caves Lechapels, Paris (Fra) (W/ Portradium)
12/14/07 — 4AD, Diksmuide (Bel) (W/ Black Heart Rebellion)
12/15/07 — State-X Festival, Den Haag (Nl) (W/ Motorpsycho, Jesu, etc)
08/09/08 — OYA Festival, Oslo (Nor) (W/ ISIS, My Bloody Vantine, etc)
10/10/08 — Regent Theatre, Los Angeles (W/ John Wiese, Eagle Twin)
10/12/08 — Fall into Darkness Festival, Barbat's Pan, Portland (W/ Trees, Grails, Subarachnoid Space)
10/15/08 — Knitting Factory, New York (W/ Tony Conrad, Thou)
10/16/08 — First Unitarian Church, Philadelphia (W/ Thou)
03/14/09 — Radar Festival, Mexico City (Mx) (W/ Nurse With Wound, Haino Keiji, Jazkamer, Tony Conrad, etc)
04/19/09 — Leave them all Behind Festival, Tokyo (Jp) (W/ ISIS, Boris, Envy, Growing)
04/21/09 — Earthdom, Tokyo (Jp) (W/ Coffins)
04/22/09 — Earthdom, Tokyo (Jp) (W/ Jim O'Rourke)
04/23/09 — Sansui, Osaka (Jp) (W/ Black Ganion)
04/24/09 — Sansui, Osaka (Jp) (W/ Runzelstern & Gurglestock)
05/22/09 — Skanu Mezs Festival, Riga (Lat)
05/24/09 — Volksbühne/Prater, Berlin (Ger)
05/25/09 — Worm/Arminius Church, Rotterdam (Nl)
05/26/09 — Stuk/Predikheren Church, Leuven (Bel) (W/ Fear Falls Burning)
05/27/09 — Sonique Villette Festival, Paris (Fra) (W/ Jesus Lizard)
05/29/09 — Primavera Sound Festival, Barcelona (Spa)
05/31/09 — Kilbi Festival, Dudingén (Swi) (W/ Miss Kitten, Final Fantasy, Sonic Youth)
06/01/09 — Teatro Comandini, Cesena (It)
06/03/09 — Arena, Vienna (Au) (W/ PITA)
06/04/09 — Stimul Festival/Sacre Coeur, Prague (Cz) (W/ PITA)