



DEATH, BE PROUD

CHILDREN OF BODOM

Love 'em or hate 'em, Finland's Children Of Bodom are fast becoming a household name -not only in Europe, but all over the world. Continually providing us with their trademark combination of classicalism, seasoned with '80s-style rock n' roll and hints of progressive ambience, mastermind/vocalist/guitarist Alexi Laiho and his fellow mercenaries still repeatedly defy opposition and categorization. Their latest, *Follow The Reaper*, is no exception, showcasing both virtuosity and great songs in another display of "sui generis metal". As we speak, it continues to wreak havoc all over this metal-deprived planet, securing new fans and once again satisfying old ones. Guitarist ALEXANDER KUOPALA called me from the Spinefarm offices recently so that we might discuss death, murder, horror movies and, oh yeah, that new album, too. So sit back, and indulge in an interview that contains all the requisites, plus a wealth of unpleasant trivia from one of metal's coolest guys.

Has the response to the new album in Finland been as fanatical as it was with *Hatebreeder*?

Oh, yes. It has already sold 10,000 copies and is number three on the charts, all within one week, which is very good.

I was wondering what you can attribute such huge success to? Do a lot of older people listen to you as well?

(laughs) No, it's just that metal is very big in Finland. Finland only has about five million people, which isn't a lot, it's easier to get through to our fans. Especially with TV, as there's a new show that plays metal videos so

that reaches a lot of fans.

Tell me about the recording process. Have things improved as far as the chemistry amongst you guys? Was it pretty democratic as far as bringing ideas to the table?

Yes, from the beginning we've been really good friends with each other. Of course, Alexi writes all of the music, brings the ideas to the recording studio and gives us his ideas on what we should play. I mean, we all carry our own ideas with us and Alexi isn't any kind of dictator

"THE SUICIDES HAPPEN NOT SO MUCH IN THE WINTER TIME, BUT MORE IN THE SPRING TIME. SO WHEN THE SUN IS STARTING TO RISE AND THE DAYS START TO GET LONGER, THIS IS WHEN THE PEOPLE START KILLING THEMSELVES."

but he always says, "Let's try this" and if it works, we use it. The songs kept changing and we spent many sleepless nights trying to figure out the best way to play them. Everyone respects one another's opinion, so it works very well. But Alexi is so good at writing the songs, so we don't want to get too involved in that because he knows what he's doing.

Do you find there is a lot of pressure to meet the expectations of the fans or are you pretty confident that the formula works fine?

It's the safest way to go. When we went into the studio with Peter Tagtgren he basically said, "Play whatever you want and I'll come back in three hours to check up

on you." So later he'd come in and sort out what we'd done. He'd say, "Okay, this is good and I have no problem with it," and with other stuff it was, "Hey, let's try to do this different." So we just did our best and let him do his thing. He had some very good ideas for keyboards and Alexi's vocals. At first we were all sort of surprised at his technique but we listened to it later and said, "Whoa, this really worked out well."

No disrespect to Alexi—since he is the main contributor to this band but since he's usually the focus of everyone's attention, I'd like to talk more about you and your relation to the band.

Well, I actually have to say I started out playing what many might say is "too late".

Right, because so many musicians out there are so young...

I started to play when I was something like 15 years old. I mean, we've all been in bands with our friends, but this is like the first serious band—for any of us and the first professional recording band any of us have recorded with. I have been playing many different types of music like blues and rock n' roll. It's very important to play different types of music like jazz because it gives you something to use with your metal playing. Listening to everything like classical and blues always improves your playing. Are you influenced by any classical/jazz/blues musicians in particular?

I listen to a lot of classical. Mozart is my favorite. People always say that he is very "light" and that Bach and Beethoven are "more serious", but I disagree. When I listen to classical music I listen to the orchestrations and stuff like that. I write orchestrations for symphony bands, so I find that helps. As far as blues though, I like B.B. King and stuff like that.

You stated some of your influences in an earlier interview as King Diamond, Slayer, and Ozzy Osbourne. Did you ever find yourself making any sort of conscious effort to sort of study those players over the years or do you find that their styles sort of just emerge subconsciously in your playing?

Well, of course if you were to ask me what my advice is to young guitarists I'd say get the technique down first, then the style will come later. But I love Andy LaRocque [King Diamond]. He has his own style. The way he uses his vibrato and stuff like that, it's great. *Voodoo* (his lead tones on that especially) defined "evil" for me. Just bad-ass.

Yeah, I don't know if he's insane or what but he has a very unique way of handling the guitar. And, of course, Zakk Wylde's work with Ozzy Osbourne and his new band Black Label Society is very good as well. He's the ideal rock n' roller to me with the long hair, and he has his own style. When you hear that certain sound, you know it's Zakk.

What about influences outside the metal genre?

Alexi and I are both huge fans of the same movies and television shows. One is *Amadeus*. And I don't know if this is really good, but we're both really big fans of *Miami Vice*.

Miami Vice?

Yeah, I have a few of [Miami Vice music composer] Jan Hammer's CDs. He has a very distinct sound, one that really accompanies the show well - the tense music for the tense scenes, and so on. He's really terrific. You recently had a dream come true when you played the Milwaukee Metalfest.

It was the first time I'd ever been to the U.S. For me, it was just like, "Whoa! I'm in America!" And the local people were just like, "Oh. Your first time to America and you're in Milwaukee? It's like the 'asshole of America,!" (laughing) Anyway, for me it was a total culture shock. First, [the Metalfest] was an indoor festival - something we're not used to and by the time we went on, there had already been about 20 or 30 bands on stage and the P.A. system was broken. We didn't have our amplifiers with us, only guitars, so we tried to create this sound with these beat-up Marshalls they had on stage. A lot of stuff was broken so I have to say it wasn't really our best but I don't think the crowd really noticed because the response was great.

[At this point Alexander puts bass player, Henkka Blacksmith, on the phone to talk with me.]

Henkka: Hey man, how are you doing?

Hey, what's up?

Henkka: Not much. Just drinking beer...

Both Alexi and Kimberly (Goss - Sinergy vocalist) have commented in past interviews on the Finnish climate and how it affects their songwriting. I was wondering about your feelings on the subject.

Henkka: When you wake up it's fucking dark, and then you wait a while and all of a sudden you're getting like four or five days of sunlight straight. And then before you know it, it's already dark again. I don't know if you know about this, but Finland has the highest suicide rate amongst young people in the world.

Yeah, one of the few things I know about your country.

Henkka: Right. And the suicides happen not so much in the winter time, but more in the spring time. So when the sun is starting to rise and the days start to get longer, this is when the people start killing themselves. This is actually fucking fascinating to me because when you think about it, that doesn't make much sense. But in another way it does. Maybe because we are so used to the darkness here that when it finally gets to be summer time and the sun is suddenly shining 24 hours a day, the people just go nuts and can't handle it. So yeah, it affects the music too, of course. It has to.

Too much to handle in too short a period of time.

Henkka: Yeah. They can't adjust.

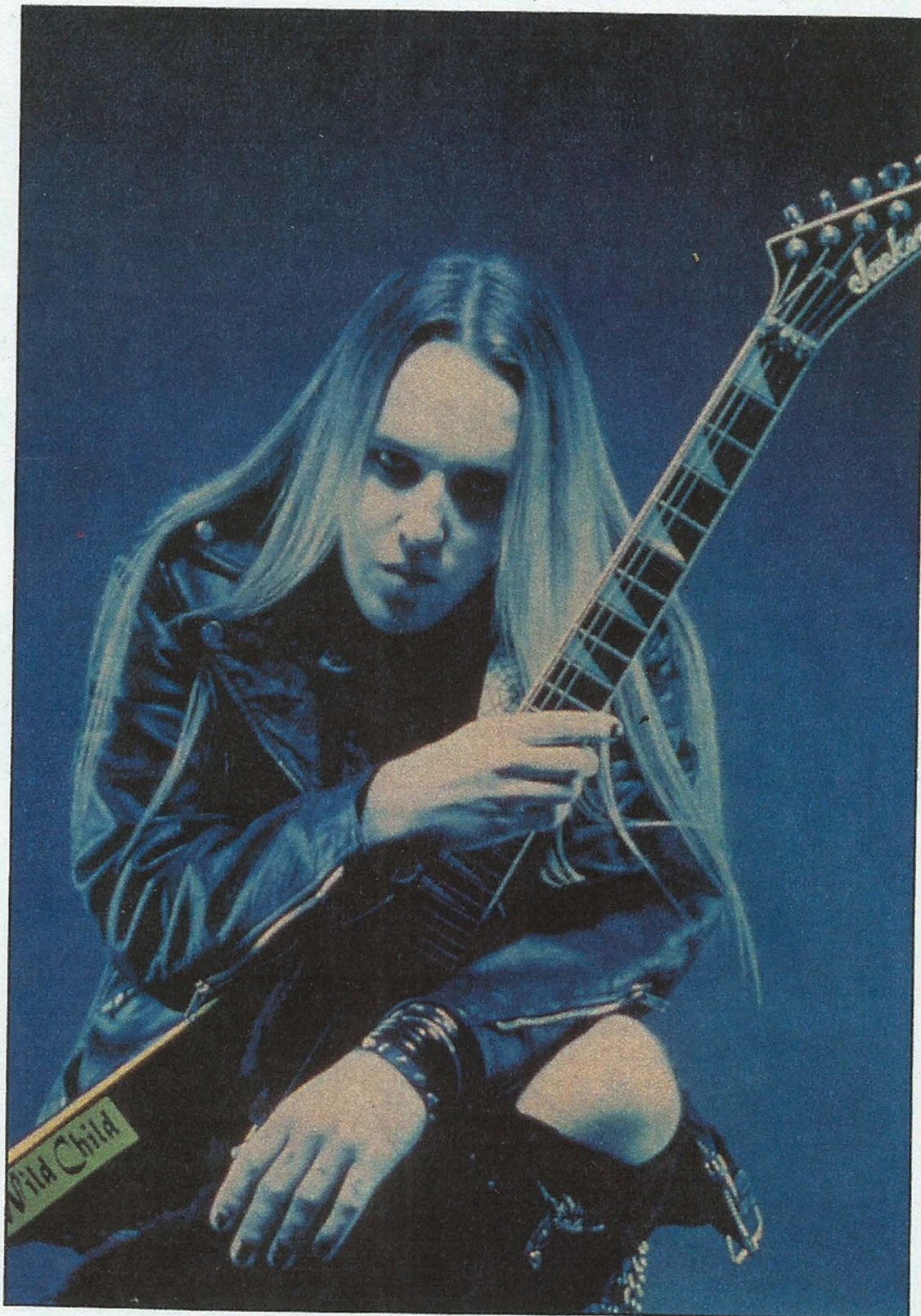
Let's talk about music for a minute, the music scene over there in particular. What do you think about Finnish hip-hop?

Henkka: (laughs) For me, it's a fucking joke. It just doesn't fit that you have someone rapping in Finnish. You've heard it before?

No, but I just can't imagine someone bustin' out rhymes in Finnish.

Henkka: Yeah, trust me dude, you don't want to hear it! I guess it must be pretty tame, since there's not really any crime over there.

Henkka: It's just basically all about getting drunk and wasted everyday, not giving a shit about anything. You



can't really sing about gangs over here. (laughs) Because there are none!

Henkka: Right. No violence. Hey man, Alexander's back. You wanna talk to him?

Yeah. Take it easy, man.

Alexander: Hey.

Henkka and I were just discussing the lack of violence over there in Finland, but I'd actually like to kind of counter that with a subject Finnish understandably still have trouble talking about: the Lake Bodom murders, which obviously gave you the inspiration for your name. For those of us fascinated by the morbidity of it all, what exactly happened that night?

Well, it happened 40 years ago on June 5, 1960. It's still a very interesting case here in Finland, a true story. There were four teenage campers: two guys who were 18 years old and two girls who were 15 years old. They were just camping on Lake Bodom when somebody came at night, cut the ropes of the tents, jumped over on them and started stabbing them with a knife. Three of them were killed immediately, but the fourth one got

out of the tent and started to run away. The murderer, though, picked up a stone from the ground and threw it at him. But the fourth victim actually did manage to get away, he survived it. Now he's something like 50 or 60 I guess, but he doesn't remember anything about it.

A sort of selective amnesia, huh? I heard that some guy came forward and claimed to be the murderer, but the police proved it not to be true so it still hasn't been solved.

Yeah. And nine years after the murder, this one guy claimed to be guilty too, but committed suicide before anything could be done. The police have no clues, even though in this police museum they have the actual tent the campers were sleeping in on display. So it's a very famous case. When we were little kids we all lived right

near the place where it happened so it's kind of a national thing for us. It's very easy for us to create stories about it. I really think that we are gonna be in trouble one day because of that name.

Have you received any threats from the peoples' families or other stuff like that?

No, but we have had some people say, "Oh my god, that is really gross, how can you talk about something so inappropriate?" I don't think we care, really. I don't think our fans do either.

What are your plans for the future?

Touring right now. We have a problem here in Finland, most of our fans are underage here so a lot of the time they can't get into the clubs because they're too young so we're going to play a huge New Year's gig which is going to be all ages. Then in February I think we're going on tour in Europe for five weeks with Primal Fear. We've been discussing about touring in Japan. And there has been discussion in April about going on tour in the United States.

Word about you guys is spreading really fast.

A lot of people in South America are saying that too! They keep asking when we're coming to Chile, Brazil, Argentina. I heard they're pretty fanatical down there, I dunno. We'll see about the touring thing.

I wanted to ask you one more question. A very stupid one. If you could be one character from a horror movie, which would you be?

Well, I've seen all the Jason (Friday the 13th) movies. Seems like it would be a pretty obvious choice. Jason is very cool because he just doesn't talk. He just kills without really saying anything.

Sort of the strong, silent type? But if I had to really pick my favorite one, I'd have to choose the alien from the *Aliens* movies. Especially part two (James Cameron's *Aliens*). That movie rules.

It's like, "This time it's war!" It doesn't feel pity or remorse, it doesn't have a conscience. (laughs evilly, Henkka joins in)

Corporal Hicks [Michael Biehn's character], that guy is my favorite. And I play *Aliens Vs Predator* on my PC a lot. It's a good game.

Alexander, it's been great talking about the band and mindless violence with you. Take care and come to America soon, we want to see you guys over here! Thank you very much, man! Good-bye.

- Jeff Nau

DISCOGRAPHY

Something Wild (Spinefarm/Nuclear Blast, 1998)
Hatebreeder (Spinefarm/Nuclear Blast, 1999)
Tokyo Warhearts Live (Spinefarm/Nuclear Blast, 1999)
Follow The Reaper (Spinefarm/Nuclear Blast, 2000)

Website: www.cobhc.com