



DEATH, BE PROUD

CHILDREN OF BODOM

I love 'em or hate 'em, Finland's Children of Bodom have fast becoming a household name—not only in Europe, but all over the world. Covetously greeted 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 musicians will reportedly defy opposition and categorization. Their latest, *Fellow The Deeper*, is no exception, showcasing both virtuosity and great songs in another display of "asi generic 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 KUOPPALA called me from the Spinefarm offices recently so that we might discuss death, warner, 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 sophisticated trivia from one of metal's coolest guys.

Has the response to the new album in Finland been as "crazical as it was with *Atrocity*?"
"It, yes. It has already sold 10,000 copies and is number one 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?"
"Barely! 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

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but he always says, "Let's try this" and if it works, we use it. The songs keep changing and we spend 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 same way to go. When we went into the studio with Peter Taggner 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 start out what we'd done. He'd say, "Okay, this is good and I have no problems with it," and with other stuff it was, "Okay, 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 boy-beards and Alexi's vocals. At that we were all sort of surprised at his technique but we listened to it later and said, "Wow, 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 give you something to use with your metal playing. Listening to everything like classical and blues always inspires 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 weird. "Eigh" said that Bach and Beethoven are "more serious", but I disagree. When I listen to classical music I listen to the orchestration and stuff like that. I write orchestration 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 Gary Oldman, but you even find yourself making any sort of conscious effort to sort of study those players over the years or do you feel that their styles sort of just emerge subconsciously in your playing?

Well, of course if you care to ask me what my advice is to young artists, I'd say get the technique down first, then the style will come later. But I love Andy LaRocca (King Diamond), he has his own style. The way he uses his vibrato and stuff like that, it's great. Yonkos [his lead singer on that respectably defined "solo" for me]. Just had one. 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, Zak Wylde's work with Ozzy

Osbourne and his new band Black Label Society is very good as well. He's the ideal model of a roller to me with the long hair, and he has his own style. When you hear that certain sound, you know it's Zak.

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 also know if this is really good, but we're both really big fans of *Moulin Rouge*.

Amor! Wee?

Yeah, I have a few of [Amor! Wee's] cassette compilations [his Hammer's CDs]. He has a very distinct sound, one that really accompanies the show well—the bass music for the scene scenes, and so on. It's really terrific.

You recently had a disease, come true when you played the Milwaukee Metal fest.

It was the first time I'd ever been to the U.S. For me, it was just like, "Welcome to America!" And the local people were just like, "Oh, your first time to America and you're in Milwaukee? It's like the 'ashole' of America!" [Laughs] Anyway, for me it was a total culture shock. First, [the Metal fest] 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 an early failure, so we had to create this sound with these beat-up Marshall's 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 down his guitar, picks up a blackboard, on the phone to talk with one.]

Hunka: Hey man, how are you doing?

Hey, what's up?

Hunka: Not much. Just drinking beer...

Both Alexi and I, shortly [Goss—

—Singer revealed how concerned he is about the Finnish climate and how it affects their songwriting. I was wondering about your feelings on the subject.]

Hunka: When you wake up it's fucking dark, and then you wake a while and all of a sudden you're getting like four or five days of sunlight straight. And then because 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.

Hunka: 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 to kill 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're used to the darkness here than when it finally gets to be—anytime one day, the sun is suddenly shining 24 hours a day, that's like just as we said 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, Hunka? 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?

Hunka: [Laughs] For me, it's a fucking joke. It just doesn't fit that you have someone rapping in Finnish. You're heard a before?

Ma, but I just can't imagine someone bustin' out rhymes in Finnish.

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

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

out of the tent and started to run away. The murderer, though, picked up a stone from the ground and threw it at us, but the fourth victim actually did manage to get away, he survived it. Now he's screaming like 50 or 60 dB, guess, but he doesn't remember anything about it. A sort of obsessive obsession, huh? I heard that someone 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 convinced outside before anything could be done. The police have no class, even though in this police manure they have the actual best computers were sleeping in on display. So it's a very funny case. When we were little kids we all lived right near the place where it happened so it's kind of a normal 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's really good, 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 coming from 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 Final Cut. 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 you're being asked when you're coming to Chile, Brazil, Argentina. I heard they're pretty fanatical about you, I damn. 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 *Jaws* movies [the 1980 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 *Alien* movies. Especially Janus from *James Cameron's Alien*. 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]

Capital Hunka [Michael Hunka's character, that guy, is my favorite. And I play Alexi 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 Wu



Something Wild [SpinalBach/Black Box, 1994]
Jawbreaker [SpinalBach/Black Box, 1996]
Tulpa Worknets Live [SpinalBach/Black Box, 1999]
Porlan: The Slayer [SpinalBach/Black Box, 2000]

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