

OVATE – LOST TRADITIONS MUST BE EXPLORED AGAIN

On June 1st, Soulseller Records will unleash Ováte's *"Selftitled"* debut album upon mankind. This Norse band was formed by Aindiachai from Taake fame, for which he collaborates with Taake live-drummer Brodd and different befriended vocalists are in charge of the vocal duties. Impressed by this first record that unleashes some upbeat pagan black metal, I decided to contact Aindiachai in order to gain more insights into his new band. (JOKKE)



I was really impressed by your new band's first output, the selftitled *"Ováte"* record. According to my research an "Ovate" is a Celtic priest or a natural philosopher. Is that correct? Why did you choose this name?

Thank you. An "Ovate" is a branch of Druid. The Druidic order was tripartite in nature. They were the Ovates, the Bards and the elite Druids who presided over all. The order was not to enforce hierarchy but to make sure that only the pure had access to sacred knowledge.

The word "Ovate" or "Vate" comes from the Irish word *"Faidh"*, from which we get "fate" and "faith". The words *"Veda"*, *"Vedic"* and *"Edda"* also derive from this word.

The Druids/Ovates were legal authorities, adjudicators, lore keepers, medical professionals and political advisors. They were interpreters of nature and also known as the serpent priests. The name chose itself.

The mysterious figure on the cover looks like a combination of an evil Santa Claus with Rudolph's antlers. Who created the image and is this a drawing of an ovate?

It is not an image of Saturnus nor is there any connection. The image is of Cernunnos, the horned/stag god also known as Herne, Herme, Thoth and Mercury. He was the god of initiation and of the portals between the realms. The image itself dates back to around 8000 BC and is still used today, for example, on every page on the current Irish passport.

Myself and Brodd came up with how the image should be represented but it was Phil Robinson at Níðhöggr Studio (<https://nidhoggrstudio.wordpress.com/>) that did an excellent job of bringing this image to life.



It seems that you have a huge interest in the ancient Celtic cultures?

I believe it is a natural human aspect to have an interest in one's past and the works of their ancestors, or at least it should be anyway. It is shameful if people do not explore their own heritage and discover how their people pre-existed.

Two weeks ago I watched the three-part BBC documentary series *"The Celts: Blood, iron and sacrifice"* in which anthropologist professor Alice Roberts and archaeologist Neil Oliver go in search of the Celts. Did you see this documentary? I was really impressed by the figures of Vercingetorix and Boudicca. Who are your favorite Celts?

I have not seen that particular documentary, as I am more interested in certain things that happened much, much earlier. The Celts were of course a formidable people with great warriors and at one point had the option to defeat the Roman Empire, mercy was the mistake on their part. Cú Chulainn, Brian Boru and Fionn Mac Cumhail are some of the legends that spring to mind, albeit their true stories have been blurred throughout the ages due to Christianity's incompetence.

The record is a quest through pagan landscapes. Can you go a little deeper in explaining some of the pagan items explored on the album?

First of all it goes deeper than just the pagan aspect and more into the spiritual aspect of the nature of the universe. Lost traditions must be explored again and for the most part re-introduced and incorporated into the system once more. Of course, there are but a few that share such ideologies, so it will never happen.

You are an Irishman from birth, but you live in Norway. How did you end up there and what attracts you in living in Norway? Do you live in an urban or rural area in Norway?

I have always been interested in nature and Norway is probably the most beautiful country I have ever seen in that respect, with its vast and surreal landscapes amongst many other things. I moved to Norway eleven years ago very spontaneously with the thought of staying for about a year, but things progressed musically and I ended up staying for longer because of this aspect.

I live in a rural area at the moment, but I have lived in Bergen for six years of my time in Norway. I am not one to settle in one place for too long, I never have been and I get bored if any place lacks something I am looking for.

Was it easy to adapt to the Norwegian way of living?

It is difficult to adapt to the way of living in any country during these times, even my own. I will never flow into any system constructed by man.

Are there big differences between Irish and Norwegian pagan stories?

I believe there are many cultures with similar stories, similar pantheons but with a unique cultural aspect. "Lugh" of Celtic mythology for example, shows a lot of the same characteristics as the Norse "Loki". Etymology proves important in discovering such things.

Paganism generally implies polytheism and was often used for people who didn't believe in Christianity. Your stage name Aindiachai is an Irish word for a person who rejects belief that any deities exist. Are you an atheist?

No, I do not like to label myself in such ways and I appreciate the freedom of being able to explore life's mysterious secrets, that is a long path and I'm not even halfway there.

Aindiachai can be directly translated as, 'One who is without God' or 'The godless one', so even though there is something more powerful in this vast universe, I will never worship it but instead eventually become a part of it.

Do you practice Neopaganism or the modern ideology of Wicca or revived versions of the old practices?

No, I don't practice any of those particular things. Images come before words or actions....enough said on that.

You are probably most known as the live guitarist for Taake. When did the urge arise to form Ováte together with drummer Brodd who is Taake's live drummer?

The urge was always there but the time was not. I have always been writing music but never had the proper opportunity or time to record up until around 2014 when I began work on this album. Things moved much more quickly when myself and Brodd joined forces. He has been a big influence on this project in many ways and has the technical savvy and initiative to get it done right.

On every song we hear another vocalist. Why did you choose this way of working and didn't you take care of the vocals yourself? Did each vocalist also write the lyrics for the song on which he performs?

The concept and idea of using different vocalists has been with me for many years, I am very satisfied about how it worked this time, so it is something I will revisit on future releases with other vocalists. Each vocalist wrote the lyrics themselves for each song they performed, except Hoest who used an excellent Norwegian poem from Tor Jonsson called "*Song til ein orm*" ("Song to a snake"). All the lyrics really fit really well into the ideology of the music, which impressed me a lot.



On the album opener "*Morgenstjerne*" we hear V'Gandr of Helheim and Taake fame and on the second song Taake frontman Hoest is in charge of the vocals if I'm not mistaken. Who do we hear on the other songs? Did you have each vocalist specifically in mind for a certain song?

Eld (Aeternus, Gravdal and Krakow) can be heard on "*Illhug*". "*The horned forest king*" is sung by Ødemark from The 3rd Attempt and "*Inst i tanken*" by Ese from Slegest and ex-Vreid. Yes, each vocalist's style seemed fitting for the songs on which they sing.

You are since more than 10 years active as a live guitarist for Taake and since last year also for Gorgoroth. Is Ováte the first band for which you also write and compose songs?

No, I have written all the music for an older project I had, "*Druid*", plus I am working on a new project "*Bard*", to complete the trilogy. I have written songs for a few more projects also but nothing has been released as of yet and some have just been discarded due to unforeseen consequences.

Will you take Ováte to the stage and if so who will handle vocal duties?

It would be good to do some special shows in the future that include all the vocalists if the opportunity arises. It all depends on how the album is initially received, if there is enough demand I will go live with it.

How did you end up with Soulseller records from the Netherlands?

I have heard great things about Soulseller Records in the past few years and now I can see why. It is a very professional label to work with and I am very pleased with this collaboration. They also have a great roster of bands, including Gorgoroth.

Recently Taake had to cancel their March American tour after the resurgence of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim accusations by Antifa. It seems that what happened in the past will forever haunt Taake. Any final comments on Antifa that is becoming more and more active to boycott (black) metal gigs and bands?

Fuck Antifa and their deluded cause. The idiocy of some humans will never cease to amaze me, but their reign of terror will soon end in tears. This is but a silly, childish phase.

ADDERGEBROED 24/04/2018