

# MISTHYRMING – HEATING UP THE ATMOSPHERE

When temperatures up to 40°C were hitting Belgium and breaking all heat records, I had a call with Dagur Gíslason, founder, composer, front man and guitarist of Icelandic black metal heavy weights Misþyrming. While I was sweating my ass off, Dagur, on the other hand, had caught a cold. It took a while before the interview took place due to daily studio obligations and recordings for Mannveira. Apparently, and much to my surprise, there is also a studio version in the making of the “*Sól án Varma*” commissioned piece which Dagur, together with other members from Misþyrming, Svartíðauði, Wormlust and Naðra, performed at Roadburn 2018. On top of that, a six weeks spanning trip to Romania is in the middle of being planned. A busy man, to say the least. (ADDERGEBROED)



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**Hi Dagur, “*Algleymi*” has been out for two months now. How has the response been thus far?**

Good to be honest. Of course, there are people who prefer the first record, which is no problem, but I’m very glad “*Algleymi*” is finally out. Creating this beast was not a walk in the park and it took a lot of time to have it released since we initially started recording “*Algleymi*” in 2016.

**Indeed, it seems it took a long time, since I remember you playing the record in full at the 2016-edition of the Roadburn festival when Misþyrming was ‘artist in residence’. However, it took almost three more years for “*Algleymi*” to see the light of day. What happened and caused this delay?**

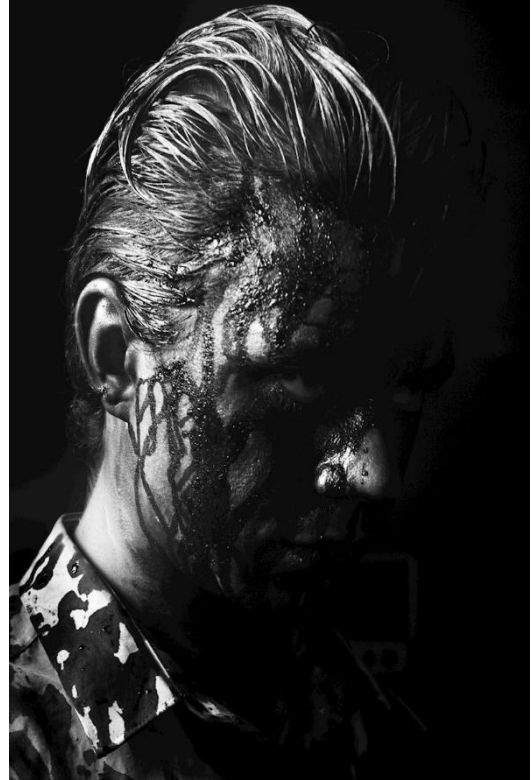
When Walter asked us to play three nights in a row, we decided to play a different set each night. The last night we performed our debut album “*Söngvar elds og óreiðu*” in its entirety. The second night was the “*Úlfsmessa*” set, an immersive collaborative performance including members of Naðra, NYIÞ and Grafir. The first set was indeed composed of (at that time) entirely new material and consisted of the songs that ended up on the first recordings of “*Algleymi*” that were just finished.

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During the mixing process, however, I found out that some parts were not played very tight and due to using cheap equipment such as shitty microphones, it sounded poor. I should have known that it could not been fixed in the mix. Therefore, there was nothing left to do but to re-record the entire record, after intense rehearsals, in the autumn of 2017. We now went to a professional studio to track the drums and the remaining recordings took place in our rehearsal space, Gryfjan, but with far better equipment such as a borrowed Mesa Boogie amplifier from my good friend Þórir of Svartidauði.

**Was there a difference between the first and the second recording of “*Algleymi*”?**

Except for the sound of course, which is far better on the second and final version, I changed the lyrics to one song. However, in general, there are almost no differences in music and lyrics between the two versions.



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**If I can give a small point of critique: I think the vocals are too much on the foreground and they dominate the music, especially in the more melodic parts. Due to this sound, the record reminds me sometimes of the last Behemoth records.**

Well, Behemoth is a band with great sounding records, so I'll take that as a compliment.

**I also have the impression that your voice sounds deeper on “*Algleymi*”. Did you change your way of singing?**

Yes indeed, I wanted to sound more powerful and capture our energetic sound when we perform live.

**“*Algleymi*” features guest vocals by Sturla Viðar of Svartidauði and Wraath of Darvaza, Behexen and One Tail One Head. To me, Wraath is the best black metal vocalist out there nowadays. Which singers or guitar players inspired you to become a front man in a black metal band?**

I think Wraath and I are each other's favorite front man, haha. He is such an energetic and enigmatic front man who is very cool to watch. With Misþyrming, we try to bring an almost animalistic, raw and aggressive performance and heat up the audience (I remember seeing the band at Aurora Infernalis Fest in 2015 where the band members even went into the audience during an intermezzo to heat up the atmosphere, JOKKE). Members of some black metal bands do not move around, they are like statues on a stage and seem to focus more on not playing any mistakes rather than delivering a performance. Well, fuck that.

In any case, when I decided to take Misþyrming to the stage, I wanted to combine both singing and guitar playing. Since our music contains long instrumental parts, it would have felt strange not having a guitar in my hands.

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I am a huge admirer of Ariocho/Mortuus. The way he performs with Marduk is so intense. He also wrote many fantastic songs for all the projects he's (been) involved in, such as Marduk, Triumphator and Funeral Mist. Also Till Lindemann and Rammstein inspired me with their masculine and still humorous homoerotic performance style.



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**Contrary to the debut album, you now decided to include the lyrics in the booklet, even accompanied by English translations. Was it more important to you this time to give listeners an idea about the meaning of the songs?**

In a way, yes. Some people asked for the lyrics of *“Söngvar elds og óreiðu”* and used Google Translate to understand what I was singing about, but these translations did not always make sense. Therefore, I decided to put the English translations in the booklet. I did the translations myself and they are, let's say, a 1-to-1 direct translation of each word, so less poetic than the Icelandic version. Maybe it will encourage some people to learn my mother tongue. The album also contains a lyrical contribution by poet and musician Kristófer Páll for the song *“Og er haustið líður undir lok”*.

**Lyric wise, the epic song *“Ísland, steingelda krummaskuð”* (“Iceland, castrated dump”) is very fascinating. I can relate to the somber picture you paint in the lyrics because - although I enjoyed it very much being there on holiday and I was really impressed by the overwhelming beauty of its nature - I don't think I would ever be able to live in Iceland, seen the enormous desolation. Does living so remotely from the rest of the world, make it more difficult for Icelandic bands?**

Yes, in some ways. Together with our guitarist Tómas Ísdal, I run the Vánagandr tape label. However, once we found out people in Iceland were also interested in vinyl, we were looking how to do this, but it doesn't make any sense to produce the vinyl in Europe, let them ship to Iceland, and then send them back to our customers in Europe. The label is still active although with less output than before, but we will soon release a tape version of *“Algleymi”*.

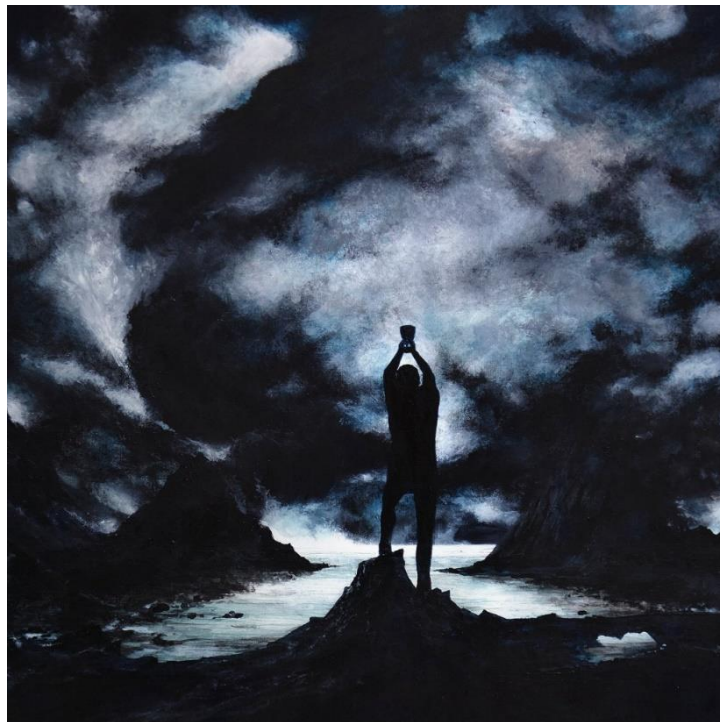
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**I was surprised how touristic Iceland is. The airport seems to have become too small to cover the hordes of tourists and at every sightseeing point, there are busses full of people. Although you drive almost alone on the road. Do you think the country reached its maximum capacity for tourism?**

Yes, five years ago we didn't have to pay to park our cars at waterfalls, but now the government changed this due to the many tourists who visit our country. On top of that, there are many who don't know how to drive or rent shitty cars, which often results in car accidents. We also start having the first traffic jams in Reykjavik. Moreover, our capital looks more sterile these days, while it was more colorful in the past.

**You partially created the artwork for your debut album, but for “*Algleymi*” you worked with Dutch artist Manuel Tinnemans. How did this collaboration start?**

After the release of “*Söngvar elds og óreiðu*”, Manuel contacted me to work together one day. I met him in Svartidauði's rehearsal place when I was tracking down some vocals with them. We had some beers together and got drunk. He talked about his trip to Iceland and described the feelings he had when he was travelling here. This led me to writing the song “*Ísland, steingelda krummaskuð*” and I also decided that he could make the artwork. I think the visual of the man on the cliffs really captures the atmosphere of the music and the meaning of the lyrics.



**Your debut record was released by the Norwegian label Terratur Possessions and the American, now defunct, Fallen Empire Records. For “*Algleymi*”, you moved to Norma Evangelium Diaboli. What made you switch to this very renowned French label?**

At the time, both Terratur and Fallen Empire were the right labels for us to release “*Söngvar elds og óreiðu*”. For “*Algleymi*”, however, it was time to take everything to the next level. It feels fucking great to be on Norma Evangelium Diaboli, together with so many of my favorite bands like Antaeus, Funeral Mist and Deathspell Omega.

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During your first shows, I remember you playing some cover songs. At Bergen's Beyond the Gates Festival in 2015, I saw you perform the Funeral Mist song "*The God Supreme*" during which Ariocho joined you on stage. At the Aurora Infernalis Festival in Arnhem later that year, you played The Ramones song "*Commando*". Which other cover songs did you play?

When we had to play festival sets and had some extra playing time, we decided to include a cover song into our set. At last year's De Mortem et Diabolum Fest in Belin, we decided to play the Svartidauði song "*Dthtrp*" together with their front man Sturla Viðar. We also covered "*Angel in disguise*", a song by Icelandic hardcore band Minus during a concert in Reykjavik. For our show in Turku, Finland, in 2017, I really wanted to play a song by a Finnish band since this country has so many great bands. We chose to play Impaled Nazarene's "*The horny and the horned*". We did the Ramones' song you mentioned, because it's so full of energy. During the recording sessions of our debut, we also recorded Slayer's "*War ensemble*", but I don't think we will ever release it. Playing covers is a nice thing to do.

**You formed Misþyrming in June 2013 as a solo project when you were still in upper secondary school. We are now six years later and you have released two records and an EP, played numerous club and festival shows outside of Iceland, curated the Roadburn festival and performed the "*Sól án Varma*" commissioned piece two years later. What do you consider your biggest achievement up to now?**

All of these things were really cool to do and are highlights in some way. Playing "*The God supreme*" together with Ariocho was extra special for me since I – like I already said – am a big fan of Funeral Mist with whom he never played live.



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**You also recorded, mixed and mastered several records by other Icelandic black metal bands such as the fantastic “*Undir skyggðarhaldi*” record by Andavald. Is running your studio your full day job or is it more like a hobby?**

I have a full day job to pay the rent, but I also do many recordings for Icelandic bands, something I really like and am very serious about. I’m glad you like the Andavald record by the way. It was a great experimental recording session, especially given the fact they are new to writing and recording.

**Besides Mispyrming, you are also part of Martröð, Naðra and Skáphe of which the latter just released a fantastic split with Wormlust. Can we expect more music from Martröð and Naðra?**

The Skáphe and Wormlust split is indeed very sick. Martröð was initiated by Alex Poole, but is currently put on hiatus due to the many other musical activities of its members. With Naðra, we play some live shows from time to time and every time we write a new song, we want to play it live. So we already did a lot of premieres, haha. We are very excited by the new material and hope to release it very soon.



**I was born in the beginning of the 80s and most of my favorite black metal albums are the ones that came out in the 90s. I still remember the first time I saw Emperor’s video clip of “*The loss and curse of reverence*”. It blew me away and fueled me to further discover the genre. Since you are much younger, I was wondering which records had the biggest impact on you? Are it also the old classics or rather some mid-00s records?**

Both in fact. I was at the same time discovering black metal through Deathspell Omega or Funeral Mist’s “*Maranatha*” as well as “*De mysteriis dom sathanas*” or Burzum’s “*Hvis lyset tar oss*”. Actually, it’s funny that you mention Emperor, since, for one reason or another, I never really listened to them. But a lot of people tell me they hear some Emperor references on “*Algleymi*”, probably due to the use of keyboards and the integration of more epic parts.

**In September, you will embark on a European headlining tour together with Darvaza and Vortex Of End. All three bands performed at this years’ A Thousand Lost Civilizations festival in Brussels. Was it here that the idea arose to join each other for a tour?**

The idea was older but was confirmed at the festival since A Thousand Lost Civilizations will also host this tour. It was a great happening by the way. Our show at Atelier 210 was OK, although I rather would have played at Magasin 4. It’s such a shame that this cool venue will soon disappear.

**I ran out of questions. I wish you a good recovery from your cold, all the best with your trip to Romania and I hope to talk to you again when you play in Brussels.**

“*Dankjewel!*” I spent a lot of time at Roadburn, so I picked up some Dutch words, hehe.

*This interview was published on Addergebroed on August 3, 2019.*