

TSATTHOGGUA – NON CONFORMITY, CHAOS AND PASSION

Out of the ashes of a German Death Metal band, Tsatthoggua formed in 1993 and decided to drive their efforts into an even more bizarre, faster and outrageous style. “Satanic Hyperspeed Metal” was born with the release of their ‘95 demo tape *Siegeswille* which led to interest of the infamous French label Osmose Productions. Tsatthoggua made their way to destroy the stages of Europe and attracted their loyal audience by wearing leather and latex masks to emphasize their reference to the dark, lost and forgotten realms of mankind. In the year of 2000, the band suddenly split up. Now, 20 years later, the five weirdos return to the front. Together with guitarist Nar Marratuk, we dive back into the past of Tsatthoggua, but also talk about some future plans. (JOKKE)



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Hi Nar Marratuk, how are things going on in the aftermath of COVID-19? I heard some member(s) tested positive? I hope they're doing OK now?

Hi Jokke, yes, we had a COVID-19-positive test for North Wind some months ago. He was in quarantine for 14 days and Lightning Bolt and me were tested negative, which was confusing because we have been practicing in our small rehearsal room with North Wind and we both had symptoms. But everybody is ok now. No problem.

Before talking about present topics, I would like to go back to the beginnings of the band. You first started out as Dissection, but - for obvious reasons (I guess?) – changed your name to Tsatthoggua, referring to an ancient god in the literature works of H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. For a band singing about themes as sadomasochism, bondage and anti-

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Christianity, this seems a rather odd choice, since I do not see any link between the band name and the general concept. What was the idea behind naming the band Tsatthoggua?

We do have lyrics in the vein of Lovecraft and the Cthulhu mythos. I think there are two or three songs at least. But anyway, when we heard that the Swedish band Dissection was about to release an album we decided to change our name. That was around 1993. In fact the Lovecraft stories deal with extremely bizarre creatures, strange events and extraterrestrial influences. That was a topic we thought could fit into our band. So, we borrowed the name of Tsathoggua, but added a double T in the middle, so we couldn't be confused and nobody could mix it up.

After 1995's *Siegeswille* demo, your debut *Hosanna Bizarre* saw the light of day in 1996 through Osmose Records. This label releasing records by bands such as Marduk, Immortal, Enslaved and Absu was very important back in the days. How did you end up with Osmose and did the band get a big push due to releasing on Osmose?

When we recorded the demo tape we sent some CD's to labels, some bigger and some smaller ones. Osmose was the only label we sent a tape to. That was kind of a strategy I must confess. We thought Tsatthoggua should be released by the world's best label for extreme metal. And so we tried to convince them that we are a true underground metal band without any "rock star attitude", so we sent the old tape format and not the modern, more perfect sounding CD format ... and it worked. It was a massive push for our band of course. But we felt that we deserved it and that we were creating really outstanding music that fitted to the Osmose roster without copying any other band. We did a German tour before with Therion and the Carnage follow up Furbowl and played a lot of gigs with good bands in the years before the Osmose signing. So we were already "in business" but of course it became much better after the CD release.



Out of the two full-lengths, I prefer 1998's *Trans Cunt Whip* because it was even more aggressive than the debut and abandoned the keyboard parts. I always noticed some Marduk and Impaled Nazarene influences on this record. Which bands influenced Tsatthoggua musically speaking?

I agree, the second album is more straightforward and more aggressive than our debut. Also the guitar sound is extremely heavy and I still love it. But *Hosanna Bizarre* was the more sophisticated album I think, more melodies, more breaks and so on ... The album was the result of a period of three or four years of development.

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Our main influences are older than second wave Black Metal bands, we were fans of Carcass, Napalm Death, Bolt Thrower, Obituary, etc. In the beginning until 1992 we sounded much more like a Death Metal band but when North Wind tried to vary his voice much more into high pitched screams, we were all really pleased with it. It fits much better than the deeper growls of our early days. At the same time we were listening to Impaled Nazarene, Satyricon, Immortal and Marduk and of course we love these bands. They were pushing Metal to a new extreme. That was exactly what we wanted to do.

Why didn't you use keyboards on *Trans Cunt Whip*? Did it have something to do with keyboards being despised back in the days?



No that was just because we didn't have enough time to work on the album like on the debut. *Hosanna Bizarre* took us about three months recording and mixing and adding sound samples, movie samples, intros and keyboards of course. At least two times we changed the complete mixing of the recording and started mixing from the very beginning. With *Trans Cunt Whip* we didn't have this amount of time. We had ten days for the complete album and although we had the arrangements completed before studio time it was not enough to work on the details for another three days.

Your record covers and band pictures contain images related to sadomasochism and bondage. Being a German band and knowing that a lot of extreme metal bands had problems with explicit record covers and/or lyrics in Germany, I wanted to know if you ever had problems with the German government and/or selling your records?

We never had these problems. I don't think that sex related lyrics or cover artwork could be ever a reason for a shop ban in Germany!?

Was this bondage, hedonism and sadomasochism thing just part of the band image and some kind of shock value or were these perverse practices also part of your private life?

In fact, we don't want to shock people. I think our lyrical topics are quite interesting for some people who love sex. We even don't call it perverted sex. It is just what people want to do in their private lives, some people even are part of a kind of public scene, in underground clubs in the capital cities for example. Usually the basis for S/M sex is trust and love. These are values we use as inspiration for our art. And of course our western society is not free and open to these values. Everybody knows that. Especially the old remains of catholicism and other religions still think that these open and free (and S/M) people are anti-christian or anti-religious. We really like that idea, haha!

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In 1997, you embarked on a European tour with Marduk and Sear Bliss. How do you look back at this trip? I can imagine that some crazy and or funny things happened on this tour? Any anecdotes you can share with us?

Oh yes, that was a great time, maybe the best time in our lives but long ago. We had a lot of fun and met some crazy people on tour, especially the bands we shared stage with: Marduk, Sabbatical Goat, Dunkelgrafen and Sear Bliss. The Marduk guys liked parties a lot, maybe Morgan not really, he was more in a kind of tunnel, concentrating on the music and his shape. But Legion, Freddy and we were animals of course ... ha ha ... I remember when Perverted Pete made one of his famous marijuana cigars with app. 10g pure Skunk or Orange Bud and our roadie "DJ Baron" (a really, really big and strong guy) smoked too much of it on our tour bus. He immediately fell to the floor in the middle space between the seats, and on his back. He was massively shaking (!!) and shouted: *"I am dying, I am dying ..."* That was not really funny in that particular moment, we thought he was maybe getting a heart attack or whatever but from the next day on, we died laughing when we remembered and impersonated that scene lol 😊

Another funny moment was when we tried to pass the borders from Germany to Austria which was not too easy in these times. I think Austria became a Schengen member a few years later than the Netherlands, Belgium or France. Anyway, we had a party on board with alcohol and drugs and of course nobody was seated correctly, our tour manager had



no passport and so on. We really feared that the tour would stop at the Austrian border. But we were lucky and they didn't arrest us 😊

Ah and in Fraureuth, a venue in Germany, Dunkelgrafen was the support act and when we entered the backstage room some minutes before their show, they were doing some blood letting with a real nurse! They needed their own blood on stage for a goblet of gore! That was really bizarre!

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Some members wore leather face masks during live concerts. Did you ever faint wearing such a mask in a small club where temperatures rise during a live concert?

The masks are not really a big deal. Only False Prophet is always funny to watch when he has massive problems getting his head into his tight latex mask. But after the show he easily slips it off his shaved skull he he ...



In the wake of *Trans Cunt Whip*, the 7" single *German Black Metal* was released in 1999 but soon after Tsatthoggua disbanded. What was the reason for calling it quits?

Oh, that is difficult to describe correctly. I think there were different reasons for the split. First of all, Lightning Bolt and me had started founding families at that point and I had not the time and passion for composing new songs. We had to play some gigs without Lightning Bolt and after that we decided to care about our private lives and not too much about the music. Ironically it was Lightning Bolt who later continued his music career with another Black Metal band which was founded by Perverted Pete, but I think he recorded only one album with this new band. Perverted Pete continued with several bands until now. North Wind started a band with ex-Funeral Procession guys some years ago. They are called Beast In Me. They are still active.

Was there a certain statement that you wanted to make back then naming this EP *German Black Metal*? What do you think of the current German Black Metal scene?

The title of the EP was kind of a compromise. First it was going to be named *Status Stürmer*, like the song on side A. But we thought it would be a good idea to state that we are a German band. I wouldn't say that it was a perfect idea but we felt very much connected to our German fans and bands we met on tour. I think that was the main reason. Marduk's Morgan was also a great inspiration for us as he is of German origin and he entitled the Marduk live album *Germania* ... so it was a mosaic of different reasons. But of course, we liked all our fans and cool bands whether

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they come from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland or anywhere. We are not nationalists but part of an international movement for sure. As far as I see it, Black Metal is against borders and frontiers.

Last year, Osmose Records re-issued your two records *Hosanna Bizarre* (1996) and *Trans Cunt Whip* (1998), now also available for the first time on vinyl. Are you satisfied with how these re-issues turned out?

Yes, we are absolutely satisfied! Osmose did a brilliant job, especially layout guy Yohann! The new layout of the CDs is modern and pure, I really love it. And the LPs are far beyond what we expected! Osmose even made red and white vinyl ... and inserts with all lyrics etc. Really, really a fucking great job!!! Thanks a lot to all people involved!



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Do you think the younger metal fans can also be attracted to Tsatthoggua or does the biggest interest in the band come from people who followed you 20 years ago?

I am not sure. Of course, we have the small advantage that some older people remember our band. And we hope that there are younger Metal fans who discover Tsatthoggua now and maybe like our 90s style. But until now most people who contacted us are mostly old fans I think. Anyway, we will try to convince new fans that we are not stuck into 1994 but that we are able to compose and record a modern, fast Metal album with the old spirit and heaviness.

On Metal Archives, I read that the *Extazia* album was scheduled to be released in 2000, but is unavailable due to Necropolis Records' collapse. I didn't know about this album. Was this supposed to be your third full-length at some moment in time?

Yes, *Extazia* should have been the title of our third album, the first for Necropolis Records from California, USA. We had signed the contract and were in good talks starting a US campaign with touring and playing live at the East and West Coast. But somewhere in the year of 2000 it all collapsed and we lacked the motivation to start over again. Of course, we were down and frustrated. But we did not split up because of these happenings. I hope we will record and release the album one day, maybe 2021. At the moment we are all motivated!

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On August 28, Osmose will release *Hallelujah Messiah*. At first, I thought it was a new record, but this doesn't seem to be the case. What material is included on this release?

Hallelujah Messiah contains remastered stuff from the 90s, especially the *Siegeswille* demo tape songs and the EP-tracks are included too. The new sound is absolutely amazing! We are glad that we had the help of Gulnar. He is a Bergen, Norway based sound engineer and Black Metal musician. He is running his Paranoic Abyss studios and his band A.H.P. which stands for Against Human Plague. He made a perfect job. We are all extremely happy with the result. It sounds incredibly heavy and dynamic.

Seeing the band now also active on social media, I assume there's more to come, no?

Oh yes, the fucking social media thing haha! When Osmose decided to release the old stuff and we started rehearsing again, it was the best possibility to keep in contact with our old fans. Nobody of us never had an Instagram account before, but Tsatthoggua is not only a music act but we have always been into bizarre photo sessions and something like that. So, it was quite a good chance for us to collect photos of the band, stickers, shirts, advertisement etc. Instagram

is very good for this kind of picture collections. We also started a Facebook account and tried to sell our LP releases in the Facebook shop but they deactivated all of our shop items because Facebook said we are not allowed to sell porn, haha!

Are their plans of releasing new music in the future?

Yes, we want to compose new songs and record a new album. I am optimistic that we will release new stuff next year. First, we want to play live. In November we have a gig in the western part of Germany in our home base Marl. We bow to the sado gods that this fucking pest will end until then and we can play in front of our fans. That is the essence of Rock n Roll!



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Is Tsatthoggua anno 2020 any different from the band 20 years ago in terms of band members and lyrical content/concept?

No, we start at the same point when we split up 20 years ago. The same members, the same instruments, the same record company, the same manager, the same crazy friends. That is maybe the best part of it all. That we found together again as friends. The lyrics and the music should not be too different than in the old days but I hope we can make it even better. Maybe not that crazy kind of chaos like in the 90s but maybe more structured. But I am not sure. The chaotic element in Tsatthoggua was part of our personalities and maybe we can't delete it even if we want to.



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Being twenty years older, did you become more or less extreme in your world and live view?

No, there was no change. We have always been a band of strong personalities and the values we shared 20 years ago are still valid. We are all mortal and we are lucky enough to have friends and families to share our lives with. I know that does not sound too much like a Black Metal cliché but we have never been that type of depressive suicide band. Tsatthoggua is a band for art, love, lust, drugs and alcohol. Of course, we love the bizarre kind of life. In any detail. No conformity but chaos and passion!

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