

MÖRK GRYNING – BRING FIRE TO THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE

Mörk Gryning strikes back after an absence of more than fifteen years and is ready to conquer without taking any prisoners. Since 2016, the Swedes have sporadically been playing shows, but recently they finally unleashed their long-awaited new record *“Hinsides vrede”* of which I’m very much pleased that it goes back to their oldest records. Together with Jonas Berndt, better known as Goth Gorgon, we look back at the past, talk about the present and lift a tip of the veil of the future. (JOKKE)



Hi Jonas.

With new records of Naglfar, Necrophobic and now also Mörk Gryning’s return with *“Hinsides Vrede”*, fans of the Swedish melodic Black Metal sound are really treated well in 2020. Do you think that, COVID-19 aside, 2020 was the right time for the comeback of Mörk Gryning?

Yes definitely. We’ve been away long enough and it’s time to make a statement before it’s too late.

Fifteen years ago, you decided to call it quits due to a sudden disinterest in extreme metal. When did it start itching again to reform the band and to start writing new music? Aren’t you afraid that you will soon face again this disinterest?

No. It’s not that I have to listen to every new album that comes out just because we are active again, then maybe I’d get bored with it. For me it’s important to not listen to too many other bands, I need to keep my ears fresh. I have always checked in every once in a while to what’s going on in the scene, but the inspiration to music for me generally comes from within. With that said, of course all the bands that influenced us in the past still influence us today and some newer bands might give ideas.

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Do you listen to contemporary extreme metal music or are you stuck in the past? I ask this question because a lot of musicians from “bigger” bands seem to only like the bands from the older days, but what do you expect from people who hear your new records? Do you think that *“Hinsides Vrede”* will mostly attract fans who know the band from back in the days or rather a new and younger audience? What do you say to people who react that only your debut and semi-classic *“Tusen år Har Gått...”* matters?

I think both old fans as well as new will enjoy this album. It’s not a nostalgia trip, of course we use the elements that define who we are, but this is something quite different from *“Tusen år Har Gått”* or *“Maelstrom Chaos”* for example. Like I stated earlier, I don’t listen to much of the newer bands and like you said about the other bands, I also generally still turn on the old classics if I want some old Black Metal.

Founding member Draakh Kimera didn’t take part in the self-titled album that was released in 2005 before Mörk Gryning was laid to rest. Why did he decide to stop back then and was it difficult to convince him to re-join the band? Can the band exist without one of you two on board?

Well yes, we already did. But in those days the band was quite different, it’s difficult for me to see the band existing today without either one of us. I don’t remember exactly why he left the band back then, I think he simply wanted to pursue other things in life. It was not difficult to convince him, actually it was the other way around, he convinced me.... And that took a while, but after the two reunion gigs I was hooked.



The promo picture depicts 3 members although the band has 5 musicians for live settings. Who are the 2 other members and are they officially part of Mörk Gryning?

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Aeon and CG who play with us live were members the last years before the break. It feels great to have them in the band cause it gives us the historical backbone we need as we know them very well, both musically and personally. They both participated on the album (C-G plays drums on two songs and Aeon plays the two piano interludes + some clean vocals) but we didn't have time to incorporate them as full members. At the moment though, they are all rehearsing in Sweden so in a sense they're more part of the band then I am (where I live on the French countryside).

If a band announces a comeback after a long period, it's always tricky on what to expect, but I must say that I really dig *"Hinsides vrede"*, which to me sounds like a mix of the aggression of *"Return Fire"* and the more orchestral approach of *"Maelstrom Chaos"*, the last of your albums I listened to back in the day, because after this one I lost interest in the band for one reason or another. Was it a deliberate decision to go stylistically back to the older work rather than the more progressive style of the last records?

Yes. Listening to all our albums these days, we felt it was the older style we liked the most and that we wanted to develop. With that said, I love the other albums as well, with for example *"The Sun"* from the last album being one of my absolute favorites. But this time, we wanted to go to the early albums and do something new with that.



In *"Infernal"*, the most catchy song on *"Hinsides Vrede"*, I hear some obvious references to Dimmu Borgir's *"King of the Carnival Creation"*. Is this a coincidence or a deliberate choice?

I hadn't heard that song before, but I listened to it now. And yes, I hear what you're saying. I think Kimera might have been influenced there but I doubt that it was conscious.

Translating into 'otherworldly wrath' or 'wrath of the world beyond', *"Hinsides Vrede"* represents the doom of pre-historic cultures as well as our impending doom while the world is cracking at its seams. It is a furious assault upon the civilized world and a descent into the nether regions of the world beyond. Can you elaborate a little bit more on this theme? Where did you find inspiration for these thematic?

Look around you. It's not like I'm going through dusty shelves at some library. The whole world is coming down on our heads and still most people care about little more than the interest on their mortgage, or their studies or their career. This world is run by an ice-cold machine that sacrifices all of us. Our music aim to bring fire to the hearts of people and make their blood boil hot. I like the mountains, the endless forests or the eternal oceans - this is what inspires me and what fills me with rage when I see the destruction of it.

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In 2018, you released a live album called “*Live at Kraken*” that I enjoyed, but, unfortunately, it contains but 4 songs. Why didn’t you choose to release a full show, maybe also on DVD?

I wasn’t so involved with that release but I think there was some technical issues with the sound on the other tracks. There was some filming going on as well but I don’t think we ever got the footage, in any case I wouldn’t wanna release that today since we sound much better now. But I’d love to release a DVD one day.

After having releases records through No Fashion and Black Lodge Records, you now teamed up with Season Of Mist. Was there big interest also from other labels for the resurrected Mörk Gryning? Why does this French label seem to be a perfect fit?



Actually, we only talked with SOM. We mailed them and got an immediate response. A few weeks later we played in Holland and met them there, so it all went very quick and smooth. We thought SOM would be a great label for us and they have proven to be extremely professional. We couldn’t be happier with the work they’ve done so far.

I saw that they will also re-release your back catalogue, of which some will get a first ever vinyl release. Excited by this or are you no record collector?

Yeah, this is awesome. So, YES, I am super excited about this. Never thought those albums would ever be released on vinyl!

Throughout the years you have used different visual representations in the band, going from traditional corpsepaint, to wearing masks, monk’s habits and on the latest promo pictures, you chose again for some kind of warlike tribal paint. How important is this visual side of the band for you?

It’s pretty important. The last years before the break we didn’t wear any paint, but I think it’s much better when we do, it puts you in a mindset. It makes you focus and there’s no denying the visual aspect is important for a band like us. I’d like to work much more on it but it’s a monetary question of course plus at the moment we can’t plan much for any live shows naturally.

Just as many other members of the second wave Black Metal bands, you were very young (something like 13 years old I guess) when you started Mörk Gryning. Do you remember a moment you had, with a song or an album or a show, that really changed what you thought about music or made you want to start making music yourself?

I started going to shows very early. I saw Judas Priest when I was 11 and Sepultura a little later. Then there was a lot of death metal shows going on where I lived, and all these shows inspired me. I think Slayer in 1994 was one of the best shows I ever saw.

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Is there something that, at the age of 13, you considered to be a weakness, say the way you played guitar, the way you wrote songs or sung, that you now see as a strength?

Not the way I played but the way I wrote music. Cause it was all so fresh then and you didn't overthink anything, everything came straight from the heart. As we grow older, there was so many different sources of inspiration and this could make it a bit chaotic sometimes, just too much going on. This time, we wanted to get back to the original freshness and make sure the music was produced in the heart and not the mind.

One of the advantages in making music that young, is that you just don't know any better. You're just messing around and if you end up with something magic then it's great off course. Can you think of any disadvantages? Ways in which you were limited then and are less so now?

I guess I answered this above more or less. But of course, we were much more limited back then. today we have a totally different control over our instruments.

Mörk Gryning was one of the first Black Metal bands to sing in its mother tongue. Why did you abandon this approach, only to have a few later songs written in Swedish, like "*Hinsides Vrede*" opener "*Fältherren*"?

We didn't abandon it totally, we had a few songs in Swedish on the later albums as well. But true, most have been in English. We don't plan to write in either Swedish or English, it just comes naturally. We might use it more in the future though since people like it a lot.



I was really looking forward to seeing you perform at this years' edition of Unholy Congregation fest in Belgium, that obviously got cancelled. Can we see you in Oudenaarde in 2021?

Yeah, I know, that sucks. We will come as long as it's possible. We do have gigs planned for 2021 and we are still planning more, but it's better not to provide any details cause none of us know what '21 is gonna look like.

Also, for the first part of 2021, touring or playing gigs seems uncertain. Does it mean that you will rather focus on (hopefully) writing more music for a follow-up?

We'll see. If no gigs happen at all, yes perhaps we will start writing new material. But it will feel a bit strange to do that before we've toured on this album. As you might deduct - we really want to come out and play!

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