

HÄXENZIJRKELL – THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE BEYOND AND THE PRIMAEOVAL CHAOS

Ever since we listened to Häxenzijrkell's first demo in 2016, we have been under the spell of this enigmatic German band. So much so that we wanted to book them as headliners for the first Addergebroed gig we organised in 2023. However, a change in the drummer's work schedule made it impossible for the Germans to perform. Fortunately, Häxenzijrkell's mesmerising power could be witnessed on the Unholy Congregation stage a few months later. The raw Black Metal from the demo days had deepened over the course of several splits and two full-lengths ("*Die Nachtseite*" from 2020 and '*Urgrund*' from 2022) and evolved into their distinctive ceremonial, psychedelic and ritualistic sound of today. We spoke with M. (vocals, guitars) about their third full-length "*Portal*". (JOKKE)



You keep your lyrics a secret, although I am not sure if there are any lyrics in the first place. However, since the early days, spoken word recordings and samples from vintage horror movies, such as "*Cry of the Banshee*", have been an integral part of Häxenzijrkell's sound and seem important in telling your stories. The spoken word parts alternate between masculine and feminine voices. Which factors determine using one or the other?

There are lyrics, although I tend to keep them secret, that is correct. I'm slowly gravitating towards making them a bit more accessible which resulted in a few words being printed in the inlay of our split release with Drengskapur, so I might actually end up including a lyric sheet at some distant point in the future.

The samples were first introduced on our "*Des Lasters der Zauberey*" EP back in 2016, so more or less right from the start. We've used them on most of our releases as they're a great way to enhance the atmosphere and the meaning. There has been a shift though: with the release of "*Die Nachtseite*", we stopped using samples from vintage horror movies and started recording our own '*Stimmen im Nebel*' instead. The underlying words are partly self-written

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and partly taken from existing works as I delve deeper into the subject of the respective album or track. *“Die Nachtseite”*, for example, is heavily influenced by writings connected to the Fraternitas Saturni, a legendary magical lodge founded in Germany in the 1920s.

Whether we use a masculine or a feminine voice for the respective sample is either based on the content of the sample or on the “feel” of the music.

One of these ‘*Stimmen im Nebel*’ that can be heard on every release since *“Die Nachtseite”* is H. (Oerheks, Silver Knife and LVTHN). Ultimately, he ended up as the permanent bass player of Häxenzijrkell, expanding the line-up to a trio. How did this collaboration come to fruition? Will H. also participate in future songwriting?

H. and I have known each other for quite some time. We’re both part of the “Amor Fati Family”, so to speak, and while I don’t really remember where and when we first met, I’m pretty sure that Marius (Amor Fati Productions) introduced us, and we got along quite well from the get-go. H. introduced me to Déhà, who has been our producer of choice ever since *“Die Nachtseite”* – quite a Belgian connection going on here.

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Häxenzijrkell was never intended to be a two-piece in the first place; it just kind of happened. P. and I grew up in the same rural area of (western) Germany and have been making music together for at least ten years prior to the release of the first Häxenzijrkell demo. There is a blind understanding between the two of us when it comes to creating music. Finding someone who fitted into this tight bond, both musically and personally, wasn’t easy. H. was the logical choice, and he fits right into this weird universe we’re building. Concerning songwriting, there are no plans yet.

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Häxenzijrkell's music doesn't follow any traditional song structures and seems to be partially improvised or created 'in the moment' instead of being meticulously thought-out in a home studio environment. Am I right here?



Well, yeah, sort of. The way we work is pretty organic, I'd say. It usually starts with me either coming up with or receiving a riff. I'll then record it on whatever device I have available at the time (which is often a shitty-sounding acoustic guitar recorded on a phone), and then I'll stop. A few days or weeks later, I revisit the riff to see if I still like it and if I can come up with a sequence, another riff, or whatever fits. At some point, I'll show what I've come up with to P., and we'll work on it together in the rehearsal room. We definitely don't follow traditional song structures, that's for sure!

When it comes to recording the albums, we keep it as live as possible. We always record drums and guitars live together in the same room, while vocals, samples, bass, and synths are added as overdubs.

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Songs like "AEON" are different, though. "AEON" started with something I heard in my head – I had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted it to be, but no riffs or parts written yet. During the recording of "Portal", we gathered every synthesiser we could find and went for it. Drums, guitar, and a lot of synths (loops upon loops) were recorded live in one go, just by the two of us.

It's clear that progression is important for Häxenzijrkell. But even while embracing some sepulchral Death Metal and faster Black Metal elements on your latest opus, the band still sounds 100% authentic. Do you have a specific set of rules about what can or can't be included in the Häxenzijrkell universe?

Trip-hop beats? Nah, there's no strict rule, but whatever we record has to fit the atmosphere of Häxenzijrkell. The same goes for progression—we're not actively trying to evolve our music; it just happens naturally. Sometimes, we don't even notice certain elements until we've recorded them. Take the "sepulchral Death Metal" element, for example - I think I know exactly which track you're referring to. We only started calling it "the track with the Death Metal riff" after we recorded it. Funny enough, I don't actually listen to a lot of Death Metal, so we didn't intend to include that element on the album.

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When listening to Häxenzijrkell, few specific Black or Doom Metal influences stand out—perhaps Urfaust is an exception. Which bands helped define your sound?

Ah, the Urfaust comparison. I like Urfaust, but we have never tried to sound like them, because you really can't. Plus, we never looked to other bands to "define" our sound. Both P. and I grew up listening to the same classic bands: Burzum, Mayhem, Darkthrone, Beherit, Samael, Isengard... You'll probably hear bits and pieces of all these influences in our music.

Having seen you perform two times live, I can confirm that none of the band's magic gets lost in a live setting. Do you prefer playing live or creating music? Do songs sometimes get a second life when being performed on stage?

Thanks! Personally, I do prefer creating and recording music, but playing live has become an integral part of Häxenzijrkell. It took me quite a while to adjust to the live setting and the role of doing vocals and playing guitar in front of an audience. Songwise, there's the odd track that we don't think works live at all and then someone will tell us the opposite. So yeah, occasionally songs get a second life live.

Karmazid seems to have become the graphic artist par excellence for collabo- rating on your album art- work. What makes him so special that you keep on going back to him?

A mutual understanding, I guess. Karmazid is very easy to work with and under- stands immediately what the artwork is supposed to look like. Usually, he only receives a very basic concept and is free to work on the artwork as he pleases – he hasn't let us down. And the results speak for them- selves, right?



On “Portal”, the German song titles and witch-themed concepts of your previous releases seem to have been replaced by Kabbalistic cosmology. What made you go for this new approach?

It's not necessarily a new approach; it's just more evident on “Portal”, I suppose. As mentioned above, all our full-length albums are deeply influenced by Western esotericism, and there's a connection between them: “Die Nachtseite” represents the step over the threshold, “Urgrund” explores the journey through the Beyond and the primateval chaos, and “Portal” is the manifestation of that journey. It's some sort of trilogy, loosely connected.

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The first four song titles on *“Portal”* refer to the four worlds of the Kabbalah, the mystical tradition of Judaism, wherein the universe is structured into four spiritual worlds. They represent stages of creation and the flow of divine energy. These worlds act as a bridge between the infinite, unknowable God (Ein Sof) and the material world we live in. Each world reflects a different aspect of the divine and has its own unique characteristics. The four spiritual worlds in Kabbalah are Atziluth – The World of Emanation; Beriah – The World of Creation; Yetzirah – The World of Formation; and Assiah – The World of Action. These worlds explain the process of how divine energy descends from the infinite realm of God to the material universe. They also form a fundamental framework for understanding Kabbalistic meditation and spiritual ascent. For how long have you been studying the Kabbalah, and is Kabbalistic meditation something you practice?

Kabbalistic practices have been a part of my life for years, though they are not my sole focus. Rather, they are part of a personal journey that is constantly evolving. I wouldn't call myself a Kabbalist, but it has influenced my interests and, to some extent, marked the beginning of my journey.

How does the album's closing track, “AEON”, relate itself to these four spiritual worlds described in the first four tracks?

It stands out a bit, right? While, as you correctly pointed out, each track represents a world – or rather a process, a glimpse of creation – “AEON” is the purpose, the connection or the manifestation brought together.

Which came first for this album: the music or this Kabbalistic concept? Can we see each of the first four tracks as manifestations of how you interpret the four spiritual worlds?

The concept came first because, as I mentioned before, it is more or less a culmination of its two predecessors. And absolutely, as pointed out earlier, the first four tracks are an interpretation of these four worlds – a personal one though.



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Opener “Atziluth” is one of the fastest pieces you have ever written with Häxenzijrkell. How does this aggressiveness correlate with the spiritual world of Atziluth?

Yeah, “Atziluth” and “Dämmerung”, which is the second track on our split with Drengskapur, are the two fastest songs that we’ve written up until now. Now, to me, “Atziluth” – the world, not the track – always had a rather fierce, untamed quality to it. Not necessarily an aggressive quality, but a primaeval spark of fire. Which is why the track itself is a bit more, well, dynamic and uncontrolled, or – as you put it – aggressive sounding.

In an “Urgrund” review posted on Dusted Magazine, reviewer Jonathan Shaw wrote: *“So, some other words: Urgrund, Entschleierung, Zeit, all philosophically thick, and the German makes things sound sort of Heideggerian. One envisions lots of misty, Alpine mountainsides; spiritually impenetrable thickets; and long, arcane discoursing on concepts like “dwelling” and “Dasein.” All that’s needed is a night sky, a line of skiers bearing torches and Leni Riefenstahl, ruddy cheeks aglow, leading the way. Those are loaded names, signalling varying degrees of collaboration with the Third Reich’s cultural wing — and likely sensationalist, low-hanging fruit to pluck in the context of black metal. This reviewer has no clue what positions the duo (identified only as P and MK, in cultish black metal style) in Häxenzijrkell take in the ongoing NSBM/RABM schisms, if any position at all. Lots of bands have declared themselves Artists (my capital A, ironising intended) ensconced in lofty spaces above the petty fray of the political. Sorry, folks: if it’s social, and especially if money is changing hands, it’s political.”* Did you ever reply to him about the position you take?



Oh boy, I don't think I've read that review, and if I did, I completely forgot about it. I honestly can't follow that train of thought at all; it feels extremely forced to me. Let me put it this way: obviously, people can interpret whatever they want from our music, but that doesn't necessarily make it true. The struggle for transformation, metamorphosis, or evolution, which is often reflected in the esoteric topics we explore, hardly aligns with any system or thought construct that incorporates totalitarian ideologies.

Häxenzijrkell is about to embark on a short release tour with Nubivagant. (Three shows have been played so far; ADDERGEBOED) I could be wrong, but the male voice on the album closer “AEON” reminds me a lot of your touring partner, doesn't it?

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Yes, the clean-ish voice on “AEON” is indeed Omega from Nubivagant. “AEON” needed something a little different, and since we’d been in contact for a while, he was the logical choice for it. We’re really looking forward to the tour with Nubivagant, not only because the lineup is great and we both released our respective new albums on the same day, but also because it’s our first time on the road for more than five days. Omega is obviously used to this, but for us, it’s a novelty, and we’re extremely excited.

Häxenzijkell has been releasing splits with LVTHN, Drengskapur and Brånd. What is the most important condition for you to share a release with another band?

All the bands we’ve released splits with have something in common: apart from obviously great music, there’s a personal connection. We’ve either been in contact for a while, shared the stage together, or are simply getting along well. In one case, we’ve even adopted a former split partner as a band member (laughs). On a side note, we just released a touring split with Nubivagant.



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What other projects are you currently involved in and willing to share with us?

Not that many right now. Most of my side projects are currently on hiatus. Häxenzijrkell has been taking up more and more of my time over the last few months and years, so there's not much time left for any side quests. I'm helping with live guitars for Ish Kerioth. If people haven't checked them out, they definitely should! There is, however, a completely new entity in the works. It will be revealed whenever it's finished and the time is right.

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