

MALAKHIM – THAT TEMPTATION THAT CALLS OUT FROM THE SHADOWS

Four years after the blazing ascension of “*Theion*”, Sweden’s Malakhim return from the shadows with “*And in Our Hearts the Devil Sings*”, an album that deepens their already formidable presence in the modern Black Metal pantheon. Where their previous work gazed outward into the divine and the cosmic, this new creation turns its gaze inward, into the churning abyss of the human heart. Speaking with Malakhim vocalist/lyricist E, we delve into the creative rebirth following “*Theion*”, the spiritual and aesthetic forces behind the new work, and the enduring role of Satanic philosophy in defining what Black Metal truly is. (JOKKE)



“*And in Our Hearts the Devil Sings*” arrives four years after “*Theion*”. How did your approach to songwriting and atmosphere evolve during that gap?

The writing process took a while to fire up again after “*Theion*”. The lockdown of the world during the pandemic threw a few wrenches in the creative wheels, which caused some delays. We’ve never been a band that sets a very specific aim when writing, but there were thoughts behind the tracks to lean more into the melodies and the grandiose feeling that is present on the album.

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The new album feels indeed both more melodic and more grandiose, yet still fiercely traditional. Was that balance a conscious choice or a natural progression?

A mixture of both. The usual modus operandi of writing occurred where ideas were mostly finalised by one of the main composers, presented to the rest, and then adjusted accordingly. I think we naturally ended up with something that progressed from “*Theion*” without deviating too much from the path already set out.

Malakhim have always sounded distinctly Swedish, showcasing some subtle Watain or Naglfar influences, while avoiding pure imitation. How do you maintain that regional Black Metal essence without falling into repetition or nostalgia?

No idea. We write according to our own preferences and principles, so I suppose there's a distillation of that regional essence in that sense. Given that we're all from different generations of the scene, we have a surprisingly uniform taste in what we like and consider influential, but I suppose that's why we get along in the first place.



The album's title suggests devotion and possession at once. What does the “Devil” represent to you within this context?

It's very direct – the Devil here represents that temptation that calls out from the shadow, that lingering voice that beckons. In a way it's like how we presented the same entity in the opening track of “*Theion*” – that shining beacon that guides across a black abyss. A tempter, seducer, a guide if you will? Someone asking for a dance, and should you accept, you're not getting off until the music stops for good.

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You once stated that "*Black Metal is a sonic expression of the antinomian currents that are best represented in the west through Satan. This is key to what Black Metal is, without the presence of Satanic elements in aesthetics, lyrical matter and other things, there is no Black Metal.*" If Satan represents the Western form of antinomian rebellion, do you think Black Metal could ever express itself authentically outside of that Western framework—or is its essence bound to that cultural and spiritual context?

Of course. The Satanic element can be present in other frameworks as well, as most of the spiritual currents have antinomian currents within them as well that represent the same element. The names may be different, but the energies remain the same. Satan is what we know from the roots that have set into the soil here long ago, so it is by that name we know Him here. In other regions He comes in different forms and manifests under other names – or perhaps the same.

If “*Theion*” gazed into the firmament, your latest creation turns its burning eyes inward—into the abyss of the heart, where the Devil plants His seed among our passions. What inspired that change in focus?

The lyrical ideas, and most importantly the title, were born out of a single illustration by Marcel Roux called "*Humans Offering Their Hearts to Satan*". It's an incredibly visceral image, and there was something about it that drew me in. From that illustration, many of the lyrical ideas that came to be on the album were inspired. This wasn't planned, but I'd rather view it as something presented to me in that way – a divine intervention perhaps?



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You've described the lyrical concept as exploring 'Yetzer Hara', the human inclination toward evil in Jewish thought. Do you view that as a force to be embraced, resisted, or transcended?

I think 'exploring' is perhaps overselling the idea, but in combination with the illustration, this concept was something I was, for one reason or another, inspired by, and the pieces just fit. To be clear, there isn't a perfectly thematic line in the lyrics or the tracks – no continuous thread that would make it a concept album.



As for the idea itself, it's a fascinating one, much like how 'Malak' means 'angel' or messenger in Aramaic, with Malakhim being the Hebrew form. Yetzer Hara isn't necessarily a purely evil concept; it can also relate to passion or self-interest – power, pleasure, survival – not purely bad things in themselves. I'd say it's something to embrace and transcend through. Much like "*Theion*" was direct and had underlying tones about transcendence through strife, the constant presence of the Devil in our ear is something that inspires us, yet at the same time draws us away from the limiting laws of God.

The artwork is simply stunning, and I cannot wait to hold the vinyl edition in my hands. How closely did you collaborate with both K. Pavleska and Karmazid to visualise the themes?

As usual, we give very free rein to the people we work with for the visual concepts. We had a more direct idea about the cover art this time, and Kristina did a great job of translating it. I think that's an important aspect of the overall aesthetic. We give flesh to the music and lyrics, and their input is to translate that into something visual, but in their own style and medium of choice. Karmazid is a given collaborator for us at this point, and once again he's done a fantastic job with all the details.

Malakhim have grown from an underground project into one of Iron Bonehead's leading names. Do you still feel part of the underground, or has the scope changed?

I'd say so. We belong here, and we have no intention of stepping out of the underground scene. We're glad to be working with Iron Bonehead again on this album, and his support has been greatly appreciated. I don't think we ever really had a 'scope' in that sense. We'll continue to write music as long as the muse continues to inspire, and whatever occurs during that process will occur.

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“Theion” introduced many listeners to your sound, but “And in Our Hearts the Devil Sings” feels more like a statement of intent. What do you hope the album does to the listener?

I hope they dream of the emptiness between the stars and the horrors that lurk therein.

You’re about to embark on a tour with Whoredom Rife and Halphas. What role does live performance play in expressing this material? Do you see your concerts as ritual, catharsis, or confrontation?

It’s a catharsis, in a sense. A confrontation? Perhaps. I tend to lose myself in the moment, so for me there’s certainly something that happens – almost breaks – in my head when we hit the stage and play. I can’t exactly claim it’s a ritual, more a sermon of sorts to the things we write about and praise. Whether something resonates with that and responds, who knows. I hope that energy transfers to the audience who stand witness to our performances.



Finally, when the Devil sings in your hearts, is it a curse, a blessing, or simply the sound of truth?

As cliché as it sounds it is all the above and none. It depends on whether you choose to hear the song and dance to the tune or if you pull away from it.

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