

AFTOKTONIA – BLACK METAL COULD BENEFIT FROM MORE COLOR

Rooted in Greek identity yet shaped by Norway's frozen landscapes, Aftoktonia occupies a space between introspection and immensity. This solo vehicle of young multi-instrumentalist Sarkhildr fuses atmospheric Black Metal abrasion with cosmic ambience and a striking visual sensibility that rejects monochrome convention. Prolific, fiercely independent and conceptually driven, Aftoktonia is less a band than an ongoing personal voyage. In this candid conversation, Sarkhildr discusses identity, inspiration, independence, and the restless creative drive behind one of the underground's most intriguing young acts. (JOKKE)



Aftoktonia is a name heavy with meaning, translating from Greek ('αυτοκτονία') as 'suicide'. How do the ideas of self-destruction and self-creation manifest in the band's philosophy and music?

Hello, thank you for having me. I really appreciate you taking the time to interview me. It feels great to finally discuss my project, which I am very passionate about.

Funnily enough, Aftoktonia was never meant to be a raw Black Metal/Dungeon Synth project. It was originally intended to be a very basic DSBM project, hence the depressive name. I made an EP and was almost ready to release it. However, I was severely disappointed with how it sounded and ended up discarding the whole thing. So Aftoktonia was on the verge of not existing at all.

I then made "*Ashes of the Astral Rite*" under what was meant to be a completely different project with a different name. However, the name 'Aftoktonia' stayed with me, and I eventually used it, even though it wasn't entirely fitting for the music.

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I also chose the name because of past experiences. At the time, making music was my only purpose. I was doing nothing else, and Aftoktonia was one of the only things keeping me from committing the actual act, if that makes sense. I would rather make music about it than do it. So yes, it has a dark backstory.

The drive behind Aftoktonia's early music was fuelled by self-destruction in a way. I wasn't in a good place. I had a lot of anger and was constantly working on music.

Aftoktonia is a one-man project. Is this the result of practical limitations in finding like-minded musicians, or a deliberate choice to avoid compromise?

Aftoktonia is a one-man project because I don't want to wait for anyone when I make music. I don't want to make arrangements or wait for someone to create cover art. Everyone has something going on in life, and so do I. I want to create whenever I have the time.

If I worked with someone else, the process would be slower. I wouldn't have full control over decisions. It simply doesn't work well for me. I have always worked alone. When someone doesn't match my pace, it slows me down. I am a patient person – just not when it comes to music. So, it is a very deliberate decision.

Your alias Sarkhildr appears to draw from Old Norse roots associated with battle and wounding. Is this interpretation close to your intention?

Sarkhildr draws from both Old Norse and Greek. 'Sarka' means 'flesh' in Greek. 'Hildr' means 'battle' or 'war' in Old Norse.

When choosing my artist name, I wanted something violent yet unique. I decided to combine words from my mother tongue, Greek, with language from the country that has influenced me most musically – Norway and Old Norse tradition.



The artwork for your new album, "Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether", is striking and immediately stands out. It strongly complements the psychedelic, cosmic, yet warm-blooded atmosphere of the music. Can you tell us more about the creation of the album cover?

When I make music, I see colours, places and numbers. While creating "Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether", orange and purple were dominant in my mind. I imagined a clear, starry sky glowing in those colours. That is what the music made me feel.

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At the time, I was listening to a lot of Gorguts and Arghoslent. Both bands had striking, colourful cover art – Obscura’s “Condemned to Obscurity” and Arghoslent’s “Incorrigible Bigotry”. I originally explored those albums because of the artwork. I took inspiration from that boldness.

I am also tired of the typical black-and-white aesthetic often associated with Black Metal. It is awesome but very basic and overused.

I grew up partly in Greece and became used to ruins and abandoned buildings. There is something melancholic yet beautiful about such structures. That is why there is a ruin on the cover. It reflects the album perfectly – heavy, yet at times peaceful and melancholic.

The cover artworks for “Ashes of the Astral Rite” and “Unspoken Psalms Carved in Shadows” both feature prominent orange hues, a colour rarely associated with Black Metal. Is there specific symbolism behind this choice?

As unsophisticated as it might sound, I often choose orange simply because I like it or because the music feels that way. That is honestly it.

As I mentioned earlier, I am tired of the black-and-white scheme. It feels uncreative and overused. As ‘unmetal’ as this might sound, I think Black Metal could benefit from more colour.



I found it intriguing that the four epic tracks on “Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether” are titled “Stellar Voyage Parts I–IV”. Why did you choose not to name the album “Stellar Voyage” itself?

When creating titles for Aftoktonia, I rarely use conventional song names unless it is a split release. I prefer numbering tracks with a shared theme. I want the music to feel like an adventure. I want listeners to focus on the sound rather than the title or duration. My albums are intended to be heard from start to finish in one continuous listen.

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I did not call the album “*Stellar Voyage*” because I see it differently. “*Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether*” is the journey itself. The “*Stellar Voyages*” are the stages within that journey. That is why the first track is “*Stellar Voyage I (Είσοδος)*”. “Είσοδος” means “entrance” in Greek. The final track is “*Stellar Voyage IV (Εξόδος)*”. “Εξόδος” means “exit”.

I have a very personal and perhaps strange way of conceptualising my music. It is difficult to explain clearly, but it makes sense to me.

You were born in Greece but later moved to Norway. Has this change of environment influenced your music?

I was born in Greece and moved to Norway when I was around seven. If that had not happened, none of this would have existed.

In Norway, I discovered classic Black Metal bands such as Emperor, Satyricon and Darkthrone. They introduced me to the genre. The winter landscape has also influenced me deeply. There is something inspiring about being surrounded by freezing darkness.

Although your early recordings resemble Trhä and Paysage d'Hiver, your sound leans more towards the Scandinavian tradition than the Hellenic one. How do you view the legacy of Greek Black Metal?

Trhä and Paysage d'Hiver are my all-time favourites. Damian and Wintherr are geniuses and major inspirations.

I do lean more towards the Scandinavian tradition than the Hellenic one, because that is what I fell in love with first. The first Black Metal bands I heard were Norwegian. At the time, I only knew a few Greek bands such as Rotting Christ. I simply listened to more Norwegian Black Metal in my formative years.



That said, the Greek scene has strong projects. I respect that such music exists in a country that is strongly Christian. Mnima/Mνήμα, for example – what a project! I have rarely heard something so violent and heavy. I am proud of the Greek Black Metal legacy.

There is a noticeable evolution in Aftoktonia's production. “*Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether*” sounds significantly cleaner than your earlier releases. Was this a conscious and intentional development?

I have always loved gritty, noisy, and harsh productions. It gives music character and uniqueness. I will continue to make lo-fi material.

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However, “*Through Nebulae of the Empyrean Aether*” contained many layers that were lost in a harsher mix. I wanted every element to shine through. That required a cleaner production. I have tried to make previous albums polished and clean, but it didn’t suit them. This album was one of the few cases where it actually worked.

With each release, I aim to retain Aftoktonia’s signature while sounding different. I do not want albums that feel identical. I hope I have achieved that to some degree.

In just over a year, Aftoktonia has released three full-length albums alongside several smaller releases. What drives this remarkable abundance of inspiration?

I would not always call it an abundance of inspiration. I often noodle on guitar and discover something worth recording. Once the first riff exists, the rest follows naturally.

I feel compelled to create – not because fans are waiting, but in a spiritual sense. It is like an itch in my head that must be scratched. Making music stabilises me. It supports my emotions and creativity. I do not want to stop.



You are also active in Drah’kæl and Lernaeon. What distinguishes these projects from Aftoktonia?

Lernaeon was the first project I created, which I believe I started around October 2024. It was intended as a heavier, depressive outlet where I could channel all my emotions. As mentioned, the themes were very dark and personal. I released two records, and by the time I finished the second, I felt the urge to create a raw Black Metal/Synth project. Of course, I couldn’t release it under the Lernaeon name, as that wouldn’t have made sense.

That’s when Aftoktonia was born – a more synth-driven, astral, space-inspired project. I simply felt it was time for a change. I might revisit Lernaeon at some point, though. Aftoktonia remains my main project and the one I feel most connected to.

Around June 2025, after listening to a lot of Death Metal, I began creating a lo-fi Black Metal record with a heavy Death Metal influence. This became Drah’kæl’s “*At the Forgotten Altars of Depravity*”. Drah’kæl came out of nowhere; it simply happened. It is a more vicious, anger-fuelled project, born because that material didn’t fit any of my previous work.

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By the way, Drah'kæl means 'the king of dragons', inspired by the Greek word Drakos, meaning dragon. Lernaeon, meanwhile, takes its name from the mythological 'Lernaean Hydra'.

Your album titles frequently reference astral rites, cataclysms, eclipses, and empyrean space. Is this cosmic language a metaphor for an inner spiritual process, or are you intentionally constructing a broader mytho-cosmic narrative across the discography?

It is both metaphorical and literal.

Aftoktonia is a project designed for each listener to form a personal, unique connection. You have to think outside the box and interpret the music in your own way. I find that engaging with something personally can help you learn a little about yourself.

The album titles mostly refer to actual cosmic space – planets, stars, and so on. However, there is no single spiritual meaning for each listener. I leave it open to interpretation so that everyone can connect with it in their own way. I could go into more detail, but it would probably get too sappy and overly philosophical, and I would likely be the only one to fully understand what I am talking about (laughs). So I'll leave it at that.

Aftoktonia appears to operate largely independently, with only limited CD or tape releases through small labels. Will you continue this way?

I will most likely continue with a DIY approach whenever possible. What I can say for certain is that Aftoktonia won't be signing to any label any time soon. I enjoy working independently, and I don't want to "overpopularise" the project. I don't mean this in a metal-elitist or gatekeeping way – I simply want it to remain a small project with dedicated fans. I don't want it to become too mainstream; that tends to dilute the fanbase.

I would rather have a few people who are truly dedicated and obsessed with the band than many casual listeners who barely know anything about it. Being signed to a label that handles everything is a big no for me. It would take a lot to even consider it. Working alone or having physical releases done in a DIY manner through small labels feels far more personal. When you produce physical copies yourself, small inconsistencies and mistakes happen – and that's what makes it human and, in my opinion, cool.

Of course, I wouldn't reject professional production entirely if it helps get the music out there. But for physical releases, I prefer a DIY, retro approach, similar to how it was done in the past.



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As someone in my mid-forties, my introduction to Black Metal came through bands like Emperor, Satyricon, Mayhem, Immortal, and Marduk. Rumour has it you're quite young – did your journey into Black Metal begin with these classics, or through different influences?

I'm 17, turning 18 this year. Despite my age, I've always listened to older music. When it came to Black Metal, I gravitated towards Darkthrone, Mayhem, Emperor and other second-wave bands.

The game-changer for me was Leviathan – Jef Whitehead's project. A close friend recommended “*The Tenth Sub Level of Suicide*”, and that album completely blew me away. I then explored “*Massive Conspiracy Against All Life*” and “*Scar Sighted*”. I absolutely love that project, and Leviathan's music introduced me to Xasthur. These were the main inspirations behind Lernaeon.

I later discovered Paysage d'Hiver's “*Self-titled*” demo and Trhä's “*Avðølajntðé£ hinnem nihre*” by coincidence. These albums introduced me to the atmospheric Black Metal that eventually led to the creation of Aftoktonia.

Drah'kæl, meanwhile, was inspired by a mix of influences – far too many to list entirely. Some of the bands that have influenced me most include Trhä, Paysage d'Hiver, Leviathan, Judas Iscariot, Mnima, Darkthrone, Mantiel, Vampirska, Left Alone, Spectral Wound, Xasthur, Mütiilation, Windir, and Grausamkeit.

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