

ARCHAIC OATH – THERE ARE ALWAYS CHOICES TO BE MADE

It seemed written in the stars that Lykormas (Filip Dupont) and Arneriach (Arne Vandenhoeck), two seasoned forces within the Belgian underground, would one day join forces again. And so, it came to pass in the form of Archaic Oath, through which both musicians swear a solemn oath to revive the primal power of Swedish melodic Black Metal. Their sights are firmly set on the legacy of the 1990s, when bands such as Naglfar, Dissection and Unanimated united melody and darkness in a deadly embrace. Their debut album, *“Determined to Death and Beyond”*, will be released on April 24 via AOP Records and stands as a uncompromising tribute to that era, while at the same time reflecting the work of musicians who have long earned their stripes. High time, then, to put Archaic Oath to the test about the band’s origins, their convictions, and the enduring appeal of the blackened past. Speaking here is vocalist and lyricist Arneriach. (JOKKE)



(c) Kevin Kellens

In 2013 Filip Dupont played his final show with Gorath, and you were on stage as the vocalist for the Dissection cover “Night’s Blood”. It seems you had to tug at Filip’s sleeve for quite some time before the two of you finally did something together again.

It’s not as if I’ve been sitting still since then — quite the contrary. With Sunless Aeon I was involved from the very beginning into a melodic Black/Death Metal band, alongside former members of Herfst, Lemuria and Bütcher.

At our most recent show so far (in December 2024), Rituals of the Dead Hand also played, another brainchild of Filip. After the show he asked me whether I’d be interested in doing vocals in the style of Jens Rydén (ex-Naglfar) for a project he was working on at the time. And that was how it all started.

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How does the name Archaic Oath reflect your musical identity? Does that archaic power lie in the themes, the sound, or the attitude?

You can definitely see it reflected in the sound, which is directly rooted in Swedish melodic Black/Death Metal from the 1990s (Dissection, Naglfar, Eucharist, Dawn, ...). Back then we were both still young lads.

At the same time, our own shared history is clearly present as well: the connection goes back to 2004, when we first shared the stage (with The Quiescent and Herfst, respectively) and became friends. In 2005 I even recorded some vocals for a Gorath track.

Within Archaic Oath, Filip writes all the music while you handle the lyrics. Was there interaction between the two of you in those areas, or do you leave each other completely free?

There was certainly interaction, but mostly on the level of details, so to speak. We're both fairly seasoned in our craft, which meant very few adjustments were needed either way. That made it a very pleasant way to be creative together.



(c) Kevin Kellens

The title “*Determined to Death and Beyond*” sounds intense and inevitable. What does that determination mean to you? And was the album title the starting point for the songs, or did it emerge organically during the writing process?

The title was actually the final piece of the lyrical puzzle — the cherry on top, you might say. In the opening track there's a short section for which Filip had originally written only guitar but later thought it would be more powerful with just vocals. That's when I came up with that line, which

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essentially summarises the entire concept of the record. So, it's not something particularly personal or even philosophical.

On another level, there's also our love for extreme Metal hidden in there, along with a subtle nod to the latest album by Lhaäd, which I personally think is very strong and which features Filip's earlier Black Metal compositions.

The words 'death' and 'beyond' suggest not only an ending but also something that comes afterwards. Is the album about destruction, transformation, or perhaps even rebirth?

I think destruction and transformation already get you quite far in capturing the fate of the protagonist. The word 'determined' is also important, because there are always choices to be made. Our protagonist chooses penance and the uncertain fate that awaits him. Perhaps the rebirth will be something for the next album (laughs).

For the single "*Forest of Horrors*" you went into the woods to film a video clip. In my experience, musicians always try to look tough in music videos, even though the process can be rather cringe and laughable, since you're basically miming along on location. What's your opinion on music videos in 2026?

Well, you shouldn't take yourself too seriously as a father of two or as an eternal metalhead approaching fifty. The shoot with Johannes from Hood Days Entertainment and his drone operator was very relaxed and great fun to do.



Given today's possibilities, it's perfectly feasible to make a video that doesn't look overly amateurish without throwing thousands of euros at it. If your label (AOP Records) is also willing to invest a bit, the choice is easily made. In our case it was the first introduction to our music, so it had to make an impact — and I think we succeeded. Our mission becomes clear as soon as you see and hear the video.

I can imagine that for the Emperor cover "*Ye Entrancemperium*" you had to push yourselves to the limit both musically and vocally. It's rather funny that Archaic Oath can be seen as an ode to Swedish melodic Black Metal, yet you chose a cover by the emperors of Norwegian Black Metal. Why that choice?

The funny thing is that Filip himself no longer remembers why he recorded it. One day an extra track appeared in my digital inbox, and of course I immediately recognised it when I listened to it — a nice surprise.

It was never actually meant to appear on the album, but our label insisted. By replacing the keyboards with guitars, the music also moves much closer to that so-called Swedish sound. We're both fans of both primordial streams of Black Metal, so it doesn't feel strange at all.

I should also thank Ihsahn (and Trym Torson), because to record the clean vocals I used a live recording from a few years ago and isolated the singing from it. With hardly any adjustments I could place it perfectly alongside our recording and sing along. Afterwards Filip barely had any work mixing it properly.

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You're releasing your debut through AOP. How did the search for a label go?

We had a shortlist of labels, with AOP Records right at the top. Filip also knows Sven, the owner, so we were hopeful that we might be able to sign there. In the end a few other labels were interested as well, but AOP made the first move — and very enthusiastically, I must say. So far, the collaboration has been running very smoothly.

On record Archaic Oath operates as a duo but live you'll rely on session musicians. Who will be joining you on stage? And are there already shows planned to promote "*Determined to Death and Beyond*"?

For second guitar we have Geert, who currently plays in Bloedmaan and was previously active in bands such as Serpent Oath and Melechesh. He lives close to Filip, which makes rehearsing together very convenient. Besides being a great guy, Geert is also a top musician.

On bass and drums, we have Jens and Max from the German band Beltez — also two very experienced musicians. The atmosphere among us is excellent, so we're really looking forward to playing live.



Because of the logistical complexity of rehearsals and the schedules of our other bands, it probably won't be a huge number of shows, but rather somewhat larger productions, so to speak. Hopefully from this autumn onwards our schedules will allow us to take to the stage here and there.

Filip doesn't shy away from taking on new projects, and you're best known as the vocalist of Doom Metal band Marche Funèbre. Recently, however, you also announced that you've joined the Greek band Hail Spirit Noir as their new singer. How did that come about?

Well, after the winter photoshoot we did with Archaic Oath earlier this year, I was warming up at home and saw the announcement that Hail Spirit Noir were looking for a vocalist. Since that band has been one of my absolute favourite contemporary acts for several years now, I didn't have to think twice.

Apparently, my application made quite an impression, because before we knew it we were already looking for rehearsal dates. I've just returned from Thessaloniki, their home base, and as you may have noticed it was a success.

Will this result in a show on Belgian soil?

From April onwards I'll be hitting the stage with the gentlemen, starting with Dark Easter Metal Fest. Logistically, a Belgian show should now be a bit easier, though of course you still need a promoter willing to organise it. It would certainly be great for me, and who knows — as organiser of Darken the Moon festival I might be able to pull a few strings myself.

Can we expect new material from the band soon?

New songs are still in the demo stage at the moment, so that will take a little while yet. The last album, "*Fossil Gardens*", isn't that old either — and it's absolutely excellent, I might add.

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You've both been active in the Belgian Metal scene for many years and could easily be labelled veterans. How have you seen the Metal landscape in Belgium evolve over the past 25 years, for better or worse?

Without a doubt, for the better. The talent has always been there, but especially in the 1990s there was less belief in our own abilities. Belgian releases often had a certain originality — far more than, for example, those from our northern neighbours — but the production was usually lacking. That has become much less of an issue, partly thanks to the digital revolution.

Thanks to the pioneering role of bands like Amenra and Enthroned, many bands now set their ambitions realistically high and have come a long way. Think of Psychonaut, Pothamus, Alkerdeel, Wiegedood, and many others such as Hemelbestormer and Marche Funèbre.

(c) Istvan Bruggen

Being a band from Belgium is no longer a disadvantage either, which used to be the case sometimes. The fact that our festival culture now offers opportunities to Metal bands makes that positive evolution even clearer — thanks in part to the Belgian focus of Alcatraz Festival, which certainly deserves credit.

Do you see this Archaic Oath debut as a one-off project, or are there already plans for a follow-up? How far do your ambitions with this band reach?

I don't think we've said everything we have to say yet. There are no concrete plans for a follow-up at the moment but knowing Filip's work ethic I'll probably wake up one day to find a new song in my inbox.

Meanwhile, a continuation of the "*Determined to Death and Beyond*" concept is already beginning to take shape in my mind.

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