

MUSIC

American Metal: All But Dead

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I'm beginning to lose faith in American metal, specifically because other countries are producing way better bands. This is seen most prominently with one of my all-time favorite bands, Opeth.

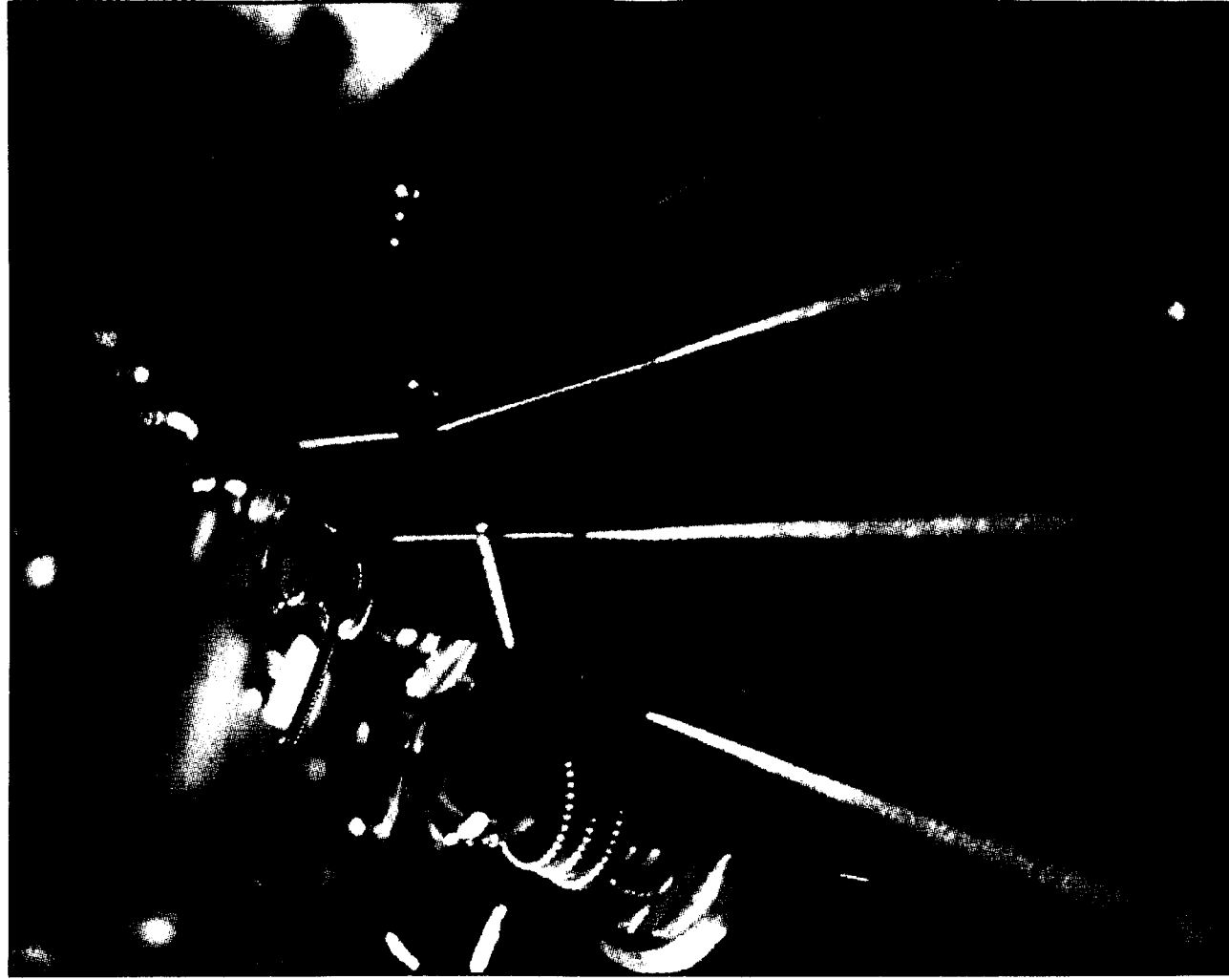
Originating in Stockholm, Sweden, the band creates a progressive metal sound that has yet to be challenged by any other band. Their rather extensive and lengthy tracks are intelligently composed and span the influences of several genres including folk and trance.

Another example, Amorphis, creates a power/progressive sound that stands rather legendary when compared to their "competitors" here on American soil. The tracks by Amorphis create a speed to power metal while maintaining audible vocals, in contrast to the scream-dominated American metal.

My reasons behind abandoning American metal are simple. For the most part, our lyricists attach themselves to two consistent classes of metal: party metal or anti-religious metal, both being strongly immature in musical resonance.

A lot of bands are in the American "metal" spotlight right now, such as Motley Crue, Hinder, and Godsmack. These three come to mind as the names I've heard over and over in recent years.

All of them expose what the majority of Americans apparently want out of their metal: something to get drunk to. Godsmack released the recent track, Whiskey Hangover, which reached No. 1 status on the Billboard



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rock charts last year. The whole song is driven by taking shots and how the credibility of the shot-taker shouldn't be questioned because of his continuous shot-taking.

It sounds brutally intelligent. doesn't it?

Also, I don't want to be accused of denouncing a band for one song produced, so I give you three more tracks whose titles speak for themselves: Love Hate Sex Pain, Bleeding Me, and I Fucking Hate You.

The idiocy of popular "metal"

doesn't stop there, but heightens with the addition of Lips of an Angel, a song about a guy who has sex with his ex while drunk who comments how his drunken stupor makes her beautiful again.

Lastly, Motley Crue focuses and

markets this dwindling killer of the genre with "Cruefest." This is a "music" festival that began in the summer of 2008, repeated in 2009 and is also in planning for this summer.

It consists of Motley Crue headlining, known most for their controversial member Tommy Lee, with several other bands of the party metal genre. In all honesty, it's a concert to celebrate anti-sobriety and perpetuate over-masculinity.

In near complete contrast, I return to European metal. Countries all across Europe, mainly Sweden and Finland, are shelling out metal band after metal band, and most that I've heard have more intelligence and resonance in their beginning forms than bands that have been assaulting our local airwaves.

Scar Symmetry (from Sweden) began in 2004 and has already produced four amazing albums (my favorite being *Pitch Black Progress*) and an up-and-coming side project that looks very promising called *Solution .45*.

Dark Tranquility (also from Sweden) released a great album in 2007 called *Fiction*, featuring Misery's Crown it. Their newest album, *We Are The Void*, has this insane track called *The Fatalist*, too.

I could go on, but my point is that while *Between the Buried and Me* and *Lamb of God* carry the dwindling torch of American metal, the vast majority is an exercise in stupidity.

If you're into harder music, check out some of the European metal I mentioned. I'm positive that it won't be time wasted.

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podcast takeover

Do you consider yourself an iPod kid? That's to say, you walk around campus to and from your classes with your headphones on? I definitely do.

As an alternative to listening to the same old music every single time you use your iPod, I urge you to try downloading a podcast or two from the iTunes store (or from any number of directory websites).

Analysts (of what I'm not sure) say that the future of music is in portable information (podcasting), narrated by Ricky Gervais' new show on HBO (which was originally a really good podcast, I recommend investigating it). Anywhere from a few

minutes to two and a half hours of information on any subject you can think of: news, bits of history, politics, video games, computers, and practically any niche you can think of can be found in podcasts.

For instance, if you want to listen to a pretty renowned hip-hop cast would mix their own and freestyle rap and play discussing how they look when developers of different textures across the globe. Listeners to think they are actually listening to a shape rap podcast, right? (The show was called *Raekwon's*.)

There's a podcast for just about anything you can think of.

If you want to credit your iPod, you can load episodes into the library of your iPod (≈20min).

If you want to listen to interviews, listen to *Fresh Air* on NPR (≈45min). If you want to listen to *Fresh Air* but not fall asleep, listen to *Jordan, Jesse Go!* from *MaximumFun.org* (≈90min).

For those who don't know where to begin, let me recommend *The Sound of Young America* from *MaximumFun.org* (varying time). Host Jesse Thorn interviews numerous figures from the West Coast comedy scene.

For those more technology-oriented, the *DiggNation* podcast from

Digg.com always has something interesting, though I can't say I watch it too often because it's a video podcast. I usually listen to my iPod around campus or while going to bed.

Another great all-around podcast that's available to almost any listener is *American Life* from NPR (≈30min). Producer Ira Glass and his staff members (as well as guest members) tell stories from all around the United States from Americans who are interesting.

For those who are interested in true stories told without the usual Hollywood twist, listen to *True Crime* from their

ongoing series in New York, LA and their tour shows across the country.

Listening to podcasts changed my iPod experience, and for that I'm grateful. It brings me new, fresh information every day, and it's a great way to learn something new. I often find myself listening to podcasts about things I've never heard of before. (It's a great podcast, I can think of that you have to pay for, but I just downloaded it from reputable websites for free.)

Listen to podcasts, especially from *MaximumFun.org*. You'll never be bored.

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