

**“...interested in the deconstruction of the given ‘norm’ of writing this kind of music...”**

Hails of Death to New Zealand, Jamie. Tell us about your musical growth, how has it been like to grow into Death metal and then grow and evolve within Death metal? You know, it's millions of other genres out there you could devour but somehow your way has led to a state of expression called Death metal, what perceptive urges brought you there and what has the music of Death brought to you as a reward for not following but for discovering and conquering its musical and spiritual territories?

Well, all of us first started listening to extreme metal in its various incarnations in high school, and at the time we were all playing in some form of metal bands, so it was inevitable that we'd end up playing the genre we were all most drawn too. I don't know, the relentless attack combined with fairly high technical abilities of a lot of the players pushed me towards the style, away from other aggressive genres - there just seems to be something more pure and 'music-focused' than a lot of metal/punk/hardcore, which has a tendency to be more about posturing and scene-politics. All of us have grown up appreciating fantastic players from other genres, so to see a style of music that shares a similar approach was fascinating.

(black/death, Paul and myself, guitars and drums respectively).

There has happened a change on the singer spot with the debut album. Can you, please, go for some details? What particular skills were you demanding from possible candidates?

Were you intentionally willing to break away from lower

laid vocal patterns and move towards a more high pitched vocal style?

Our last vocalist James Wallace developed a sinus infection that prevented him from doing vocals for an extended period, and we basically had to decide to go on without him as the album recording was looming. We needed someone that could match his formidable vocal talent, and we were already friends with Ben, who had always been an avid supporter of the band, so it was natural to ask him. We were definitely not aiming to break away from a lower style, but were more than willing to see how Ben would interpret our material, and it turned out that his higher register gave it a different angle of aggression that was very cool, so we went with it. In terms of demanding things from candidates, more than anything we needed someone who had impeccable vocal performance, someone who had played with bands as long as the rest of us, a great sense of an intense live performance, and perhaps most importantly, brought intense lyrical concepts and visions that



# ULCERATE

Playing this style of music and trying to do new things with it is extremely rewarding, all our playing has developed exponentially since we began, and we're always pushing ourselves to give a little bit extra and try things we can't necessarily do. After all, the only way to accomplish anything great is to attempt that which seems out of reach, so we keep pushing till we get there. And to me, that is my favourite kind of music/art, regardless of genre limitations.

Considering you are relatively young band, can you talk a little bit about the other members, their musical talent, experiences and how do they fortify Ulcerate's creative vision?

The other members of Ulcerate are the finest musicians I've ever played with in terms of passion, skill and creativity. We're all on the same page musically, and we all want to evolve Ulcerate further and further, I really don't see any limitations with what we can do with this band. We've all been doing bands for around 10 or so years now, so even though we're young, we're fairly experienced and know what to expect with each others playing. All of us have always been involved in other projects, most notably Graymalkin (guitarist Mike R's amazing now-defunct grind band), Asphyxiate (punishing dark death metal, bassist Paul handles guitars and vocals for these guys) and Abystic Ritual

It's always facile to walk paths well-known & explored, paths, that are to pass across to an end slightly. It appears comfortable and brings up desired effectivity easily many times in life yet how boring it all would become when pursuing same directions over and over again? Where would science stand then if there were no push to expand things and knowledge further, what would happen to art? Looking at mindless trends sparkling and fading, somewhere there might be bits of the answer. However man's always got opportunities not to follow but investigate, perceive challenge of trying things new originating in incredibly satisfying, creative momentum when something unique pours out of our minds, taking form under our hands. Such a gratifying force it is and makes the blood & sweat put into the unknown worthwhile, more than anything else. New Zealand's Ulcerate really seem to be aware of that and therefore the art of extreme Death metal they create is highly rewarding to them as well as to a listener who cares to really listen and explore.

Conducted with the drummer, Jamie Saint Merat. Thank you!

we shared. And Ben brings all, in abundance...

Let's move to your debut album Of Fracture and Failure. What was The coming of genocide demo intimidating, Of Fracture and Failure literally turned into 3D. The progress there is undeniable. Could you describe and bring more insight onto your evilution shift on this album in terms of how have you continue your path in the world of dissonance merged with dreadful melodic patterns while maintaining those dual arrangements and volatile rhythmic, which all make the music fierce, complex yet memorable so firmly after one gave it few repeated listens. It has to be an incredible amount of work behind such an effort as Of Fracture and Failure is! Especially when considering you are at the beginning of discovering & shaping your own musical identity. Well, the more painful it might all be sometimes, the more rewarding should be the outcome, shouldn't be?

Well, we set out with this material not really trying to write a specific style or anything, we just wanted to make an album and a listening experience that crushes the listener, not in a typical death metal sense, but a more suffocating, though-out

process. When Mike H. and I write, we're utilizing two guitars, bass, drums and vocal lines at all times, certainly not in a conventional harmonic sense, but careful orchestration and counterpoint between all instruments. We're very interested in the deconstruction of the given 'norm' of writing this kind of music, I think an apt metaphor would be 'swirling'... All our songs discard the verse chorus and repetition formulas and attack a purely linear approach. Of course, we're not the only band to do this by any means, but I think it's what a lot of people have picked up on this album as being, intensely complex and absorbing on first-listen. For me, regardless of whether a person enjoys the 'sound' of Ulcerate, I think they will definitely be bewildered at first attempt to try and understand us, you really do have to listen to an entire song to hear the full gamut of what we present, we never play our entire hand in the opening bars.

In terms of work in constructing these songs, yeah, they take a while to work out all the bits and pieces, a lot of the ideas come from jams, and we nit-pick over every single note choice and how it interacts with others (this is no exaggeration, often we will spend an entire writing session on 4 notes!). We're also very aware of mood and atmosphere, and while a lot of the Of Fracture stuff is very numbing and perhaps emotionless, it all serves a greater purpose. Of the reviews that we've had where people have said its just too over-the-top and soulless, I think perhaps they just haven't sat down with the album enough and listened to each track within its own context. Its an album, not merely a collection of songs, the album shifts through a lot of moods, and I think to judge it off 1 or 2 listens, or 1 or 2 songs is not serving it justice.

When firstly encountering Fracture of Failure I noticed that aside from the Death metal feeling you have very sensitively added some new "Relapse hard core" dissonance, some ambient stinking ethereality and so called post-metal influence bands like Jesu make. That frightened me a little yet it's incorporated amazingly but I just hope you won't be following that musical direction even more in the future as it could be a few steps from losing the true Death metal integrity, the obscure feeling of death and somberness. Where do you want to aim your focus as far as band's progression forward goes?

What are the lands to conquer and what are the powers you want to protect & keep on?

Well, I understand your concern for pure metal! We're not about to compromise what we've worked this hard to achieve, I think we all have an image in mind of how death metal should sound, and that is pitch black at all times - there can be movements within this, but I'm sick to death of hearing 'quirkiness' in this genre, or the failed incorporation of it at least. We definitely haven't consciously added a 'Relapse' sound, its just what we felt the composition needed, I like to try and think when we're writing, we don't see genres, or rules, we just see notes on paper to convey a feeling. I think a lot of that Relapse-ness might be with some of the drumming, more-so than note choice, but I'm of a firm believer that drums are drums, and I'm not afraid to not blast 24/7 if I think an area suits it, you know? Bands progression? I think we've hit a certain mark with our playing and song-writing that has at least some sort of unique identity, so we're pushing that forwards.

Trying to make things more 'Ulcerate' if you get the idea...

This leads me to a question how hard or even limiting is to create within the framework of Death metal for you?

Certainly you have to filtrate ideas which you come with and not just to use everything that comes your way. How much strict

you are, do you actually censor yourselves a lot in the band

and is there big amount of ideas dismissed when putting the sonic chaos into order?

We're extremely picky and critical of the material we write. We record every section we come up with firstly as guitars only with rough percussive phrasings to follow, then in the rehearsal room we craft the drum patterns and try out new versions and timings and nuances that will enhance the section. This all gets laid to tape as we wrap up rehearsals. We listen, review and possibly alter what we've laid down over the next few days, then record the section again at the next practise until we feel that its hitting the mark so to speak. We're not a band that will ever write and album in a month, we're far too critical and believe that time and hindsight are vital components in writing music.

When looking at your music from an influential point of view, echoes and inspiration by bands like old Immolation, Gorguts, Hate Eternal are predominant but also hints of Neurosis & Isis are something I believe we can agree on. Maybe you can add some real influential band I missed out, but anyway, could you please speak about every above-mentioned band and pick up the most influential spot they had on you and basically on extreme music in your eyes?

For sure, every one of those bands are loved by all of us, and I think their influence is clear, not in a derivative sense, but that you can hear we've drawn at least some inspiration from them... We all enjoy listening to a lot of atmospheric stuff.

**Absolution is all that remains**  
**Swallow the truth and chase it with blame**



Let our blood mix with the soil  
 The earth soaked in us all  
**OUR SORROW and OUR PARDONS**  
 Now, my good friend, we are even

**This is our end**  
**FORGET**  
 Defaeco

Blut Aus Nord, Bohren und der Club of Gore are a couple of names that spring to mind. Again, not in a 'we borrow a and b from such and such band' way, just the sheer fact that these kind of groups are creating music which I would call intrusive, you know they take a few listens until the uneasiness of their sound subsides a little and you can really feel the atmosphere. Also, we definitely can't ignore bands such as Cryptopsy, Suffocation, Angelcorpse, Krisiun for their total ferocity and innovative power, something which we also try to pride ourselves on ;) In relation to the bands you've mentioned:

Immolation - Untouchable. Perfectly executed death metal. A band like Immolation for me sits at the core of what this genre is about - brooding, creepy, emotive and of course truly brutal. The word 'brutal' is beyond over-used in this genre, but I truly think that Immolation actually deserve that as an adjective. They are crucial song and album writers, not one bad song, not one bad riff! Every note choice is total Immolation, combined with perfect percussion (especially Here In After to Unholy Cult era) and powerful vocals and themes, in this genre possibly the only band to not sound like any other whatsoever...

Gorguts - As with Immolation, these guys were unbelievably cool. I would also call Gorguts intrusive as fuck - almost a horrible listen on first take (especially Obscura) - then slowly it all into place haha. Compositionally, tonally, harmonically and rhythmically 10 steps beyond most other bands, I still haven't heard an album eclipse their later albums in terms of musical uniqueness.

Hate Eternal - Love them or hate them, these guys are the epitome of to-the-point death metal. Every riff is gold, and every song is unrelenting. Rutans riffing style is impressive, for me this band is all about the 'riff'. And they did of course feature some very very talented drummers, Roddy/Yeung/Killerich putting in truly death metal performances. Neurosis - Undeniably essential band in the heavy music climate. Possibly the 'heaviest' band of all time haha. The term 'crushing' springs to mind, and their juxtaposition with some amazingly beautiful passages is inspiring. Our string section think the sun shines out of these dudes asses. It probably does.

Isis - Genre defying and defining act. These guys cover all extremes seamlessly, extreme anger, sorrow, hope, tranquility, its all here. Possibly the best band I've ever seen live. Their command over dynamics is fucking flawless.

**One thing are the influences and the second thing is the way one builds on these grounds and evolves into a more unique form.** In Ulcerate's case, the attitude to composition seems really as if you take the influential parts, dissect them into pieces, devour and put them onto darkness back in an unusual shape, always trying to reinvent & push the envelope further?! Is this reasoning any close to reality?

Yeah I mean for sure, this happens with anyone whose writing music. We never sit down and say, 'we've got to have an Immolation bit here', that would be total plagiarism. Influences if treated correctly are interpretations of what your hearing in your environment, they're gonna come out in your music no matter what. No-one is un-influenced when writing, its all subconscious. We're just writing tunes at the end of the day, writing stuff that we think we'd like to hear, and most importantly what feels right to play.

Music, in my opinion, remains ageless due to its feeling and nature. Since the first time I've heard Ulcerate, I was assured you all obviously do know it's not only about math-driven riffing and brainless pummelling even though you would top many of these trying-hard, fly-by-night bands in this aspect easily with enviable style. What does "to create" means to you in general as well as to a personality expressing your feelings through music behind the drum kit? Is it hard to try & learn how to understand & perceive music without preconception in order to be able to transform the thoughts, part of yourself, into your own original audible creations?

I think any music that has the intention of just out 'tech-ing' or outplaying other bands in terms of technique/speed/heaviness is ridiculous, and this genre is suffering because of it. It's not a competition! Who cares that your feet can play 246bpm or how fast you can trem pick.

For me, playing drums in this style is all about texture and rhythm, this is not a genre where a lot of feel and subtlety is involved unfortunately, but I think there's a huge potential for some seriously innovative stuff to come out of this style. For me, to limit myself to 2 or 3 blast pat-time back beat with rolling 16ths every time I write for drums, I isn't very musical, so I attack it as a melodic instrument, either supplementing the other melodic instruments, or playing-off of rather than solely providing a back beat for the song.

I've been playing for 10 years now, so drums are a part of me, everything I think of I think in terms of beats and phrases, so 'to create' is more like 'to play' - its just doing what I do hehe.

Let's speak about the cover. Whose creative

forces resulted into the cover and where did the original idea come from? It's a strange collage of heartless human with head down morphing into octopus which could be recognized easily. What should the artwork portrait and what other elements are used in it besides those two aforementioned? Are there any intended connections between the artwork and the album title?

I began drafting ideas for the album art once we'd decided on the 'Of Fracture and Failure' title. This piece is a direct interpretation of that, not necessarily figurative or literal, just my interpretation of Ben's lyrics and what we were trying to convey thematically. The idea that resonates throughout the album is the inevitable failure of mankind at it's own hand, the extinction of our kind and the birth of the next dominating species, hence the portrayal of a dying human husk evolving or birthing a new being.

Coming onto the lyrical content of Of Fracture And Failure. First off it would be interesting to know how did you come up with the title of the album and the meaning it embodies for you.

Kinda explained that with previous question... The album's lyrics form a sort of conceptual basis in the sense that they're loosely chronological, the opening of the album is documenting man's foibles and ignorance, leading through to tracks such as Failure (self explanatory), The Coming of Genocide (man killing his own kind) and Defaeco, which resolves the album and lyrically documents our end...

Anyway, reading through all your lyrics, I would say there are two general subjects pouring through the whole album.



It's about weaknesses of man and his spirit that leads to subsequent failures of which the greatest are religions. Also there's expressed the need to wash away these things from one's mind I'd say. Myself I think some kind of revolution of the mind and soul is needed, but I've lost my teenage naivety long ago and really doubt any cleansing will start massively any time soon in today's world of consumption and commercial hypocrisy but it's good to start from oneself for sure. What are your thoughts on that? And what are your thoughts about lyrics placed on the album - which of the messages brought by the lyrics are the most meaningful for you and do you even have any text on the album which you prefer prior to others?

Yeah, you've more or less understood what we're going for which is great! The angle we were taking more-so was that of objective observer, rather than saying we need to 'cleansed' or eradicate certain facets of humanity, we're looking at the human condition from an objective angle, and noting that such events take place and are somewhat inevitable when human nature plays a role.

The lyrics on this album are nothing short of impeccable to be honest. I love Ben's penmanship, always have. It was the first thing we looked for when finding a new vocalist, great ideas and themes that we could all endorse. I don't really have a preference over the concepts or lyrics, but I'll leave you with an example of a killer set of prose that's fairly indicative of his style:

**“Loathing saturates, sour and foul  
Only to be eclipsed by the sorrow  
To cut away those close and near  
Pull back the hammer and let it swing  
Let it swing”**

What is the religious situation in New Zealand like? How's the society there like in your eyes? Are the inhabitants there fond of religions a lot? On the other hand how much power has religion in itself there in order to practice their fiendish filth? Does any church attending on Sundays or whatever massive acts of virtue happen on regular basis?

New Zealand as a nation prides itself on its secularism, which is pretty awesome in terms of unbiased living. We have like any country have a minority that indulge in religious activity for sure, Sunday church-goers are certainly in abundance. But their 'say' over here is fairly limited which is awesome. Our censorship for the most part here is very sensible and liberal, we are pretty luck in that respect.

There's a strong community of original New Zealand's inhabitants called Maori. Can you tell me more about them, they seemed to have quite similar fate as Indians in America although not just so tragic. From what I've read, Maori community survived the usual missionaries and even though many of them are converted Catholics, their traditions and stuff survived ages. Tell us how it is like to live with Maori “under one flag”.

Is their culture inspiration to Ulcerate in any way?

The Maori here are fully immersed as with any other ethnicity here. I would liken their situation to African Americans more-so than Native Americans, not in a white persecution/slavery sense, but more in the greater widespread flourishing of their culture. In terms of Ulcerate, the answer would simply be 'no'.

Can you speak about your personal view on belief and the philosophical aspect of how you threat and explain your own being?

From the small amount of reading / viewing / classes I've done, I align myself with quantum physics more than anything, not that I have a fully realised grasp on the concepts, but at a very base level it makes a lot of sense!

Let's go away from all this spiritual/religious talk. How about sports? Do you practice or at least follow any? New Zealand is well known for rugby's popularity there, do you share the passion for this game?

Personally no, drumming is all the exercise I need...

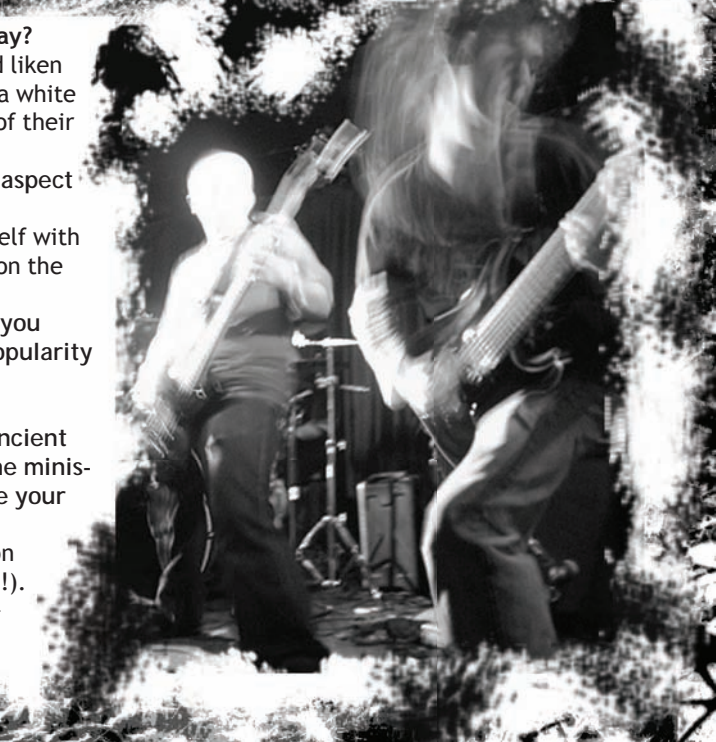
Overall, how it is like to live in a land of diverse and unique nature, of ancient Alps on one side and boiling volcanos on the other, in a land where prime minister is a woman and society is the least corrupted in the world? How were your ancestors brought to New Zealand by the way?

Its an awesome country man to be honest. The only downside is our isolation on a global scale, which is the common gripe of NZ inhabitants (us included!).

The native scenery and national pride in our ecology is very cool. My ancestors are French and Swedish, who I assume came here in the late 19th century, probably very early in NZ's colonial history.



**“I want to hear fresh ideas, I want to hear a level of brooding and sinister element...”**



# OF FRACTURE

Very superficial idea could be that although living in welfare the music you churn out possess savage & dissonant darkness which is quite contradictory in fact. Is there any explanation to this?

To some darkness symbolizes negativity and stuff like that, but in fact who was the one to settle the meanings of darkness and light and the way it should felt like? And also, who said there's light to save us onto eternity and dark to damn us and deny our divinity. Do you know what I mean? It's horrifying, those explanation and doctrines set up to present someone's idea making it into a state of generally adopted by a mass. Why then the listeners of Death metal cult don't go and just kill people as christians wasn't afraid to do in order just to spread their human belief of love? You know this is just so twisted, inverted, whatever.

Oh exactly dude, I don't think you have to have lived a tortured life to understand or appreciate a little darkness. A well balanced diet of light and dark is healthier than consistent repressing of the dark is it not? Yin and yang! We've all got broad palettes of musical and artistic tastes... I think for anyway to say that listening to extremely aggressive, violent music is 'wrong' or 'bad' or to judge the music as being 'noise' is ignorant and disrespectful to all parties involved.

As for your last point, any belief system or institution (read: cult) which allows its followers and practitioners to forgive murder, rape, paedophilia is indeed an inverted and non-instinctual way of thinking.

On a softer note. Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamatea-pokaiwhenuakitanatahu. Are the kids in New Zealand forced to spell and remember this name straight from the head? Have you ever been there? Has this mountain got any special position in New Zealand's culture except it stands in the Guinness book for the longest name of a mountain or longest word in general? What 3 things would you recommend me not to omit when the winds would take me to New Zealand?

No idea dude! I've never learnt it or even know where it is haha. 3 things not to omit? Glaciers at the bottom of the South Island, the Desert Road/Mount Ruapehu (desolate as fuck!) and Ngaruawahia haha...

As a casual listener, how would you say your musical tastes evolved since the time you have started listening to music? In general what it takes to a band to gain your attraction, so that you will listen to its music repeatedly?

My tastes have broadened extensively, stepping outside of extreme metal and exploring what else there is. Listening more and more to emotive music of any kind, anything that makes you feel something.

I think there's no one factor that a band can have to gain my attention, the majority of music that is released on labels is for the most part well-produced, well-played (or at least well edited) yet there's very little that really grabs me, it comes down to X-factor and how you identify with certain elements of the sound. For me, I love bands with really progressive talented drummers, but this doesn't necessarily mean the band writes amazing songs, which in the long-run allows for very little repeat-listening, which is crucial! In metal I want to hear fresh ideas, I want to hear a level

of brooding and sinister element, doesn't mean you can't be melodic, fast, slow, heavy, soft, so long as there is an atmosphere and a mood that is considered and well orchestrated, it will generally catch my ear at least for a song or 2.

On the other hand what are you missing in music these days? What trends or whatever are not to your liking? You can broaden it for art in general.

With metal being thrust into the limelight in the last few years in a commercial sense, we're starting to see a lot of 'extreme' bands that are more about the 'mosh groove' than actual substance, which sucks ass. A lot of the bigger labels latest signing are all this quasi-death metal crossed with hardcore, recycled riffs, Pro-Tools edited recordings and the obligatory 'pig squeal' vocals. It'll die out like every other trend, but at the moment its pretty unbearable, not so much the style, but the abundance of bands that are doing commercially well and sounding like every other band, no originality. The whole 'blast beats are cool' and 'sweep picking makes riffs' trend amongst these pseudo extreme bands is pretty fickle, the amount of metalcore/deathcore bands that are putting these elements in to sound 'crazy' is completely fucked and immature.

**We go to the semi-finals now. How important for you as a band is the complete artistic impression you want the band to leave on listener and a potential fan in fact? I mean, quality music is the most valuable thing but still it's just a one thing to appeal to listener, the way the music is packaged is another important thing as well as the way you present Ulcerate on the net and communicate with the public etc... And I think you do everything top-notch. It has to be many work and sacrifices but fun at times too and hopefully it pays off in the end!?**

100% important. We try to have as much control over every facet of what we're producing, and for the most part, all the artistic outputs are covered. So yeah, hard work, but worth it, and infinitely satisfying when people such as yourself recognise the hard work...

Thanks and hails to you, Jamie, for the opinions, thoughts put into this stab of interview. Let strong will, great experiences, perpetual creativity be with Ulcerate in good and bad, in the dark - in the light! Keep up your musical entity growing and the spirituality of Death metal burning stronger!

Cheers Jan for the in-depth questions, and for the support! We appreciate your efforts and anyone else who gives the time to check out our stuff...

Jamie | Ulcerate

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# AND FAILURE