



The Encyclopedia of Dutch Black Metal



Introduction

Hunting for the ultimate provocation, metal fans turn to Satanism. Black metal is the name of the genre that links extreme music with this morbid conception of life. Sometimes this gets out of hand. Groups living on the verge of madness, and a few of them even passing the thin line.

These are the introductory words of yet another cliché ridden newspaper article about black metal and its related acts of Satanic terrorism, published at the commercial peek of the first new wave of black metal that started in the early 1990s. It is one out of many similar mainstream publications from that time, that focus mainly on the dangers and 'horrors' linked with the genre's ideologies, forgetting or ignoring most musical aspects that nowadays codefine the style – aspects both abhorred and embraced by those with a deeper involvement in the black metal scene. Undeniably there is widely glorified hate, intolerance, violence, terrorism, arson, murder, and Satanism linked with the core of this musical subgenre². There are of course much more ideas to be found, and it has become flexible and amorphous. But because these aspects are probably not shocking enough for the outside world, only a minority of people ever learn about them through regular media. I hope to fill in some of the blanks.

I am certain that this book is bought and read mostly by individuals that are already involved in the 'black metal scene' one way or another. Still, I have to start off with a short definition of this once obscure subgenre of heavy metal music, for those new to the term. Defining black metal was the first obstacle I conquered for this book, since the concept 'black metal' is as vague and multi-interpretable as that of 'art' for instance. What I mean is, that anyone can argue whether an object (in this case a band or its music) belongs to the black metal subgenre or not – whether a certain item is 'art' or not, to continue with the metaphor. To avoid endless pondering on an answer to this question, I based my decision to feature a band in this encyclopedia on a very simple method: look at black metal in its broadest sense, avoid any personal judgment, and then collect bands, sure to be part of black metal – they said so in interviews, on promotional flyers, websites, or confirmed this themselves personally. Then add new bands and side-projects that are recommended by these contacts, or that are suggested by friends and individuals with a wide knowledge of the whole metal scene in general. That worked like a charm!³

In order to get a good view on the differences between bands, I worked on a questionnaire, that touched various parts of the essences of the bands, musicians, and black metal in general. For those with interview experience a lot of questions walked paths gone many times before. I had people give elaborate information on the discographical and biographical history of their band(s), and asked for comments about roots, inspiration, opinions on various ideologies and religions, and of course their relations with and views on the Dutch and global black metal scene. I then compiled the huge heap of papers and digital documents into readable informative material, avoiding the obvious uninspired question-and-answer routine.⁴

In the eyes of many, and certainly those part of the more fanatical underground movement, black metal is still synonymous with Satanism and Satan worship. Ever since the English band Venom defined its Satanic heavy metal music as 'black metal' by releasing an album with this title in 1982, the Satanic has been black metal's most influential element.⁵ This is reflected directly in the term black metal, which is nothing less than the union of 'black magic' and 'heavy metal' – an inseparable obscure brother of ordinary heavy metal. This

¹ *Rotterdams dagblad*, published January 13, 1996, translated from Dutch to English.

² Nargaroth's *Black Metal ist Krieg* ('black metal is war') is a perfect example of the less Satanic, modern definition of the genre. The Dutch Black Metal Mafia collective has even adopted the slogan "black metal is intolerance" as its misanthropic outlook on the genre, but as an organisation still supporting the early Satanic definition.

³ I have chosen to exclude most of the Satanic death metal genre. A lot of death metal bands flirt with Satanism and the occult, but are in every other way typically death metal. Bands I have considered to include are Abode Of The Blessed, Excavation, Lier In Wait, Sinister, Thanatos, and Zi Xul – but I reckon they are only the tip of an iceberg.

⁴ Bands that refused to cooperate (not preferred, but always an option) were not left out. They are given space, with information based on secondary sources, like magazines and flyers. I used the same approach for bands that became untraceable over the years, but had to be included in this book. I used the following sources from the past and present: *Aardschok*, *Ab Erebo*, *Black art*, *Black Ritual Art*, *Charon's Chronicles*, *Charontaphos*, *Daemonium Aeternus*, *Dutch Black Metal*, *Encyclopaedia Metalum*, *Fear Of Life*, *Hammer Of Damnation*, *Hell Razor*, *Humble Return Of Christ And Horny Mohammed*, *Imhotep*, *Isten*, *Lords Of Chaos*, *Lucifer Rising*, *Martelgang*, *Morgue*, *Morticia Numskull*, *MySpace*, *Necrology*, *Niflheim*, *Rockdetector*, *Satan's Perversion*, *Stormblast*, *Terrorizer*, *Thrashing Rage*, *Tranquil Chaos*, *Vampire*, *Violent Moshground*, and probably more I have forgotten.

⁵ Of course Satanic and occult music goes further back than Venom, as shown in the book *Lords Of Chaos*. In Holland, for example, the Dutch artist Boudewijn de Groot released the *Nacht en ontij* lp in 1968, which featured the 25 minutes long track *Heksen-sabbath* – a psychedelic occult 'radio play' about witches, demons, and Luciferian worship – and another track inspired by Greek mythology.

concept of Satanic music slowly grew into an institution that survives to this day, although most of its views are drastically different from those of the 1980s. Back then, bands were able to have completely different musical approaches, and still be part of the same phenomenon – the Satanic heavy metal of Mercyful Fate was as black as Venom's sleazy rock or Decide's blasphemous death metal. Unlike regular non-Satanic death metal, which was (and still is) almost purely a subgenre defined by its musical characteristics⁶, black metal remained a fairly open-minded musical concept.

This changed radically when in the early 1990s black metal bands broke through the massive worldwide death metal hype, after having been underground for years. Bands like Samael, Mayhem, Darkthrone, Beherit, Blasphemy, and Impaled Nazarene set new standards that irreversibly narrowed the black metal genre and secured its place inside the metal world. Black metal remained heavily Satanic, but the steadily growing group of 'neo-black metal' bands – as they are sometimes referred to – introduced vague self-set rules by which bands could be included or excluded from the (inter)national black metal scene. Concepts like *true* and *untrue* were possibly the most frequently mentioned words in interviews of that time (without ever being universally defined, by the way), which undoubtedly made them the most disliked and mocked clichés of the black metal niche.⁷

Over the years, the Satanic element became less and less important, and black metal began to deteriorate from a religion-based ideological subgenre into a musically defined genre, with typical vocal and productional elements. Black metal was underproduced, open chorded, harsh, shrill, cold, and built around recognisable visual elements like corpse-painted faces (black and white make-up), black clothing, bullet belts and nails, fire breathing, medieval weaponry, and packed in cheaply looking black and white lay-outs.⁸ People in the black metal scene were no longer Satanic by definition, but began preaching about paganism, nature, vampirism, cultural heritage, or medieval times,⁹ and more often started leaning heavily on the visual side only. The original ritual value of its visual side was thereby often devalued to simple entertainment or unintended self-ridicule, and black metal became an easy target to outside mockery.¹⁰

Great Britain's black metal money machine Cradle Of Filth, which gained enormous popularity after its 1996 release *Dusk... And Her Embrace*, irrevocably introduced the genre to the larger heavy metal masses (and even to the outside world). Occult pentagrams and inverted crosses transformed into hollow tools to shock, and the early key element of Satanism was forced into the background. Many of the newest generation black metal musicians began to create black metal based solely on its musical and visual aspects. Bands started writing about fantastic, social, political, and anti-religious issues (even including anti-Satanism), and as a final break with the Satanic, the genre spawned a long list of self-defined musical subgenres – 'war metal' (glorifying death, war, and annihilation), 'hate metal' (expressing hate against either humanity or something else), 'viking metal' (based on Scandinavian mythology and history), 'pagan metal' (preaching heathen faiths), 'nazi metal' (glorifying Aryan heritage, Nazism, and fascism), and even 'unblack metal' (Christian metal, sounding like the Satanic black metal it rebels against).¹¹

Things would never be the same again.

By now it is crystal clear to everyone involved, that black metal is a worldwide phenomenon of enormous size, depth, and width, though most likely with its highest peak in the dawn of the second millennium – and it has been fluctuating ever since. The majority of bands will undoubtedly remain undiscovered by most of the genre's fellow bands and fans, and a book will only change so much.

My main reason for writing this book in the first place (starting on 4 August 1999, and releasing a first edition 23 January 2004), was because I got tired of people looking in the direction major record companies told them to. Those new to the genre cannot see what is going on underneath the mainstream's surface.

⁶ There are exceptions to this interpretation. Euronymous of Mayhem claimed that real death metal bands worshipped death and war, not unlike a lot of black metal bands of today. "If a band cultivates and worship death than it's death metal, no matter what kind of music they play. And 'cultivating' death doesn't mean to think it's funny or being into gore, but I mean being able to kill just because you hate life." (Quoted from Mayhem's *Live In Leipzig* cd 1994, Avantgarde Music). However, it is important to keep in mind that Euronymous was an anchorhead of the black metal movement and not of the (far less dogmatic) death metal scene of its days.

⁷ The term 'true' sporadically kept turning up in the scene. However, around 2005 some Norwegian bands tried to revive the old Norwegian spirit by branding their releases with the "TNBM" (True Norwegian Black Metal) logo; see the more recent releases of Urgehal, Taake, and Secht. On the other hand, the iconic Norwegian black metal band Darkthrone released an album with a song called *Canadian Metal* (2007), seemingly distancing itself from this trend they once created themselves by releasing *Norsk Arisk* and *True Norwegian Black Metal* on their album *Transilvanian Hunger* (1994).

⁸ Actually, a lot of these visual aspects had been present in metal all along. Early bands like Kiss, King Diamond, Destruction, Sodom, Slayer, and Sarcófago had already shown the value of these visual aids in combination with extreme metal music. It was not until the emergence of 'neo-black metal' that they became a necessary evil.

⁹ Many of these elements are still seen as alien to black metal by some people, and they often see non-Satanic bands not as black metal bands at all, or at least have strong ambiguous feelings when it comes to categorising. For the sake of this book I will refrain from giving a detailed personal view.

¹⁰ Comparisons between corpse-painted black metal bands and penguins, panda's, and even easter eggs are only one manifestation. More subtle approaches are, for instance, appearances of bands parodying the black metal genre in some or all of its aspects – in this book you can find for instance: Death Kristjan, Fuckez-Vous, Lord Barbapappa, and Zwavel. Although people might be offended by these parodies, it is not impossible to use humor in black metal, since humor can be a wealthy source of evil. Some examples of real black metal bands in my book that use humour in this way are Botulistum, Christfighter, and Lanz.

¹¹ This also led to a wide variety of exotic names bands created themselves to classify their own music, like 'Luciferian avantgarde dark metal' (Omnihierophantom), 'vocal hate' (Aporator), 'veenmetaal' (Botulistum), 'nihilistische ontvolkingsmetal' (D.R.E.P.), to name but a few of the Dutch inventions.

They are fed with the commercially marketable, which are often picked up in Scandinavia because of its notorious flammable past, or are controversial or shocking to the average John Doe on the street.¹² A lot of people forget that every country has its underground, including the Netherlands. Dutch bands, how good or bad they may be, deserve (inter)national attention for their successful or failed attempts to be a significant part of the black metal phenomenon, or for the fact that they once were part of it. Only very little is known about the Dutch scene on either side of its borders, so I take the opportunity to introduce as many of my country's black metal and black metal-related bands to you, readers of this book. And it is up to you to judge, who's on your side. Perhaps I am able to expose some gems that have been hiding beneath the surface.

I give each band and project its own paragraph in ascending alphabetical order¹³, spotlighting various aspects. Although I have continually adjusted the information while writing, it is simply impossible to have everything kept up to date and have every paragraph checked and rechecked by the bands. Every section concludes with a (hopefully) complete discography. The lack of addresses for electronic mail, websites, and regular mail has two practical reasons. 1: E-mail and internet are in constant turmoil, and it is useless to include electronic addresses, when there is a great chance they change only months later. The same goes for regular addresses. You can imagine that it is impossible to update a published book. Perhaps more decisive is reason number 2: I feel the privacy of the bands is more important than the needs of their fans (or enemies). Keep in mind that none of the bands would be glad to see you turn up at their doorstep personally!

I realise this encyclopedia is perhaps not as illustrative as the excellently marketable black metal study *Lords Of Chaos, The Bloody Rise Of The Satanic Metal Underground* by Moynihan and Söderlind (Feral House, 1998). I believe that's unavoidable, since my work is not intertwined research into ideology and history of 'Netherblack', but is a collection of largely extended biographical articles; an encyclopedia in every sense of the word. Nevertheless, it is of importance to the international scene, because of the continuing narrow focus on Scandinavia and its prominent bands, as the epicentre of black metal development.

Ever since I realised the first pressing of my encyclopedia, people have been asking me about my own views on the whole black metal phenomenon. Even though I have relatively clear opinions on black metal, I am against expressing them in this book, first because of the objectivity of this undertaking and therefore my objectivity as its writer/researcher, and second because opinions can be fine-tuned or altered over time. Any view given now can become irrelevant in the future, when a radical influential aspect has unveiled itself or a new and accepted influence has challenged, and perhaps changed the scene.¹⁴ In this light I do confess to you that several paragraphs in this book contain ideas that collide with my own (some I even consider betrayal, I admit). As stated, I have chosen to include these ideas in a non-condescending way, so everyone can form a personal opinion about a band's ideas and remarks.

I would like to thank all people in any way connected to the printing, structure, and/or contents of this book (being it the first edition or a later one) and its website, or simply by supporting it during its slow creation... I will no longer take much of your time with this introduction, because it is almost time to introduce the bands. They are still the most important elements of this book...

Last but not least, I ask all featured Dutch black metal (related) bands from the past, present, and future to keep me informed on all their developments, if willing. Bands that have not been included in this book, because of ignorance on my behalf or otherwise, are welcome to write me about their activities. Send me your music (preferably originals), a high resolution band logo, elaborate biography, elaborate discography, perhaps a photograph, and anything else that can be missed. In that case, there is a very good chance to be featured in yet another next edition! I am always interested to learn more about the development of the Dutch scene... You are also welcome to give comments and suggestions. But keep in mind: all threats will be ignored, and names and addresses of those that appear in this book will not be given away for any reason!

Check out the website on: www.nlbme.nl

Vincent Meelhuysen,
revision of August 2009.

¹² The Cradle Of Filth clothesline, and especially the 'Jesus is a cunt' shirts helped this band to become what it is today: a mainstream money magnet for teenage rebels. Dimmu Borgir took a similar (less succesful) approach with the immature 'Cunthunters of the night' shirt. However, their musical qualities have now surpassed Cradle Of Filth, and Dimmu Borgir reaches a similar broad audience.

¹³ The sizes of the paragraphs vary drastically. This results in the strange phenomenon of little known bands filling more space than better known ones. Keep in mind that this length is not an indication of a band's musical quality, popularity, or my personal affinity with them. They were probably just better skilled or motivated in answering elaborately when asked.

¹⁴ However, I have not done the same with the people I interviewed. Because of development and evolution of the scene and themselves, they might feel unsatisfied with answers they once gave me. Because I found it undoable to keep track of all the bands and their ever changing opinions all the time, and because I never altered the opinions once expressed, I am not apologising for their disappointment. Hopefully this has taught them to be more careful answering interviews, or at least made them aware of it. On the other hand, where is the fun in reading only diplomatic politically-correct answers?