**Chapter one**

Ville talks about the early days and describes his band mates.

The cold Finnish winter does have it’s advantages. One of them is that on November 22 1976 a little boy saw the light, or better, the dark world, and drank in the melancholy along with mother’s milk. In the nasty early winter of 1996 he was responsible for a beam of light crossing the musical landscape, starting to drum an imaginary beat on his dinner plate…to be continued…

Ville grew up with his younger brother Jesse in a sheltered environment, protected by dad Kari and mom Anita. They lived in a three room apartment in a suburb of Helsinki, Oulunkylä. Little Ville was already very different from the other kids.

He told this funny story, about taking a bath with his dad at the age of 2 or 3.
Dad used to take a glass of whiskey with him, and Ville asked if he could taste it. His parents expected him not to like it, and be traumatized for many years, so they let him taste it, and Ville liked it, and asked for more….
At this point a remark: In the tradition of many musicians, Ville isn’t always telling the truth in interviews, and he admits that. You have to guess and gamble to filter truth from his vivid imagination. But in this business it works that way, and the enigmatic stories told by Ville, with a serious face or a charming giggle, are what makes him so appealing.

Another story is about the dog, Sami. Ville had said that he learned to walk because of the dog, and the dog was very important to him. When the dog died, he developed allergies and asthma. In another interview this happens:
Interviewer: I read your story about the dog, you were so sad…

Ville: Why? It was just a dog!

I: Oh come on, just a dog!

V: Right! When I was a kid, he was important to me, but dogs do die, sooner or later..

The sadness seems to be gone, but the asthma remained.

Is it psychosomatic?

I don’t know. A year after the dog died, I got asthma. Before that, nothing was wrong with me. Since that time I can’t be near animals. When I was 17 I moved out because my parents had a new dog. After a severe asthma attack I had to be hospitalized for about 2 weeks. Not just because of the dog.

And what about creatures without hair? Reptiles?

I heard you can be allergic to reptiles too. Once I had a turtle, and someday I would like to have one again.

But there’s no time for that now.

Music is his elixir of life, he’s a fanatic, started at a very young age.
Remember the story of Ville playing bongo’s at a family party, when he was like 2 years old.

The parents, huge fans of Finnish traditional music liked this very much.
Round the time Jesse was born, it became clear Ville had some hyperactive issues. A little, not that bad, said Ville with his hat on, sitting with me at the table. The waiter arrives and he orders in fluid German a white beer with ice.

Did you have medication for that? No, just my asthma medication. I’ve read a book about Curt Cobain, and it says that Kurt and Courtney were hyperactive when they were kids, and used Ritalin.

Ritalin is a drug, and bullshit!!! I think they were hyperactive because they used too much speed. I don’t believe they started drugs because of the Ritalin, you can’t believe everything you read. Like the story that Kurt had such severe stomach pains he had to use heroin…BS

When you’re in pain, you go and see a doctor, who can help you. Of course Ville is right but the point is when people who have used Ritalin grow up, the chance of becoming a drug addict increases. This is not a favorite subject for Ville, but he keeps paying attention.

It’s always a possibility, but I’ve seen people become drug addicts without using Ritalin. Of course I’m not a scientist, but people say, the better your childhood and the more money you have, the sooner you’ll use drugs. But when you had a shitty childhood, and everything went wrong, you can abuse drugs also.

Everybody comes to a certain point in their life where they experiment with alcohol and drugs. I know a few people who stayed away from that, but they are mentally ill….

It’s also a cultural matter, we can blame Christianity for beer! Monks started to brew that..

Finland is a very alcoholic country. You have to drink to keep yourself warm, because it’s a country where winters last long, and it’s dark and gloomy. But Russia is even worse. I don’t think drugs have anything to do with that. I think in Germany there are more people doing coke than in Scandinavia.

And the entire world smokes pot. I used to do that, but it doesn’t work for me. I always fall asleep, I hardly use it nowadays.

I don’t like coke or ecstasy, and I never tried speed or heroin.

Valo was in 4th grade when he started his first band, B.L.O.O.D. The dots are there because it looked good….

After that there were bands with great names, like Elovena Boys, when he was 9 or 10 years old, with Ville on drums, and Linde playing guitar.

In 1991 there was His Infernal Majesty for the first time, with Mige on bass and Ville playing the guitar parts on his bass.

You can’t miss that Mige and Linde are very important to our Finnish Love-Metaller…

Ville does most of the promotion, being the front man, he’s the only one the media wants.

So, I’m asking him to describe the rest of the band members.

I have to describe them??? Ville asks, semi surprised…

O.k. Let’s see…There is Mige, our bass player. He’s the old wise man of the band, he keeps the mood light. He can be very philosophical, and, when necessary he can make the smart decisions. But he’s also the joker, on tour he knows how to make us laugh. We went to school together, we've known each other since we were 9 or 10.

Isn’t it funny to know each other for such a long time, do you know everything about them?

On the contrary, I think it’s a good thing, it has to be like this. Usually in bands you have these ego-battles, because everybody wants to be a star, for us it’s perfect being that close, especially when there are major problems, he’s a big help.

It doesn’t interfere with private matters, according to Ville, there’s enough private space. You know, you can’t know somebody totally, just bits and pieces.

Linde…Linde is a very quiet person. I've known him since I was 14 years old. But I don’t really know him, because he doesn’t talk…at all…

Not with you?

With nobody!!!

Is that good or bad?

Ville pulls up his nose, I don’t know. He opens up when he’s drunk.

Sounds dangerous….

I don’t think so, he knows how to handle it, and it doesn’t happen very often anymore since Linde and his girlfriend had a baby.

He’s very musical, one of the best guitarists I know. I didn’t see him much this year, he went to rehearsal and gigs, and that’s about it. He cares about his family, and it’s good for him. Of course I know him a little, when we are on tour we spend a lot of time in the tour bus. Most of the time he sleeps or reads.

Doesn’t sound like a tight group….

You’re right, as a band we’re not that close, but we are very close friends. I go out often with Mige, and Gas.

Gas is our good spirit. He’s the only one who keeps the studio tidy, and buys us coffee. He has a huge heart. Sometimes he gets irritated, but he’s never really angry.

Gas looks a bit scary with his massive body… He absolutely isn’t!!! says Ville, you can always count on him, Gas is great, we’re real friends. We go out a lot, playing pool. He’s straight forward, he’s not a complex personality, he knows what he wants, and he does it too. He wants to play drums, and so he does. He’s very calm, and doesn’t have a lot of demons inside.

Sounds enviable, I think to a man who has a lot of demons inside him…

I’m very happy Gas is in the band, just like Burton by the way.

In terms of musical knowledge Burton is ahead of us, he had an education in Classical University. I don’t know him very well, although we’ve known each other for 12 years. He’s in the band, but has his own life also. We’re friends but it takes a lot of time to really get to know a person. He’s also very calm, and doesn’t get upset about things.

O.k, I wonder, Ville is 27 years old, and does know the other band members for a long time, but he thinks he doesn’t really know them…Sounds funny, this is typical male friendship!

Ville responds: It’s because most of the time we’re together to make music, and we focus on that., and not on other matters. But I do know them reasonably well.

It was the joy of making music together that kept Ville excited , and led to the second birth of HIM, in 1996 with a different cast.

With their second demo, they got a record deal with the Finnish BMG, and after a year they released GL vol.666. It got airplay in Europe, and their star seemed to be rising.

Of course, a handful of people were suspicious because they played with the 666 symbol, and because of the band’s name. And because Ville was not baptized, and admitted to have read both the satanic and Christian bible.

The problem was solved in this way.

They met Silke, and she took HIM under her wings. Since then she takes care of the well being of the boys, and they call her lovingly Mutti(mom)

Ville’s eyes become soft. Mutti, yes, but it wasn’t our idea you know. Our label signed another Finnish band called Kyrria (this sounds so sexy pronounced by this man) Gas is in that band and they started to call her Mutti. You know, Silke cares about every Finnish band, she travels around the world with them, for her it isn’t just a job, she really cares. So she became Mutti, but nowadays it should be granny because of Linde’s baby…

It’s incredible to have someone around who takes care of everything. We’re friends, she’s not just Mutti.

He lights another cigarette, one of those trendy ones, made of pure tobacco. They are really good, and he offers me one. Silke smokes them, and I like them a lot. I’m thinking of changing from Marlboro-lights to these. I’ve heard only good things about these. I also like to smoke a pipe, which is also pure tobacco. Of course it damages your lungs, sooner or later.

Everybody has vices, and Ville is very passionate about his music. The passion and impatience are ambiguous. I’m crazy, he says, why is it good and bad to be a passionate musician? Is there a danger to lose yourself? Sometimes it’s a good thing to lose yourself, every now and then. Music is my guide, I rely on it.

There are many things that keep Ville Valo grounded, the incredible success of RR, the disappointing DSBH, and the impressive LM.

Just like other people, I have to do the dishes, pay taxes and fill out forms

When you stay at hotels for a long time it’s difficult to adjust, if nobody else takes care of these things.

Then the Promotion-Marathon!

Ville has done 11 interviews today but he doesn’t mind doing one more, he wants to talk about the album and how great it is. The hard work was making the album. That’s all there is to it. You get tired, but it’s o.k. The hardest part is done.

Every question has been asked. Is there a question you don’t want to hear again?

No, not really…

Who can believe that! I think….. this man can’t be that polite..

I’m not!! I want to vary my answers, and not say the same things over and over again. It’s a way to survive.

In 2002, when the band took a break, Ville had a month in which he could spend time with his family and friends, but he spent that time working on new songs. I always do that, and I’m happy that way, working on music.

Did you succeed in writing the perfect song?

Without hesitation he replies: No, perfection is a bad thing. Nothing or no one is perfect. If you think you did something perfect, there are always others who will point out your mistakes. He’s getting very philosophical at this point.

Not being perfect, that’s perfection. Even the Mona Lisa isn’t perfect.

An album is never finished. It’s like a page from a diary, it’s a moment in time. Songs are like a baby, you try hard to do the best you can, you give them clothes you like, but in 5 years someone else will wear them, someone you don’t expect them to wear. The essence is there but the shape changes.

Imagine you could go back in time, what would you change in your life?

He has to think for a long time and says: Nothing I think. Everything has a reason. When I was 15 I wanted to go to Art and Music Academy, but I couldn’t because I couldn’t read music well enough. I was really pissed about that and thought my world fell apart. But because of that I started HIM…At the end of the day bad things can turn out pretty good.

Because of all this, did you become rich?

He sounds bitter. What is rich? I’m a musician for about 20 years now, and I’ve got about 300.000 euro, is that rich? After 20 years..I don’t think so.

Being popular has its downsides too. When you are first starting you have to work really hard, when you’re a bit known, more people want you. But when you want to be really famous, you have to work a lot more.

I’ve been with my girlfriend for 5 years now, but I’ve only seen her like 3 months. It takes a lot of time, and that’s a negative thing.

The best thing is I don’t have to worry about paying my bills, I can fully concentrate on music. I don’t even want to think of a “normal” job, and how to pay my rent and stuff. It’s very important, worth a lot.

Words from a man who’s joking about legends that died in their late 20’s, Jim Morrison syndrome?

I’ve got some time left, he laughs.

What do you like most in your life?

Live, and a bit later..breathe! The best things are simple.

Do you believe in reincarnation?

No, why should I? People who believe in that are people who like to postpone things. There’s no reason, reincarnation, fucking heaven whatever…

Do the things you want to do, live right here, right now, nobody knows what will happen after that.

It’s clear: Valo would never turn into a Zen Buddhist…

What happens has to happen…maybe one day Jesus will knock at my door. Maybe I’ll open it , maybe I won’t…Maybe the next thing is an alien on my bed?

Do you believe in that?

Maybe, I’ve never seen one….the closest to an alien is Mutti…

**Chapter two**

Wherever HIM travels you will find Silke. She is the heart of the band, very protective and stays out of the spotlight. She promotes, coaches and soothes their souls whenever there is stress. Without her HIM probably would not have been successful so soon in Germany.

It all started in 1996. Silke and her Finnish husband celebrated New Year's Eve at the Leppako club, Him were playing that night. Her husband, who knew a lot about the Finnish music scene, said that she would love HIM. She was very impressed and convinced her husband to stay after the gig so she could meet the band.

After the show I met Ville, we had a chat, and I liked him a lot.

An important moment for both Ville and Silke. She met Ville again, 2 days later, after he awoke from his coma…

The charismatic young man told her they didn’t have a record deal outside Finland.

Silke felt very maternal seeing young Ville, 19 years old, shy, with chubby cheeks…. She told him she would take care of the record-deal. At that time she worked for a German record company, and she practically begged them to have a listen. They flew over to Finland, organized a showcase to see HIM perform and were impressed. In 1997 HIM broke into the German market with Greatest Lovesongs vol. 666. Now the band needed promotion for the rest of Europe.

Do you think Ville’s good looks help records sales?

I think so yes, lots of fans are attracted to the visual aspect. Those girls want to see a good looking, skinny guy. The band knows this, and are realistic about it. And with Ville’s sense of humor…I can shake my ass a little and the girls scream!!!

Of course for Ville it’s important to know if they just like his looks or like the music . In the RR era he used to perform with his back turned to the audience…I could have hit him for that! But it’s because he doesn’t know how to deal with this situation. The success came so fast, so unexpected, he was just scared. Nowadays he’s used to it, and knows how to handle it.

Many people thought Ville was an arrogant person. He was overworked, they had been touring for a year and a half. DSBH was written while touring, without taking any break. The tour for DSBH was canceled because of that. The band was exhausted, and they wanted to quit. Ville was stressed out and acting irrationally, the only thing he wanted to do was hide…He was pissed off at everybody, and believe me, he’s a Scorpio, and they can be mean. Every Scorpio has a sting, but his is a nasty sting… Ville is a master of verbal attacks. He can really hurt you with words.

That’s what he had been doing to the other band members, and even his best friend Mige said he couldn’t take it anymore.

After this they took a long break, and now everything is more relaxed, and I’m very happy.

Lately there are rumors HIM isn’t very pleased with their label (GUN-Supersonic).

Love Metal was their last album for BMG, what will happen?

There will be some changes, we’ll see what happens.

It would be great to see them start their own label, like Heartagram Records.

The band has problems with their label, and aren’t very happy with them anymore, but fortunately we have this deal with Jägermeister. This means we have help from the Jägermeister Band Support, but we get a lot in return, for example a marketing budget without end….and that’s great!

It is a great deal they have with Jägermeister, giant posters, a tour bus and all this happened by accident…

Fans know they like Jägermeister and throw little bottles on stage, great fans, really.

With these mini-bottles they have a ritual before a gig. Knock the bottle on the table, cap on the nose, scream loud, and empty the bottle. Good for the nerves..

It’s nice to have fans like this, but there are other types of fans…

These are the ones who are convinced that Ville dedicated whatever album to them, or at a gig he’s only looking at them…They have wild fantasies, completely crazy. They write him letters, saying Ville is the only one who can cure them, or even worse, marry me or I will kill myself. Those letters give him nightmares. He doesn’t read them anymore.

You might have heard the story of the crazy polish fangirl who wanted to cut a lock of hair.

There are also a great number of dedicated but quiet fans, harmless. When they see me, they come running towards me and call me Mutti. They also write me letters, and when I have time I answer those.

Silke is also active in the official German Heartagram Club, but she’s looking for someone to take over because she’s very busy.

There are also some things Silke didn’t know. After some research I found a site about HIM, with pictures of Ville, his family, his ex-girlfriend, even Silke herself.

Silke is shocked, this isn't right, private pictures, a lot of gossip…I don’t believe this…

She says that lots of rumors are fed by Ville himself. Because he doesn’t always tell the truth, you have to figure out what is fact or fiction.

I told Silke that Ville and I talked about her, and when she heard what Ville said, she was touched.

HIM is my life, I have a bond with them. In the past there were different people in the band but Ville, Linde and Mige are the heart of the band, ever since their schooldays.

It’s difficult to fit in with those guys, and because of that some line-up changes happened.

The others had some problems fitting in, so they were replaced.

Then there was Gas, he’s a great addition to the band. I’ve known Gas for a very long time ( he was in Kyrria) He fits in perfectly and is a really great drummer.

Things hadn't been working out with Juska for quite some time. He was too unstable, and couldn’t handle the situation. He had become almost insane…He’s currently in psychiatric treatment.

When I ask her if drugs had something to do with this, she admits that he was really stupid. He totally cracked…

When she talks about Burton she gets enthusiastic. The best thing that could happen to the band!!!

It’s a shame the other band members do interviews so rarely, we never hear their opinion. Ville does all the interviews.

Most people only want to talk to Ville, nobody cares about Gas…sad but true.

Ville is funny, charming, and jokes a lot. We tried to let Mige do some of the promotion, because Ville didn’t want to anymore. But when they were together, the interviewer only asked questions to Ville, and ignored Mige. So Mige said he didn’t want to do this anymore, he didn’t want to sit there like an asshole.

Maybe in time people will be interested in the other band members. When bands stick around for a long time, things change. And HIM will last a long time!!!

We talk about the possibility of Ville doing a solo album.

It’s possible, he has some left-over songs, but he doesn’t know what direction he will choose, more like Johnny Cash, without keyboards…He’ll work things out after they are done touring.

Sounds exciting, but there is already a side project we all know…The Lioneye project…

Daniel Lioneye is a funny thing, don’t take it too seriously. It began with this Iggy Pop fantasy. Linde is the biggest Iggy-fan, and when I arranged a meeting with him, Linde cried and said it was the most beautiful thing that happened to him!

On tour the boys listen to Iggy and the Stooges all the time, they decided they wanted to make an album with that feeling, rough and rock&roll.

And that was the Daniel Lioneye project, pure fun, and a bit of self therapy.

There’s another story: when they had their double number one (Join Me and RR), I was at GUN Records at a champagne party. I called the boys, who were back in Helsinki. Ville and Mige were sitting in a bar, they had a single Finnish markka, not enough to buy a beer…. Then I had to cry…

Nowadays they don’t need bartenders to buy them drinks..

Are there moments you pretend you don’t know them?

Many times…when they piss somewhere they shouldn’t…on hotel floors, in the elevator, even in those pans that keep the eggs warm on a breakfast buffet….That’s not pleasant!

But I wouldn’t want to miss it, they are my family and I love them!!!

*Interview by Tania Witte.*

**Chapter three**

No dates were given on the first 5 questionnaires, I'm guessing it's 2003 from the LM references.

The last 2 have the date at the end.

MIGE

Name: Mige Sad Mizee

Instrument: Bass

Birthday: 1974 12-19

Size: Real big…

Weight: (just kidding)

Oh, don’t joke about weight, will you!!! There are some fat people in the room. I think about 92 KG but I’m working on that!

When did you meet Ville for the first time?

It was in school I think. I don’t remember much of the early days. I don’t remember much of the present either…to Hell with it!

What I do remember are some beautiful things, sometimes shocking, but that’s my favorite hobby, and so is wanking.

Where was I? Oh yeah, Ville and I both played bass, and we both liked marijuana as teenagers. One of those things caused the loss of memory, but it’s not what you think!

What's the best part of being in HIM?

I am lucky to have met some very nice people, and traveled to beautiful places. Also I’ve learned to cope , and learned to live with the fact that I look a bit like Johnny Depp.

And what was the most embarrassing moment?

There was this picture, in which I took my body-own automatic weapon in hand, and it looked like my thumb. It was a shitty thing…and the picture ended up in a teenage magazine as a poster….a terrible twist of fate...

I think this must be the PICTURE he's talking about \*giggles\*

What characteristic feature do you like most about yourself?

That would be my Chevrolet!

And the least?

My hemorrhoids, no idea if I pronounced it right, but you know what I mean, don’t you!

What are the 3 most important things in life?

You can’t just say 3 things, can you? O.K, I can…

1 My girlfriend, and the rest of my family, some people included with totally different genes. And a dog named Fenkku, an 8 month old mutt. He’s cute and clever and very stubborn. He’s absolutely great! Oh, I just realized there are 2 other dogs I should mention. My friend has this 12 year old dog named Chico, he has huge ears and a very loud bark. You see, I have this big and happy family, I love them very much.

2 My Chevy, of course! A 82 Caprice, classic, brown. The body is a mess, and it could use a new battery, and spark plugs. It's a gas guzzler, but I don’t care. I’m a vegetarian, and that's my way of saving the planet. Ville’s dad found the car for me, and I’m grateful for that. I’ve had it for 2 weeks now, and Ville hasn’t even seen it. He should put aside the stuff he’s working on, and together with Burton we’ll tour the south of Finland. Burton said he would drink a bottle of Mescal, and puke out the window. But Mescal looks a lot like gasoline, so plan B is a bottle of Croatian moonshine. In both cases he’ll end up as blind as Stevie Wonder, no problem, he’s plays the keyboards…

3 You probably expect me to say music, but it’s too obvious, and I’m as stubborn as my dog, so I won’t, I think 2 will do.

What plans do you have for the future?

I like to take it slowly, if possible. There are a lot of good things happening now, so no worries. Life is like a box of chocolates, you don’t know what you’ll get. But in fact it’s bullshit because you know it’s chocolate…

Fuck Forrest Gump, the bastard, he didn’t really meet the president, it was a trick with the camera…I can do that with photoshop!

LINDE

Name: Mikko Lindström aka Linde

Instrument: guitar

Date of birth: 12-08-1976

Horoscope: Leo

Size: 1.88 m. (6 feet and 2.02 inches)

When did you meet Ville the first time?

I think I was about 10 years old, at a school disco. He was a diabolical disco dancer.

What was the best experience with HIM?

Meeting Iggy Pop at the Comet Awards.

And the most embarrassing moment with HIM?

It’s always embarrassing when there are major technical problems. It’s ok if a string breaks, but when you’re on stage, and there is no sound coming from your amplifier for a long time…It still happens too often.

What characteristic feature do you like most about yourself?

My silence

And the least?

I’m way to nice to people who don’t deserve it.

Who are your idols?

John Lee Hooker, Steve Vai.

What is the best song ever?

Borrelus

What are your plans for the future?

I’ll take it as it comes.

GAS

Name: Gas Lipstick

Instrument: Drums

Date of birth: 08-02-1971

Size: big XXXL

Weight: (joke) no way!!!!

When did you meet Ville for the first time?

It was in ’94 or ’95. I was on the same festival with my former band. I do remember the boys were excellent musicians, but their music sucked ass.

What is your best experience with HIM?

The recording of Love Metal. There was this great atmosphere, and you can hear that on the album.

And the most embarrassing moment with HIM?

We screwed up 2 Black Sabbath songs during a gig in Turkey.

What characteristic feature do you like most about yourself?

I’m a nice person, always in a good mood.

What are the 3 most important things in life?

Music, ice hockey and music.

Who are your idols?

Darius Kasparaitis, Krystof Olivia, Herra no 66, Daniel Lioneye, Dave Lombardo.

What is the best song?

Discharge and Slayer (all)

What are your plans for the future?

Can’t wait to go on tour.

BURTON

Name: Burton

Instrument: Keyboards

Date of birth: 17-10-1974

Horoscope: Libra

Size: L

When did you meet Ville for the first time?

I was about 17 years old, we had mutual friends.

What was the best experience with HIM?

Until now, the recording of our latest album.

And the most embarrassing?

I’m trying to remember…hmm, I can't think of any, or I forgot all about it..It’s a good sign.

What characteristic feature do you like most about yourself?

Archh…difficult…If I have to pick one I would say I’m careless.

What are the 3 most important things in life?

Humor, tranquility and margarita pizza.

What is the best song?

Klarinetten Polka by Horst Mamerow.

What are your plans for the future?

To wait and see what happens next.

Do you have a message for the fans?

Murskaa Mäkki!!! (=crush McDonalds)

VILLE

Name : Ville Valo

Instrument: Singer

Horoscope: Scorpio

Size: 1.85m

Weight: 62 kg (that works out to 136 pounds)

What was the most beautiful experience with HIM?

It’s great to be able to travel around the world. And of course the double number one position in Germany, for Join me and RR

What is the most painful experience?

For sure, my first gig as a singer, I used to play bass and I was so nervous I almost shit my pants.

What characteristic feature do you like most about yourself?

I’m a very polite person

And the least?

My impatience

What are the 3 most important things in life for you?

My acoustic guitar, music and my family.

What is the best song ever written?

Tapio Rautavaara, Sininen Uni

What plans do you have in the future?

We will be touring a long time for Love Metal. After that I’ll do a solo-album.

VILLE

When did you start making music, and what was the name of your first band?

I started to play when I was about 7 years old. I wrote my first song at 13. My first band was named Kemoterapia.

What were the first and the last album you bought yourself?

First album was Animalized, by Kiss, last is Drama by Susperia.

What were the first and the last gigs you attended?

First was Iron Maiden in the Ice Hall in Helsinki, the last is Depeche Mode.

What do you like and hate about yourself?

Myself

What is your biggest dream?

I’m living it right now

What is your biggest mistake so far?

I didn’t manage to get a paid job…

What annoys you the most?

Non-smoking areas

What is the first thing you do when you wake up?

Light a cigarette.

What are the most important things in life?

Sex, drugs and Rock&Roll, what else?

Who would you like to meet?

Gene Simmons

Who don’t you want to meet?

Bill Cosby

Over population is a big issue in the news now, do you have a solution?

Kill myself.

What is your most painful experience so far?

Writing and recording Greatest Lovesongs vol 666

What do you like most about sex?

The cigarette afterwards…

What town do you like most?

Helsinki

Is there any jewelry that means a lot to you?

No, I hate jewelry!

If you could go back in time for a historical event, what would you choose?

My birth

What presents make you happy?

Anything you can’t eat or drink

Imagine the doctor says you have AIDS, what would you do?

I’d probably sue the condom company

Have you ever had a near death experience?

Yes, every time I fall in love…

*Orkus May 1999*

VILLE

Name: Ville Hermanni Valo

Date of birth: 1976 11-22

Hometown: Helsinki

First record: Animalize-Kiss

Last record: Spiritual Beggars-Ad Astra

Most important record: Black Sabbath-Black Sabbath

Favorite movie: Nightmare Before Christmas-Tim Burton

Favorite Book: The Oxford Book of Death

First gig as a guest: Iron Maiden 1987

Last gig as a guest: Black Sabbath 2000

Most obscure job: Selling dildo’s at my dad’s shop

Feature a woman should have: humor

And shouldn’t have: bad breath

What do you like about yourself?

No idea…

And hate?

My impatience

Best sex experience?

Playing doctor in kindergarten

What is your goal in life?

I don’t know yet

Are you a sportsman?

I hate sports!

What would you be if you weren’t a singer?

An alcoholic

Can you drive a car?

No

What would be a reason to quit music?

If I were in a severe accident and couldn’t do it anymore, or if I get bored with it.

*Metal Heart*

*June 2000*

**Chapter four**

Heavenly Infernal Music

A Paradox? Not when it’s about HIM, their debut album Greatest Love Songs Vol. 666 is full of them.

On a beautiful summer weekend I was invited to Finland to see firsthand the quality of the band and the androgynous front man Ville Valo, his hip swing allegedly sends hundreds of Finnish girls into a tearful ecstasy. And for real, when HIM came on the main stage at the Annkarock Festival - there were a lot of screams and tears…

Even I couldn’t avoid being impressed by the slightly arrogant heartthrob.

artly surprised, partly appreciative, I have to admit HIM really are new superstars in Finland, and not without reason!

With the release of Greatest Love Songs Vol. 666 they will conquer the hearts of German teenage girls. Women will be excited with Ville Valo and company's Gothic Metal Rock and their romantic lyrics, not entirely kitsch-free lyrics about unfulfilled love and broken hearts.

People in Germany don’t know much about HIM, would you like to tell us something?

Ville: I started to play bass when I was 8 years old, because of Gene Simmons. After that I learned to play drums, guitar and keyboards. I played in several shitty bands. In the summer of 1995, I decided to form a really great band, at least it’s good enough for you! (laughs)

Thank you! Are the other band members your friends? Did you know them before?

Ville: The only one I didn’t know was our drummer, Gas. Our bass player and I were at a gig of Gas's former band, and we decided to ask him to join us. He liked our music, so he did. Not very original is it?

We’ll leave the original parts for later. You mentioned Gene Simmons, do you have other musicians that inspired you?

Ville: Musically, Kiss was the only band I looked up to. I listen to a lot of other stuff, like Depeche Mode, Sisters of Mercy, 13 candles, London after Midnight, the Last Dance etc. It’s always so bright in Finland, we have to compensate with dark music… oh yes, Dreadful Shadows and Beyond the Maze. I love them!

Are there, apart from the musical aspects other influences?

Ville: I hate to read books! I’m way too impatient for that. When I come home after a tour, to reset my brain I like to watch movies, really bad ones, romantic stuff. But music takes most of my time. I write all the songs, arrange them, talk to the musicians, the people from the record company etc. Sometimes I don’t even have the time to sleep, it’s pretty hectic.

Did you want to be the front man because of all these things?

Ville: Should I? Of course the art, and the way the others play their instrument are also responsible for the sound of HIM. But it’s easier to talk to me, since I sing and write all the songs. I’m not a dictator! Maybe in a subtle way… In the beginning we worked very close together, but the others trust me, and now they’re not coming to me with their ideas of arrangements anymore, it’s a lot easier this way.

On your debut album you’re playing with the concept of the number 666 in contrast to 777, the infernal versus the divine.

Ville: Yeah, we had a lot of problems with that. Many people are very conservative, and some religious people rang the alarm-bell. I don’t care, but it influenced our work. When we started we didn’t want to have anything to do with religious or philosophical matters. I don’t know what other people think of God, Satan, or Buddha, but for me 666 is a symbol for thousands of things. It can mean so many things, only a few people know what I meant by this, 666 in a heart means infernal love. A heart isn’t complete without experiencing dark moments.

You have signed a cd with sex, sex, sex, that brings me to the next question: When you’re on stage do you use your sexual charisma?

Ville: (laughs) my sexual charisma… That is so Rock & Roll! The effect of my charisma on Finnish teenage girls…

I have seen it myself! They were screaming, and crying.

Ville: You can’t plan such things, it just happens. It is a compliment when people respond like that, but I don’t like it when women come on strong to me. I’m pretty monogamous, I don’t have a problem with that.

Do you take advantage of your charisma on stage?

Ville: Well, I hope it works for both sexes, I didn’t want the sex symbol thing to come in the first place, it gets boring after a while.

Does it matter to you if fans go to a gig to see you, instead of loving the music? So they can see you move your hips?

Ville: As long as they buy the album, I don’t care. I love our songs, and move on stage the same way I would in a disco. Nobody tells me how to move, nothing is planned, we just do what is best for us.

When reading your lyrics, it is all about love. Is every song a true story? It seems you have to be happy in love, or heartbroken.

Ville: Every song is about somebody.

Wait a minute! What about the monogamy?

Ville: (laughs) There are only nine songs, it is our first album, and I had lots of time! (blushes) I get my inspiration from daily life. When I go to a supermarket and I see a beautiful girl, I’ll fantasize a story, and like exaggerate… There are some personal things in the lyrics. You know, I can’t just write lyrics in 5 minutes. A simple boring line can be very important to me. There are cartoon-like lyrics like in 666 ways, I love you, and my heaven is wherever you are. It’s very mainstream, but that was my intention. I wanted people to wonder if it’s written for him or her. Are you married?

What????

Ville: Oh, you’re wearing a ring (grins) Sorry, you were asking?

I wanted to ask you about the covers on the album, Wicked Game and Don’t Fear the Reaper, and live you’re covering Enjoy the Silence.

Ville: Depeche Mode… Polygram released this Depeche Mode tribute-album with Rammstein’s version of Stripped (with a German accent) without yourrrrr teleeeevision… and with Smashing Pumpkins and Apollo 440 etc. We canceled our plan to record Enjoy the Silence for our album, three covers are way too much, even two are too many, but we didn’t have a choice, because we ran out of time, and didn’t have enough songs of our own. Wicked Game is one of my favorite songs, and it’s just coincidence it’s on the album. To promote our band it is fine to do some covers. When you’re playing in a club, and only play your own unknown songs, the crowd gets bored quickly. Don’t Fear… is one of my favorites too, but I think it is a bit weird. The original is done by two men. The lyrics are so full of drama, and sound so Romeo and Juliet like. We didn’t rehearse this one, we recorded it at once. Marylin Manson did some covers too, at first I didn’t like him, but after I heard Sweet Dreams, I started to like him. It’s important to show the entire variety of the band in a cover. When you listen to our version of Wicked Game you’ll understand.

Your looks are often compared to Jim Morrison, do you think that is fair?

Ville: I have seen you at our gig observing me, what do you think?

Somehow I’m forced to think yes… But I think there is a slight resemblance to Michael Hutchence too…

Ville: I hate the Doors, maybe I look a bit like Morrison, although I don’t admire him, and my hair is real!!

Ah, really… I thought you were wearing a wig….

Ville: (laughs) Stop it!!! I think flares are cool. I’m not wearing them now coincidence, 666 coincidences, that’s what makes our band! I’m flattered when people compare me to Jim Morrison, it’s much better than Milli Vanilli….

To end this interview, can you tell us something about your plans in the near future?

Ville: After we do some gigs in Finland, we play a couple of festivals in Germany. We want to see how the audience in Germany responds to our music. If the response is bad, we’ll just tour Lapland. I wrote some new songs and we’ll record a new album in the fall. We already have a title…

Yes, and I don’t know it…

Ville: (laughs) I will check if you listened to the album. It will be released in the beginning of 1999 in Finland. We’ll have to wait for the rest.

*Interview by Anja Lochner 1998*

**Chapter five**

Ville talks about the songs

In Our Own Words - Greatest Love Songs Vol. 666

Your Sweet 666

You might already know there is a story behind this song title. An American preacher found out if you play Led Zeppelin’s Stairway to Heaven backwards, you hear a demonic voice say: Here’s to my sweet Satan 666.... We love to play this song live!

Wicked Game

Because of this song we discovered the HIM sound. I love David Lynch, got myself the soundtrack to Wild at Heart, and fell in love with it. I made Linde listen, he got the riffs… it resembles the original a bit.

The Heartless

The original seven minute version on the EP is still my favorite. There is one shitty thing about this song: It is about me falling in love with a girl, and my best friend ruined it.

Our Diabolikal Rapture

One of my all time favorites, because of the Sabbath-influences, and the Kyuss-like psychedelic sounds, and one of the best guitar sounds ever recorded. Unfortunately we don’t perform this song anymore because Linde changed his tuning.

It’s All Tears

When I wrote this nonsense I was lost in the world of Meridian, and wanted super low vocals in the song, to piss off Jyrki69. Three chords, stupid lyrics about shedding tears, and an even more stupid arrangement, it’s my least favorite song.

When Love and Death Embrace

I took the chords from the soundtrack of Twin Peaks. I love Type O Negative to death, and this song is influenced by Bloody Kisses. This is where Finnish schlager meets Type O. It’s also my first attempt to write straight-forward lyrics.

The Beginning of the End

I remember, we were watching a documentary, Funky Monks, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers with Under the Bridge were using all sorts of things as drums. We wanted to do the same. The lyrics make me blush nowadays because of the vampire topic.

Don’t Fear the Reaper

The first time I heard this song was in the great John Carpenter movie Halloween. Girls sitting in a car, listening to the radio, smoking pot, no idea the psycho killer is about to stab a knife in their soft skin. I always wondered why nobody had ever thought of recording this song as a boy-girl duet… The album version is a demo we recorded in the spring 1997.

For You

A weird combination of Roky Erickson's Bloody Hammer, and early My Dying Bride albums, which were very influential for me in that period. In the grace of your love I will writhe in pain is one of the best lyrics I have written so far. The girl doing the backing vocals is Hiili’s girlfriend.

**Chapter six**

Live in Frankfurt, December 12, 1998

There were about 200-230 people in Frankfurt on Saint Nicholas Eve to see HIM and a supporting act called The Gallery. HIM came on stage to an intro which suited a blues or jazz club in New Orleans. The band and Ville, who was armed with a fag and a bottle of red wine started to play their songs off the album Greatest Love Songs Vol. 666. Your Sweet 666, The Beginning of the End, For You, and the crowd knew the songs!

Next up was Enjoy the Silence, another great cover. Not wasting any time with conversation, they started the sixth song, a song only known in Finland so far, Sigillum Diaboli. It was the rawist sounding song of the evening. The keyboard player was sent away, the guitars were more important now, Diabolikal Rapture was next.

I don’t expect a different sound on their next album, and I don’t think it will bother most fans. Slowly the crowd starts to move (just a little), so Mr. Valo thinks it’s time for a little Rock & Roll, they start to play It’s all Tears. The last song is Wicked Game. Even though the crowd is lethargic, the band does an encore, When Love and Death Embrace.

A short impression of this evening and to make a long story short: This band is going to be big!

*Eddy*

*Orkus 02/1999*

**Chapter seven**

Listening session for Razorblade Romance

Listening session in Cologne, this time for HIM. With Join Me in the futuristic movie The 13th Floor, we had a taste of what to expect. After the first “hello” Ville Valo, lead singer of HIM, expressed his displeasure about his band mates not being with him. The record company thought people only wanted to talk to Ville. After lots of handshakes, and listening to the new album twice, onto the drinks, not red wine this time, but whiskey and Caipirinha (a cocktail). A tipsy Ville next to me, chitchatting, wearing glittering black eye make-up, done by the people at VIVA earlier today, and dressed in black, he reminds me of a mixture of Ziggy Stardust and the Crow. And a new hairdo! "Do you like it?" he asks and adds mischievously, "I cut it myself, when we finished recording the album."

Finally we can talk about the new songs. "I was so nervous listening to the album, I hadn’t heard the final version yet," he said. The nervousness was obvious. The man chain-smoked through eleven songs, while sandwiched between journalists and label people. They are all waiting for a well known, passionate scream. Hey, there was one! A big grin from Ville, who thought it was funny.

The new album is like the new fragrance of Boss: Dark," I like darker", but also, Hard," I like harder"! Ville likes it, and so do we. Many people expected a pop-album, HIM delivered a solid Goth-rock album, knocking on the Metal door." We wanted a more organic approach, the album should be more like what we do live. We wanted it to be more energetic. Of course, the label would have loved to see us as the Gothic Backstreet Boys, but that will never happen". Maybe if the other band members swap Ville with Michael Monroe, singer and hairspray-legend of Hanoi Rocks…

The new album not only consist of louder songs, there are also some sweet ballads with Valo’s dark voice. Very pleasant to listen to. Everybody wants to know why the songs of HIM with titles like Right Here In My Arms, Heaven Tonight, and I love You are so damn romantic. That is sick, love sick.

Ville laughs when he hears this." I’m not romantic at all, I’m a realist. Of course I’m passionate about love, and this album is about a special person. I wrote all the songs about her. Every artist needs a muse, it’s easier to focus on romantics. I’m not a person who gives flowers and watches sentimental movies".

Being romantic is like living in an art comedy, you have to be a realist to appreciate it. The songs contain a lot of irony and dark humor, and that’s the biggest part of the lyrics.

Does Ville believe in eternal everlasting love?
"I believe in those moments when you are thinking it exists".

Back to the red carpet. For all you curious people, they haven’t decided what the title of the new album will be. It is very difficult to top a title like Greatest Love Songs Vol.666, isn’t it? The new songs have definite potential, you can hear it for yourself next February.

*Anja Lochner*

*December 1999*

**Chapter eight**

Adonis from Helsinki

The three capital letters are short for His Infernal Majesty, and reflect a part of the charismatic personality of Ville Valo, front man of the Finnish Goth-rockers.
With his fascinating persona he’s becoming a huge star, a myth is born.
Greatest Lovesongs vol.666 showed us a connection between romance and melancholy. Love and death as contradictions are the main theme.

There was a lot of pressure on Ville during the recording of the new album, but all doubts disappeared with the release of Join me. The second album is called Razorblade Romance and it is a huge hit. Dark melodies, and Ville’s plaintive vocals put a spell on the listener. RR is a strong album, with many potential hit singles.

Valo doesn’t seem to be impressed by all the fuss about his personality.

Ville: I’ve listened to the entire album only once. We rehearsed the songs for such a long time, and it took so long to record them.

I have a pretty good idea what the result will be.

The Finns are not taking a break, or planning to tour, no, they will return to the studio in January to record some demo’s.

Ville: We already have 7 or 8 new songs ready, and want to record them as a demo. I can assure you these songs are even better.

I sure want to believe him, but first I want to enjoy RR a bit more.

The recording of RR wasn’t without problems. The first time they recorded the songs, Hiili produced the album in Finnvox studios, but they weren’t really happy with the result, and wanted to get more out of the songs. So they recorded them a second time, this time with John Fryer( N.I.N, Depeche Mode) as the producer.

Ville: We tested him during a short rehearsal and everything worked out perfect. The recording was done in his studio in Wales. I haven't decided if John will produce our next album, I don't know, after the first one I was expecting Hiili to do the second too…But it’s always a possibility.

The lyrical side of the album is a harmony of romance, death and longing. These are important to Ville and it’s only natural to write about those things.
Most songs are about love or experiences with it. It is like a personal diary, all about experiences of the last couple of years. It has nothing to do with fantasy.

When you read the lyrics, you expect Ville to be a shy, dreamy person.

Ville: I really don’t have the time to dream, I have to work hard to make my dream come true. You can dream a great deal of your life, but at the end of the day nothing has happened. It is extremely difficult for me to talk about my characteristics, you better ask the other band members. There are people who find me romantic, there are people who don’t…I prefer to put my romantic feelings in lyrics, rather than running to a girl with flowers. Usually, when I’m in a certain mood, and I have an idea, I’ll start working on that. Often it takes months to finish lyrics, music is a lot easier, it happens a lot faster.

In the information of BMG they compare Ville to Jim Morrison, a daring comparison. Ville also has a spiritual charisma and he lives his music.

Ville: I’ve read some books and a biography about the Doors and Morrison, I love to read those, I’m not a great fan of their music, but I admire Jim Morrison as a person. It doesn’t do him justice, to compare him with me, but I prefer being compared to him rather then Scooter.

And then we come to the musical influences of the Singer.

Ville: It all started in the 80's with Kiss. Later came Black Sabbath, who had a huge influence. Lyrically I have so many, like Nick Cave or Andrew Eldritch. I like great songs, doesn’t matter what kind of music. I like the songs of Madonna, Savage Garden, Depeche Mode, Dimmu Borgir…

The band doesn’t belong only to the gothic scene anymore, recently they played at a snow board convention and made their appearance in Top of the Pops.

Ville: The last one was really funny, we weren’t used to lip syncing.
A lot of people accuse us of doing anything for money, and turning into a pop band…bullshit! The same thing happened to Marylin Manson in the States, although Manson doesn’t care about fame and fortune, and he is swimming against the tide. But you do need a bit of mainstream to reach people, so they can tell the difference and see there is more than shitty things like Scooter, Aqua etc. I do have respect for Manson, I like his stage show and some of his ideas.

We have to wait a little before the first biography of Ville Valo appears in the bookshops. For now we are just happy with one of the most beautiful discoveries in music history.

*Markus Wosgien*

*Metal Heart February 2000*

**Chapter nine**

What seems to be a fairy tale has become reality for Ville &co. But it didn’t happen just like that. Ville had been dreaming about a musical career for many years. In 1996 it started to happen, he formed a band called HIM together with his friends from Helsinki. Songs were written, a record deal signed with BMG Finland, and soon after their debut album Greatest Lovesongs vol.666 hit the local record stores. From this moment on there was no turning back for the young Finns.

Hysterical screaming teenage girls and record sales most new bands could only dream of.

The HIM-hysteria reached Germany after a record deal with GUN records and the release GLS vol 666 . The press and the music fans loved the album. After playing many gigs and festivals in Germany they gained even more fans.

Having a song in the movie The 13th Floor was a big opportunity for the band. The video clip, in which Ville appears as an androgynous dark prince is played on all the music channels, over and over.

Ville: I’m really surprised Join me is doing so well, I didn’t expect this at all. There are a lot of better songs on the new album. We’ll have to see how the album is received, because HIM isn’t a singles band. People accuse us of being mainstream, we are getting angry emails on our website because of our appearance in Top of the Pops. Most people want us to be underground.

Despite that HIM is on their way to the top, and Join me is played on every radio station in Germany. They reached number 16 in the German singles chart, the single has sold over a 100.000 copies and turned platinum in Finland. Reason enough to perform on Top of the Pops, and other teenage shows, like Bravo TV, who visited them in Helsinki.

Ville: That was fun. Mige and I did the interview together, we laughed the whole time. Of course we know the show is meant for very young viewers, we are used to that, but still, we’re not exactly role models.

The expectations for the new album are very high, so 2000 will be a very exciting year.

During the listening session last October in Cologne, Ville had doubts about the album, as did the record company. Everybody wants a piece of the cake, to take part in decisions and share the profits.

Ville: It can be a positive thing, but it can also be very shitty. People who don’t know shit about our band think they know everything better than we do… That’s the way it is in the music business, they are all whores!

Thank God HIM didn’t allow those people to interfere in the creative and musical parts of their work.

The line up of the band has changed. The drummer and the keyboard player stepped out. Fortunately they found replacements, an unknown keyboard player, and the drummer is Gas Lipstick (former Kyrria).

The next problem was the recording of the album in Finnvox studios by Hiili.

After it was finished, they weren’t happy with the result. They recorded the album a second time at the Rock House studios in Wales with John Fryer as the producer.

Ville: This was a coincidence, really. The people at British BMG introduced us to John. We spent 5 days together getting to know him. I was a bit worried, because he had more experience with electronic metal but everything worked out fine. It was a very positive thing for everyone. John changed very little in the melodies and nothing in the lyrics or arrangements. He was the only one who would listen to our millions of ideas, filter them and make it work. He kept us on track.

It was a comfortable process, it felt more like a relaxed vacation.

You can feel Ville is more positive and confident about the album.

Ville: We are very happy with the new album, but I don’t have the time to play it for my friends, or listen to it myself. I’m running from appointment to appointment, I'm busy as hell.

The success of course has consequences for their private lives, and it’s not always pleasant.

Ville: Finland is home, of course people recognize me but people here are different, they are more shy and introverted and they won’t start up a conversation. Helsinki is my hometown, and I love it because things are simple and clear.

Ville’s family and friends are very proud of him, and the boys.

Ville: My mom and dad are so happy for me, they keep asking me for free cd’s. It’s not really a special thing for them to see me on stage. For 15 years they have watched how I prepared myself for this moment. Now they are very happy that it worked out so well, I can pay my own rent and buy my own cigarettes!

Ville is often compared to Jim Morrison and called the modern Ziggy Stardust. Some people compare him to Brian Molko, front man of Placebo. Ville isn’t pleased with that.

Ville: I don’t like Brian Molko and his music sucks. He’s a cheap imitation of things from the past, which are a lot better than Molko. I hope people don’t think I’m like that. I like Jim Morrison better. It’s crazy that people have to compare things or other people, but I prefer to be compared to a legend instead of a pop-fake. I don’t really care, as long as they buy our record.

What do you think is the most important thing in life? Love, money or success. The answer according to your songs is love!

Ville: I know it’s boring, but love inspires me, and when something inspires me, I write songs about it. Hopefully it will bring me success and I can make some money.

A private life is very important to Ville, he’s not willing to “sell his soul”.

In interviews he avoids questions about his private life, or his love life. He’s very strict about that.

Ville: When people start to ask questions about that, they won’t stop, and nobody cares about the music anymore.

Everybody wonders what Ville’s dream-woman would look like, especially after hearing Gone with the Sin.

Ville: (takes a deep breath) I know how these things work. That’s the only thing people care about, I’m now a public figure.

*Anja Lochner*

*Orkus February 2000*

**Chapter ten**

In our own words RR

I love you

The only song I don’t like that much, it’s too hard and loud. My ears are growing old…I do like the lyrics though. I always wanted to name a song I love you….cheesy isn’t it?

Poison Girl

Some people think this is a hate-song, but on the contrary, it is a desperate cry for forgiveness. Musically it’s a good example of the direction we want to go with our new material.

Join me

Originally I wrote the song back in 1997. It’s a song we played to death before we went to the studio to record it. It’s a song about trust and losing.

RHIMA

This is our tribute to the 80's, a simple Billy Idol-like love song. It's about feeling bad for such a long time you fear you will never find happiness again.

Gone with the Sin

My favorite song, so warm, so minimalist, so fragile, and the most honest and truest song I’ve written so far. I’m very proud of it.

Razorblade Kiss.

One of the most rock songs on the album. Originally it was called Razorblade Romance, but we gave the album that name. Full of dark humor, a great song to perform live.

Bury Me Deep Inside

A megalomaniacal stage ballad, with a twist. When you are buried under a pile of shit for a very long time, you start to get used to it, even like it…At least that’s how it works for me.

Heaven Tonight

A real pop-track, a story of a love so strong you can’t let go, even if you want to.

Death is in Love with Us.

A Gothic Hymn, and a bit of stoner rock too. Part of our campaign “Save the Goths”. Black lipstick is cool!

Resurrection

The song was written in the same period as Join me. Imagine Bon Jovi with Cradle of Filth’s make up, singing about a love that died a long time ago.

One Last Time.

A last cry for forgiveness. It actually happened after I wrote this song. No happiness but deep despair. That’s why on the next album there won’t be any “shiny happy people”

*Ville Valo*

*Orkus September 2000*

**Chapter eleven**

RR Tour Diary

12/4 Stuttgart The perfect Fan.

It all starts with a terrible noise, repeating booming factory sounds.
Both bands, Reamonn, the supporting-act, and our new Finnish superstars are victims of the terrible acoustics of Schleyer Halle in Stuttgart.
HIM’s energy is fading, and the show transforms into routine, they guys look bored. The audience doesn’t care at all. Sweet German girls raise their hands and make the evil sign, they scream VILLEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE and more, more, more at the top of their lungs during the encore of Rebel Yell.

After that they faint, and are carried away by the security.

I’m looking for Mutti. She (Silke) is the promoter of the band, and as her nickname says, she’s also the supervisor, nanny, chaplain, everything a mother should be.

When I find her we head backstage with the winners of a Bravo meet&greet. The starving HIM boys are attacking the catering-food.

A modest Hi to the Bravo winners, some small talk and off to the bus.

Around midnight the trip changes to a pursuit. About 8 cars follow the bus all the way from the Schleyer Halle to the hotel. Arriving at the hotel, lots of impatient fans are waiting in the lobby, all of them women. Two are very amusing, they come from Switzerland and have been following the band for quite some time. One of them, a dark-haired girl is the real HIM-fan, somehow she always knows what hotel the boys stay in. She forces her friend, a big blond-haired Backstreet Boys fan to accompany her in her quest. Every night they end up in a fight, the blond is saying she hates HIM and the Ville-guy looks like shit….

Clearly nervous of all this fan-trouble 4 of the 5 band members disappear in their rooms, to do their private things....

The drummer, Mikko Karppinen aka Gas Lipstick, the least popular with the girls decides to take his daily bath in the sea of groupies at the piano bar.

The guys tease him mercilessly the next day.

13/4 Stuttgart-Zürich “In style”

The tour bus is waiting in front of the hotel, and is to leave at 12:00 sharp but around 11 the entrance is blocked by waiting fans. Five minutes to take off, the band members come stumbling in. Ville doesn’t look pleased at all.

He tells me the fans have been bothering him all night, begging him to come to the lobby, to talk to them….I can imagine he doesn’t look happy…

When everybody is present we leave for Zürich.

Apart from funny stories in teenage magazines, very exaggerated ( Satan’s children, animal sacrifices), stops at gas-stations, making phone calls, sleeping, drinking water, listening to Turbo Negro, smoking, and playing Tekken, nothing special happens on this 3 1/2 hour trip.

Around 4 we arrive at the hotel, and we all devote ourselves to doing nothing.

For Ville, it is the first day since January without interviews…

A day off for HIM is a great opportunity to spend money and go shopping.

Bass-player Mikko Paananen, aka Mige, buys a pair of sandals, desperately needed…On this shopping tour in Zürich he went bare foot.

Mige and guitar player Mikko Lindström aka Linde purchased a bong and some cherry-flavored tobacco.

Keyboard player Jussi Salminen, just like front man Ville Valo, loves to buy clothes. He spends his money on some camisoles and a pair of techno pants. Later he begs Mutti to dye his hair black.

Mige and Linde, together with manager Seppo, are drinking tea in the hotel restaurant. Besides smoking the bong, they find peace in the English ceremony of Tea Time, not surprising after 2 months of excessive partying. The evening is about to end very quietly.

14/4 Zürich Marathon Men

The day begins under a lucky star, we were awakened by the clip of RHIMA on VIVA2.

Round 12 , the band, bodyguards, driver and the rest gathered in the lobby to go to a signing hour at a big record store. We were amazed to see the two Swiss HIM/Backstreet Boys fans in the lobby. Some endurance….

I always thought bodyguards were a little exaggerated, but I think different now!

Hundreds of fans were standing in front of the record store to get an autograph of their idols, the owner told me they started lining up at 8 in the morning.

Today Razorblade Romance turned gold in Switzerland, what a coincidence!

The band reached the store via the underground parking, and then led to a stage inside the store. Necks were stretched, a scream here and there.

Once the doors were opened, one word seemed very important: patience.

Autographs on posters, pictures, arms, shirts, pictures together, a polite thank you for all the presents people took with them, it made this signing session look like a marathon.

Ville and Mige had to go to a press conference, so they needed to finish this marathon soon. The disappointed fans, with bowed heads left. They guys felt sorry for them, but they had to smile when a 10 year-old, his copy of RR in hand said: I didn’t get an autograph, so I’m no longer a HIM fan…

Arriving at the Volkshaus, a few fans were already there. For Linde, Jussi and Gas begins the endless waiting. To avoid being bored they read the fan mail, which was thrown on stage during the last gig. Apart from that I’m very surprised how long these Finns can sit opposite each other without one word.

Meanwhile Ville and Mige aren’t happy about another press conference, we meet the Swiss HIM fan again, without her friend this time.

They enter the room and are blinded by the flash of lights. After 15 minutes of pictures the first questions are asked. Then a very negative journalist gets to speak, and doesn’t stop… He accuses HIM of being commercial, plastic music etc. and that HIM has nothing to do with goth music.

Soon Ville has had enough of this, and to end the situation Ville asks sarcastic: What do you want? Will it make you happy if I tell you we are Goths!

Meanwhile things don’t change much at the Volkshaus backstage, there are still 3 silent, bored men. The crew is working very hard to build the set.

A few hours later, when the local bands are done, it is time for our Finnish Goth Rockers. As usual Ville, Mige, Linde, Jussi and Gas put on a flawless show, and this evening is better than in Stuttgart. It is so amazing how 5 bored, completely different men can turn into such a sensational and tight band. The highlight is as always, Join me, as soon as the audience hears the keyboards, they go wild, same with the Grande Finale, when Linde and Mige bang their guitars and throw them away, a real Rock&Roll attitude.

After this spectacle nobody has doubts about HIM being a pop band…

Conclusion: A very tiring but pleasant day with the Finns, in the evening a perfect sold-out gig, and it’s turning into a quiet night.

15/4 Yverdon “Saatana”

First this information: saatana is after vittu the most used curse word on this tour. But there is no need to use the devil’s name now because we’re on a short pleasant trip to Yverdon, a small town in the French part of Switzerland.

Usually the boys don’t get to see much of the country side. In front of the bus is a map and the bus driver marks it, so the boys have a bit of an idea where they are and where they are going.

There is also the head of a plush dog, hanging there….Animal sacrifices in the name of Satan? No nothing exciting…it's Ville's dog, he ripped the head off during a melt down.

I can imagine when you are in a small space, packed with 10 people for months, it will get on your nerves

In HIM’s case everything is very orderly, even though they are very young.

When there are problems, there is always Mutti and their manager Seppo to help out.

When we arrived at Amalgane in the early afternoon, a few fans were waiting. The band was welcomed and entertained by the local organizers.

The backstage area was just as big as the venue and they had damn good catering.

After a short sound check Mige and Linde got their bong. People passing by gave them a hard look. It’s just tobacco!!

Juska and Ville were playing chess in the tour bus, and Gas is air drumming with his cell phone. When Mige and Linde were done smoking they all went to the tour bus to rehearse a little. Not for the show this night, but a Turbo Negro song Rendezvous with Anus. In 3 days they have to record this in Luxembourg, and they don’t know a single note yet. While Ville is doing push ups, Mige and Linde grab their guitars and try to play the first notes of the song. Gas is air drumming, and Juska is using his voice as keyboard.

With the repetition of the refrain “with anus” they sound like a choir, very funny! Ville grabs the bass to show Mige how HIM’s way of the anal version is done.

Again it proves how much these 5 Finns enjoy making music. Ville improvises on the text, “gonna give you an electric shock” becomes “gonna give you an electric Goth”.

After the local Goth-band has finished their performance, it’s Showtime.

The club is packed, and not like the other gigs, this audience is different. Not the teenage goth girls, but boys and girls of all ages. Refreshing, despite the the heat. It is so hot that when Mige head bangs he sprays the front rows. To alleviate Mige’s suffering someone in the front row offers him a joint, he accepts it thankfully. Hands were lifted, making the evil sign. Suddenly the crowd starts shouting: 666 is the number of the beast…A completely different atmosphere than at Top of the Pops.

After the show they all go to their dressing rooms except Juska, he has to do an interview.

When I walked to the cigarette vending machine down the hall I bumped into a lady, I noticed her from the front row, staring at Ville. She begged me to take her backstage…

16/4 Frankfurt/M Fairground attraction.

Lots of female fans dream of this, but for me it became reality…to spend a night under Ville Valo. Well it isn’t that pleasant, I had to sleep in the bottom bunk of the tour bus, under Ville’s bunk. Fortunately the band doesn’t have to sleep on the bus very often. My back hurt and some of the Finns were snoring rather loud.

When we woke up we were near the Frankfurt hotel. In the room Silke and I shared waited a nice surprise, on the t.v screen it said: welcome Mr and Mrs HIM….

In the afternoon a couple of security agents arrived at the hotel to escort the band to the venue The Frankfurter Messegelände. HIM was expected to do a signing session for Shure (the microphones) Ville has a endorsement deal with Shure. While the boys did the signing, the 3 Finnish technicians, Seppo, Silke and I were at the Shure reception.

After the signing session, which was one of the less complicated ones, we walk through the venue. Ville wasn’t supposed to be with us, as he can behave like a little Diva, first say yes, then no, the say yes but meaning no…and now regretting he said yes. Mige, Linde and Ville are constantly asked for autographs, Ville hisses at me: I hate this…but he’s a professional and knows what to do. But he is a also person who needs his rest time. When a person walks up to him and says: your music sucks, he replies lethargically yeeeeeeeees….

For the evening the Shure people have planned something special, a dinner with Rock legends Uriah Heep. Ville and Juska are too exhausted, the rest are enjoying the evening. While driving back in the taxi, the taxi driver knew there were band members of HIM in his car, and started to play White Wedding by Billy Idol, and Black Dog by Led Zeppelin. He turned around and said with a grin, now that’s Rock&Roll.

17/4 Luxembourg Kippis.

The next morning, a 3 hour drive to Luxembourg. Some sleep, some play video games. A car with a trailer passes the bus. On the trailer is a huge hamburger…

Gas whispers, Oh yes, McDonald’s….

Arriving at the hotel, the usual procedure, everybody to their rooms. Ville explains: I’m hyperactive, I have to rest now.

After having dinner with the band, the crew, and the local organizers, we were taken to the club in a darkened van. At the club, while the band members are stretching their legs, a female fan approaches and hands over a present for Ville, a huge pink dildo with a heartagram painted on it. Sweet.

Backstage the guys rest some more. They decide to record the Turbo Negro cover in September instead of tomorrow because they will be in the studio by then to record some new songs.

This night the supporting act is once again Reamonn, or Reaman whatever, nobody knows the proper name. They warm up the audience and HIM gives the excited crowd a great show. When 3000 people are singing: this life ain’t worth living, it makes you think….not all are suicidal are they?

When Ville climbs the monitors and shakes his ass, the crowd goes wild.

Reamonn, the support band, are leaving the tour tomorrow so they meet up after the gig for drinks with the guys in the hotel bar. Everyone but Ville is drinking and having a great time. The word of that evening is: “kippis” ( cheers in Finnish).

I got to enjoy Linde's imitation of Sopor Aeternus. Jussi, the baby of the band, is the first to pass out. Gas is talking to the drummer of Reamonn about drums and drumming (his favorite subject).

Ville observed all of this a bit bored. It’s no fun when you see others drink while being sober.

We all left the place saying: kiitos.

*Anja Lochner*

*Orkus June 2000*

**Chapter twelve**

On this Tuesday night there is no martini for an appetizer, only an interview. He ordered his diner, grabbed his cell phone, walks outside and talks to me!

Let’s look back at the past few months, what was the festival season like for you?

Ville: We have a couple of Festivals left to do, but did you hear what happened on Highfield festival in Erfurt? Incredible! First there were some technical problems and we got a late start, round 20:30. The humidity was very high and it seemed like the atmosphere was electrically charged, like before a thunderstorm. We played 3 songs and all of a sudden all hell broke loose. It was the worst thunderstorm I’ve ever seen in my life. Thunder, lightning, and the rain, terrible!!! On stage the water was like 10 cm( 4 inch) deep. Everything was soaked and people started to throw mud at us. We had to cancel the gig. All the equipment was on stage, the PA broke down. We had so much fun at the beginning and we were furious it had to end like this. The audience was disappointed too, of course.

I can imagine! But you decided to do something for your fans, unlike many other bands…

Ville: Yes, we play September 24th in the Messehalle in Erfurt. People with a ticket for Highfield festival can come in without paying. We owe them another gig.

I heard you would love to perform with Sopor Aeternus?

Ville: Yes, we call him/her “it” because we don’t know if it is a man or a woman. But it would be a dream to perform with Sopor.

Unfortunately Sopor doesn’t perform live, but wouldn’t your fans freak out if Anna-Varney joined you on stage?

Ville: Of course they would, but it would be a wonderful spectacle!

Did you do other festivals this summer?

Ville: Tons of them! Tomorrow we’ll go to Portugal, after that we’re going to Amsterdam to play Lowlands.

What was the best experience of this summer?

Ville: The coolest thing was at the Méra Luna festival, I met Wayne Hussey ( the Mission) and we partyed together. I also met Carl McCoy, and Sisters of Mercy were great too.

Does Wayne Hussey know your music?

Ville: He bought both of our albums in a record store, that’s rare!

Is there a musician you would love to meet?

Ville: Well, Sopor Aeternus ( laughs). But I’m not a stalker, I didn’t run after the guys in Mission, I met them by coincidence and it’s always nice to meet new people, famous or not.

I haven't asked you yet, not very polite, how are you doing?

Ville: Very well, we had 2 or 3 weeks off, we went to the studio and recorded some demo’s for the new album, the writing is almost finished.

What do the new songs sound like, are they louder?

Ville: Probably yes, a bit louder than RR but also very melodic. This album isn’t influenced by the 80's but more the 70's. The songs sound beautiful and cool! Trying new things keeps us energized. It sucks to play the old songs over and over again.

You must have been so tired after the European tour.

Ville: No, not really, but it’s time to do something new. We played some of the new songs at the festivals, like Salt in our Wounds.

Will you spend some time in Berlin tonight before you go to Portugal?

Ville: yeah, we’ll go to see the Foo Fighters.

Will your new single be released soon?

Ville: Yes and we did the video near London. The single will be released in October.

Gone with the Sin is your favorite song. Did you want to make it a single?

Ville: Yes, we wanted this track to be a single, it's mellow enough for the strict German radio.

Indeed, I can imagine this song will be played a lot!

Ville: I have a funny story to tell you, if you’re interested. We were in Amsterdam, to meet a video director. We went to a club and there was this huge swimming pool. We went in there fully dressed, smoking cigarettes, drinking Jack Daniels. When I woke up the next morning I was wearing hand cuffs….

Why???

Ville: I was so wasted, the people at the hotel assumed I was a tourist who had an overdose. They broke down the door of my hotel room and put handcuffs on me. Paramedics were there.

Were you o.k?

Ville: Yeah sure, I ordered a few too many drinks, went to my room and fell asleep. I didn’t expect them to break down my door.

Did you get into trouble?

Ville: No, not really, I had to pay for the broken lock, we had a lot of fun that night. Before I went to my room I ordered some warm sandwiches, and of course, they weren’t warm anymore.

After they finally removed the handcuffs, somebody from the hotel asked me if he should warm up the sandwiches…I was half naked, in my underwear, I tried to be as polite as possible and said, No Thanks, and fell asleep again.

*Anja Lochner*

*Orkus 10/2000*

**Chapter thirteen**

To be honest, I wouldn’t want to be in Ville’s shoes at this moment, all these questions, can I repeat the success of RR, can I take a risk and try something new musically? What song do we pick to be the first single? At least the last question, and maybe even more will be answered in the beginning of June. This is the day HIM releases the first single of the upcoming album.

The 3rd album has a special meaning in a band’s career. A lot of people expect you to surpass RR. How do you deal with the pressure?

Ville: We don’t take it too seriously. If we feel pressure, we’ll tear off all our clothes and start dancing to Black Sabbath’s old records.

For many bands a great hit can became a curse because the band is measured constantly by that song, and fans expect a song like that on every new album. How important is “Join me” and do you feel the pressure to write another song like that?

Ville: It is amazing what happened to that song, especially when you realize we didn’t expect much of it. Unfortunately for people with no talent, it is impossible to write a song like that again, sorry.

How did the success of HIM affect your life? Do you enjoy your popularity?

Ville: We are very busy, and we have a little more money to spend on Bratwürste.

When did you start to work on the new album?

Ville: We’ve been working on it for about a year now. It takes so long, we’re tired of it.

What is the sound like when you compare it to the previous albums? Are there any changes in style?

Ville: The album is still not finished, it will sound a bit more rocking. Gas has lost 10 kg (22 lbs) He makes it seem drumming is terribly easy…

Why did you choose Pretending as the first single?

Ville: Pretending is a great rock song which will remind people that we’re still able to rock, although we are lazy old geezers.

What is the song about?

Ville: Pretending

Do you have plans for a video?

Ville: We’re working on that.

On the previous albums everything was about Love and Death. Is it still the same on the new one, or do you have some new themes?

Ville: This time it will be of Love and Life.

For quite some time you were very present in the media, you also released a lot of singles off RR. Was the marketing a bit too intense?

Ville: Well, maybe it would have been better for us to sign up with a small Norwegian label, record our songs in the woods with the sounds of rustling leaves, and never perform live…

Were there times when the hype round your band and more specific you became too much ?

Ville: No, not really, we think of it as a big joke.

In the beginning of this year your keyboard player Jussi left the band. Can you give us some background information about that? And who replaces him?

Ville: We talked about this and came to the conclusion that he was too young and too unstable to be on tour for months with bastards like us.

You decided to work with John Fryer again, does it have something to do with the motto “never change a winning team”? Wouldn’t it be more interesting to work with a new producer and create something different?

Ville: John doesn’t produce our album, we do the production ourselves, with the support of our fellow-countryman TT Oksala and Kevin “the caveman” Shirley.

What is the name of the album?

Ville: Deep Shadows and Brilliant Highlights.

It was very quiet around HIM this year, what did you do? Did you have the opportunity to deal with everything that had happened the past years? Was it necessary?

Ville: We continuously worked in the studio, we didn’t have time to think about all those things. Only the Idiot Twins (Mige and Linde) went to Jamaica to forget all the bad things that happened.

There are bands nowadays that surf on your wave of success, think about Entwine, also from Finland. How do you feel about that?

Ville: Good or bad we’re always one step ahead of them.

*Stefan Brunner*

*Orkus 07-08/2001*

**Chapter fourteen**

The 3rd album from HIM will cause a lot of controversy, that was clear after the first listening session. The band however is very relaxed. Singer Ville and bass player Mige don’t have time to think about these issues. They were involved very deeply in the production process, and now they are on the road to deliver their “baby” and talk about the new album.

I meet them in a five star hotel in Rheinlanden. Ville and Mige expect me to ask about their new cd but I’ll try to turn the interview in a different direction.

Why aren't the band members introduced on stage?

Mige: We didn’t even think about that. Some bands make a real spectacle, they stop the show for like 10 minutes, every band member plays a solo and is introduced.

Ville: And the audience falls asleep! We don’t feel like doing that, it doesn’t feel natural or spontaneous.

In the past few years hotels have become a big part of your lives. How do you feel about that?

Ville: Life in hotels can turn you into a monster or a nervous wreck if you’re not mentally strong enough.

Mige: You can lose reality but you don’t have to worry about washing your clothes, and you can jerk off on the sheets.

Do you know the statistics, how many times you have slept in your own bed, and in a hotel room?

Ville: The past year we were on the road for 160 days, and most of the nights I slept in a hotel. I think we stayed in about 150 hotels.
I like luxury hotels with lots of flair, and I insist on very clean rooms without feather pillows because I have allergies.

In a famous German magazine there was an article about hotel rooms, when the room looks clean it doesn’t mean it is clean…

Mige: Of course, in the bath tub, shower, or even in the bed there are always germs or other micro organisms, but what can you do?
They are also God’s children and how can you fight them, you can't even see them?

What is your favorite hotel?

Ville: In England they have this new hotel chain where I like to stay. Every room has a hi-fi, a huge bathroom and like in most English hotel rooms, a coffee machine. When you wake up you don’t have to order or go to the hotel restaurant.

Mige: In London there is this hotel and the suites have different themes. You have the Casablanca room, an American 70's disco-room and other themes.

What is the worst hotel you’ve been in?

Mige: We haven't had many bad experiences yet. You hear stories about cockroaches, but we haven’t seen them. Maybe we will if we ever get to tour in the U.S., the motels along the highways have a certain reputation.

Ville: We’ll stay on the bus!

Ville you mentioned your need for coffee in the morning, what about breakfast?

Ville: I don’t drink coffee on a regular basis. I’m not very hungry, I don’t have an appetite in the morning and the food in hotels isn’t that good.

Since the success of “Join Me” and RR, lots of fans gather in the lobby of your hotel. Do you ever use a false name or have special security in your rooms?

Ville: We haven't had any problems with that so far. Sometimes just for fun we use false names, once I used Billy Idol.

Your Rebel Yell cover is legendary. What do you think of Billy’s come back with Steve Stevens on guitar, and the acoustic version of Rebel Yell on the Greatest Hits album?

Ville: I think it’s stupid. I don’t know if Stevens cooperated but it sounds cheap. They used the same songs as the previous compilation. The album has a different cover, and 2 bonus tracks…A new album would have been more interesting.

Did you hear the rumors he refused to record Don’t You Forget About Me?

Mige: After all these years he recorded it as a bonus track.

Ville: Too bad, Simple Minds had a huge hit with it!

On the Billy Idol version you can hear the song doesn’t fit him.

Ville: He probably knew that back then. He writes all the songs himself and didn’t want to do someone else’s song, I imagine.

Would you like to record a cover?

Ville: When I hear a great Desmond Child song I get weak, but I’m not sure about the rest of the guys.

To get back at the hotel-theme, have you written any songs in hotels?

Ville: Musically, little. But when I spend a day at the hotel relaxing, I might write some great lyrics.

*Markus Sturmer*

*Metal Heart 09/2001*

**Chapter fifteen**

HIM and Umbra et Imago

A bizarre sight…We’re in the lobby of an expensive hotel in Cologne to interview 2 of the top stars of the Gothic scene. One of them, Mozart, is in full uniform and mask, and the other, Ville Valo, looks like a dark reincarnation of Jim Morrison, he is dressed from head to toe in black. On his clothes are hand painted monograms, words and signs. You can imagine the puzzled faces of the other guests at the hotel when these two are posing for the photographer.

The reason for all of this is two extraordinary new albums, DSBH by HIM, and Dunkle Energie

(Dark energy) by Umbra et Imago.

With the dark/light opus of HIM you just have to listen to the guitar-work, like with the new album of Umbra et Imago. Both albums have remarkable moments, although the style is similar to their previous albums.

HIM combines many distinct styles, rock songs meet ballads, songs of love meet songs of pain, it’s a constant game of contrasts, accompanied by powerful guitars and Ville’s unforgettable voice.

During a break (from the photo shoot) the guys talk about Iggy Pop. On Ville’s left hand it says Ozzy, and on his right Iggy. Ville asks if I have seen the Harald Schmidt show with Iggy. No????

"We recorded it and watch it all the time!"

Mige muses what it would be like to tour with Iggy Pop. Mutti (Silke) knows Iggy Pop. What is he like, is he a nice guy, asks Mige.

Enough, more pictures.

Hotel management is visibly relieved when the photo shoot is finally over.

Mozart wants to change, so he leaves. Ville and Mige are laughing when I ask them where Mosi is. Mosi sounds like mutsi, which is Finnish for mutti (mom) and Silke is Mutti. When Mozart returns, he likes his new name, and they start to play word games. Vati ( dad) is fatsi in Finnish. Both Finns know the German word that sounds a bit like this. They are both grinning….

Changing the subject I ask them how they got to know each other, and what they think of each other's music.

Ville and Mige with mischievous grins: We've heard sooooo much about Umbra et Imago!

Ville: We have seen loads of pictures, and I have to admit I was a little scared to meet Mozart.

Mige confirms this, and Mozart laughs.

The guys haven't seen Mozart perform live but their former keyboard player Juska aka Zoltan did.

Mige: He came back from the show and his hands were shaking…he said: OMG they hang girls in chains…

Ville: That’s probably the real reason he left the music business…

Mige: Indeed he was afraid of Mozart! Of course we can also have pretty girls hanging in chains....

Ville: We've heard some exciting stories about Mozart’s club and would love to have a look in the Kulturruine ( culture ruins) but our schedules are packed, and to be honest, we are way to frightened…

Mozart, who doesn’t believe a word, talks about HIM:

I've known about HIM since their first album. The first thing I noticed was the brutal, heavy guitar sounds. Our first festival together was really rushed, but at the Méra Luna festival we had an opportunity to party together and celebrate Linde’s birthday.

Ville: Indeed, we were all wasted….

Mozart: It was great fun, and I think we became friends after that.

Ville: Because we’re both sex symbols! (the room erupts in laughter)

Mozart and I are like Yin and Yang, together we are the perfect sex symbol.

Mozart: Ville has a horny, cool charisma, and I’m more direct and extreme.

We didn’t ask for this to happen, it’s been forced upon us and it isn’t always pleasant.

Ville: We don't have sex on stage, that happens backstage!

*Anja Lochner*

**Chapter sixteen**

In our own words DSBH

Salt in our Wounds

Because of the spooky intro we made this the first song. We wanted to scare and annoy people who want to listen to this album. There are some Indian influences, Mige likes that a lot.

Heartache every Moment

The piano is a tribute to John Carpenter’s Halloween. This song took a lot of work and Kevin Shirley contributed very much on this song. In the lyrics there are some parallels to RR. It is my favorite rock song.

Lose you Tonight

We nicked the drum rhythms off of Cathedral’s Voodoo. The guitar solo is a tribute to John Frusciante.

In Joy and Sorrow

This is our next single and the last song I wrote for the album. The song has beautiful string arrangements by John Fryer, I think he stole them from Massive Attack. The lyrics are inspired by Indian wedding vows.

Pretending

This was our first single, not our first choice, we liked it more as an album track. To shoot the video we had to spend a day at an amusement park, it was fun. This is our sentimental version of Iggy Pop’s Mask.

Close to the Flame

This song has a beautiful Christmas melody and is the follow up to Gone with the Sin. We tried to create a maximum sound with a minimum of instruments.

Please Don’t Let it Go

This was originally meant as a Stooges tribute. We recorded an acoustic version with Kevin Shirley and liked it so much we left it this way.
This track is the light at the end of the tunnel.

Beautiful

This song caused a lot of concern for the record company because nobody liked it. Too sentimental for those cold hearted people…I don’t give flowers on Valentine’s day so I dedicate this song to a special person.

Don’t close your Heart

This song is sung by a person, who tries to rescue another person, who sang Join me….(grins) The most organic song on the album.

Love you Like I do

The first song I mixed myself. I tried to copy the sound of Elvis. When I recorded the first demo, I was totally wasted and I wanted it to be finished quickly so I could drink more. The outré is a tribute to Black Sabbath.

*Orkus 11/2001*

**Chapter seventeen**

Hotels

Nimoti did not translate this article, she said it is exactly the same as the Billy Idol chapter. They just took the same living in hotels comments and made another article, there is nothing new in this chapter.

**Chapter eighteen**

While Germany is covered in snow and mud, most people like to stay at home drinking gluhwein and eating cookies. HIM is traveling in the south and east of Europe.

We called Ville Valo in a hotel room in Prague. Ring…ring…Valo? Finally!!! It isn’t easy to contact the dark Finnish rocker. Since the release of their third album on 27-08-2001 they have been on tour. But now we are lucky, and shortly before the sound check we can talk to him. The next day they will leave for Poland and Russia.

"Well, after the huge German tour we had about a week off", Ville says. He sounds a bit tired, although it’s only 5.30 pm.

Are you feeling home sick? Missing friends and family?

VV: Ah, one always wants what you don’t have…when I’m on tour I want to be at home, and when I’m home I can’t wait to go on tour again. But I’ve got my cd’s with me, I can talk to my friends on my cell phone, and the BBC news you can watch it everywhere.

Reading isn’t a problem, like most young Finns Ville’s English is perfect.

VV: I prefer to read English books, I have about 7 books with me, so I won’t get bored.

The highlight of the tour so far was the gig in Dom Sportova in Zagreb. First time we played there, a huge venue and the crowd went crazy! It was great!
The venues aren’t that different, but the prices are from country to country.

Are you happy with the arrival of the Euro?

VV: It seems convenient, it costs a lot to change money in every country, but I do like the feeling of having coins from different countries jingling in my pocket.

The tour seems to be running smoothly....

VV: Yesterday the singer ( female) of our supporting act fell off the stage, is that spectacular? Somebody nicked my beanie and threatened to tear my jacket, but we stay calm.

It is a desolate life on the road, as Ville describes it, sleep as long as possible, take a long bath, do a lot of promotion, sound checks, gigs, eat and drive to the next place.

I think he's turned on his professional-mode, well who could blame him with all the hype going on.

VV: The difference between the private me and the public me is I’m not telling everything in interviews. The promotion doesn’t bother me, we need that.
Fortunately I don’t have a stage personality, like Marilyn Manson. When he has a day off, I think he’s happy just to sit in his hotel room not wearing make up or his platform shoes.

On tour I rarely write any songs.

What would Ville be doing if he didn’t have this band?

VV: I don’t know… would I still be making music ? I never thought about that, I’m the kind of person who doesn’t have a plan B. I’d probably take a break to think things over. But so far HIM is exactly what I want. When we write a song, we want to reach people. But we don’t know how they will react to the song, if they will like it or not.

Right now Ville is just concentrating on the tour, they have three more gigs to do after today, then they have 14 days of Christmas holidays and at the end of the year a “home game” in Helsinki.

That’s tradition, every New Year’s Eve we play the at the same club, we know the owner. What else is there to do on that night? Get drunk with your friends…well we do that and then go on stage.

And after that?

We’ll see, we’ll see…. The 69 Eyes are working on a new album, maybe they will invite me to do some backing vocals.

*Sabine Gabriel*

*Orkus 02/2002*

**Chapter nineteen**

Ring, ring….Somewhere in rainy Helsinki a phone rings. Yepp, a cheerful voice on the other side of the line, and soon we’re in the middle of a conversation about love, symbolic death, old naked men and countless reasons to look forward to the release of their new album.

"It is a rock album, melodic and melancholic", so Ville tells us, and also remarkable. The new single, Funeral of Hearts is released in March.

"An excellent love song, with loud guitars, epic organ and piano melodies and the basic atmosphere of When Love and Death Embrace, without turning into a ballad. I’m very happy this is our first single, and also very curious how people will react", a cheerful Ville tells us. "I think it is the best song I have ever written". Not obvious, because the album wasn’t finished due to lack of time. So they worked really hard for two days, and this song was recorded. " We mixed the song together with Tim Palmer, he has worked with U2, Ozzy Osbourne and the Mission. He did a great job, it sounds so awesome"…smiles Ville proudly.

The development should be clear." We took the best of our albums and mixed it together. We wanted to have the mood of the first album. The mood, as in unusual instrumentation, and musically interesting arrangements, and ambitious song structures. I wanted the music to be melodic again with a passion for the dark. There are lots of bands that play melancholic, sad and tragic songs, and most of them suck…at least, for me. They can’t experience the Finnish melancholy like I do, I live here, and it’s cold and dark but I’m happy with that."

It seems that Ville was inspired by Charles Baudelaire ( 1821-1867) and he writes some darkly romantic lyrics.

Another influential person is Timo K. Mukka, a Finnish writer of the sixties. "He has written a lot of melancholic things, I’m going through things now that he was going through in the sixties, he has the same vibe as our lyrics. The best way of killing your heart is to fall in love, because it doesn’t belong to you anymore. Love is the Funeral of Hearts. It’s laid in a coffin, waiting to be cremated."

Interesting is the fact that the video for FOH is directed by Stefan Lindfors, a Finnish designer, and he enters a whole new world with it. Ville explains their choice." He wanted to do the video and had some great ideas, for example me in a row boat in the Arctic ocean in Norway. Of course I wanted to go to Norway and Lapland, I’ve never been there. We saw the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights. It was extremely cold, like -40 C, but also very beautiful, I’ve seen landscapes I never saw before". He tells us about the 3 old, gold and naked men, David Lynch style. "We’re not sure what will be in the video, Stefan is still working on it".

"Funeral of Hearts is just a small part on the album, but we like it a lot, and think it will be a great single.

It is very us, very HIM!"

*Doreen Krase*

*Orkus 03/2003*

**Chapter twenty**

Listening session

When it gets dark outside Ville takes his acoustic guitar, sits down and starts to play. He plays whatever comes to mind, he is in his own world. Melodies arise, and even songs. Like this Ville can relax and unwind. "Creating songs this way is the most beautiful thing there is" he says.

The 11 tracks on the latest album, Love Metal were created this way. Every single one of them has grown from Ville’s soul, and he loves them all. "Love Metal is the only album that reflects my personal taste.. I had so much fun writing this".

While working on DSBH the whole world was waiting for another hit, "everything had to be done fast, because we didn’t want to disappoint anyone". There were hundreds of meetings, much more than Ville could handle.

It was as if everybody was stressed out at the same time. Ville is at home, in bed with the flu, while in Cologne the press gathered to listen to the first sounds of Love Metal.

"I love to write songs, more than anything else, it is the reason I became a musician. With all the other things the essence sometimes gets lost, you have so many meetings that have nothing to do with music, you don’t even have time left for yourself".

After the DSBH-tour the band decided to take a short break. "For the the rest of the band stress wasn’t that bad, but for Ville it was", says Mige Amour, who came to Cologne to fill in for Ville. Mige is talking and drinking beer with the assembled journalists. "Ville is always the center of attention, after a gig I can take it easy but Ville has a lot of obligations".

Mige is a close friend of Ville. They used to spend a lot of time together and know each other well. "Ville is very close to me", Mige says. "Back in the day we used to hang out together but in the last few years there isn’t time for that anymore. So while he handles most of the promotion, I’ll have a drink with the others".

During his doctor ordered break, Ville enjoys being at home he says "drinking a beer. I can rest, think a lot and have the most crazy ideas. That is almost as important as writing songs".

The past few months Ville was able to forget everything about the music business, and focus completely on writing songs. "I even listened to old songs of Black Sabbath and the Sex Pistols, and jammed to them. I had so much fun being able to dedicate myself entirely to music". At the end of this process Love Metal was written.

This is a rock album with a dark atmosphere, which reminds the listener a bit of Black Sabbath’s Paranoid. "We were all influenced by Black Sabbath and everybody should hear where we come from". On the album Ville’s favorite companion, his acoustic guitar, shows up in quiet moments, sober, characteristic and impressive.

"When Ville played us the demos we were all impressed", Mige says, while in the background Love Metal plays. You can see it makes him happy to hear the new album. "It is harder than the previous album and it will be fun to play this live".

The band is aware that taking a break made them stronger and they have grown together. "The short break was great and it made everyone realize they can’t live without music", Ville says. "This time nobody put pressure on us, we took all the time we needed. My batteries are fully charged"!

*Sandra Eichner*

*Orkus 4/2003*

**Chapter twenty one**

The Dark Force of the North is back. They proved they could work under a lot of pressure (with the album DSBH), this time they had fewer international producers and got rid of all the advisers and know-it-alls. Only the most necessary people worked on the album, therefore it doesn't sound over produced.

Ville Valo stayed in Cologne for a couple of days for practical reasons. He did a lot of press meetings and drank some beers. We met Ville in a hotel bar. He was in a good mood, he survived a party the previous evening and we ended up talking about horror movies, especially The Ring.

"I haven't seen the American remake yet", said Ville, who is wearing an Evil Dead shirt. "I watched the original Japanese version at home, and it was the creepiest movie I've seen in years. The end was so tense that I had to call one of our roadies and had a few beers with him until I was able to sleep"!

You don’t have to be a genius to understand it wasn't just a coincidence that Juliette Lewis had a leading part in the video of Buried Alive by Love, the second single off Love Metal.

Ville says, "Juliette is a really nice person. She doesn’t have to adjust that much for her movies, she is out of control in a good way. The first time I met her was at a party in Philadelphia. She was our first choice, she’s so much better than some arrogant model or diva. She told me recently she is focusing on her musical career right now, instead of acting. I listened to some of her songs and it sounds like Blondie, the good Blondie I mean. I don’t write songs for her, I’m way too busy with HIM".

No wonder, when one considers that Ville handled his dog's death with the lyrics to 'The Funeral of Hearts', Love Metal's first released single.. well that's the rumor an anonymous Informant spread....

"This is probably one of the subjects I assimilated with the lyrics" says Ville, as he tries to stay somewhat serious, "one of the subjects.. in general it's just about interpersonal relationships, not me necessarily".

Ville won't 'escape' me that easy.. did his dog really die?

"I was five.. but I can remember it pretty well and I know that it's horrible when your favorite animal dies. For some reason - probably a psychological one - since he died I have developed allergies to animals."

But there is a difference between the love for an animal and the love for a human being?

"We are not talking about love making, not to cause any misunderstandings.... but love can be similar in both cases, you take responsibility. You give and you take".

While we're on that topic: Could it be that many of HIM's lyrics might be about completely different things than the listener might think they are?

"I don't think that there is a great difference between the people's interpretations and the real meaning of the lyrics. But well.. what is the real meaning of a lyric?! If you could interpret every word, it would be a boring and predictable undertaking. People can interpret what they want to. But they shouldn't try to know every little thing about everything. It's like the difference between a book and it's movie. There are differences also and perhaps it should be like that. It would be ideal if the listeners could form their own picture about the music and the lyrics. That's one of the reasons why I'm not so much into music-videos. They take away your imagination! They are a necessary evil. In ideal cases they're close to the musician's general idea and you can live with it. But it's not good if you watch the video and remember it more than the actual song. The media give you the feeling that this is the way it should be done, and what can you do about it"?

Valo’s lyrics contain a certain mystic, but there are also lines that puzzle me, for example.... I’ve crossed oceans of wine to find you.

"It’s simple, really, it is a word game. Dracula said: I’ve crossed oceans of time to find you, and time and wine sound a bit similar so....and it’s also a little bit of a mean gothic joke. But it worked out fine, at least I can remember the song.

I usually work on a few songs at the same time, and when I don’t like an idea I put it away. That’s why our B-sides, or bonus tracks are also great songs, at least, most of them. There are some bands who've lost the feeling of good and bad songs, for example, Suede ( from Sweden) have such great songs on their B-sides, the original songs are faded. So they released an album with only B-sides".

*Nikolas Krofta
Metal Heart 5/2003*

**Chapter twenty two**

Buried Alive by Love

When we started to work on our songs, it became clear this had to be the opening song for the album. A pleasant rock&roll start, and the hardest song we have ever done. It has a “swing” and a good groove, and a lot of punk energy. A bit like Iggy and the Stooges. The energy is like It’s all Tears, one of our older songs.

The Funeral Of Hearts

On every album there is one song that defines our style. When somebody asks what we sound like, we would play this track. We could play harder and faster songs, but this one has the most important trademarks of HIM, melancholic, characteristic guitar sounds, and my voice. This song has a unique touch and isn’t like any other song we've done. It will also sound great by a campfire. The genesis of this song is a funny story. Mige came to visit me and I was strumming my acoustic guitar. He asked me what I was playing so I performed the entire song. He was thrilled and said the song HAD to be on the album. He kept bugging me, so I finished the song, and now it is the first single! This is the kind of magic that creates extraordinary songs. Paranoid by Black Sabbath was done in the same way. I created more last-minute Art-songs, like In Joy and Sorrow, Gone with the Sin and When Love and Death Embrace. The best songs are written without pressure and not thinking too much about it.

Beyond Redemption

I like the raw guitar sounds combined with the 50's and 60's sounds, like Elvis Presley meets Megadeath. A simple effective song with a great feeling, it will sound great live. When we did a gig in Hamburg a couple of weeks ago, our expectations were exceeded.

Sweet Pandemonium

Tim Palmer did one hell of a job on the final mix. He has sure qualified himself to do our next album. The guitar riff is stolen from Black Sabbath, it is so obvious, we can’t hide it….And the slow soporific groove is new to us, our older albums don’t have anything like this.

Soul on Fire

It reminds me a bit of I Love You, the first song off RR, or Diabolikal Rapture. The riff is similar, but it can also remind you of the latest Cult album, an excellent album that failed because of bad promotion.

The Sacrament

Same style as Funeral of Hearts, a sentimental song with influences of folk and acoustic guitars. Burton has some remarkable keyboard parts . I begged him to do something Wagner-style, and he did, just like that!

This Fortress of Tears

Black Sabbath meets Pink Floyd, and they meet HIM. Again a Black Sabbath riff, although between the passages it sounds more like Pink Floyd, the Wishing you were here era, which is my favorite song . It is very melancholic, and the guitar solo could be from Corrosion of Conformity. Raw, no effects, straight in your face, I like that.

Circle of Fear

Somewhere between the Mission, U2 and HIM, and a bit of Led Zeppelin is also there.

I didn’t know Tim Palmer produced the best selling album by the Mission, I found this out later. Tim told me some very interesting stories.

Endless Dark

This is what we sounded like in the beginning of HIM. A positive Neil Young song. Linde plays it very well.

The Path

Epic, but simple. The build up at the end works out very well. We improvised a lot in the studio. It is our tribute to Kyuss and to the Mexican deserts, or in our case, the Finnish ice massifs.

*Ville Valo*

*Metal Heart 7/2003*

**Chapter twenty three**

When HIM singer Ville Valo and London After Midnight front man Sean Brennan meet each other you never know what is going to happen. They have a lot in common, suggestive imaginations and music filled with desire, tragedy, and lust. On the other side, the contrast on this sunny Saturday in Cologne couldn’t be bigger.

Before he does this interview, Ville lays down on the floor in the hotel lobby, asks in fluid German for a beer with ice, rubs his tummy and curls up on his coat. Compared to this paragon of a rock star, Sean looks like a fairy prince, dressed in a S/M outfit, questioning himself if this is really happening. His dark eyes are inscrutable, he stays very quiet, and shows no curiosity.

Both have a whole day to get to know each other. Between filming and photo shoots with the guys,( Sean piled on Ville, Ville with big wide eyes crawling around Sean, Sean and Ville poured into one chair), they were lurking at the bar, sizing up each other. First polite, then thawing, and later on animated. We feared they told all their jokes without us…

What do you guys usually do when you have a Saturday off?

VV: I don’t know, maybe I would dream for a day like this? I’m here, surrounded by friends and free drinks. Back home I probably would wank and grab my guitar.

SB: I would rehearse, we do that on Saturday, even if I’m the only one there. I would be wondering where everybody was.

Did you two meet for the first time at Méra Luna festival last year?

VV: Yes, we were there on the same day and playing the same stage, but we didn’t have the time to talk to each other. I saw a little of London after Midnight, but it wasn’t the first time I heard their music. I listened to Selected Scenes in 1995, before we even released our first EP. My girlfriend is a huge fan of London after Midnight, so Sean has a lot of autographs to give me after we are done.

SB: You see, that’s a great thing about Europe, you have access to so much music, in America you hear or get nothing. OK HIM has a solid fan base, first underground, and now it’s becoming a wider audience. In 1995 I didn’t know any European bands. In the US it’s black or white. Either you’re a megastar, like Christina Aguilera, and earn a lot of money, or you’re completely underground, there is no in between.

Recently HIM was in L.A to record their new album and do the video for Buried Alive by Love. Were you able to observe the local scene, and what did you think of it?

VV: Not really, we were there with the guys from Jackass and they took us to the crazy MTV parties, there were dancers just like in video clips.

More the Aguilera side of the scene?

SB: Look, they saw the cool side of the scene, the money side, he got to see the side of L.A I don’t know. I’m poor, I live in the poor musicians ghetto.

Is it time to do a school exchange program, Sean should go to Helsinki?

SB: First Ville must tell me if it’s worth it.

VV: Mmmm, Helsinki not that much, but I can recommend Tampere. There you have a real gothic and industrial scene, and a lot of club nights. The Helsinki scene has grown old.

SB: (laughs and claps) Old people, that’s our target group!

VV: No really, Tampere is a student town with more girls than boys, that’s what you want, a lot of great bars concentrated in one street, or a district like the Sunset strip in L.A. All the kids from Finland go there, while the rest of the country is very conservative.

Sean you've expressed you dislike for current American political policies, especially the response to the terrorist attacks. You were on tour then, did you think twice, at that time, about going to Europe, let alone boarding an airplane ?

SB: Sure. Other than that I hate flying anyway....

VV: me too! Every flight after September 11th is an uncomfortable experience. But you have obligations, you gotta do what you gotta do…

The world has become a peculiar place…

VV: It has always been like that, war and terrorism are everywhere, but the whole media is focused on America, and the subject of censorship.

SB: America is a strange country, we have been touring a lot in Europe, middle and south America, and returned with the feeling that America lost its adhesion, it turned into a bizarre wonderland. People live in ignorance. They don’t give a damn about others, and don’t understand why nobody likes the U.S.A. I feel ashamed of most Americans. With that amount of money we can do something really good. Instead 1% of the super rich have control over the White House and want Bush there. It’s the worst situation, he’s an absolute asshole, he doesn’t know what he is doing, and doesn’t care that the rest of the world sees him as an enemy.

VV: Wait a minute.....(a long pause)

SB:(undeterred) Lately I’ve been having doubts if it makes any sense to be an artist. What is the use, does it really help to improve people’s lives?

VV: I think you are a great artist and your music is beautiful. When we talk about politics and everything that is going on in America, don’t forget music is a way of escaping for lots of people. Listening to an album or going to a gig are ways to forget about injustice and fear. Personally I’m not thrilled about political music.

Don’t you listen to Dead Kennedys?

VV: I’ve listened to their music, not the lyrics. At that time, I was just a kid. I preferred to listen to Ronnie James Dio, he was talking about dragons and other fantasy stuff, it was my trip to Disneyland, escapism for a few hours.

SB: I understand Ville very well, but I feel like I have to consider the consequences of my actions. I prefer reality to escapism.

Do you want to bring children in this world?

VV: I want to have a family, later. I love children and I would be a great dad!

SB: No, not really. I’ll take care of Ville’s children when he’s on tour. I’ll be their godfather.

VV: We have come to the subject of responsibility. When you want things to change in this world you have to raise your children in this spirit, teach them love, respect and values.

What would John Cleese say? And now for something completely different!
We’ll talk about your “brainchildren” now. HIM’s Love Metal is almost in clean diapers, and the new LAM album is almost done. How do you know when it's time to deliver?

VV: You’re never sure about that, an album is never finished. Back in the day, in the 60's and 70's a band would tour for about 2 years to see how the audience would react and what the best songs were to put on an album before they recorded it. Today most of the material is kept secret, due to the internet . I would have released RR after a massive tour. That would have rocked! But I’m still learning, it is hard to let go.

SB: We have re-released our older cd’s and improved the sound. At that time we didn’t have the proper equipment. But you make the most of the situation you are in, so you’re never really finished.

VV: Songs are a sonic diary, a snapshot of your career. You don’t have to be embarrassed about that. You should be proud to create something beautiful with a small budget and lousy equipment. LAM’s Spider and the Fly were very influential to me. I wish I could create something like that under those circumstances. It is my complicated way of saying Thank You Sean!

What would be the common denominator between you?

VV: Dry humor. We are both serious, but also sarcastic and a little skittish.

SB: I agree with Ville, but it is also obvious we both put our feelings in our music.

VV: Indeed, it’s about true feelings.

SB: Ideally every band has many dimensions, which open up one at a time, the deeper you get involved. But there are many layers of Hell…

VV: Aha Dante!!! We are only in the 9th circle, but we’re working on that. Or even better we slide further down.

That’s what people mean by a downwards spiral. But let’s go back to the surface again, both HIM and LAM are very expressive and extroverted artists, and your music is wide ranging and beautiful. How different are Sean and Ville on or off stage?

VV: That is a very difficult question. It is easy to wear a mask, and way more difficult to be yourself, and HIM as a band chooses the last one. I don’t want masks anymore. OK, I love Alice Cooper and all the stage characters, but my favorite artists are like Johnny Cash. He doesn’t need stage magic. In a way he wears a mask too, but he represents something real for me. I think this question has to be answered by somebody who knows Sean and me really well. It is a puzzle of a thousand pieces.

SB: People with a strong stage personality like Jim Morisson and Johnny Cash are larger than life. I’m not comparing myself with them. I don’t have a high opinion of my stage performance, I’m too shy. One thing all stage performers have in common is that the stage is like a filter, a magnifying glass of your life. All experiences are amplified and looked over. I studied at the Film Academy, it was an inspiration for me, it helped me to express myself. But it can be different, like Radiohead, who don’t care about publicity, or on the other side there is Marilyn Manson, who connects great music with a crazy image.

VV: While Sean was learning about filming I was learning to play jazz. Maybe that explains something? I started to play bass, and played absolutely everything, reggae, bebop, grindcore, fusion. I was in seven different bands at that time, simply because I loved music. I couldn’t imagine being a singer, the center of attention. I was way too shy for that. I started to sing because nobody else wanted to.

We don’t have to feel sorry for you, do we?

VV: No, I’m happy with it now.

Let’s talk about your album’s titles, Love Metal for Ville, and the preliminary name for the LAM album, according to their website is Violent Acts of Beauty. What do you two want to tell us?

VV: ( snorts) Love Metal, that is difficult… Violent Acts of Beauty mmm. I’m from Finland and English isn’t my native language, I'm an outsider, and I experience things in a visual and sensual way. I chew on words, taste them. Sean has this great feeling for language, his lyrics turn me on, I’m crossing my legs right now!!! Sean is also very direct in his choice of words, there is more aggression and hate. I’m simply an old hippie who smoked too much pot when I was younger.

SB: (laughs) We’re like yin and yang, and you haven't even heard our new songs!

VV: I like Sean’s lyrics because I don’t always understand them. It stays a mystery, like Neil Young, when you don’t understand everything the images are much stronger, they speak to the unconscious mind. Sound and lyrics bounce off each other, and that is the power of music. If things were different we would have been poets.

Isn’t that a bit the same, don’t all art forms pour out the same creative well? Like poetry, music, acting and so on?

SB: When you’re attached to a certain art form, like we are to music, you see things different, not universal. For every song you have a trigger, and you respond to it. Without that inspiration, you can’t write songs. If I could fake it, I would be writing \*N Sync shit, and earn millions. But it doesn’t work that way, music is my life.

VV: For me it’s organized madness. There is so much information, you can’t cope with it all, you suck it in without digesting or understanding it, and then IT happens. I try not to over analyze it.

We're near the end of this interview, 3 quick questions, just out of curiosity.
The latest book you read?

SB: The Universe in a Nutshell by Steven Hawking.

VV: An autobiography of Lemmy Kilmister, White Line Fever.

The last movie you saw?

SB: Bowling for Colombine.

VV: Cinema? I never go there. I saw the Jackass movie in London because Steve-O invited us to the Premiere. I hate cinemas, the air is too dry, I have to cough all the time during the movie, which is annoying.

SB: Ah, so you are one of those horrible people who cough all the time!

VV: Noooo, it’s the miserable air conditioning. I also have a bladder the size of a walnut, I have to climb over people every 15 minutes so I can have a piss. But I borrow videos and dvd’s, the last one was Cradle of Fear.

Oh, the Alex Chandon movie, with Dani Filth! It's nothing but a B-movie....

VV: Well I liked it!!!

So did I. Ok, the final question, what's the last album you bought?

VV: No idea, I get a lot of cd’s, very often I forget to listen to them.

SB: He is a rich rock star!

VV: No, I pay for them, probably a reggae album, oh no I remember, Turbo Negro, Corrosion of Conformity, a rock album.

SB: The new Foo Fighters.

Surprised? So am I. Like I said, with Ville Valo and Sean Brennan, you never know.

Later on Sean signed everything Ville brought for his girlfriend.

They left together, into the Cologne night….

*Melanie Aschenbrenner*

*Orkus 5/2003*

**Chapter twenty four**

At the movies

"I just like movies", Ville confesses, "I like great movies, I like cult movies, but I can gain something from bad movies too! I want to see Driven by Rennie Harlin. He’s a Finnish director, and has done some successful movies in Hollywood. I heard that Driven is really, really bad but I still want to see it."

Ville is wearing an Evil Dead t-shirt, of course we need to talk about that…

"I liked the first one, it was low budget but charming. The second part was ok, I can live with that, but the third part was too exaggerated, it didn’t appeal to me."

"I gave my younger brother a luxury box set of Evil Dead as a present, it’s in leather and looks very expensive. I should buy one for myself or visit my brother more often!"

Valo’s favorite movie isn’t a Hollywood block buster, it is a Japanese movie, a sort of comedy about a soccer player who does a lot of kung fu tricks to open up the game.

"It sounds cheesy, but it is very well made, and funny. I ordered it from Japan, via the internet, it has a great picture and sound. I just can’t remember the title…."

No problem Mr Valo, we’ll get back to you later.

*Nikolas Krofta*

*Metal Heart 7/2003*

**Chapter twenty six**

Making of the Sacrament

Castle Ploskovice, Czech Republic

The newlyweds, dressed in their festive clothing, have to wade through the mud to have their wedding pictures taken in front of the castle's ornate door. A short distance away is a white, steaming, catering truck. Inside vegetables are cleaned and preparations are made to feed the entire video crew. If you look at the faces of the wedding party, they look very surprised to see Ville and his crew sitting at a table, drinking coffee and playing chess. Outside there are dozens of peacocks screaming.

The summer residence of Anna Maria Toscano von Sachsen-Lauenburg was selected by Bam Margera to shoot the second video for the Finnish Goth Rock band HIM.

Since 11 am this morning the preparations started full speed in the basement vaults, declared by Bam to be the orgy room. And indeed you can why when looking at the lavishly furnished cellar, with fountains and statues. The scene is done rather quickly so there is some time left to look around.
Hours are passing by, in which a lot of coffee is consumed, they play chess again, and are freezing…the weather isn’t very cooperative. The lighting team is doing the best they can to create sunshine for Ville’s balcony scene and the bed scene with model Vanda Vosatkov. We had a chat with Bam, who is very eager to tell us about his love for HIM’s music, and shows off some of the injuries from his Jackass stunts. It is obvious he has a crush on Ville when you see his tattoos, which he shows proudly.

Meanwhile the speaker for Ville’s playback is connected, and it becomes hectic on the balcony.

The Sacrament is played at double speed so they can synchronize the slow-mo-parts. It sounds like the Smurfs and everybody is grinning. Sir Valo doesn’t care, he concentrates on acting and is flirting with the camera until the take is finished. The video crew is satisfied with the take and start preparing for the bed scene.

The model doesn’t know one word English ( there is an interpreter) but she feels at ease. It isn’t a problem for her to take her clothes of and lay on the bed with red satin sheets in front of about 20 men. You can’t blame the camera and lighting men for taking a closer look at her, she is beautiful.

Silke, aka HIM’s mutti, annoys the professional photographers by telling them Ville won’t do any topless shots today. You can hear some cursing. The irritations are soon forgotten as the music starts again, and our heartthrob is strutting on the bed.

After all this we have to wait again for a very long time. It’s getting dark, and half the crew attacks the buffet. The State Hall is being prepared for the final shot of today in which the entire band shows up for the playback.

Because everything took much more time then planned, everybody is getting tired, and the antique furniture is being used to lie down on. The administrator of the castle isn’t very pleased with the guys lounging on the furniture, she starts yelling at Mige, but he doesn’t understand her and doesn’t move....but there is an interpreter who explains everything to him and makes him get up.

At last, when the Sacrament plays for the last time this day, people have the feeling they are at a live gig.

Mige and his knights sling their guitars and are on their way to the Prague hotel.

*Christian Hector*

*Orkus 9/2003*

**Chapter twenty seven**

At the end of their record contract HIM will release a live album and a DVD, and the following year a Greatest Hits album. After the planned tour with Ozzy Osbourne , the Finns are in no hurry for a follow up deal. They can take it easy, the next album won’t be released before 2005. Bass player Miko Paananen aka Mige tells us what he thinks of the music business, teen culture and Bam Margera.

In November a live album/DVD will be released, what can we expect?

Mige: We put together material from seven different gigs we played at Semi Final in Helsinki, for both the live album and the DVD.

Will there be an documentary about the history of the band on the DVD?

Mige: No, we didn’t want that. A book was published and it's horrible! In my opinion there shouldn’t be a documentary about our band.

Also, a Greatest Hits album will be released. Will there only be singles on it, or perhaps some unpublished songs?

Mige: Both I hope. The Greatest Hits cd from the Smashing Pumpkins is great, it consists of a cd with the singles, and a cd with special remixes. I would prefer something like that for us. But it’s up to the record company.

Live album, DVD, Greatest Hits album, sounds like a summary section of the record company.

Mige: It is. Our record deal is almost finished and the label decided which tracks to use. Apart from this, I like compilations very much. I think it is awesome when a band has recorded over 20 albums and there is one album with their greatest hits.

Can you tell us something about a new record deal right now?

Mige: No, we need to take our time for that. There is no need to make a decision this year.

It didn't take long for HIM to become a big success, what do you think of all the attention?

Mige: I don’t think about it. The music is the most important thing, and it didn’t change that much, we do as a band what we've always wanted to do. Of course there are a lot more people being nice to us. Most things that happen when you become more popular and sell more records are ridiculous. The entire music business is bullshit.

The next album isn’t planned before 2005. What will you do in the mean time? Side projects or activities that have nothing to do with HIM?

Mige: Some of us will definitely do side projects, personally I won’t.

What will you be doing?

Mige: (grins) I will build a sauna in Finland, and of course there's always HIM business to take care of.

Your guitarist Linde became a father this year, can you see yourself having a family one day?

Mige: No, it’s not my thing, really. When you’re away from home all the time, and leading this crazy life, it doesn’t suit me. But later it might happen.

At a HIM gig in London I noticed the audience was different, mostly skater kids. In Germany there are mainly gothic people, a funny combination isn’t it?

Mige: It’s great there are so many different people at our gigs, a fusion of different cultures. It is nice to play for a mixed audience instead of reaching just one group of people.

What exactly is the connection between HIM and Bam Margera? Is it promotion for the UK/US or are you just friends?

Mige: It's so funny, people are taking this way too serious. Bam likes our band and has done some videos for us. I would prefer that kids find us because of Bam rather than the teen magazines.

*Meike Spanner*

*10/2003*

**Chapter twenty seven**

Linde goes Rock&Roll

Album review

When you expect not to be taken seriously, you’re basically on the safe side. That must have been the thought of Lily Lazer, aka Mikko Linde Lindström about the bad reviews of his solo side project Daniel Lioneye.
HIM fans adored the first solo work of the singing guitarist, but the press weren’t very enthusiastic. Apparently it didn’t hurt Daniel, or Linde at all.

The fun oriented cast of DL with Mige on bass and Valo on drums promised, promises and keeps promising to be a fun factor. With a motto like "anyone can do it if you really want it", it took only 5 days to make the album including mixing and mastering. "We recorded the album in the winter of 2000. It was written and recorded in only 5 days. Most tracks are first takes" says the self pronounced King of Rock&Roll, and he seems to be proud of that. "I wasn’t sober once in the studio".

Rock&Roll attitude or Finnish reality? Hard to guess… Just like the lyrics by the way, which are very true to life. To quote Daniel Lioneye, "It’s all about drinking, fucking and drugs, the usual shit. I write whatever comes to mind".
The result is, according to DL, "loud and dirty, and please don’t take it too seriously". Objective listeners didn’t like that…

"Because HIM recordings are always very expensive I wanted to do something completely different. Everything in the recording studio should sound raw. There was no master plan, but everything was flowing and you can hear it on the album".

When you’re famous you can have some fun once and a while. The fan base of the tall blond rasta hailed the album, and the hardcore HIM fans ordered the album on Ebay.

Don't doubt the statement “just for fun”, because Linde says he’s telling the truth.

"When I started to write the songs, the total process went spontaneously. At first I wanted the songs just for myself, but it was so much fun playing them and even more to reverse the roles".

Shameless imitations, stolen riffs. Presley meets Danzig, passes the Stones and embraces Lemmy of Motörhead. Next to him stands Ritchie Blackmore, who pats Tony Iommi on the shoulder, saying: they are young and having fun… Iommi plucks his shirt and starts to meditate.

DL and company give everything they’ve got on the King of Rock & Roll. I’m gonna give you what you need, I’m gonna make your ears bleed. Intense, but in 5 days…5 days…

International P-Lover and Eldorado Baby are sufficiently legitimized, due to full drunkenness, and with We gonna Rockin Tonight, you just have to grin. Also Dope Danny and Lonely Road are amusing. But with Lioneye's version of Dylan’s Knocking on Heavens Door, my patience is gone, and I’m happy it is the last track on the album.

Lioneye, Mige and Valo gave it their all and had fun. HIM fans will love it.
It appears that DL is a guy who just wants to irritate the world, and they are exploring how far they can go.

Linde's guitar playing skills are great, but you have to get used to his voice.
And the lyrics: bananas… is this Rock & Roll cliché with punk elements: no.

Iggy Pop maniac Linde promised in 2001, when he has the time he will think about the next album…

*Tania Witte*