

MARROWOMB interview TNT Radio, by Brujo

Hi Frank. First of all, thank you for coming to TNT Radio and sharing this time. First of all, I would like to know what your feelings are about the release of “Phisenomie” in a few weeks, especially after having shared two singles from the album.

- Hi Brujo – thanks for having me and thanks for taking an interest in my project. In a Word...I am relieved. It's been a long and arduous process, and there was a point where I was so demotivated that I didn't think I would even finish the album. But, I powered through, and I am glad I did because I am happy with the final product. Along with this sense of relief though, I do feel a sense of accomplishment and excitement since it means a lot to me to get it out into the world. The act of creation is important to me, so that process alone was worth it.

MARROWOMB emerged in 2020. What motivated you to form this new project? Did you feel that there was something else you needed to explore musically that you couldn't do in your other bands?

- Funny you say that because that is exactly the reason! I felt limited every time I was in bands with other people. Not say they weren't fun or good experiences – they undoubtedly were – but it was extremely hard to get my specific vision through in collaborative projects. I knew I needed to find a way to do something that was truly my own. With Marrowomb, I loved that I was able to go at the pace that I was setting and I really enjoyed making all the creative and artistic decisions myself. While taking 5 years it not necessarily outside the norm for bands to write an album, it did start to take its toll on me near the end. I was getting really tired, and really frustrated, but all that time truly did pay off because I was able to present the album in such a way that I envisioned 5 years ago. If I didn't take the time that I did to prepare and construct it, it would not have met my own standards nor would it have had the effect that it might (hopefully) have when other people hear it.

From the beginning, MARROWOMB has presented itself as a musical entity without restrictions and with a completely relentless approach. How would you define the essence of the project compared to other bands within blackened death metal?

- I try not to compare *too* much because I like people to form their own opinions and I also like to form my own opinions about what I want to do artistically. That being said, I would say what sets me apart from other bands of a similar style is that it remains unpredictable and it merges a lot of sounds/genres together. I think a lot of this is due to my vocal style. I was opposed to using a one-note style for every song, so I sort of adapted my performance to what each song called for. While it might sound incongruous on paper, I think it turned out nicely because song ends up with its own identity and its own special performance, while still sounding like part of a cohesive whole. I don't think there's any one song that doesn't belong on this album. It's also important to me that I make albums that function as a whole. Though it's not a conceptual story per se, the album is definitely meant to be taken in as a full experience.

Extreme metal in Chicago has a rich history, with a fairly solid underground scene. How has this environment influenced the sound and philosophy of MARROWOMB?

- I actually take most of my inspiration/influence from non-US based music, so I'm not sure the scene in Chicago has directly shaped my sound, at least from a musical standpoint. However, going to a lot of shows here, meeting people in the scene, playing in local bands, etc. is what prepared me with the confidence to make my own project. Seeing other people do creative work and play it live, no matter their level of musical prowess is still very cool to see and it can be inspiring. Musically, however, I tend to just do what I want and do what I feel like without the intent of trying to fit into a scene.

"Phisenomie" is an album that you have been developing almost since the beginning of the project. How did the vision for the album evolve over time? Were there moments when the concept changed drastically, or was the sound and direction of the record always clear to you?

- You are correct, this project began with the creation of this album. Interestingly enough, I don't think the vision changed over time as much as my approach to the production did. So, more plainly speaking, the sound and direction was always clear, but it was the "how" of getting there that changed over time. I went through a significant number of re-records and remixes simply because I was unhappy with how it was sounding. The music was all there, the lyrics were what I wanted, but I ran into so many problems that caused me to question the production. But eventually I hit a stride in 2024 where I was able to get it to a point where I felt like the production highlighted the strength of the material.

On a conceptual level, the album seems to dive into themes of internal conflict and psychological struggle. What is the central message of "Phisenomie"?

- Largely that – but to expand a bit, each song dives into different "masks" we can adopt at any time, whether that be a mask of vanity, mask of narcissism, mask of desperation, mask of hatred, etc. I'll leave it up to the listener to discover all these angles and interpret them as they see fit, but that is the gist of the concept. There are of course consequences we can experience for adopting personas that are not true to oneself and I explore those as well on the album.

What was the songwriting process like? Did Frank work entirely alone on the structures and then bring in Kevin Paradis on drums, or was there a more organic collaboration in developing the tracks?

- I essentially did everything from a composition standpoint. I even programmed the drums before I sent them to Kevin. I chose Kevin as my drummer after I already constructed the drum parts, too. The vision is entirely mine and Kevin was not part of that because I discovered him much later, via a friend when I started to seek out drummers. However, what Kevin was able to do with such pre-written tracks was simply incredible. He took my mechanical sounding programmed parts and breathed a life into them that I could not have imagined.

Kevin Paradis is an incredibly precise drummer, and his work with Benighted has cemented him as a reference within extreme death metal. What was the experience of working with him like? Did you have creative freedom in your parts, or were you directed towards a specific sound?

- I gave him the tracks I made and told him to follow the general ideas but make them sound more “human.” I gave him the freedom to implement his style and make some creative decisions if he felt like it might help a song. A lot of the times when he made a suggestion or change, I ended up keeping it. Kevin’s approach was exactly what I wanted out of a drummer for this project and I could not be happier with what he did. He kept my creative feel while adding that human element that the album truly needed.

The opening track, “Phantasia Kataleptike,” sets the tone for the album with a relentless sound and complex structure. Why did you choose this track to open the album? Does it in any way reflect the overall essence of the album?

- It was actually the first song I wrote, and after I had the album done, it just felt like an opener to me. It’s definitely one of the more immediately catchy tunes on the album, and it has a relatively straightforward structure that I think is memorable. I love when albums have an opening track that is special and memorable because in many cases it does set the tone for the rest of an album, and, in my opinion, it should be a preview of what’s to come later. “Phantasia Kataleptike” has a speed and variety that I thought just made sense as an opener – and it definitely makes one buckle their seatbelt in preparation for what follows.

MARROWOMB's sound is very raw, but at the same time meticulous in every detail. On the album we find elements of black metal, death metal and even progressive and experimental parts that, at times, create a chaotic atmosphere. It is something that we already noticed in the initial “Phantasia Kataleptike” but, for example, in “Inner Ring” that experimental vein is much more present, right? How do you achieve that balance between aggressiveness and ambiance without losing the extreme essence?

- Thanks for noticing that. I’m glad that you did because that’s exactly the effect I wanted the album to have. I needed the album to be clear enough to hear the parts, but I didn’t want it so polished to the point where it sounded sterile and uninteresting. Also, that’s a good question and again, I am glad you are picking up on these nuances because these choices of mine were deliberate. I would say on a large scale, I maintain that type of balance and ambiance simply because of the variety of music I listen to. I don’t listen to only metal. I love progressive rock, electronic music, ambient, synth, experimental, jazz – you name it. I think as a result, I both get bored easily and never want my music to feel boring as a result. So, anytime I can implement an unpredictable change or variety of some sort, I try to do it as long as I feel like it works. But since I want to maintain a sense of extremity as you said, I still try to ensure that I am doing so in an intense way. It’s why even “slower” sections of my album can still sound ominous – I will often layer textures, harmonies/dissonances that can sound just as intense as fast blasting. Intensity is not dictated by speed. I also find that dynamics and contrasts between dark/light, heavy/soft, pretty/ugly, tonal/dissonant, etc. is what makes things sound more chaotic because its ever-so changing and unpredictable.

“Black Gossamer” seems to have a more frenetic approach, almost like an explosion of pure energy, and it has a guitar solo by Curtis Vamarasi. How did the collaboration come about and what does this solo add to the song?

- Curtis is a good friend of mine. We have a very similar taste in music, but we both have completely different ways of approaching music. But that is exactly why I wanted him to do a solo on the record because I knew it would be unpredictable. Curtis has a strong background in improvisation, so believe it or not, this solo is improvised AND double tracked! Curtis took maybe an hour to do it, and once he figured out the notes, he tracked it a second time by ear. Curtis is truly talented and I think the style of the solo complements the frantic nature of the song’s compositional structure and themes.

“Despairloom”, with its almost 12 minutes of duration, is a composition of great impact on the album. It begins with a melodic tone, but is soon swept away by darkness and despair, in addition to that almost distorted effect of the voice. How did you design its structure and what significance does it have within the narrative of the album?

- This song was both fun and terrible to write. Fun in the sense that I love how it turned out, but terrible in that it took me forever to figure out how to construct all the riffs I had for it. I knew I wanted to end the album with a longer, more comprehensive song, so it was just a matter of figuring out how to do that while still keeping the song interesting. The opening melody (that also returns in a similar form at the end) is actually about 15 years old but I just never knew what to do with it. So, I started there and with the end, and then had to fill out the middle, which I eventually did over time. It probably has the greatest significance of all the songs on the album because it’s a culmination of the songs prior, both sonically and lyrically. Sonically, it has elements we’ve heard throughout – fast parts, slow parts, synth parts, layered vocals, abrupt tempo changes, etc. Lyrically, it touches on the theme of how we’re predisposed in a way to pass down these “masks” and negative traits to those after us, because we model by example and younger generations absorb that. However, the very end suggests the shred of hope that through a period of death and rebirth we can essentially start over without the aid of such “masks.”

The production of the album is impeccable: each instrument is heard clearly, but without losing the oppressive feeling of the sound. What was the production process like and what challenges did you face in terms of mixing and mastering?

- Glad you think so! Eventually I got it to a point where I liked but it started out rather poorly and required a lot of re-recording and remixing before I was happy. I actually did most of the production myself in my home studio (vocals, guitars, bass, synths). Kevin recorded his drums in his home studio, and the guitar solos were tracked at a local studio. I was set on recording and mixing it myself, which is why it went through so many iterations, but once I was confident, I passed it on to V.Santura (Owner of Woodshed Studio, guitarist for Triptykon, ex-Dark Fortress) for mastering, who I have worked with several times before. Once I heard his mastering, I knew the album was finished. I thought many times about lowering my standards...but I knew that wouldn’t be right, haha.

“Phisenomie” has received very positive reviews, with many highlighting its ability to combine brutality and sophistication. How has the response been from the public and critics so far?

- From what I have seen, I would agree it's been positive like you said and people seem largely impressed with the work and scope. I think we'll see more response once the album is fully released, and I hope that people get something out of it. I'm not too concerned whether response will be positive or negative – this album was just something I needed to do, and simply getting it done and out there is accomplishment enough for me. So, if it has an effect on someone, whether that be positive or negative, the record has done its job. True art evokes reactions no matter what that reaction may be.

In a landscape where many bands seek to stand out within blackened death metal, how do you think MARROWOMB manages to differentiate itself?

- The fact that I approached this album through my own voice is what will I think will make it stand out. When I look at the full package and hear the songs back, it feels like “me” and not some other band I am listening to. There are a lot of records out there that sound like copies of other bands or that sound derivative of certain genres, but to me, mine sounds like me. If you've already noticed that, I think it's a good sign that others will notice that as well.

With such a solid debut, it is inevitable to wonder: what is next for MARROWOMB? Do you already have ideas for a second album or any material in the works?

- In the immediate future, I just want to see how the first release goes. I would love to get a live band together and also play a show or two and see how that feels. I designed Marrowomb with a live show in mind, and I feel like these songs have a live intensity about them. As for a second album, I am certainly not opposed, and I will likely do one eventually, but I don't have any material ready at the moment. This first album consumed a lot of my time and energy, so I can't say when I might start writing again.

For those who have not yet heard “Phisenomie”, how would you describe the experience of diving into this album for the first time?

- A controlled, yet disorienting and unpredictable journey. It's relentless, dynamic, and full of conflicting emotions.

Finally, any message for MARROWOMB fans and those who are yet to discover the band?

- Thanks to anyone who chooses to support this project. It means a lot to me to see the hard work pay off and to see people connect with the music!