

LACABRA – Interview TNT Radio – by J.A. Marroqui “Brujo”

LANCE NEATHERLIN (vocals)

The American band LACABRA has just released their self-titled debut album, a brutal statement of intent that blends black metal, thrash, 90s death metal, and a sharp melodic vision. We spoke with them to dissect their history, their influences, and the dark journey that brought them here.

First of all, "Lacabra" is now available. How have you experienced these months leading up to the release, seeing the impact of the first singles? What are your feelings about this release?

It was very cool seeing the gradual growth as the singles were being released, and then when the album was released it feels like we got a nice boost in traction, which is really cool to see happening! That being said, we are really happy with the way the label operates and helps develop bands like us as we are a new band.

The core of LACABRA comes from the ashes of LOCISTELLER, a band with which you even released an EP. What elements did you decide to leave behind, and which ones evolved to shape this new, rawer, and more forceful incarnation?

We decided to go in a completely different direction and just do more straightforward songs. Locistellar, there were a lot of layers to the music and we just kind of stripped it down and went with more straightforward rhythms and a lot more guitar solos. Vocally I wanted to do harsher vocals with less clean singing on this album.

What happened with LOCISTELLER and the departure of Didier Almounzi, one of its founders? We know that he even collaborated on the lyrics of "Nothing" on LACABRA's debut. Why didn't he continue with you in this new phase?

Didier had a job change and with Covid happening in American politics. It was just way too much for his liking and he had to move out of the country so he moved to Edinburgh Scotland. We still talk all the time and we are very good friends and even hint around about someday maybe putting together a show that looks stellar do if we ever tour together. He has a really fucking cool band called Exdestrier with another friend of mine, Chris Smith who did the layout work for our album and CD. But be sure to check out Exdestrier!

Your lyrics address intense themes like mental breakdown, addiction, and psychological damage, as in "Nothing" and "Human Quilt." What draws you to these dark and deeply human themes?

Personal experience and things that affect me directly. Basically life. I don't write about fantasy. I've lead a pretty interesting life and not all of it has been good.

The members of LACABRA come from very diverse musical backgrounds. Their sound combines black metal, thrash, melodic death metal, and classic heavy metal, all under a profoundly dark aesthetic. What's the secret to achieving this alchemy without losing your identity?

There's a lot of influences in this band and once a song foundation is written, everybody puts their own stamp on the song, everybody writes their own parts. No song is completely written and then just handed over to the band. We all put our influences into it and it's the first band I've ever been in like that. It's a really cool process and it works perfectly for this band.

Which bands or musical scenes have been key in shaping your sound?

I would say melodic death, metal and black metal so far, I'm a massive dark wave fan and so is Eric Snyder and Michael just got bit by the dark wave bug as well so you may see that incorporated more into the music in the future.

Let's talk a little about some songs to understand LACABRA's sound. "Blood of the Goat 1876" opens the album with a fierce mix of black metal, thrash, melodic death metal, progressive moments, and that dark atmosphere accentuated by synthesizers and melodic vocals. Would you say this song encapsulates the band's sound? Is it something of a signature song?

I would definitely say this song captures all of the elements of the band at this point into one song.

In "Nothing," influences emerge that are a bit outside the box: a certain industrial drive, echoes of 90s melodic death metal, and even a psychedelic touch in the more atmospheric vocals. How did that mix come about? Was it something you intentionally sought for this track, or did it simply fit with the song's theme?

That's where some of our dark wave and Killing Joke influences come from. That song was actually written when we were playing with Locistellar. Didier, Eric Snyder and I are all huge Killing Joke fans so that song was definitely inspired by Killing Joke.

In songs like "Fallacy," you can strongly sense the progressive undertone that runs through much of the album, especially in the constant rhythm changes. What role does this progressive influence play in the band's overall sound?

That would be Eric Snyder with his musical training. He's actually a guitar instructor and classically trained. He was GIT student in Hollywood California and he was around a lot of guys like Paul Gilbert, Marty Friedman and those types of guitarists. He's a fucking shredder.

Lacabra's sound has an unpredictable quality that makes it addictive, and "Human Quilt" reflects this perfectly, a visceral blend of black, punk, and hardcore. Do you consciously seek that kind of contrast and rawness, or do you simply let each song take its own path?

That would be my main influence on that song. I wrote the rhythm for that and I'm not a very good guitar player so I just play straightforward and I'm a crust punk at heart. I love punk rock and crust punk.

Gwen Kerjan and Andy LaRocque bring a brutal weight to the album's final sound. What was it like working with them on the production and mastering?

Gwen is basically our sixth band member, we've been working with him since Locistellar Days and he just knocked it out of the park, he gets what we are looking for and we all have the same vision so it's really cool working with Gwen! Slab Sound Studios rules! Andy LaRocque also crushed it being he's a guitar player and Michael and Erik are both huge King Diamond fans, when we're on the road they're always playing King Diamond in the van haha

A self-titled album always sounds like a declaration of purpose. What did you want to convey by simply calling it Lacabra?

As far as the name goes, there's no more metal sounding of a name than the goat and we just smashed the words together to make up a word pretty much, way easier for a trademarking and nobody else had it like that so it was a no-brainer.

The cover art, created by Nestor Avalos, has a strong visual impact and a very clear identity. Was the intention precisely to consolidate the LACABRA brand visually, making the name and concept unmistakable?

Yes, Nestor is our artist and he already did our second album cover art, which I would love to share with you, but I can't at this moment. He's absolutely amazing and really great to work with. We definitely want to brand the band with a certain look, it comes across a little bit more black metal influenced but it's all art and I don't think there should be any boundaries on how you want to market yourself. The music does the talking in the end.

For a debut album, you're not sitting still: shows in France, dates underway, and a live reputation that's already starting to grow. What is this first stage of live performances meaning for the band? Do you feel that live performances are where LACABRA's identity is truly defined?

We are definitely more of a live band than a Studio band and I'm proud to say that. There's always a danger element to this band when we play live. You never know what you're going to get. The music will be consistent, but the energy levels are always high live. we are definitely being known as a live band. We are much heavier live than we are on the album as well. we are about to head back to Europe this fall and we can't fucking wait. We love Europe, especially France. The French are some of the most giving and warmest to people I've ever met and I love their passion for everything they do.

The debut is already out, you're touring, and everything is taking shape. Are there already plans or outlines for a second album? Or are you still digesting everything that's happening with this first one?

Oh yes, I have plans for the next two albums already we already have the names of the albums and the concepts.

To close, congratulations on such a solid debut. For those who are discovering LACABRA for the first time through this interview, what would you say? How would you invite them to delve into your musical universe?

Come on in, the water is fine! Welcome to the Darkside!

Thank you very much for your time.

Thank you so much for your time and your interest in this band, we appreciate your support and looking forward to meeting you in person someday!