

LORD BELIAL (MICKE BACKELIN)– Interview TNT Radio – by J.A. Marroquí “Brujo”

First of all, congratulations on “Unholy Trinity.” I think it's one of your most compact and solid works, one of the best of your career, and one of the best so far in 2025. Congratulations!

Thank you very much! We are very satisfied with the album!

I'd like to start by asking about your feelings, since “Unholy Trinity” is having a great reception. How are you experiencing this positive reception? What are your feelings about this release so far?

As already mentioned, we are really satisfied and the album is exactly as we wanted it to be, and the response has been fantastic this far to say the least! We are overwhelmed by all fantastic words and reviews for the album!

Fourteen years passed between The Black Curse and Rapture. A long silence for any band.

Yes, we felt in 2014 that we had not much left to add to our discography, and travelling around for gigs was getting boring and it didn't give us anything of personal value. If we play live, it should be for the hunger in the band to do live shows, not for hunger for money or anything else. So, we decided to call it quit and focus on other things, other projects, bands or completely other things in life.

How did you experience that return internally? Was it a challenge to adapt to the songwriting rhythm and the scene again?

Me, Pepa and Thomas just jammed a bit for fun in my basement a few months after me and Pepa had recorded the album “Storm of Satan” with Vassago in 2020. It was nice to play together again, and after we jammed our old songs for a while we decided to start writing some new material as Lord Belial again. We thought it would be fun to be the original members of Lord Belial as it was from the beginning in 1992, but unfortunately Anders did not have time to join. So, we decided to go as a trio, and to just focus on writing and recording new songs, and no focus on live gigs at all.

The reviews for Rapture were very positive, and your fans seemed to connect immediately. Were you surprised by such an enthusiastic response, or did you already sense that there was a solid foundation waiting for your return?

Yes, the reviews and the response was great, and we didn't actually had any expectations at all. We knew that we thought the songs was great and the way we wanted them to be, but we had no clue what other people would think of them. We also immediately started to get an extremely number of live requests, for tours, gigs and festivals from all around the world. It is of course flattering and the requests still coming almost on a weekly basis. But we have not accepted any single one of them, just because we no longer see Lord Belial as a live band.

With Rapture, you worked fairly calmly, composing and pre-recording each piece at home, which made the studio experience more direct. Did you repeat that same approach for Unholy Trinity, or was the process different this time? How did these new songs come about?

Yes, we worked in a similar way with “Unholy Trinity” as on “Rapture”; Thomas writes almost every riff and the foundation of the songs, then me and Pepa add our things and ideas. For Unholy Trinity we did not rehearse together at all before entering the studio.

Unholy Trinity sounds deeply rooted in 90s black metal, but with new nuances. What did you want to preserve, and what has changed on this album?

It's not something we really plan. We do the songs the way we want them to sound, both musically and in the mix, and the fact that it sounds the way it does is simply because it's Lord Belial, and we sound like this. We don't try to change style or anything on purpose, if we get an idea that we think seems good, we go with that idea. I don't know if anything has really changed, of course you should progress as a band and not repeat record after record, and I think we have succeeded with that.

One of the details we appreciate, not only in Unholy Trinity but also in the previous Rapture, is the guitar solos, which have gained prominence. It's not that they didn't have that prominence in the past, but in this new phase they shine even more. I suppose working with a producer like Andy LaRocque has been crucial for you, right? What's it like working with him, and how has he influenced Lord Belial's sound?

Guitar solos were from the beginning not something we thought was so important in our songs, but over the years it has grown and now we all think it should be more solos. Even me as a drummer think the guitar solos are great to listen to haha. Andy also usually does a solo on each record, and we appreciate that, since he is an incredible guitar player! But I also enjoy Thomas and Pepa's solos as much as I like Andys! Every solo fits its spot.

Andy is exactly what we want in the studio, he has the same sense of humour as we do (which is quite sick and disturbed), and he is of course an incredibly talented sound engineer and producer. We work with him almost as if he were a member of the band, his ideas count as much as ours and there is mutual respect all the time.

The album moves between moments of pure aggression and others that are more melodic and atmospheric. How do you manage to balance these contrasts without the album losing coherence or rhythm?

There must be dynamic in the music, otherwise I think it gets boring quickly. Sure, there are many bands that write songs that go in 300 BPM straight through and still are good, but in the long run it becomes pretty boring to listen to. Even if we run the same BPM through an entire song, you can still make the feeling become aggressive at times and then sound a little calmer or heavier and then return to the more aggressive. This makes a song much more interesting, both to play and to listen to.

"Ipse Venit" kicks off the album without concessions, with a direct and sharp aggression. What made you choose this track as the opening track? Do you feel it encapsulates the overall tone or intention of Unholy Trinity?

Yes, we agreed pretty soon after we chose which songs should be on the record that Ipse Venit should be the first one. Just as you say, it is the entrance to the record, it should be heard immediately what we are dealing with.

There's a latent atmosphere of doom and mystery in many of the songs. What ideas or images were present while you were writing the lyrics?

Since Thomas writes most of the lyrics, with just a few ideas and inserts by me and Pepa, I can't really explain this. I am not enough involved in the lyrics to tell.

There are excellent songs, like "The Great Void," in which you explore a more melodic and emotionally charged approach, with synthesizers, choirs, and cinematic tension. What led you to pursue this type of atmosphere? Are you looking to break new ground within your sound, or does it simply emerge naturally?

It comes quite naturally, yes. We think it's important to work with the songs in different ways until we feel that they are really completely finished! Then whether that means putting on a choir, synth or simply removing something doesn't matter. We don't consciously work to change our style in any way, but if we want to add something, we do it.

"In Chaos Transcend" is one of the most intense tracks on the album, with very expressive guitars, almost heavy solos, and a synth base that gives it a sinister and profound feel. How did this song come about? Did you have a clear idea of this more emotional approach from the beginning, or did it take shape during production?

The foundation was already there when Thomas wrote the music, and then we have sculpted it out together into what it became.

Along with the more atmospheric tracks, there are also much rawer and colder cuts like "Blasphemy" and "Scornful Vengeance," which directly refer to Lord Belial's more extreme past. Was it important for you to maintain that more ruthless side on the album?

There must be brutality and violence on our records in some form, otherwise we wouldn't play.

I can't help but dwell on the closing track "Antichrist," one of my favorites from the album. Almost nine minutes of a dark journey, with increasing drama, a solo by Andy LaRocque. A somber march with a vocal performance that drags you toward the abyss. Epic! How did this song come about? Were you sure it would be the album's closer from the beginning? What does it represent to you within Unholy Trinity?

For me personally, it's the best song on the album right now. I like how it turned out with all the different parts of it, and it was a matter of course that it would be the conclusion of the album

You've maintained a very distinct sonic identity over the years. Do you feel this album is a reaffirmation or a reinterpretation of that essence?

I don't think about it that way. We make the songs, and we record them. It is Lord Belial and then it should sound like Lord Belial.

What do you think of the current state of black metal? Is there anything you miss in the new generations of the genre?

Black metal has become too mainstream; many bands and members fear what other people think. Black metal should be a big FUCK OFF to everyone outside the scene. Also, I'm tired of all the new sub-genres called a lot of concocted nonsense, like neo-classical satanic feminist butt-plug-metal, and all politically correct fucking rubbish.

You've been with practically the same lineup for over three decades, something uncommon. Do you think this stability has been key to maintaining a sound as tight and cohesive as Unholy Trinity's?

Well, we have had a few member changes, but we have always come back to the original members after a while again, and that foundation has of course had a very important role in what has been, and is, Lord Belial. We've also had a few breaks as a band where we didn't even know if we were going to continue any more, or if it was a permanent end. But also, that we know each other so well on a personal plan is of course a contributing factor that we sound as we sound and that Lord Belial still sounds Lord Belial.

After so many years in the business and with all the evolution that extreme metal has undergone—new subgenres, production methods, and technology—how do you see Lord Belial today within this changing scene? Do you feel you've had to adapt, or rather that your identity has remained outside of these transformations?

Regarding sub-genres I think as I stated above, it is dead boring and totally pointless. When it comes to methods of production and the technical part of being in a studio, it has changed incredibly much over the years. We are not afraid to use new technology to record our albums. Of course, we want our music to sound good, and we use the possibilities that exist in the studio if we need to. But we don't conform to anyone else, if someone says that we should do it in a certain way to make it sound the way they want, then we probably do the opposite.

With this tenth album already released, do you have any touring plans? Is there a chance we'll see Lord Belial on stage?

No. We will not be playing live. Lord Belial is not a live band anymore. If we should feel in five years or something that we want to play live, then of course we do, but now it's nothing that interests us at all.

Finally, if you could leave a message for those who are discovering Unholy Trinity, or for those who have followed you for decades, what would you say? What do you hope they take away from this album after listening to it?

Hope you like what you hear, and that you share your thoughts on our various social media and emails for example, it's always nice to have feedback from our fans! For our loyal fans who have been with us for many years, we want to say THANK YOU for your support! It means everything.

Thank you very much for your time, and congratulations on this GREAT work.

Thank you so much for your support! We appreciate it!