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ISSUE#16



year ^{OF} THE cobra

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H I S S I N G

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Letter From the Founder:

Hello everyone, and thanks for picking up the new issue of the Seattle Passive Aggressive, Issue 16! It's been a while since our last issue, sometimes real life gets in the way. But, we're here now, you're here now, and that's what really matters right? Right.

These are no doubt tough times, not only in Seattle but all over the world. This year has been a brutal year for losses of friends, musicians, people we love and hold dear to our hearts. I know so many of you are mourning, and it just keeps on getting worse. All we have in this world is each other. This community is so strong and supportive, and we will keep forging ahead somehow.

I just wanted to take this time and tell you all that your support means the world to me and the staff too. Be kind and good to each other, and never take anything or anyone for granted. We will get through the tough times together. Once again, thanks so much for your continued support.

Sincerely,
James Ballinger

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Adrian J. Guerra

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Un

By Dustin Carroll
Photos by Dan Aguilar

The raging tide of funeral doom music in the Pacific Northwest has ebbed and flowed over the years, with bands like Burning Witch and Grey grudgingly paving the slow, sludgy trail through the murk surrounding the spotted concrete metropolises along the I-5 corridor, while in recent times artists like Bell Witch and Atriarch keep the torch aflame, bringing fresh ideas and concepts with them to breathe new life into the genre. One such act of notoriety in Seattle's scene is Un, a quartet made up of four young men from various parts of rural Washington, who all ended up in Seattle at various times.

Drummer Andrew Jamieson and vocalist/guitarist Monte McCleery met via AOL Instant Messenger when they were 17. Eventually the two of them started a technical death metal band, before scrapping the idea and moving on to darker and slower territories. Monte and bassist Clayton Wolff both transferred into the same school in Aberdeen on the same day, befriended one another, and Wolff joined the project, eventually self-recording a two-track demo as a trio in 2012. The demo songs, "Smoke Signals" and "Dark Genesis" were promising predecessors of what was to come. Atmospheric guitar work, melodic bass riffs and blast beats range throughout the EP, still very much rooted in their metal backgrounds but laying the groundwork for something uniquely bleak. Clayton had also been playing in a metalcore outfit called Idols, and when that group started to fizzle out, rhythm guitarist David Wright jumped ship and joined the Un fold.



Now complete with their lineup, the group recorded a second two-track demo EP and released it in 2013. As the band stretched and breathed and evolved over time, combining the various non-doom influences from each members musical backgrounds, a sound very much unto itself was naturally occurring. "Death metal wasn't giving me what I needed emotionally," remarks McCleery, "We're still evolving and we all have eclectic tastes, and it comes through in the music we write together, and it's something we want to embrace. It would be a shame if we didn't incorporate that into our sound."



The band set to work writing material for their first full-length, when McCleery was stricken with a sudden bout of lymphoma. With the album essentially shelved and the band forced to take a hiatus, Monte spent his time in between chemotherapy treatments and bedrest rehashing and re-arranging much of the album. Finally, with the cancer in remission, "The Tomb of All Things" was ready for a proper release. The band entered Big Name Studios in Olympia, WA with engineer Jon Lervold at the helm. "We recorded the whole album in 3 days, but we went in very prepared and had concrete ideas and it came together very naturally." Monte recalls, "Jon made everything very easy and professional." Jamieson adds, "Recording is really stressful for me. Recording in a room by yourself doesn't have the same kind of energy you have when you play live, or even in a rehearsal space. It's difficult to reproduce that same intensity on a recording, you have this pressure because all your takes are 10+ minutes long, and they have to be perfect, because that's what's going on the record to be out there forever. but this album fleshed out exactly how we wanted to portray it." David surmises "Recording with Jon was so chill and relaxed. There was no railroading us to do anything, but we had a separate brain in the room to bounce ideas off of and get solid advice from someone who hasn't been hearing the songs for months".

The leadoff track off the album, Sol Marasmus (following a short instrumental intro) features guest vocals from Conan frontman Jon Davis. The track sets the pace for the album as a whole, filled with heavy, dissonant chords, huge drum hits ringing out at a glacial pace, and morose, tortured growls. Wolff's Meatsmoke-driven bass keeps the foundation of the record murky and cold. Even the more reserved and quiet segments still have an overall chill to them, as showcased in the third track, "Forgotten Path". Soaring guitar leads offer no more solace or hope, only more despair and anguish.

"Some of the lyrical concepts explored on the record are the ideas of estrangement and isolation, that everything in the universe is forever moving farther away from each other," Monte recalls, "'Through the Luminous Dusk' came from reading Alan Moore's 'Swamp Thing', wherein the man has to let go of his previous life by literally burying his own corpse. That imagery to me was very vivid, and it felt like a concept in itself that could be explored more thoroughly."



The eponymously titled final track starts off somber and serene, before also heading towards the realm of the slow and the heavy. One highlight though, is the almost Godspeed-like buildup near the end of the song, which is absolutely chill-inducing, and transitions into the fastest segment of the whole record, with a blasting black metal outro reminiscent of Usnea or Lycus.

The group recently finished up a West Coast tour with Hissing, as well as an appearance at Seven One Grind in Colorado Springs. Un show no signs of slowing down any time soon, with new music, another tour, and an upcoming show with Yob all on their immediate radar, it's a safe bet that this is a band to keep on your radar in the coming months.

<https://unvibes.bandcamp.com/>



By Jake McCune

Photos by Ryan Avery and Thomas Mazerolles

Seattle produces a larger than average number of bands that fall into the "metal" umbrella, many of them forming and dismantling in short bursts and sharing members, countless names that remain alive only in the memories of local fans and long-buried show posters. It is always notable when a fresh local band cuts through the dense cluster of offerings our great town can spoil us with and makes a splash on the bigger pages of the metal community in a short amount of time. Having only been a band since late 2014, Hissing are certainly the most recent unit to qualify for such a distinction.

H I S S I N G

The seed for the death/doom/black hybrid trio was planted when bassist Zach Wise and guitarist Joe O'Malley began talking at a Morbid Angel show in 2013. "It was after 'Illud Divinum Insanus' came out and they knew that everyone hated it so they were doing all of 'Covenant' to like, make up for it." remarks Wise on an afternoon sit-down with the band at Cafe Pettiroso. "I think we had met once before but I think we started talking at [that] show about how we wanted to play stuff together."

The duo began writing riffs with a drum machine at the sorely missed venue and practice space The Josephine, where drummer Sam Pickel made his way into the picture. "I was playing in this, like, grindcore band called 'Shapeshifter'" remembers Pickel, "We were practicing in the Josephine and they practiced right after us. And then the three of us just jammed more like industrial stuff, like weird, Godflesh-y sounding things. And then we just decided to get together one time after that at my house. And, we didn't really know what we were doing, and it was kind of bad." O'Malley is also willing to admit the band took time in finding their sound. "We kept meeting and just started writing songs right away and we've been learning what we want to sound like." The trio settled on a name, a subject the members recall with both laughing and groaning.

"It was basically the least stupid name that we agreed on. That all of us didn't hate." Wise remarks, sounding modest about the simplistic nature of the two-syllable name. He's downplaying its effectiveness, in a short amount of time Hissing have been able to build a relatively distinct aesthetic in the world of over-the-top proclamations of death and doom and misery, aiming for an aesthetic more focused on unease and tension.

The group's logo, a heavily distorted, strung out display of hand lettering, brings this into focus with an appropriately strange origin. "I liked the idea of having like a tall logo" said Wise, elaborating on the origin of the weird and alluring image. "I may or may not have, uh, dipped a piece of paper in human urine, then scanned the result that was crumpled up, then filtered it through photoshop, then printed it out [again], scanned it...I do like graphic design stuff and like a lot of my stuff is this blown out Xerox kind of thing where it's like 'let's just run something through a printer multiple times' and you get this like weird natural distortion."

Having fully-formed and written a set, the band spent much of 2015 opening for a cavalcade of impressive local and touring fellow bands, gaining a local following and getting their name out into the musical landscape. The band recorded a demo with local guru Ryan Schutte and Wise began sending it around to various labels, one of which was their future home at Southern Lord.

It wasn't until Goatsnake, label owner Greg Anderson's legendary doom band, was playing in Seattle that Wise was able to meet the man. "I somehow ended up running [that] show for the promoter because he was at some work meeting or something, and then I just ended up talking to Greg for a while and we had a couple beers and he was like 'Hey, you guys wanna do a seven-inch?' and I was like '...yes, definitely.'" That seven-inch was released this June, and features the band's two most recent songs 'Cairn' and 'Husk.' Before its release, however, Anderson and Stephen O'Malley, his bandmate in Sunn 0))) and Hissing guitarist Joe's brother, invited the fresh-faced trio on a multi-regional tour opening for the drone doom titans.



"They emailed me in like a joint email asking are you guys interested in doing a Southwest tour with us?" recalls Joe, "and yeah we were kind of like 'holy shit that sounds terrifying, but we have to say yes' and it was just like a kick in the pants." The band spent the first part of the year on a warm-up tour, their first ever, with fellow Seattleites Un before heading out on the road with Sunn 0))) and Big Brave to play venues larger than any single show they had played to date. "it was definitely one of those things were like we were ready right at the point we were going on tour with Sunn 0))), but it turned out really well. And the band we are touring with Big Brave is fucking awesome, and like we only got positive feedback from everyone."



After the seven-inch and the tour, Hissing are settling down from the whirlwind of the first half of the year and hoping to lock in on writing new material for a full-length. O'Malley talks about the future of the band's sound and writing process. "I think we always want to be still exploring, I think we're doing something wrong if we have found our sound and are just like 'now we make music that sounds like this.' What I'm more concerned about is just figuring out physically what works really well for us. Being able to lock into each other...we can always, always get better at that as a band, just understanding each other."

On a pronounced label like Southern Lord, Hissing have been given the platform to bring their caustic metal to a Pitchfork-reading crowd, but that isn't a bad thing. The label has long had a finger on the pulse of bands that precipitate larger trends in American metal, and if their decision to throw their weight behind Hissing is an indication of anything, it is one of future success.

<https://hissingseattle.bandcamp.com/>

YEAR OF THE COBRA

By Brian Kim

Photo by Brent Morgan

Amidst the fertile heavy music scene of the great Pacific Northwest, a dark, gleaming pearl has been growing. Commanding a formidable ear in the ancient arts of song crafting and an unholy worship of Black Sabbath influenced doom and sludge, bass and drum two piece Year of the Cobra create a sound as epically heavy as it is infectiously catchy.

On The Black Sun EP, their potent debut collaboratively released via up and coming local label Devil's Child Records and Netherlands-based DHU Records, Year of the Cobra effectively showcase their deceptively enormous sound. The Black Sun was recorded, engineered, and mixed by Don Farwell at Earwig Studio, then mastered for CD/digital by Black Belt Mastering and for vinyl by Tony Reed. From the first track, "White Wizard", bassist and vocalist Amy Tung Barrysmith's otherworldly voice begins its haunting reign on the listener's dreams, flowing ethereally over her crushing and rich bass tone and drummer Jon Barrysmith's powerfully driving beats. The title track, "The Black Sun", is an explosive rock and roll banger, while closing track "Wasteland" burns slow, dense with atmospheric grooves. Over the course of three artful and dynamic songs, this concise EP simultaneously foreshadows an exciting future as well as embodies the journey behind it.

Relatively new to the Seattle scene, the hardworking duo originally met in Los Angeles, where they cut their teeth playing in other bands and touring the country. "What's funny is I was born and raised in Santa Cruz, which is kind of a punk rock DIY town, and I was touring in bands and I hated LA. Lo and behold, I end up auditioning for and joining a band that's based in LA, so I moved down there." Barrysmith explains. "Both our bands happened to play and we met."

Eventually, the two started a family in Santa Monica and, after deciding on a much needed change of environment, traded in their shorts and flip flops for jackets and hoodies and settled in Seattle. "Playing in bands and touring, Seattle was always one of my favorite cities." states Barrysmith. "From my very first tour, I just really loved it." Jaded and exhausted by their experiences in the southern California music scene, it took several years of slowly building up riffs and ideas as GarageBand demos before the couple finally shook off the dust and began jamming. A testament to the solidarity of the Seattle music scene, Year of the Cobra found themselves rejuvenated by the community they were welcomed into. "We've met some really good people, and it's just cool how everyone always helps each other out." says Barrysmith.

"In our youth, every band was like that. Then we moved to Los Angeles and it kinda went by the wayside." adds Tung-Barrysmith. "It was really disappointing. And then we move here and this is it! This is what we've been missing, these people and this community and the scene. It's just nice to be back and know that it still exists."



Since their formation in the tail end of 2014, Year of the Cobra have been diligently hammering away at the west coast, blowing minds with the hefty bludgeon of their hard hitting heavy rock. During this period, they developed a relationship with renowned Portland based producer, Billy Anderson (Sleep, Neurosis, Melvins) and recently made a trek down to the Rose City to track and mix their upcoming full length record with him.

"That was really, truly a mind blowing experience." describes Tung-Barrysmith. "He's an absolute genius. He has so many ideas that are just spot on."

The yet-to-be-titled full length record will be put out on vinyl by STB Records with a tentative fall release planned. Before then, the band will also be heading out on an extensive North American tour and releasing a 7" split EP with labelmates Mos Generator. The split was recorded by Mos Generator's Tony Reed onto a four track cassette, a throwback to old school recording and classic vibes.

It's been a big year for Year of the Cobra, with a highly praised debut EP and extensive gigging behind them and a forthcoming full length record, a split EP, and even more touring ahead, the band plans to stay busy. They've already been announced to play the Hell Over Hammaburg festival in Hamburg, Germany next year, and are planning a full European tour around it. They've even started thinking about and writing for their next record already.

"We have a hard time sitting still." jokes Barrysmith. "I think it's been so productive and fast because we've just been having the most fun ever playing music. I was super jaded when we moved up here, and when I was in LA in the bands I was in, it was more like a job. I remember thinking, 'this is not what it's about', it was so lame. Now on Tuesdays and Thursdays I'm excited for practice, and other days we're thinking about other shit we need to do, it's like being a kid again. So that's been the raddest thing, how much fun we've been having."

<https://yearofthecobra.bandcamp.com/>

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Barisal Fri 8/05 Come to Grief, Bell Witch, Hissing, Dilapidation

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