

# UNTIL IT LEAPS

NOTES FROM ALLEYS OF

## META METALLURGY by Torben Ulrich

**Lars thought that it might make a nice change to hear from another Ulrich. So at Lars' special request, his father (Torben) wrote the following thought provoking article exclusively for So What!**

**F**rom the alleys, it says. Alley as something that goes between, an in-between. More concretely, going quickly: Which alleys, what in-between?

Between so what and so what, between issues, deadlines, words, the in-between where writing always seems to linger, out of breath, and close to the garbage cans.

But also, more concretely, the space between Slim's and Apple, we're talking June 1996, warm nights in San Francisco, a smoking alley, a massive noise. Which Slim, what Apple?

As for Slim's, it's easy to go back to a previous issue (Volume 3, Issue 3), where Steven Wiig's careful coverage took us through the details, of Metallica playing a warm-up gig, a club setting, compact walls, Metallica Club members filling space, sweat and song blending, things

heating up, beer flying, slightly calmer air to be reached through the back door, a stumble into the alley.

As for Apple, it's also easy to say, yes we're talking computer people, now they are across the alley from Slim's, filling large rooms in a rented studio-type place, setting up shop to broadcast, yes webcast, Metallica. Rows of computers are

lining the walls, the soft clacking of keys barely heard over the sounds of now 'Whiplash,' now 'Bells,' coming through their own speakers and again, fraction delayed, through the walls and alley, from the other side. If things were heating up here, it wasn't so easy to tell, no singing along, no puking. Screens would flicker, a head would be nodding, a pair of eyes would drift, up tempo over here would mean a sudden burst of clicking.



A strange place then, the alley, this in between, still early in the evening. From one side you'd see pale and blackened warriors crawling out, through the alley door, faces weathered, from years of arena air, bodies armed with metal knowledge, their stride somewhat cautious, eyes half closed, half alert, what: Could those four fuckers in there still play music?

Into the alley, from the other side, would enter another cast, no less alert, eyes targeting, stances upright, their pace quickened by a certain zeal, a hurry, like time wasn't on their side. They were men and women briskly at work, their bodies maybe not quite resonating with the questions brought inside to Slim's that evening. Rather, as we would learn, their concern was how to get this stuff moving on to a computer screen. How to get four musicians moving, not in spastic struts, eleven times a minute. But move, flowingly, in so-called real time. Not just today, tonight. Maybe more particularly, tomorrow.

The alley thus a passage, an opening, where different orientations would meet for a moment, in a crossing, a smoke, a brief interplay between eyes set on different horizons. Those that had come to hear, at Slim's, came heavy with knowledge of the past, of metallic lore and the music's more minute history. Their attention, early that evening, seemed pointed in a particular, for them crucial direction: Were those four guys still their guys? Or had something gone radically wrong?

Those that came to work, over at Apple, were obviously not looking at the same set of questions, comparing past and present. Obviously their energies were cast into the situation at hand, early June '96, yet maybe even more so into the larger setting, of years to come, coming soon, where a whole other set of rules might govern how we would travel, along with this music, on the Internet. In other words, they were working also, this very evening, to shape the binary questions of tomorrow: the ways we listen and see.

A little more specifically: What were they doing? They were, as I understand it, making a digitized video version of the music at Slim's, making it come alive, more or less, on the Internet. More or less would here mean according to their ability, but even more so maybe according to your ability, in terms of what your receiving equipment would be capable of. Again, sitting at home, you might have a fairly live audio version, but a pretty jerky visual version, because your computer would not be able to handle, transform quickly enough, the full stream of incoming signals. Or, say, if traffic were way up a particular evening you might not even have access to a signal, or a fully streaming signal. Again, more pertinent perhaps in years ahead, how long would a streaming version remain accessible, or would a fully streaming signal, for copyright reasons, be accessible at all? In other words, all of a sudden it would not be a question of capabilities, yours or theirs, but what kind of version they would want to see released.

The last line reminds me of something James H. is quoted as having said, in November of '92: "We didn't know anything about producing or any of that crap, so the whole thing was kind of innocent. A kind of innocence that you can never recapture after your first time in the studio. I remember they wouldn't let us in for any of the

mixes or anything like that. I remember hearing the album and going, 'Oh my God, that sucks!'" (M. Putterford: "Metallica: In Their Own Words." Omnibus Press 1994.)



A kind of innocence. What I'm trying to portray then, let's say still from the viewpoint of the alley, was the kind of excitement that flowed out of the Apple rooms, the charge, a kind of riding the waves of the unknown, maybe a naive clicking away, perhaps an innocence, when we get to look back on these things, years from now. Compared with the seasoned situation in the rooms across, over at Slim's, where fans would sing along, the well-known energies pumping, the bell that tolls, the fading to black.

A kind of innocence. At Slim's three video cameras were operating, two on tripods, one on the move. The signals, as pictures would be seen across the street on a video control unit, about the size of a man. At various times through the evening I was fortunate to be right next to this unit, thus being able to see three clear pictures of the band playing. Three pictures simultaneously. Whereas three were not to be broadcast, webcast. Only one. Which means a reduction took place, a choosing, a kind of mix, an interpretation, to be made or taken quickly. Two gentlemen were standing next to me, they were in charge of pictures, of selecting one rather than the other. If they were familiar with Metallica music, the specific songs that were being played, I could not detect it, not from their words, not from their choices. This is not to criticize, it was really very interesting, I thought, to be there, to be let in. But I thought of James' words. And I could see how you might want to put constraints on the signal, to refrain from giving a full stream version.

While I try to recall these summer moments at Apple, sitting in Seattle, early November, the phone rings, and it's Lars' mother. She wants to ask something about vitamins. She asks what I'm doing, and I say that I'm trying to write some of that stuff that I promised Lars for the next issue of So What!. She says, do you remember the time when he had spread all the lids, from the kitchen pots and pans, all over the floor? I said, of course I remember, but maybe it's not so much those things that I was going to get into.

But maybe it is. In some sense, this whole thing is about Lars spreading the lids all over the place. And us picking up the pieces, when it's getting close to dinner.

This of course goes back to a time when he was small, small. In Denmark. Later we would sit, at night in Southern California, and wonder if he and the boys would make it back, safely, from band practice, the hour-long drive on the road. His mother would worry.

So I'm Lars' father. And I'm writing to you as the first common member of his fan club. His mother was president, and I the one assigned to rinse the FanCan.

In some sense, it's still like that. In Danish, when you write the father, it's written faren. If you take the re out and put it in front, you get re-fan. Like re-writing, return, repeat, recall, you go back, reflect, you do it again, you continue.

But when you read it, in Danish, just like it is, faren, it also means the danger. And we know

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from Greek mythology and onward, how the father can be the danger, Oedipus, and so on, into Freud, Reich, Jung, etc.

However, it can also be understood, I think, as being aware of the danger. And thus the father being one to protect from danger. And of course the mother, too. Parents as those who continue that way, are obliged that way, to care, to cover.

But sometimes there's nothing you can do about it, you try to protect, but it happens. And as parents, in some sense, you know that situation, even if it hasn't happened to you, directly.

But it happened to Cliff Burton's mother. And I remember being there, in a small studio in the Bay Area, the first nights when the band was practicing again, Jason's first live songs as a member, and Cliff Burton's mother was there. And we had a moment together, I had my arms around her, and we always knew there was that danger, and now it had happened. And we had that moment together. Afterwards, at the end of rehearsal, Cliff's mother went over to Jason, and they embraced, sealing as it were: the continuation.

I'm thinking of her loss, now years later, and I'm sharing it with you also to try to reconnect with you: where we were, in the alley, early June. At that time, but maybe more so in the weeks and months before, there had been a constant concern, a worry. And we had seen it, particularly on the computers, on the Internet. A small barrage of daily letters, e-mails and dispatches, wondering what it all meant. Was "Load" still metal music, was "Load" still the right music, were these guys right out of their minds, cutting their hair, cutting their balls, cutting their tempos, painting their fingernails, selling the whole load to the highest bidder? Was Metallica losing it?

Being in the alley those nights, then, was to experience not only the differences of the two outlooks, fans and apples, but to see how strongly they also intersected, interconnected, sharing modes and modems, how the fans were changing, transforming, with the times, communicating and expressing themselves in new ways. Yet wanting the band to remain the same, stay where you are, where you were, fuck "Load," fuck you, we the undersigned, sincerely on the Internet.

Still, what seemed to take place, even within the hour, within the tight locality, the walls at Slim's too close for the usual arena feedbacks and delays, the proximity of band and listeners, what seemed to take hold was a kind of coherence, that cut across lines and discursive limits and made the room open up to the band's energy irrespective of album titles, date of songs, name of tune. In other words once the band got going, and the people in the room started to let go of whatever they were carrying in with them, things were not that different, the texture pretty even. By that I mean it would be pretty silly for someone to divide these hours up into segments of: this year, that year, second album, sixth album, here they are still rockin', here they are selling out. I thought Steven Wiig wrote some pertinent observations in the last issue, like: "'Sad But True' is without a doubt, the heaviest it's ever been. With the tempo held back just a bit, the weight of the song triples." By the time they got to Aberdeen, on that truck trip, was it not even a

tad slower? That's the best I ever heard it, tempo-wise, the kind of grease in there. Back to Steven's point later.

Did Mack come to Slim's? In the *Village Voice* of June 16th Donna Gaines has an essay called "The Metallipalooza Moment," where towards the end she writes: "Although he likes the hypnotic 'Until It Sleeps,' 21st-century metal man Mack, like older fans, feels betrayed by Metallica's "Load." "When a band changes like that, it's like a friend dying," he says." Donna Gaines adds she's "waiting for "Load" to grow on me the way "...Justice" did. James Hetfield's Cowardly Lion can really sing, and in my dreams, the looser, more bluesy guitar work enters Danzigland. But my friends complain the album is boring."

Donna Gaines herself says she looks forward to hearing the band live, adding: "While some fans blame Nirvana for the death of metal, others argue that the fall from grace came with Metallica's eponymous "Black" album, which moved away from thrash, back towards hard rock."

What does that mean "back," towards hard rock? It couldn't mean where they came from. Could it mean back like on a timeline, like hard rock would be prior to thrash (and should stay there)? Could it mean from one fold into another, like into the hard rock fold, that kind of fall? Like hard rock being somehow a fixture in space, a certified landscape (back to the USSR)?

Are we getting so hooked on boundaries, so carried away by our verbal designs, that we begin to take them seriously? Metal, the name metal, the category, lead, didn't all that start as irony, a self-deprecating joke, and didn't it lead to led, without an 'a', so that later even the Americans would get it? Or did I get that wrong, maybe that's not the right story, the right story being grimmer, more correct, official. Anyway, here's a version picked up from the Led Zeppelin FAQ on the Internet: "Jimmy Page joins

The Yardbirds in June of 1966, first playing bass, then dual lead guitar with Jeff Beck, then replacing Beck in November of the same year. In December, John Paul Jones does string arrangements for the Yardbirds' album "Little Games." In 1997, Robert Plant and John Bonham come together in The Band Of Joy. In March of the same year, Jeff Beck releases a solo single entitled 'Hi Ho Silver Lining,' which is backed with a Page composition entitled 'Beck's Bolero.' This song is recorded by Page, Beck, Nicky Hopkins, John Paul Jones, and Keith Moon. At this session Moon and John Entwistle, who are tired of The Who's infighting, discuss forming a band with Page and Beck. It is here that Moon announces that they should call the group Lead Zeppelin, because, '... it'll go over like a \*\*\*in' lead balloon!' (The 'a' was later removed from 'Lead' so that Americans would pronounce it correctly.)"

End of quote. They call this one the Moon version, since Entwistle claims that he was the one that made it up and also was responsible for the idea of having "an LP cover with like the Hindenburg going down in flames." (Same FAQ page.)

But if you stay with that cover for a moment, isn't it so that the Hindenburg was this proud

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German ship that had already crossed the Atlantic, in other words been up, now going down in flames. Whereas in the Moon version the joke is maybe in the metaphor itself: Will it ever get up, being fuckin lead, being heavy metal?

So for all of us, in Europe, in Britain, certainly in Denmark, since the days of Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong's first visits, the problem was how to get it lighter, how to "swing that music." Certainly for the horn players, but even more so for the rhythm guys. Certainly we had our problems in Denmark, but we used to feel when we visited in London, in the Fifties and Sixties, that they had even more problems than we did: that their rhythm work sounded even more, well, non-arising, and in the medium and faster tempos often metallic, a pounding, hammering away.

In other words, although we could easily hear and perhaps respect the degree to which a Page, a Clapton, a Peter Green could emulate the music of the Black masters of the blues and related fields, it was also very obvious, sometimes painfully so, what was missing. And of course we knew why men like Muddy Waters (born in Rolling Forks, Mississippi, 1915), when they'd come over, would look somewhat bemused, if also not uninterested. To them we were kids, in more ways than one.

To be a kid, then, at that time, and to struggle with the qualities of being a drummer, laying down a beat that had to be really solid and tensely light, ongoingly vibrant, heavy and at the same time not heavy at all, to be working in that field could be wonderful but also exasperating. And maybe it wasn't that different in this country.

White kids, then, not getting it up. Sounding like fuckin' lead balloons? Well phrased, Keith Moon. Lead guitars, lead drums, lead like the heaviest of metals, trying to transform this state of play, see if it could be lightened up, purified of its stiffness, distilled, maybe refined, redefined, working on what was still lacking, barely there.

A process, then, of transmuting the coarser metals into lighter veins, of alchemy if you will, towards silver, quicksilver, etc. And still not take leave of what's there, of who you are.

In saying well said, Keith Moon, I have of course no way of knowing if his words above have anything remotely to do with what I've tried to express here, the turning towards Black ways of phrasing fifty, forty, thirty years ago, and the obstacles that come up with such an approach. What I would like to try now would be to connect some of those thoughts, of alchemy and rhythm, to the situation in June '96, the alley.

Still in there, at Slim's, the band's warming up, for its summer tour, next door the Apple people are doing their stuff, and all over the country reviews are beginning to appear, the field of critics taking their shots at "Load," the album released in the stores just the week before. Some quotes from the review by Ann Powers in the *Village Voice* are selected for several reasons.

Using past tense, Ann Powers first gives a background, laying out a larger view of the albums gone before: "... Metallica created a music of separation, based on time signatures too fast or too slow for the average ear, and guitar and vocal harmonies that echoed medieval modes and European art rock instead of the blues. Within this sound Metallica embedded a mythology..."

These observations I think are well taken. In this context perhaps the one about the blues is particularly worth noting. "Instead of the blues", as Ann Powers says. If there's a key point in the things I've tried to express in these pages it would be the following: That Lars & Co., but in any case Lars, was inspired primarily by musicians that were not directly turned towards Black music. You might say that Metallica, if its ears were turned towards (early) NWOBHM as a major inspiration, the band was at least twice removed from Black rhythms. And it seemed that already the people they were listening to (in terms of being really influenced by them) did not have Black ways of playing as a fundamental problem, an obstacle or a concern. Maybe they (NWOBHM) didn't even hear it that way, as something worth a concern, because it wasn't even an aspiration or an ideal. Black musicians were not their heroes. At least it didn't sound that way. Whereas it did for the generation before, Stones, Cream, Page, Green, maybe Blackmore, etc.

To return to Ann Powers and her review of "Load," in her second long paragraph she is still looking back, I think: "... Metallica's mythos wasn't psychological or personal at all. Instead it distilled the essences of comic books and horror movies and the fantastic literature of metal itself, until it touched a Platonic ideal of alienation and rage. Unquestionably white and male, favoring emotional violence, it did nothing to change the surface of rock. But on the more mysterious level where rock jumps identity to become a soul-transforming tool, it pushed further, opening up new ways to contemplate the extreme."

In these lines you might say that Ann Powers comes close to using a language that reflects also the alchemical approach and process I was referring to above. Continuing in this way



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(archetypes, death, fear, boiling, lead, etc.), via U2 she now goes into “Load” itself, but unlike so many other writers she makes, I think, a pertinent stop: at the photograph on the cover: “... while the Irish bombardiers invoked “Exile On Main Street”’s introspection with “Achtung Baby” (released the same year Metallica, the band’s last disc, achieved world domination by boiling those old archetypes of death and fear in lead), the thrash kings adorn “Load” with Andres Serrano’s blood-and-cum splash photographs. It’s an excellent choice: Serrano’s manipulation of fleshy substances (piss, semen, gore) within images both tactile and abstract exactly parallels the primordial quality of Metallica’s music. They may flaunt their downtown duds in far too many Anton Corbijn photographs inside the CD booklet, but Serrano’s coagulating stain still represents Metallica’s enduring strength.”

Ann Powers continues her review from there, stating a moment later that “... it can’t be denied: there are moments on this record that will make you shake your hips instead of bang your head.” We will not continue, although it can’t be denied that I feel her entire review is really well written. The idea at this point would be to see if we could link up the themes of alchemy and rhythm, the transformational processes of alchemy, of the coarser metals, and the energies of rhythm, the boiling in lead, to see if we could link up these themes with the subject of the cover, the cover itself. The Metallica cover, as such, the six albums as a series of statements, over the years, pointing both to the music inside, as protective cover, and to the process of play, from album to album, as something also to be tried, dis-covered. Maybe.

In any case, since we don’t have a larger footnote apparatus set up, I would like to put in place, as further background, as a kind of foundation, another couple of quotes. The first is from Lars, it relates to and expands on the reference I made above on the letters NWOBHM, puts it in a more embodied framework: “What we got from Motörhead back in ’80/’81 was the aggression and the energy and the speed that Motörhead had back then, around the “Overkill”/“Ace of Spades” albums... That’s why the band sounds so European. When I moved to L.A. in 1980, we wanted to get a band together that had a European-sounding background, and since I came from over there I had a lot of the influences with me, like Motörhead and other bands like Diamond Head and some of the other early New Wave of British Heavy Metal bands.”

I have taken this quote from Chris Crocker’s book *Metallica: The Frayed Ends of Metal*, (St.

Martin’s Press) page 24. In the same work, on page six, it says: “The term heavy metal is said to have first appeared in William Burroughs’ 1959 landmark avant-garde novel *Naked Lunch*. It doesn’t. His 1962 follow-up, *The Ticket That Exploded*, does contain a number of references to ‘heavy metal.’ While having nothing to do with rock’n’roll, they somehow convey the right atmosphere.

“When Steppenwolf sang about ‘heavy metal thunder’ in their 1968 hit ‘Born to Be Wild,’ it may have put a bug in the ears of those fans or rock critics who put the term to use.”

To this may be added a few lines from a verse, estimated to be from the neighborhood of the ’70s, maybe by Thomas Norton, of Bristol in England, a student of the master George Ripley: “Then depart them by distilling/ and thow shalt see an Earth appearing/ heavy as Metall should yt be/ in the which is hyd great privitie.” (From E.J. Holmyard: *Alchemy*, Dover Publ., p. 198).

In Mark Heffner’s *Dictionary of Alchemy* (Aquarian), under Georgius Agricola, the metallurgist, we learn about “De re metallica” from 1556, “in 12 books, dedicated to Duke Maurice of Saxony. This posthumously-published work was Agricola’s crowning achievement, laying firm foundations for the rapidly growing science of metallurgy.”

And in *Alchemy: The Secret Art*, by Stanislas Klossowski de Rola (Thames and Hudson) there are these words associated with Dom Pernety (p. 13): “True alchemy consists in perfecting metals, and in the maintenance of health.”

We move now to the subject of the album cover for “Load.” There is a book called *Andres Serrano: Body And Soul* (Takarajima Books) that shows the photographs of Serrano from his different periods of work and also contains the photograph on the cover of “Load,” with its full title: “Semen and Blood III, 1990.” On the inside of the cover of the book itself, the first lines are a quotation from Senator Jesse Helms. It reads: “I do not know Mr. Andres Serrano. And I hope I never meet him. Because he is not an artist. He is a jerk.”

The inside cover lines then continue: “Andres Serrano’s name became a household word on May 18, 1989, when Sen. Alphonse D’Amato tore up a picture of the artist’s “Piss Christ” on the floor of the U.S. Senate. The act launched the so-called Culture Wars, a national debate over free expression and federal funding of the arts. But, while Serrano’s “Piss Christ” became widely known, the rest of his photographic work received scant attention.”

In an essay early in this book called *The Radiance of Red: Bloodwork*, the American writer bell hooks (her name spelled like



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that) talks about Serrano's work. At a certain point she uses the phrase "defamiliarize by provocation," which seems relevant also to our situation here (photographer and band). She dares to bring together the sacred and profane, to defamiliarize by provocation. In the introduction to *Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions*, Steven Dubin describes his own visceral response to the Serrano photograph "Milk, Blood (1986):" "As the grandson of a kosher butcher, my immediate reaction was 'You don't do this; you don't mix milk and blood. It just isn't done!' Once again this reaction startled me, for although I do not observe kosher laws, this image struck me as a violation of a very basic sort. Categories which I long rejected intellectually, I suddenly desired to uphold emotionally; they seemed natural and inviolable. But not only had they been juxtaposed, they seemed to bleed into one another down the middle of the photo. Unthinkable, and yet here was the record of this transgression."

So let's situate ourselves once again, where are we? In the in-between, between deadline and past it, between covers, this one and the next, in other words between "Load" and "Load." In the December issue of *Metal Edge*, Lars is quoted as saying: "The main thing right now is to do the tour and live up to the promise we made to ourselves to go in and finish these other songs and get them out sometime at the end of next year. I want people to understand that although it's a new Metallica record it's really part two of "Load." All the songs were written and recorded at the same time and in terms of feel and sound and style they're a part of this whole thing, so it's important we get it out as soon as possible. I was listening to the stuff a few weeks ago and it all sounds really strong but I want to get it out there before it starts sounding dated."

I asked Lars if he thought that Serrano would be involved in the cover of the second "Load," and he said he definitely thought so.

Where are we? We are at the risky point where we will try to give a reading (a reading in terms of the dynamics of rhythms and alchemy) of the albums, on the basis of their covers. The six albums, on the way to the seventh, from that perspective, that kind of hindsight, not to be taken seriously.

The cover as metaphor. I always thought it was incredible that an album with a phonograph record in it could not be called "Metal Up Your Ass," could not, but could be changed and apparently quite easily be called "Kill 'Em All." Pretty good picture of our society, our cultural ways. In Mark Putterford's book Lars is quoted as saying, in August of 1983: "I really like the cover... The idea of a sledgehammer lying in a pool of blood may sound kinda simple, but it looks real neat..."

So here we have the idea of a sledgehammer, iron fist, heavy metal, or maybe led as found in s(led)gehammer. Metal in a pool of blood, already that chemical marriage, the energies of being human coming together, the thrust of force as a hammer, etc.

If you take the six albums and divide them in three, you might call them, so far, the early, the middle, and the late. The two early albums would then be about energy, the riding of the energies, the lightning, the onslaught of force, its coming to a halt, the pool, the chair, etc. And inside the cover the music itself shoots up, rides the pulse, singing death, surviving death, fuck death, up yours, here we go.

But is there in this pulse a kind of sledgehammer approach, the fast rhythms perhaps having a kind of metronomic feel, going to the leaden side rather than to the blood? Above we talked about this hammering away, the British way, here we have a newer breed, faster attack, erupting speeds, killing, killing, maybe even the tempos.

Met(all)ica. As there is led in sledgehammer, what kind of all is there in early Metallica? Metal up your ass seems to be a friendly gesture, a committed insistence, inclusive at least to the degree that you yourself are seen as part of the procedure. Take Putterford's book, page 9, where Lars

is quoted as saying, in August of 1992: "Remember, you're talking to the guy who brown-nosed his way through England in 1981 with Lemmy, Diamond Head and Iron Maiden! That side of me has been there! That's one of the reasons Metallica exists, because I'd sit there and learn from the Motorheads, Diamond Heads and Iron Maidens, because I was so far up their ass all the time! I've been to Motorhead rehearsals in 1981 – when they were working on the 'Iron Fist' songs – as a punter, absorbing and learning the vibe. That's what made me realize I wanted to do this shit myself."

Metal up your ass, as quicksilver, raising the temperature, boiling conventions, familiarizing through provocation. Kill 'em all, which all? Maybe the others. Maybe those that oppose the freedom of choice, the choice of that first naming of the album. Where the first title spreads its own congeniality, or at least can cut several ways, the second and final title sets up, in disgust, an adversarial situation. Us and Them.

This continues on the third cover, where you see the name Metallica untouched by the strings attached to all the crosses, the army of death being held by the hands above, the all in Metallica freely suspended on the cover, the whole Metallica name hovering like a spaceship above the rows of crosses, the energies of the M and the A, the pointed letters, spreading out over the cemetery. In alchemical terms, you are beginning to see the hands of dogma and authority holding you to the ground, institutionalized order prevailing. You begin to see the strain of this living, always wearing the helmet of death (left side of cover). In chemical terms you feel you must begin to change, a dying to a fixed regime. In political terms you feel it's time to speak up.

Doris arrives (bound and cracked). The fourth album thus introduces Woman, the female everywhere that gives solace to sailors and roadies. And more, woman as Justice, as the call to justice, for all. This all now of a different kind, the call to justice all-embracing, the slow realization that we are in this soup altogether or all together, the laws of desire, of buying and selling, the laws of legality, of favoritism and legal fees (see Putterford, p. 29), the tipping of scales, of green cards, red cards.

Black is next, the fifth album, the word in the alchemical tradition is nigredo, from Latin, the blackening of the metal, "a black blacker than black" (quoting from Jung), the stage of putrefaction that must take place before a purer metal is obtained, the transformation towards a lighter form, towards mercury, the ongoing transmutation of ignorance, a shedding of veils. In rhythmic terms it's the opening up towards blacker modes of play, having been enlisted for years, maybe for centuries, in a different, more mechanical pronunciation. In alchemical terms the snake on the cover would be the dragon, of deep-rooted confusion (both fierce and stubborn), that must be seen through, slain, the word drako being Greek for serpent, snake. In rhythmical terms, the snake (front and back cover) would be the coiling movement of the blues, like Blind Lemon Jefferson's 'Black Snake Moan.' On the cover of one of my EPs (with several versions of 'Roam' plus a live 'Battery') only the "all" of Metallica is seen, way up in the right corner, across the cover.

The latest album, then, is this process continued, both extended and turned inward. Blood and semen coming together in Serrano's poignant photograph, the marriage of male and female forces, the processes of union, its steps and stages known in alchemy as coniunctio (king and queen, solar and lunar sides, etc.). In terms of rhythm: a further vitalization, in that a continuation of less restrictive patterns opens up the entire field of play, the music breathing freer, the pulse flowing more organically. The word Metallica, on the cover, now more porous, the M pointing its point into the mixture of semen and blood, the A pointing into a breach, an opening bay. The logo, for-



merly with its arrows aiming only outwards, is seen in the lower left corner on the back cover (and on the CD itself, its metal): now turning some of its energy inward, the four sides of the assembled star turning also on itself, arrowpoints touching other sides, leaving a situation rich in possibilities, a variety of future ways, not without its risks of internal fractures. How do you read the logo? How do you see the cover, the series, in retrospect?

James H., quoted in Pepperford's book, May 1990: "Things are so deep and people are always trying to read shit into things that are real simple. Some people try and tell you what the songs are about and it bores me to death."

Concerning the in-between, between albums, between holes. In *Modern Drummer*, Nov. '96 issue, Lars is quoted: "... I don't like to be pigeonholed, and I really like that people never really know what's going on with Metallica. We set the tone for that going all the way back to "Ride the Lightning," which was a lot different than "Kill 'Em All." There's a certain side of me that likes messing with people's expectations of what Metallica should be."

Between beats, between drums and guitars. Lars, same issue, same page: "... you have to understand that for ten or twelve years the only thing I had on my monitor was James Hetfield. The only thing coming into my headphones when we were recording was James. The drums and the rhythm guitar were always the backbone of this band, unlike most bands where the drums and bass are supposed to be the backbone. With us, the bass was almost an afterthought; we fit it in wherever there was a space left in the mix. You take a record like "...Justice." There wasn't very much space left.

"Load" was the first record where we cut the drums and then the bass, so we actually had the rhythmic foundation on tape before we cut the guitars. It gave us that solid foundation we'd never quite had before. It's also the first time I felt that Jason and I were really starting to lock in at the level a drummer and bass player should, in the traditional sense of rhythm players. There's more of a connection and vibe going between us. There's more eye contact now and we're both more aware of what each other is doing.

"When we first met Jason and brought him into the band, his ears would always go to James' left hand. What we tried to do was get him to forget about James' left hand and focus more on my right hand. It was very hard to get him to do that, especially coming from his speed metal background, where the two guitars and bass are almost as one, whereas in the traditional hard rock that I was brought up on the drums and bass were more hooked up. But in the last couple of years, I think Jason's really come more into my camp and it's made an incredible difference in how the rhythm tracks hold together."

The tracks between the rhythms, the tempos. This would be the point where we might link up again with Steven Wiig's good lines in volume 3, issue 3 of SO WHAT!. I'll extend the quote to the paragraph as a whole: "'Sad But True' is without a doubt the heaviest it's ever been. With the tempo held back just a bit, the weight of the song triples. Kirk's in tune with the crows (and his guitar) like never before. Tossing and hammering his guitar around like a crazed magician, he is full of eye (liner) contact and makes a huge impression on all of us."

Being in tune, with the crows, with the tempo. When the tempo is held back just a bit, the weight triples. Here's an area where I think there're possibilities for development, relating also to Lars' comments above concerning his and Jason's coming together: taking the tempo to its rightful place, its full potential. Obviously that's never a fixed place. Yet to experiment a little with taking it down a notch, or up, will change the whole fiber of a song, open it up to a richer texture and pull. And the solo work on top of such a changed foundation might then, again, in its turn be influenced, inspired. The Count Basie band, from early on, seemed to make an art of just that, the tempo as such.

The in-between as such. There's a kind we haven't mentioned, which is a little related to the above: the in-between between songs, when one song is ended, and the next is not quite there yet: the interval on the playlist, so to speak. In those spaces, I feel there's also room to work, how to time and play with these silences, to move the whole thing along, while the applause etc. rises and waves out. To prepare, in (non-scripted) sound and silence, a chord, a cymbal, an anticipation, a rest that's still alert to its further direction. The one who impressed me in this area was Courtney Love, I heard her with Hole, striking a stand, some sliding notes, a hurling of insults, building a tension up to the release of the song itself, I thought she did that so well.

Finally, the word cover of course has several meanings, cover as protection, shield, and also, in music terms, cover as mimesis, to cover a song, adding a seal of one's own. Thinking again of Courtney Love, and the coming together, on "Load," of the seminal juices, this possibility then: to hear her version of "Where's Your Crown King Nothing."

Finally, back to the alleys. Between Metallica and the Internet, between the band and its most vocal and loyal supporters. This is what we picked up, here in Seattle, just as we were putting an end to the story. Signed by one Steve and dated Sunday Nov. 17, America Online, the subject being "Re: All I Want For Christmas," it read: "The hell with Metallica, I want a Tony Smith action figure!!!!!!!!!"

We all join in saluting the Editor. ●

**META METALLURGY**

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