

*Interview with Clayton for Putrefactive Effect magazine, July 2006*

**PART HARKONIN:**

**-Jim: Infernal greetings to you Clayton! The band HARKONIN started in 2002 but you came in the band later; when were you exactly a band member? Can you introduce the readers to HARKONIN and its releases?**

A: I joined Harkonin in mid-2003, July I think. By that time, they had already released one 3-track promo and the debut CD "Seductress Of The Unlight", which was recorded with drummer Mike Evans. After I joined, we released "Live At The Pit", a very limited (and bad sounding) live album. "Sermons Of Anguish", the first studio Harkonin record with me on it as well as new guitarist Matt Coyle, came out in 2005. Our third album "Ghanima" will be out this summer.

**-You are actually going to record your new album "Ghanima" with a remix version of "Sermons of Anguish" as bonus that should be out this summer. What can be expected from this new onslaught? Why did you remix "Sermons of Anguish"? What is the meaning behind the word "Ghanima"?**

A: Well, this new album feels different from "Sermons..." in that "Sermons..." was a really angry and aggressive record, some might say possibly at the expense of more mature songwriting. This album, there was a concentrated effort at better songwriting and more focused emotion and aggression as well as creating a darker atmosphere. The "Sermons..." remix came about because in the time since we recorded it, we came to be unhappy with the muddiness of the production. Matt had the opportunity to remix it, and it sounds like a whole new album to me. Much better. "Ghanima" means something akin to "a token of battle", or "a souvenir earned in war."

**-You also self released an official bootleg "Live at the pit" 2004 which is sold out. Never think about releasing it again on tape format for example? What do you think about this format?**

A: That "official bootleg" will never be re-released. That was the old lineup and we have moved on. As far as the tape format, I have no problem with that whatsoever; it's just easier for us to self-finance CD duplication. Plus, we have greater quality control with the digital medium – tapes degrade over time and with heat.

**-It's quite surprising to see you involved in a black metal band like HARKONIN regarding your past in EULOGY. Are you interested by this music style or do you remain a death metal fan?**

A: Well, I wouldn't say I was ever a fan of typical death metal. I like any music, as long as it brings something to the listener, inspires unique feelings. I was really the first person in Eulogy to be into black metal. I remember trying to get the guys to listen to Bathory, Darkthrone, etc., back in the day. So I guess I've always been a fan of black metal. It's just more raw, less confined by genre clichés, and elicits more raw emotion from me. Also, let me just say here that I don't consider Harkonin to be a true "black metal" band – we play what we feel like playing, period. We answer to no genre qualifications and aspire to break free of any

obvious classification. Much like Eulogy was not a typical death metal band. People can call us whatever genre they want, it really means nothing to me.

**-The style performed is a kind of old school black metal with thrash elements. How would you define your music and what are the influences of HARKONIN?**

A: I'd say you defined it pretty well. We are all very much influenced by the music that first got us into metal – the extreme thrash and early death & black metal of the late '80s/early '90s. This is not to say that we don't listen to newer music, because we do; it's just that when we sit down to write, the things that come out usually end up being very "old school" with some added newer-style twists. That's one of the things that attracted me to Harkonin in the first place – we, as a group, have very similar tastes in music. I remember the first "extreme" metal song I ever heard was Whiplash's "Last Man Alive", which we covered as an unlisted track on "Sermons..."

**-I have also noticed you didn't use triggers on your bass drums. Was it your decision or the other members' one? Is it a way to distinguish from other black metal hordes?**

A: I've never used triggers regularly. In fact, the only time I ever used triggers was when Eulogy was recording "The Essence"; our engineer was having a very hard time getting a decent sound out of my kicks, so after a few hours I walked across the way and asked Pete (Sandoval) if I could borrow his pedals & brain for the recording, since he had just gotten the DW pedals with triggers on them. He said sure, and the last three tracks on "The Essence" are the result of that. I simply don't like triggers and much prefer an acoustic sound. That being said, I do understand the purpose of them in a live environment – you take the soundman/sound system of any given club out of the equation and you ensure you have a solid sound from night to night. In this light, I might consider using triggers on only my kicks in the future for live situations, but for now lack of cash prohibits my toying with the idea. But I would only ever use them for kicks – I can't stand the sound of triggered snare and toms. It makes me want to vomit. I prefer a more natural, warmer sound to the drums. I realize that modern triggers can mimic this, but you know what I mean; there is a difference.

**-On "Sermon of Anguish", there is a well done WHIPLASH cover "Last man alive". In the past, HARKONIN paid tribute to DARKTHRONE, BARATHRUM and the mighty VENOM. What do those bands represent for HARKONIN? Have you listened to recent stuff of DARKTHRONE "The cult is alive" and VENOM "Metal Black"?**

A: Thanks for the kind words. As I said above, Whiplash (the first album or two, anyway) was a great influence on me in the early years. Jason too. The band was already covering "War Metal" and "In League With Satan" when I joined, so I had to learn those songs. I had never heard Barathrum before that, but Jason was/is very into them, so that's how that came about I suppose. And the Venom cover, I'm sure many bands have paid tribute to Venom at some point in their lifespan. It was after Matt and I joined that we decided to cover "In The Shadow Of The Horns". That was always one of my favorite Darkthrone songs, and I think it's a track that really fits in with our style. We have fun with that one. And yes, I have heard the new albums of Darkthrone and Venom.

**-Do you consider HARKONIN to be part of what is called US black metal with hordes like THORNSPAWN, DEMONIC CHRIST, GHOSTIC, KULT OV AZAZEL, DEMONCY, AVERSE SEFIRA, KRIEG, etc? Or do you feel closer to European black**

**metal scene? According to you, what are the main differences between US black metal and European black metal?**

A: While I have huge respect for bands like Averse Sefira, Krieg, and some others you mention, I don't feel that we sound anything like them. I think we are complimentary – meaning, a show with Harkonin and Averse Sefira would be very good – but I don't think we are congruent musically. We may travel similar paths as far as intent and creed, but when it comes to music we express ourselves differently. There aren't really any songs from Harkonin that have blast beats from beginning to end; we aren't interested in any kind of speed contest. Of course, we also don't sound like any current European black metal because of that either. I honestly have a hard time trying to classify the music we make; it's very black metal influenced death/dark thrash with mostly black metal-style vocals and mostly nihilistic lyrics. It doesn't really sound like anything I've heard before.

**-I know you are a huge fan of RIPPING CORPSE. What releases of the band do you own and why so much passion for this band? Do you like the new projects of ex-RIPPING CORPSE members; I talk about HATE ETERNAL and DIM MAK?**

A: I own all Ripping Corpse ever released, as well as many things never released, including rehearsals, live shit, and the “lost album” that they recorded after the 1992 demo. Anyone that has heard anything RC has done should know exactly why I think they were gods. If the only RC you have ever heard is the album, that is very unfortunate. Not that the album was bad by any means, but the things they did after the album... If those things had been released, they would have changed the face of metal, and that's no exaggeration. The riffs of Shaune & Erik – not to mention the incredibly melodic and emotional leads, the drumming of Brandon, the anger of Scott... I just love everything about them. I miss them dearly, and it was a huge honor to share the stage with them once.

As far as current projects, I love Dim Mak. The new album is different from the first two in that there are far fewer “groove” parts and much more straight-forward anger. This isn't really a bad thing, but the first couple albums, in parts, really felt like this would be what RC would be doing had they stuck together. Dim Mak filled a huge void in that area for me. As far as Hate Eternal goes, I think the musicianship is incredible, possibly unmatched by any other death metal band out there. Erik has been fortunate to hook up with some amazing drummers that can keep up with his insane riffing. But I'd be lying if I said that I didn't miss some of the old Erik style; I really enjoyed Alas, and I think that Erik has much more to give to the music scene beyond the confines of Hate Eternal. I hope he finds the time in the future to pursue something on the side again, as he's easily one of the most talented guitar players I've ever met. I have much respect for him.

**-How is the scene actually in you area (St Louis / Missouri)? What young metalheads are listening, good old stuff or they have been infected by nu metal/rock trend? Usually, what do metallers look like at you gigs?**

A: There are always people that are influenced by trends in any city you visit, and St. Louis is no different. However, there are also a great many fans of true black metal and older music that means something. For example, when we would cover Darkthrone, people would go nuts; we didn't have to tell them what it was. Plenty of people singing along. But yes, there are many nu metal-type bands that will soon become recognized I'm sure; they are talented but not my thing, obviously. As far as what people look like, it's all over the place. In Tampa,

everyone pretty much fit a mold – long hair, band shirt, jeans, boots. Here, we get all kinds of people – long hair, bald, male, female, clean cut, shaggy, etc. This is a diverse area when it comes to metal fans.

**-How HARKONIN is perceived in your country, and more generally the scene from St Louis? Do you have good feedback from your music? Can you name interesting extreme bands from Missouri that deserve support?**

A: Around here, for the longest time we were the only band that was considered “black metal”, but within the last year or so many have cropped up. Some are very good, like Warghoul and Abyss Of Black. We also have some great death metal like Divulsion and Desecrate. If you expand that by about 100 miles, there are also bands like World Divine, Null Dynamo, Emaciation, and Exesion that are good. I’m sure I’m forgetting a few, as there are many, many metal bands around here, it seems like there are more popping up every day. It’s a very rich metal area right now. There’s a lot of talent here – members of great death metal bands All Will Fall and Cast The Stone have gone on to join Misery Index. We also get quite a bit of unsolicited support from the local entertainment magazine The Riverfront Times, which is appreciated. The only issue now it seems is that there are far more bands than there are decent clubs to play, of which I can think of three or four.

### **PART EULOGY:**



**-OK, now let’s talk about your past in EULOGY. The band appeared in the explosion of death metal during the beginning of the nineties. I think that because of the numerous band like MORBID ANGEL, OBITUARY, DEATH, DISINCARNATE, IMMOLATION, MONSTROSITY, DEICIDE, SUFFOCATION, CANNIBAL CORPSE, etc... EULOGY remained confidential and underrated like the more underground bands like RIPPING CORPSE, NECROVORE, PYREXIA, DECEASED, GOREAPHOBIA, etc... What’s your view about that? Can you also give us informations about the 1990 demo? I have never heard about it.**

A: I am honoured to be among such names for you. I think you said everything that needed to be said there – we remained mostly underground and underrated. We simply couldn’t compete with the type of publicity that a record or distribution deal could finance.

The 1990 demo was created by Jarrett, Jason & Mike. It was done with a drum machine, and it sounded like it. There were some parts on it that were truly unplayable by a human. I wish I still had a copy, as I did really like it. It had, “Suffering Within,” “Consecration of Fools,”

and “Animystic Blasphemy” on it, as well as a synth number called “Night Must Fall,” which we eventually incorporated into the ending of “Abstractions.”

**-In 1992, EULOGY released the killer “Dismal” demo which sold quite well I have heard about 3000 copies!). What were your musical activities before entering EULOGY? You were replacing Antar Lee Coates (ex-DIABOLIC, ex-UNHOLY GHOST, BLASTMASTERS and he also played in HORROR OF HORRORS and NECROSIS), am I right?**

A: Thank you for the kind words about “Dismal”. I joined Eulogy less than a year or so after I moved to Tampa; prior to that, I was in the St. Louis punk band Dain Bramage. We played with bands like AOD, and we had a gig scheduled with Life Sentence (one of my favorite punk bands in their earlier days) that got cancelled because of a snow storm. That was in the mid-late ‘80’s and I was in high school. Before and during that I also had extensive experience with marching drumlines and orchestras.

As far as the history of Eulogy before and shortly after I joined, it seems that several people involved have their own set of memories and reality; I’m not here to start old arguments over again, but I can tell you what I remember. Lee lived with me and my friend at the time he got involved in Eulogy. Lee had just moved to Tampa and didn’t really have anywhere to stay so he moved in with us. Lee got hooked up with Eulogy through Pete (Sandoval), I believe. Eulogy were looking to relocate to Tampa and Lee was looking for a new band post-Exmortis, so it seemed logical. We had two drum sets set up in the living room of the house, and one day the rest of Eulogy came over to jam with Lee. I hung around outside & listened; it seemed cool. They were trying him out. I played on my kit between their sets but was sucking it up since I wasn’t warmed up or anything. A short time later (a week or so, I think), Eulogy came back over for the second practice only to discover that Lee had pawned his drums because he was short on cash and the job at Burger King up the street wasn’t paying well. Needless to say, they were pissed. They were having a band meeting outside and I was jamming. I had been listening to their drum machine demo that week and I played my rendition of “Consecration of Fools”. Jarrett comes running in the door and asked me what it was; when I told him, he said, “Why didn’t you play like that last week??” I told him I hadn’t warmed up yet. The rest was history. I may be off on the timeline a bit, but that’s the main idea of the way it happened. So essentially, some hard times on Lee created an opportunity for me. I think it also really changed Lee, as that was when he started telling everyone to call him by his first name.

**-Then came a kind of official bootleg “Live at the Ritz” in 1992 which showed the powerful live side of EULOGY. Nevertheless, I didn’t understand why you didn’t get approached by a label; you proved you can be very professional. What were the reasons of such disinterest from labels, in your opinion? Was EULOGY a cursed band?**

A: Cursed? I don’t know about cursed, but we definitely had more than our share of challenges that seemed endless. I believe that the main reason we were never offered a decent contract was because we were too different from the other bands. As odd as that sounds, that’s the way it was/is in the music business. A label is a business and as such they like to make money, relatively speaking when it comes to metal. So, labels observed what was selling from our area at the time – Morbid Angel, Death, Deicide, Obituary, Cannibal Corpse, etc. Out of that list, we sounded closer to Morbid Angel than the others, and it seemed most labels felt that Morbid Angel was a fluke that couldn’t be duplicated. Tons of other bands

from the area that sounded exactly like watered-down versions of the other four bands were getting record deals; the Florida death metal scene was saturated with copy-cat “chug chug chug” bands that somehow sold records. We were not like any of those bands, and the over-saturation of shitty bands simply drowned us beneath it. As I said, we were ignored because we were different. I believe that if we had lived in Europe it would have been easier to get a deal done from a European label, especially with bands like At The Gates taking off. So, I guess my answer is that it’s all economics; I don’t think any label thought that we were a crappy band, I just think that they went with the safe investments. When any one shitty band would fail or have bad sales, they’d just drop them and replace them with some other shitty band. It’s easier that way, I guess.

As we got closer to the end for us, Metal Blade was showing some interest, and I think we have George, Alex, and Cannibal Corpse to thank for that. There was a time shortly after we recorded “The Essence” where we were offered to get on the tour with Cannibal Corpse and Samael, provided “The Essence” was released in the States. When the delays for the release of the EP kept piling on, we were told that we couldn’t get on that tour if we had no product for sale in the States, so we were off it. That was only the beginning of our anger at Cenotaph Records. But, Metal Blade did put us on the final Metal Massacre album.

**-In 1993, you took part in ANGEL TRUMPETS with Mike Bearden, Jay Fernandez and Jason Avery. What kind of music was played by the band? Was it just a single side project?**

A: Angel Trumpets was the brainchild of Mike and Jay, I believe. What the four of us recorded was only two songs, and it was sort of... hm. I guess the closest thing I could compare it to would be later Type O Negative – real dark and slow atmospheric metal with no real growling, except on backing vocals. After he left Eulogy, Mike continued the project with Jay and a different drummer, adding a bass player later so he could be the singer only. The later Angel Trumpets stuff was much different from what we did; it sounded more like White Zombie than anything else, if I remember correctly.

**-In 1994, you recorded your first professional MCD “The Essence” released by Cenotaph Records from Holland which finally ripped you off. This EP was pure US death metal, but you dare to introduce female vocals on the song “The Essence”. Were you aware at that time, that it would cause some serious critics by supporters of the death metal scene as it’s a very narrow minded music style?**

A: We never really thought about it. We just heard it when we would listen back to our rehearsal tapes and decided to do it. We didn’t want to use keys, we wanted to use real females, and fortunately we knew some that were up to the task. We even pulled it all off live at one gig. I really enjoy it, and I think it was the right decision for the music. I’ve heard people say they wish that they could hear the song without the female vocals and whatnot; to them I say make your own band and then you can do what you want. This was what we wanted and it worked exactly as we wished. And technically, we recorded that CD in late 1992 or early 1993, it just got released in 1994.

**-Unfortunately 1995 sounds like a swan song as you self released a last demo named “Lesson in fear industry”. What were the reasons for EULOGY splitting up? Were there dissensions? There are also rumours telling you stopped EULOGY because you’ve been screwed by music business? Can you raise the veil about that?**

A: The demo was called “Lesson In Fear”, and it was pretty much just an industry-only demo; meaning, we sent it to labels and didn’t release it to the public, except in Tampa.

Eulogy split for a variety of reasons that really have no business being public knowledge. There were “dissensions” as you put it, there were personal issues individually, there were financial issues, etc. Being screwed by the music business was only a very small part of it. The band had simply run its course; it was destined to be a finite band from the beginning. When Jarrett moved back to Virginia in mid-1995 is when the band truly ended. Sure, we carried on without him and got a replacement guitarist, playing one more gig without Jarrett, but the heart and soul were gone. Jarrett and I were the primary writing team behind the band’s best music and without him it was a Eulogy cover band. So when I left in January 1996, Jason went to Monstrosity and the other guys scattered to other projects.

**-You played a short time in ALAS with Erik Rutan and Alex Webster during the summer of 1995 then moved out of Florida in 1996. During this period, were you just fed up being involved in a band? Or was it just a matter of earning money to live?**

A: Well, neither really. I was certainly not fed up being in a band; I was extremely excited about Alas. I couldn’t believe I was playing with two of the best musicians in the business. The songs really flowed with us. Something came up in January 1996 that put me in a difficult position. I spoke to Erik about things and told him that I thought I was going to have to leave Tampa. It was a very depressing conversation and a very difficult decision to make. However, I will say that I still feel I made the right decision. That’s all I will say about that situation. Once I got to St. Louis, I was really depressed about my prior band situations and I spent the next three or four years reflecting on things and just laying low. I didn’t play my drums at all during this time. It was difficult, but very healthy for me to take a break after pouring my heart, soul, and wallet into Eulogy for six years. Don’t get me wrong – Eulogy is still one of my favorite bands to listen to. We made some great music, in my opinion, and we gave it everything we had. I’m proud of the things we recorded and wish we could have recorded more.

**-What are your relations between you and the past members of EULOGY? Never think about a reunion? And what about a re-release of your full discography on one CD? I ask this because, we can see some bands doing a come back like MORPHEUS DESCENT or REVENANT.**

A: I remained friends with Jarrett and still speak to him, but not often enough. I spoke to Mike for the first time a few months ago, I’m very happy he’s getting his life together. He’s a good guy. I spoke to Dave Sawyer via email awhile back. That’s the extent of my relationship with my ex-bandmates.

As for a reunion, I don’t see it happening. At least, I’m not really interested. Eulogy was what it was, and for us to reform now to record new material would be cheapening what we created. We were all in the same mindset back then, pretty much, and mostly on the same page. Now, we’ve spent so much time apart it would be merely music tied to a name. Back then, it was a brotherhood. I think it would be fun to get the guys together and play a show or two maybe, but we’d all have to agree not to kill each other first, heh. I would love to write and record with Jarrett again sometime, but it would probably be under a different name.

Releasing our discography is something I've always wanted. We were close at one point, but then got sidetracked talking about recording the old songs that we never got to record. That would truly be amazing, as we had some great songs that no one has heard, but then we're back to the recording thing I spoke about above. So that part of it never happened. Right now, I think the only thing stopping anyone from releasing a CD of our old shit is the fact that there would inevitably be huge arguments about money from some ex-members. Trying to figure out who is owed what royalties, etc., would be an accounting nightmare. That's why I don't think it will ever happen, and that's also why I supplied everything for free download off the Eulogy website for years. For me, it was always about the music. If you play metal and expect to make money, you're fooling yourself.

**-You now play in HARKONIN, Jason Avery is in MONSTROSITY but what others members do now? I have heard that some of your mates play in CONTORTED.**

A: Ex-Eulogy people have changed bands quite a bit and it's difficult to keep up. I know there are or have been ties to Monstrosity, Contorted, Diabolic, Brutality, Unholy Ghost, Canephora, and The Stellar Core, to name a few.

**-Clayton, I wish you all the best for you musical activities. Thank you for answering my questions. I hope it didn't bore you too much! If you want to add anything, it's more than welcome!**

A: Thank you for the interview. It's good to see that Eulogy holds some relevance for someone out there. I'm extremely proud of the new Harkonin album "Ghanima", which will be out this summer. Keep an eye on Harkonin.com for updates and downloads.