

= Antestor =

Antestor is a Norwegian unblack metal band formed in 1990 in Jessheim . Credited for starting the northern European Christian black metal scene , Antestor is the only Christian band to have an album released by Cacophonous Records , which has also released records by bands such as Dimmu Borgir , Sigh , and Cradle of Filth . The band 's only release on Cacophonous , The Return of the Black Death , proved influential for the Christian black metal movement , and has sold over 10 @, @ 000 copies .

In the late 1990s they dubbed their musical style as " sorrow metal " rather than black metal because the black metal movement was publicly affiliated with Satanism in Norway . According to HM magazine , the progressive elements on the debut album , Martyrium , were possibly ahead of their time in the Norwegian extreme metal scene .

The group has gone through several line @-@ up changes over the years , and currently Antestor consists of the founding guitarist Lars Stokstad (Vemod) , vocalist Ronny Hansen (Vrede) , bassist Erik Normann Aanonsen , guitarist Robert Bordevick , and drummer Henning Børven . The original vocalist Kjetil Molnes (Martyr) and drummer Svein Sander (Armoth) left the band around 2000 , and the members of a fellow Norwegian black metal group , Vaakevandring , joined Antestor . The reputable Norwegian extreme metal drummer Jan Axel Blomberg (Hellhammer) played session drums for their 2005 album The Forsaken and Det tapte liv EP . A fourth studio album , Omen , was released in 2013 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Crush Evil era = = =

In 1990 , the band was formed under the name " Crush Evil " by Lars Stokstad , Kjetil Molnes , Øyvind Hope and Erling Jørgensen in Jessheim , Norway . Paul W joined them as a drummer later on . Back then , the band 's music style was a mixture of death metal , doom metal , and thrash metal . In 1991 , they recorded and released their first demo , The Defeat of Satan , which contains three songs and an outro . The band is Christian and over the course of their career have received death threats because of this .

The existence of the band itself caused a debate in the metal underground . For example , during the early 1990s , Bård Faust of Emperor brought up the subject when he discussed with Euronymous , guitarist / vocalist from the seminal black metal band Mayhem , in his zine Orcustus about the Norwegian scene . Faust asked : " Don 't you think that something is terribly wrong when it has gone so far that we have a Christian " death metal " band here (Crush Evil) ? Any advice on how we should kill them ? " Euronymous replied to this : " It 's bad enough to have a couple of society bands , but a Christian band is too much . But don 't worry , we have plans . They will not continue for a very long time . " However , the band persevered despite these threats . Antestor was never forced to split apart , and in an almost ironic twist of fate , Jan Axel Blomberg (better known as Hellhammer , the drummer for Mayhem) was Antestor 's session drummer on their latest two releases .

= = = Martyrium (1993 ? 1996) = = =

In 1993 , Vegard Undal joined the band as a bassist and Svein Sander became their drummer . During that time , they changed the name Crush Evil to Antestor , which is (Latin for " call to witness " or " testify ") . Despair was their first self @-@ released demo , and was released under the band name Antestor . The demo starts with an intro and ends with a cover of an old Norwegian hymn , called Jesus , Jesus , Ver Du Hjä Meg (" Jesus , Jesus , Be With Me ") . Strawberry Records pressed 600 copies of the recording .

In December 1994 , Antestor recorded their first full @-@ length album titled Martyrium . Arctic

Serenades Records was originally supposed to release that album , but because of unknown reasons that never happened , and the band tried to get another label to release the album . American @-@ based label Morphine Records would subsequently produce a limited quantity of bootleg copies of the album in 1997 . In an interview , the drummer Armoth said : " ... we were in contact with a label called Morphine Records . But that was about signing a deal for the Martyrium album . But we never signed a contract but that guy , Burrito , made several promotapes and sold every bit of it illegally ' cause he didn 't have a contract . " However , the tape copies circulated in up to fifth generation copies and their audience grew fast . Martyrium was the last album that emphasized the band 's death / doom direction .

On June 3 , 1994 , Antestor appeared on a local television program called " BootlegTV " where youth could practice and experience recording and video production . Usually local bands from Oslo played on that program which was broadcast on the television station TVNorge . During the course of this program , Antestor played five songs from Martyrium . On June 6 , 1995 , Antestor was featured on the Norwegian weekly newspaper Morgenbladet 's article about the phenomenon of Christian black metal , surrounding the black metal parody controversy of the Australian unblack metal group Horde 's 1994 album Hellig Usvart . In the article , vocalist Kjetil Molnes explains the band 's stance on if a Christian band can play black metal : " We identify ourselves as black metal as a music style , not black metal as an ideology or belief . "

= = = The Return of the Black Death (1997 ? 1998) = = =

In 1997 , Antestor recorded a promotional CD titled Kongsblod . The promo @-@ CD caught the interest of British Cacophonous Records , one of the biggest labels with experience in the black metal style and helped established groups such as Cradle of Filth and Dimmu Borgir start their career . Cacophonous signed a record deal for 2 albums with Antestor . In 1998 , Cacophonous released Kongsblod under a different name , The Return of the Black Death , and changed the original cover art of a famous Norwegian painting to artwork by Joe Petagno , a well @-@ known American heavy metal cover art creator .

Cacophonous being a secular label releasing material by a band that held Christian beliefs generated some interest in the metal scene . In an interview with Art for the Ears Webzine , published on December 12 , 1998 , Armoth said : " We sent the CD and a short biography . They just wanted to sign us because of the music . And that 's exactly what we wanted to do . " 2 years later in a 2000 interview with the Finnish The Christian Underground Zine issue 4 , the fanzine 's interviewer asked Antestor : " However , you had a record deal with Cacophonous Records (ex @-@ Cradle of Filth , Bal @-@ Sagoth) . What kind of experiences did you get from that ? " The band replied : " Pretty bad , actually . I can not say they did anything else than released the album . No money , no royalties , nothing . " The interviewer also asked : " Did the record company set any demands concerning your image ? " Antestor replied : " Nothing like that . They just said that it is not recommendable for us to proclaim exactly everywhere that we are a Christian band , and they censored the words ' Lord ' and ' Jesus ' from our lyrics . We ourselves removed a few texts because we did not want to provoke unnecessarily . "

The Return of the Black Death was mostly well received by both Christian and non @-@ Christian black metal fans and critics . For example , the British metal magazines Kerrang ! and Terrorizer both gave the album 4 points out of 5 . Musically , The Return of the Black Death is a mixture of black metal and doom metal . The album relies on hypnotic , cold atmosphere and showcases influences from Norwegian folk music , which led some to label Antestor as Viking metal . Unlike previously , around this time the band themselves said they felt uncertain whether a Christian band can play black metal , because the movement was still strongly associated with Satanism . The drummer Svein Sander says in the 1998 interview :

= = = The Forsaken (2000 ? 2009) = = =

In 2000 , Antestor was signed by Endtime Productions , a metal record label that also helped to

start the career of the Norwegian metal band Extol . The original vocalist Kjetil Molnes (Martyr) left Antestor . However , the breakup of another Christian metal band in Norway , Vaakevandring , led to several former Vaakevandring members joining Antestor . Namely , Ronny Hansen , adopting the new moniker Vrede , became Antestor 's new vocalist , and Morten Sigmund Mageroy (known in Antestor as Sygmoon) stepped in as the new keyboardist . Ann @-@ Mari Edvardsen , who has sung in the Norwegian gothic metal group The Third and the Mortal , joined the band as a female vocalist . For the first time in their career , Antestor began using the infamous corpse paint masks as a part of their live shows and overall image .

In 2000 , Endtime Productions released Martyrium with cover art done by the reputive Swedish metal music cover artist Kristian Wåhlin . Antestor toured the United States with Extol that year , playing small venues and finally performing at Cornerstone Festival . Over the next several years , the band remained somewhat quiet ; they did not release any more albums until 2003 , when they re @-@ released their two earliest demos on one CD , titling it The Defeat of Satan . The drummer , Svein Sander (in Antestor , Armoth) , left the band during this time , and Antestor would not find a new full @-@ time drummer for several more years .

In 2004 , Antestor changed their style into a more modern black metal , and released their first set of new songs since The Return of the Black Death in an EP called Det tapte liv (" The Lost Life ") . Det tapte liv concentrated less on the black metal aspects of Antestor 's style , instead focusing more on instrumental songs . However , it hinted at what the band was preparing for their 2005 full @-@ length , The Forsaken . The cover arts for both releases were once again done by Kristian Wåhlin , and the cover for the EP depicts the Borgund Stave Church . Hellhammer played all drums on both of these releases . In an interview with the Russian metal site Metal Library on January 7 , 2007 , Blomberg was asked what did his Mayhem colleagues and record company think about his participation in Antestor , and he said : " To be honest , it was a big ' fuck off ! ' to them all . I will repeat again that I decide what I do and I play not only in black metal groups . " The band also asked Hellhammer to play live for them , but Blomberg refused . Hellhammer also went to state : " In my opinion , black metal today is just music . I will tell you that neither I nor other members of Mayhem never really were against religion or something else . We are primarily interested in music . " Ronny Hansen commented on Blomberg 's appearance :

New drummer Tony Kirkemo joined the band later in 2005 as live session drummer . The band played live shows rarely and only at explicitly Christian music festivals . Examples of performances the group have made in 2000s include the concerts at Bobfest in 2000 in Stockholm and 2004 in Linköping , and at the Nordic Fest 2004 in Oslo .

Some of the members still play in the black metal band Vaakevandring , who played a reunion concert in 2007 together with Antestor at the Endtime Festival held at the end of March 2007 in Halmstad . Antestor performed the concert with numerous session musicians . In this concert the band announced that this is their last live show for a while .

= = = Omen (2010 ? present) = = =

After three years of hiatus , on January 29 , 2010 , the band launched an official Facebook page . Later they announced new members : Bassist Thor Georg Buer (Grave Declaration) , guitarist Robert Bordevik (Grievance , Vardøger) , drummer Jo Henning Børven (Grave Declaration , Morgenroede) and keyboardist Nickolas Main Henriksen (Aspera , Desdemon) . With this line @-@ up , the band played a stage show at Nordic Fest 2010 in Oslo . On November 4 , 2010 they announced signing to Bombworks Records to record a new album and an EP . After some line @-@ up changes in mid @-@ 2011 , Erik Normann Aanonsen (Moddi) joined on bass while Thor Georg switched to guitar , and the show at the Norwegian Seaside Festival was with that line @-@ up . The album has been recorded and will be mixed and mastered in Sweden . Guitarist Thor also left the band to focus on his college education , but stated he may return if the opportunity arises . The fourth album , Omen , was released on November 30 , 2012 . A Brazilian tour was announced for early 2013 . During the Belo Horizonte leg of this tour , the band faced a protest organized by Black Metal / Anti @-@ Christianity radicals who rejected the possibility of a Christian black metal band to

perform in the city . Since the radicals were already announcing their intentions via Internet , the local police had assigned one private policeman in addition to the 30 security guards present to help guaranteeing the security of the show . At one point , the officer had to fire some shots towards the sky to control the rioters . A video posted on YouTube shows a group of radicals screaming " Fuck You Antestor ! " outside the venue and the local police escorting the band members .

After the show , the band posted a public statement about the incident , thanking their fans for coming despite of the risks involved , and blessing the radicals : " We are proud to call you our brothers and sisters in Christ . Last but not least we must thank the gig security and the Belo Horizonte police for escorting us though the angry mob . [...] We do not hate the angry mob who came to hurt us . In fact , our message in our shows is to love your enemy . So God bless everybody who stood outside chanting : Fuck Antestor ! Hope we can talk like reasonable people someday over a fresh squeezed juice . Extra special hails to our fans who had the balls to come although they knew it could be dangerous . Antestor salutes you and be blessed . " In a newspaper interview with the Norwegian Christian newspaper Dagen two days following the band 's safe return to Norway , bassist Erik Normann Aanonsen said that he had prepared himself for the worst @-@ case scenario that the tour could end in death , and he reiterates the band 's gratitude to the aggressive Brazilian Satanists stating : " We 're now twice as big in Brazil as we were before we went there . "

= = Style = =

= = = Music = = =

While the band 's style on the first publications was primarily death / doom with correspondingly slow songs and death growl singing , the band began playing black metal on the 1998 album The Return of the Black Death . On that album the band showcased screaming vocals , tremolo guitar riffs and drum passages with increased speed typical for the black metal genre . Keyboard is also in a central role , which for the typical black metal is used to perform epic interludes and dominates the soundscapes . For example , over the first three minutes of the song " Sorg " , only the keyboard melody leads the performance .

With the third album The Forsaken the band developed more in the direction of a more technical style , as it is apparent on the style of The Return of the Black Death . The band 's musical development resulted in that The Forsaken includes several guitar solos . Also the quality of production compared to The Return of the Black Death improved . Through the introduction of the two ex @-@ members of Vaakevandring , the style became more melodic and atmospheric .

= = = Lyrics = = =

Antestor 's lyrical themes include hope and despair , but also deal with the personal Christian faith of the band members . Therefore , many metal fans oppose classifying Antestor 's style to the category of black metal , as their lyrics are often contrary to the ideology of black metal . The lyrics are mostly in English . Norwegian texts are also rare for the group , but on the album The Return of the Black Death the Norwegian language dominates the lyrics . On this album , only part of the lyrics are listed in the booklet ; words directly referring to Jesus Christ and God were omitted . The song " A Sovereign Fortress " dealt with , for example , the acknowledgments of God who protects and supports the lyrical I since birth . It is portrayed in the chorus of this song as :

" Sorg " (Norwegian for : grief , sorrow , sadness) , however , deals with the themes of the sorrow and the search for hope , with the song based on darker imagery , and the lyrics are not explicitly Christian yet are not negative in the end . An example (in the Norwegian language) :

Another song that is also a dark , but this takes on Christian theme , is " Ancient Prophecy " . The lyrics tells that the man was sinful , and no one can escape the court of God . Antestor process in their lyrics also topics such as suicide , doubts about the certainty of salvation , and longing death , all of which are rare themes for a Christian band . An example from the text " Betrayed " from the

album The Forsaken :

= = = Appearance = = =

Antestor are one of the few bands in the Christian metal scene who use corpse paint in their appearances and on photos . One example is the booklet photos in the album The Return of the Black Death , depicting Antestor in Norsemen outfits and black and white face paints at a snowy Norwegian mountain location . Sometimes the group uses art blood , as known for the session bassist Ravn Furfjord 's (Frosthadr) appearance at the Bobfest 2004 concert . The band explains that corpse paint " is the same for us as masking is for actors or mimes ; One way to express certain feelings in the battle we are in . The main purpose is to concentrate on God and not to break a lance in side issues like these . "

= = Reception = =

According to Vrede in an interview with Intense Radio on December 13 , 2007 , " by various sources , The Return of the Black Death has sold over 10 @, @ 000 copies and still keeps selling . " Very few published reviews of the band 's albums exist , yet the ones that are available are positive , often good and some excellent . Michael Bryzak writes in the liner notes of The Defeat of Satan / Despair that , although the first album was not officially released until 2000 , " Martyrium was rightfully considered a cult classic . "

The group 's position in the Norwegian metal scene was controversial from the beginning . Bryzak writes that " standing up for their faith in Life and Hope , Antestor received serious death threats during this time from some of the major bands and key players of the scene . " When asked if the band ever played with other groups in the black metal scene , Antestor said in a 2000 interview with Tcu zine : " We played with some early form of the band Old Man 's Child once . Apparently they expressed their opinion of us with their legs and walked out of the venue during our set . It was their way of saying ' screw you Christians . ' " In the liner notes of Martyrium , Antestor corresponds in a slightly bitter tone : " For those of you who despised us , disbelieved in us and misplaced your anger upon us , may God have mercy on your poor souls ! "

On Antestor 's achievements , Bryzak wrote that " The birth of northern Europe 's Christian extreme metal scene can be attributed to only one act , Antestor . " In 2010 , HM Magazine ranked The Return of the Black Death number 40 on their Top 100 Christian metal albums of all @-@ time list with Beck stating about the album , " Devastatingly dark , TRBD set the standard for Christian black metal . " Jamie Lee Rake of HM Magazine wrote of the Endtime Productions re @-@ release of Martyrium , wondering if the progressive elements of the album made the band unnoticed innovators in the early Norwegian extreme metal scene :

= = Members = =

Current

Ronny Hansen (aka Vrede) ? vocals and lyrics (2000 ? present)

Lars Stokstad (aka Vemod) ? guitars and sung vocals (1990 ?) , keyboards (1990 ? 2000 , 2013 ? present)

Erik Normann Aanonsen ? bass and acoustic instruments (2011 ? present)

Jo Henning Børven ? drums and live programming (2010 ? present)

Former

Robert Bordevik ? guitars (2010 ? 2011 , 2012 ? 2015) , backing vocals (2012 ? 2015)

Nicholas Main Henriksen ? keyboards (2010 ? 2013)

Thor Georg Buer ? guitars (2011 @-@ 2012) , bass (2010 ? 2011)

Morten Sigmund Mageroy (aka Sygmoon) ? keyboards (1999 ? 2007)

Vegard Undal (aka Gard) ? bass (1993 ? 2005)

Tony Kirkemo ? live drums (2003 ? 2006)

Svein Sander (aka Armoth) ? drums (1993 ? 2000)
Stig Rolfsen (aka Erkebisp) ? guitars (1995 ? 1997)
Tom W. Holm Paulsen ? drums (1990 ? 1993)
Øyvind Hope ? bass (1990 ? 1993)
Ravn Jokull Furfjord (aka Jokull from Frosthadr) ? bass (2005 ? 2006)
Pål Dæhlen ? live drums (2001 ? 2003)
Ole Børud ? guitars (1996 ? 1997)
Kjetil Molnes (aka Martyr) ? vocals (1990 ? 1999)
Erling Jorgensen (aka Pilgrim) ? guitars (1990 ? 1993)
Bjørn Leren ? guitars (1990 ? 1993 , 2003 ? 2005)

Session musicians

Jan Axel Blomberg (Hellhammer) (2004) ? session drums on The Forsaken

Ann @-@ Mari Edvardsen ? session vocals on The Forsaken

Tora ? session vocals on ' Martyrium

Timeline

Note : Martyrium was recorded in 1994 , with some bootleg copies leaked , but not officially released until 2000

= = Discography = =

The Defeat of Satan (demo , 1991)
Despair (demo , 1993)
Kongsblod (promo , 1998)
The Return of the Black Death (1998)
Martyrium (2000 , recorded in 1994)
The Defeat of Satan (compilation , 2003)
Det tapte liv (EP , 2004)
The Forsaken (2005)
Omen (2012)