

= 12 Gauge (Kalmah album) =

12 Gauge is the sixth studio album by the Finnish melodic death metal band Kalmah , released on February 24 , 2010 . The album was recorded with more thrash metal elements than their previous releases , while the melodies that the band is known for and environmental themes regarding the swamps of Finland were retained . 12 Gauge was recorded in three sessions over a four @-@ month period at Tico @-@ Tico Studios in Finland .

Each of the band members kept in touch with their fans by keeping track of their recording sessions online at the official website 's studio diary . In addition , guitarist Antti Kokko videotaped the recording and photo shoot sessions . Seven videos were posted online during the months leading up to the album 's release . Promotion for the album was otherwise minimal . There were no official singles , but the track " Bullets Are Blind " was released on a 2 @-@ CD compilation included with Soundi magazine 's 35th anniversary issue , and a music video to the album 's title track was produced and posted online .

12 Gauge received generally favorable reviews by European and American critics , with a few considering it better than either of its immediate predecessors , For the Revolution and The Black Waltz . It was agreed that the band succeeded in producing a thrashier album , but most critics found the music to be less sophisticated than the band 's previous efforts . 12 Gauge charted in two countries , peaking at number 32 in Canada and number 15 in the band 's homeland . Because the band had not been offered a worldwide tour , support for the album would be limited to Europe and Canada .

= = Background = =

When Kalmah began writing music for their melodic death metal album , their intent was to incorporate more " aggressive thrash material " than their previous recordings had . As a result , the songs were going to be , as vocalist Pekka Kokko described , " quite straightforward " , but the band did not want to lose the melodies they were known for . The album would not be entirely thrash metal , since the band planned on adding acoustic guitar sections and also trumpets .

Antti Kokko , the primary songwriter for 12 Gauge , composed the riffs and melodies at his home . These ideas were developed into complete songs during rehearsals . Guitar and keyboard solos were then written , sometimes with both instruments soloing in the same song , trading off repeatedly . Two of the tracks , " Godeye " and " Sacramentum " , were composed entirely by keyboardist Marco Sneck , including the solos .

When the music was completed , Pekka began working on the lyrics , which were inspired by various topics , including " politics , religion ... drinking , failure , [and] pessimism " . Several of the songs shared an environmental theme . " Hook the Monster " was about fishing , " 12 Gauge " was inspired by hunting , and the impact of land development in the swamps of Finland was the subject of " Swampwar " . Commenting further on the swamps , Pekka remarked , " [those] valuable areas are a part of our northern wilderness and [are] always threatened to be ditched or drained . People are interested in those areas [to use] as a source of energy . "

= = Production = =

Recording and mixing took place at Tico @-@ Tico Studios in Kemi , Finland . The studio 's schedule was too full for a single recording session , so Kalmah had to book time to record the album in three separate sessions , between the months of May and August , 2009 . The majority of tracks were recorded in May , beginning with Janne Kusmin 's drums , which were completed by May 12 . Kusmin was not able to play as well as he had hoped because he had not been practicing . As a result , several of his drum parts were changed .

By the following week , Timo Lehtinen had finished laying down the bass tracks . His technique was to play nearly all his parts with downstrokes to bring " more balls to the sound " . He continued recording even after his thumb had formed a blister . According to Lehtinen , he used only two bass

string sets and broke five picks .

Pekka and Antti took turns recording their rhythm and lead guitar parts , respectively . Both guitarists played by striking the guitar strings at a 45 @-@ degree angle to achieve a more aggressive sound . Several of the guitar techniques used on the album had specific names : " Jynkhä " described the rapid succession of downstrokes , and a slower version of this technique was called " perusjynkhä . " Speed @-@ picking with alternating upstrokes and downstrokes was referred to as " hionta " , Finnish for grinding . Some of the techniques used were difficult for Pekka , and his brother Antti took the time to show him proper fingering and grasps .

The acoustic guitars were played by Antti . Ahti Kortelainen , the album 's recording engineer , was credited by the band for his input on how the acoustic guitars were recorded , especially for the song " Sacramentum " . All the guitar tracks , excluding the solos , were finished by May 28 .

By the middle of June , Pekka had recorded vocals for five tracks , which Antti described as " very raw ... the way we want them to be " . Pekka 's vocals would continue to be recorded in August , and he completed them on August 20 . Antti had also completed his guitar solos by June and was pleased with the results . " For me , the solos are [the] best that I have ever managed to create , and I 'm very satisfied . " After a summer break , the band returned to record Sneck 's keyboards , which took place over three days , August 17 ? 19 . Sneck worked with software effects for the first time , along with sound modules . He introduced synthesized horns to the band 's instrumentation , but an actual trumpet was used for the intro to " Rust Never Sleeps " .

Although the band produced the album , Pekka stated that Antti was the main producer since he was present at every step of the production , including mixing and mastering . Because they were comfortable self @-@ producing on all their previous albums , they refused to bring in an outside record producer for 12 Gauge . " This concept has worked for us since the beginning and we just want to trust it . Everything goes easy with this setup and we don 't want any extra risk factors " . Mastering for the disc took place at the Cutting Room in Stockholm , Sweden .

The title of the album was chosen by Pekka and Antti , who both enjoy hunting . They wanted to draw a comparison between the shotgun shells and the music . Pekka added that the title also alludes to " unpleasant matters " that the listener can infer from his lyrics . When it came time to design the album cover , the band decided against using computer @-@ generated graphics . They commissioned Rami Mursula to create a hand @-@ drawn piece of artwork , depicting a man emerging from the swamp to fight a beast . Pekka explained the symbolism : " In Kalmah 's mindset , there is Swamplord defending his marshlands against [the] monster created by common materialism , industrial pollution and [the] world @-@ wide nausea of globalism . " The layout was inspired by Akseli Gallen @-@ Kallela 's 1896 painting , The Defense of the Sampo .

= = Promotion = =

Images used in the album artwork were photographed by Vesa Ranta at one of Finland 's many swamps . The photo session was documented by Antti in a two @-@ part video , titled " The Call of the Wild . " These , and five other short videos documenting the recording of 12 Gauge , were uploaded in the months leading up to the album 's release .

There was no official single , but in December 2009 , the track " Bullets Are Blind " was included on a 2 @-@ CD collection released as a companion to the 35th anniversary issue of Soundi magazine , and a music video was shot and posted online for the track " 12 Gauge " . In February 2010 , Kalmah launched a second MySpace page solely dedicated to the new album . The album was released on CD and digital download in Japan in February , followed by releases in Canada and Europe in March , and in the US in April . A vinyl pressing was also made available in April , limited to 500 copies .

There would not be a worldwide tour to promote the album because the band had not received a " decent offer " . The 12 Gauge promotion was therefore limited to several gigs in Finland and a brief 10 @-@ show tour in Canada . The March 4 show in Jyväskylä , Finland , was considered to be the album 's release party .

= = Critical reception = =

Allmusic 's Eduardo Rivadavia said Kalmah 's sixth album was " more aggressive than its immediate predecessors " . David E. Gehlke of Blistering was already devoted to Kalmah 's previous album , For the Revolution , so he had high expectations for 12 Gauge . He found the album full of " break @-@ neck riff action " , " visceral melodies " , and " daring " dueling between Antti 's guitar and Sneck 's keyboard . Although Gehlke believed that Kalmah gets better with each output , he decided that 12 Gauge did not " match the ... glory " of For the Revolution .

Jussi Kallinen of Imperiumi.net said that Pekka 's vocals harkened back to the band 's 2006 album , The Black Waltz . He said the album was not anything new , but he found the production to be the best of Kalmah 's releases . MetalEater 's Sean Bester decided Kalmah 's strength lay in their consistency : " releasing energetic and melodic music with consistent intervals of time between them , delivering tracks that are consistently likable , and each one is consistent with the sound they 've firmly established for themselves . " NecroWeb gave the album a perfect score , because it was " beautifully arranged " , " wonderfully varied " , did not contain any filler material , and it succeeded at combining melodic thrash with blackened death metal (a combination of black metal and death metal) .

Chris Colgan , writing for PopMatters , found the album to have the longest and most intricate solos yet , and he , too , mentioned the increased trading off between Antti 's and Sneck 's solos . He thought it important that Kalmah had " not fallen prey to the tendency of introducing American metal elements or becoming more mainstream with their sound . Their music now is as unique as it was in their early years , if not more so " . Marko Säynekoski of Soundi described the performances as " controlled " , " burly " , and " performed effortlessly " . Stalker 's Kathleen Gransalke admitted that she was unfamiliar with Kalmah 's previous work , but she was nevertheless impressed with its technicality , double @-@ guitar melodies , fast solos , and the combining of genres . She called the album " a lot of fun to listen to " .

= = " 12 Gauge " music video = =

A music video was created for the song " 12 Gauge " , though the acoustic intro was excised from the final version . It was shot on February 20 , 2010 in Pudasjärvi , Finland , in some of the coldest temperatures the country had had in decades . The morning temperature when the band began filming was recorded at ? 37 ° C (? 35 ° F) , rising only to ? 27 ° C (? 17 ° F) at the end of the day . The band and camera operator were kept warm by a bonfire , though Antti said that they were used to cold temperatures .

The video , which debuted online on March 1 , was produced by the record label , Spinefarm , and Kalmah . The camera and Steadicam operator was Markus Lintu , and Kalmah 's bassist , Timo Lehtinen , edited and color @-@ timed the final product .

The video cuts between two narratives . In the first , a hunter (uncredited actor) straps a 16 @-@ gauge shotgun around his shoulder , and tracks footsteps through the snow , eventually finding the Swamplord (the band 's mascot , here as depicted on the covers of The Black Waltz and For the Revolution) . In the second narrative , the band members , dressed warmly in heavy clothing , are sitting around a campfire , preparing a kettle of an unknown drink . As each person takes a sip , they begin convulsing . To simulate the drink 's effects , the camera used shaking and rapid zooming . As the song finishes , Pekka pours himself a drink and is the only one immune to its effects .

= = Track listing = =

All lyrics written by Pekka Kokko .

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts = =

= = Release history = =