

= Kekal =

Kekal (sometimes stylized as KEKAL) is a heavy metal and electronic music band formed in 1995 in Jakarta , Indonesia . According to AllMusic , Kekal was one of the first heavy metal bands from Indonesia to make international inroads , and according to sociologist of heavy metal , Keith Kahn @-@ Harris , was one of the few extreme metal bands from Southeast Asia to ever make more than a minimal impression on the global scene . Founded by two musicians known simply Yeris and Newbabe , the band underwent some shifts in lineup in its early years , but emerged with a consistent lineup of three key @-@ members , guitarist / vocalist Jeff Arwadi , bassist Azhar Levi Sianturi , and guitarist Leo Setiawan . Frequently labeled as black metal , progressive metal , and avant @-@ garde metal , Kekal plays a very diverse range of music styles within the frame of metal and rock , incorporating many other music genres such as ambient , electronic , jazz fusion , and progressive rock . Over the course of its career , Kekal has transitioned from a heavy metal @-@ based style to a more experimental and electronic sound .

Throughout its entire career , the band has released nine full @-@ length studio albums , two EPs , two compilation albums , two demo tapes , a split album with Slechtvalk , and several contributions to various collaborative albums , and in 2004 engaged in a successful European mini @-@ tour . As of 12 August 2009 , all key @-@ members have officially left Kekal , but continue to contribute material . Though the band currently has no active members , former members of the band contributed to an eighth studio album entitled 8 which was officially released in 2010 , and a ninth studio album entitled Autonomy , released in 2012 .

= = History = =

= = = Early years (formation to 2002) = = =

The early history of Kekal started out in 1990 , when 16 @-@ year @-@ old musician Jeff Arwadi formed a self @-@ styled " punkish thrash metal " band called Obliteration with some of his high school friends , but Jeff quit this group in 1991 to better learn guitar . Kekal was officially formed on 15 August 1995 , by two friends , simply named under pseudonyms Yeris and Newbabe (the latter revealed years later as Newin Atmarumeksa) , as a more straightforward extreme metal band . The name Kekal was coined by Newbabe , and is Indonesian for ' Immortal ' or ' Eternal ' . The band was intended as a one time project , and recruited a vocalist known simply as " Harry " to help record a four @-@ song demo tape . This demo began to circulate and caught the attention of future guitarist Leo , who had gained experience in a Metallica and Megadeth cover band .

In June 1996 , Azhar Sianturi joined Kekal and the band recorded its official demo , entitled Contra Spiritualia Nequitiae , using the songwriting and production talents of Jeff Arwadi , who was also a member of the group Inner Warfare . According to Jeff , the demo was recorded in his bedroom with only a Fostex X @-@ 28 4 @-@ track tape recorder and \$ 2 karaoke microphone . With the help of underground tape trading circles and local fanzines , the demo soon caught the attention of the metal scene outside Indonesia and Southeast Asia , and few record labels began offering deals . Later that year Leo Setiawan joined the band , and in April 1997 Kekal began to record its self @-@ produced debut album , Beyond the Glimpse of Dreams , released in 1998 . The album was licensed to and released by two record labels , allowing for Kekal to be known internationally , especially in the underground metal circles around Europe and North America . Harry left the band after this recording , and the remaining trio released Embrace the Dead the next year . Jeff has expressed disappointment with this album , both in the stylistic direction , which was intentionally designed to appeal to a more mainstream audience , and in the recording sessions , which would inspire the title of the band 's next album , The Painful Experience . The following year the band contributed to a Living Sacrifice tribute album with a cover of that band 's song " Mind Distant " . In October 2001 , the band 's third album , The Painful Experience , was released . Leo Setiawan left the band before the recording sessions and moved to Melbourne , Australia , but he was still listed

on the album credits as a guitarist due to his contribution on the album 's songwriting and general concept . In 2002 , the band was reduced to a duo , and collaborated with the Dutch band Slechtvalk to record a split album entitled Chaos & Warfare , and also recorded a cover of " God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen " for the compilation album Brutal Christmas : The Season in Chaos .

= = = International scene (2003 ? 2006) = = =

In 2003 , with the absence of Leo as a guitarist , the remaining members Jeff and Azhar Levi recorded a cover song " Dance Macabre " for a well received Cradle of Filth tribute album entitled Covered in Filth , and shortly after they released the highly progressive and experimental 1000 Thoughts of Violence which was also well received , being rated eight out of ten by Rock Hard and was regarded as a highlight of the year 2003 by Powermetal.de. A best @-@ of collection of works and re @-@ recordings of Kekal entitled Introduce Us to Immortality was also released that year . Also that year , Kekal received notice by the Antwerp @-@ based radio show " Psych Folk " Radio on Radio Centraal , being referred to in that show 's programs on progressive music in Indonesia . The success of 1000 Thoughts of Violence was followed up by a two @-@ week European mini @-@ tour , arranged and promoted by the band 's record label in Europe at the time , Fear Dark . In March 2004 , the band played a string of shows in the Netherlands , Germany and Sweden , and was featured in the Dutch magazine Aardschok . That year also saw the release of Spirits of the Ancient Days , a collection of early Kekal demo songs .

Upon return to Indonesia , Kekal was back in the studio to record a fifth album Acidity which included guest musician Didi Priyadi on guitars , as well as playing some local shows with him as an additional live guitarist . Acidity was released in 2005 and was an official reunion album for the band , which marked the return of Leo , and a vocal contribution by founding member Newbabe . Acidity was well received , and Kekal was again noted by " Psych Folk " Radio . In 2006 , the band started recording their sixth album , The Habit of Fire . In 2006 , Jeff leaked two cover songs , " The Prow " , originally by Voivod , and " Juices Like Wine " , originally by Celtic Frost , both of which were recorded in 2005 .

= = = Jeff 's move to Canada (2006 ? 2008) = = =

In 2006 , right after the recording of The Habit of Fire , founding member Jeff Arwadi moved to Canada while the rest of the members were in Indonesia , leaving the band unable to play shows and do touring . At the same time they left their longtime record label Fear Dark and status of the band was in question . After few months of uncertainty and rumors of break @-@ up went around among their fans , they all decided to remain together and to keep the band only as a studio project . They quickly signed licensing deals with two record labels to release The Habit of Fire in 2007 . The album was received very well and was named CD of the Month by UK 's music technology magazine Sound on Sound , as well as being nominated as The Best Avantgarde Metal Album in 2007 by Metal Storm . In 2007 , Jeff leaked another cover tune , " Redemption " , that originally was planned as part of a Johnny Cash tribute album by Open Grave Records , a project that was ultimately shelved . Later in 2007 , Jeff announced on the band 's Myspace blog that a new Kekal album was on the way , which he had been working on all by himself .

It was revealed later on that the new album was entitled Audible Minority , and it was meant to be released officially on 25 December 2008 as two versions : a free download and a limited edition Digipak with total 11 songs including a cover of the A @-@ ha song " Locust " . Unfortunately the Digipak version was never released , and the album ended up being offered only as a free download instead .

= = = Departure of band members (2009) = = =

In March 2009 , Azhar Levi decided to step down from Kekal . Jeff Arwadi said that although this closed a door , Kekal would continue as a musical unit in a " new era " of the band 's history . On 12

August 2009 , Jeff announced that he and Leo had left Kekal , and that the name would continue but without active members . He said that , as well as unspecified personal reasons , he decided to leave the band because , after being closer to nature and in a less densely populated city in Canada , he was unable to continue to make dark and angry metal music which he did in the past with Kekal . Shortly after , Kekal put up an offer of three albums for free download on its website , including its best @-@ selling album to date , 1000 Thoughts of Violence .

Many of its fans perceived that Kekal had technically split @-@ up / disbanded at the moment band leader Jeff announced his departure from the band , despite the fact that Kekal as an institution still existed and the institution itself was not affected by any founding member leaving . To end the confusions among the fans , the band issued a statement posted on its official Facebook page : " KEKAL IS NOT DEAD ! ! ! ! When Jeff left Kekal it doesn 't mean the band is dead ! " The band 's MySpace and Facebook pages are still active and currently being moderated mainly by volunteers from the band 's Street Team members , as well as Azhar and Jeff themselves .

= = = Current activity (2010 ? present) = = =

On 13 January 2010 , Kekal announced that a new album was in the works , and that former members Jeff , Leo , and Levi were all contributing . Then , on 15 February , Jeff posted a music video on his YouTube channel for an , at that time , untitled new album . The music video was for a song entitled " Tabula Rasa " , which was also released for streaming . On 23 June 2010 , the band announced on its Myspace and Facebook that it would release its eighth album entitled 8 in late 2010 , and that further details would be forthcoming .

On 15 August 2010 , a remastered , limited @-@ edition version of the band 's second album , Embrace the Dead , was released as a free @-@ download for up 1000 downloads in celebration of the band 's 15 year anniversary .

Kekal 's newest album , 8 , was made available for pre @-@ order on 22 December 2010 by Whirlwind Records , which included an offer of free shipping within Europe up to 24 December . The album was released on 23 January 2011 .

On 2 March 2011 , Jeff Arwadi announced on the Kekal Facebook page that he and Leo were recording new music , and said that another album would probably be released sometime in 2012 . On 2 April , Kekal announced that a download @-@ only EP would be released in June or July , and would contain two brand new tracks recorded in 2011 , as well as separate guitar and vocal tracks of " Tabula Rasa " for the purpose of remixing by the general public . On 26 April , Jeff uploaded a music video for the song " Futuride " from the upcoming EP , which was promised to be released in July . The official release date for the album , 10 July 2011 , was announced over Facebook on 23 June 2011 . The title of the EP was Futuride EP , and three tracks from the album were made available for public use under Creative Commons Attribution Non @-@ Commercial Share Alike license . On 24 February 2012 , Kekal announced the title of its ninth studio album , Autonomy , and the album was released on 19 December 2012 , first as a limited , hand @-@ numbered deluxe @-@ edition double @-@ CD with the 2008 album Audible Minority (which was previously never released on CD) added as a bonus disc . On 29 June 2013 , Autonomy was released by Indonesian netlabel Yes No Wave Music as a free digital download , but restricted to Indonesian market only .

On 19 March 2013 Kekal released a surprise EP , Unsung Division , announced the 10th full @-@ length Kekal album would be released in 2015 , and the possibility of a second EP in late 2013 or 2014 . The Unsung Division EP consisted of songs originally written for the upcoming 2015 album , but removed as the " some compositions turned out to be a bit out @-@ of @-@ place with the rest of the album 's general concept , " according to Arwadi .

= = Music = =

= = = Style = = =

Although mainly known as a progressive metal and avant @-@ garde or experimental metal band , Kekal has stylistic origins in extreme metal , particularly black metal , but even with its debut album the band demonstrated a unique style . Beyond the Glimpse of Dreams featured a varied sound of black and death metal and incorporated a range of vocal styles such as high pitched black metal shrieks , death growls , and female singing . On Embrace the Dead , Kekal used a combination of black metal with death , classic , and doom metal elements and included hints of Gothic and dark wave . The third album , The Painful Experience , saw the band fusing its black metal style with progressive metal and included elements of thrash , classic , and power metal . Mark Allan Powell described that most of the band 's songs were midtempo to fast with a heavy , guitar @-@ driven style , though the band incorporated " certain elements of variety into the sound . " In a 2001 interview , Jeff expressed ambivalence to what style the band was described as , as long as it was " metal " . On its fourth , highly technical album , 1000 Thoughts of Violence , the band plunged into ultra @-@ progressive experiments , The album was noted for switching between raging intensity and more mellow passages , such as the song " Violent Society " , which even included a hip @-@ hop passage . Powermetal.de noted that the band had become more progressive and lost some of its toughness and aggression . " Psych Folk " Radio viewed the album favorably , mentioning that 1000 Thoughts of Violence " is a possibility to invite progressive rock listeners to take the challenge to open up their perspectives . " In March 2004 , Aardschok Magazine described the band 's albums as a mix of black , heavy , and progressive metal , being grounded in the extreme metal scene .

On its well received fifth album , Acidity , Kekal used double bass drum blasts and saw the band incorporating styles such as electronic , black metal , progressive metal , progressive rock , classic rock , indie rock , psychedelic rock , trip hop , jazz , ambient , and avant @-@ garde . Jeff Arwadi responded to the " avant @-@ garde " label in an interview with Ultimate Metal.com : " For us , avant @-@ garde is not a classification of music . It is a state of being , a state of becoming ... once your music can be classified easily , I don 't think the word progressive or avant @-@ garde fits . So that 's why we mention in our bio that ' avant @-@ garde ' is an ideal state for us , and not a classification . " On the next album , The Habit of Fire , the band maintained its use of various music styles such as electronica , ambient , and jazz fusion , but began to shed its black metal roots and introduced atmospheric soundscapes and an industrial vibe . Pop Matters described the album as mixing black metal , noise rock , progressive rock , and jazz fusion . With the 2010 album 8 , the first album by the band without any active members , Metal Hammer Germany noted that the band was now far away from its early black metal days . Powermetal.de described the band as avant @-@ garde tinged post @-@ rock , with the album being predominantly electronic , but stated that " experimental " was the simplest description of the album . The reviewer , Björn Backes , made comparisons to The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers and noted the use of " weird " arrangements , post @-@ rock mood swings and alternative guitar sound . Sonic Seducer called the album simply avant @-@ garde and described the band as loving triplets , polyrhythms , and complex beats .

= = = Influences = = =

Kekal has identified itself with the punk rock and early 1980s metal scenes , and considers itself a " street @-@ progressive " band that is aesthetically more akin to Sonic Youth or The Mars Volta than to technically oriented bands like Dream Theater . The band claims roots in 1980s forms of heavy metal as pioneered by bands like Iron Maiden , Bathory , Trouble , Helloween , Celtic Frost , Sodom , Death , and Massacre . Dimebag Darrell and Quorthon have also been cited as influences .

Currently , Kekal has cited an influence from many styles of music and now lists a large host of artists as an inspiration , including A @-@ ha , Amebix , Autechre , Björk , Black Sabbath , Bohren & der Club of Gore , Camel , Celtic Frost , Cocteau Twins , Chick Corea , The Cure , Miles Davis , Depeche Mode , Discharge , Duran Duran , Gazebo , Godflesh , Iron Maiden , Joy Division , Killing Joke , King Crimson , Led Zeppelin , Mantronix , Massive Attack , Curtis Mayfield , Merzbow , Pat Metheny , Wes Montgomery , Gary Moore , Napalm Death , Outkast , Pan Sonic , Paradise Lost , Parliament , Pet Shop Boys , Pink Floyd , The Police , Portishead , Radiohead , Red Snapper ,

Return to Forever , Rush , Sonic Youth , Squarepusher , Talk Talk , Tangerine Dream , Amon Tobin , Trouble , and Voivod .

== Songwriting and recording techniques ==

Jeff has stated that starting from the album *The Painful Experience* they incorporated their own approach to record drum tracks in the studio which they call " hybrid drums " , a mix of real @-@ time performance and software @-@ based matrix programming . He also mentioned the efficiency of using the hybrid drumming compared with getting a drummer : " About the drummer , it is still very hard to find a right drummer because Kekal music is ranging from very extreme @-@ metal with blast beats and fast double @-@ kicks , to powerful rock beats that demand steady tempo , and to some polyrhythmic playing and time @-@ signature shifts in the characteristics of jazz and prog drumming . We would need 2 or 3 kinds of drummer for Kekal . That 's why the best thing for the recording is to make the hybrid drumming . " In other interview , Jeff mentioned the process of recording of *The Habit of Fire* , starting from collecting samples and creating MIDI information , then manipulating the sounds to create what he called the ' skeleton ' . Then riffs , MIDI @-@ triggered instruments , synthesizers , and melodies would be added and the structure re @-@ arranged once again . Once the song structure was set , the guitars would be re @-@ recorded , then bass and drum tracks would be put on top , then vocals . Jeff also mentioned during the interview about the 2011 *Futuride EP* , that he has experimented with additive synthesis on the recent songs he has recorded and uses guitars to counterbalance the sounds generated by the additive synthesis .

== Ethics and ideological stance ==

== Kekal and DIY ethic ==

Kekal claims to have followed a strong DIY ethic throughout the majority of its career . Kekal owns the copyrights of the band 's recording masters and has 100 % artistic control over music , production and artwork . Kekal has recorded and produced most of its albums in its own studio / workstation , manages the band itself , does its own photo sessions , and designs its own album artwork and covers . As Jeff stated , " So far , we 've been known as an independent band who never want to get signed by record label , to maintain our independency and control over our artistic freedom , and also to own our recording masters and copyright .. Instead of band signing , we always prefer to license our finished albums to record labels . "

== Kekal and Christianity ==

Kekal has acknowledged in interviews that the band members , at the time interviewed , subscribed to Christianity , and has been described as one of the first black metal bands to profess Christian beliefs . Known to have fans from different religious backgrounds , and with the majority of their listeners being non @-@ Christians , the band has stated on its Facebook page that as an institution it is not a Christian metal band and does not endorse any particular religion or ideology , and has always maintained that it is about music , life , and universality , and stands against any form of elitism and exclusivism in today 's culture . Although Christianity has comprised a part of the band 's lyrics , the band has said that from *The Painful Experience* (3rd album) onward its lyrics have not been associated with religion or ideology at all . Mark Allan Powell commented on this in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* , stating that " on the band 's first two albums the songs testified to their Christian faith in an upfront way " , but that on their third album , the band pulled back from an overt approach that " Jeff says tended to turn people against the band before they gave the music a chance . " According to Powell , " they maintain that three @-@ fourths of their albums are purchased by non @-@ Christians . " In an interview with *HM Magazine* , Jeff Arwadi clarified his view on Christian metal : " I don 't want to divide our fans and market as religious

- secular dichotomy . We always see everything as one . When we started the band , we knew nothing about the Christian metal scene , and we started just like a normal band in our underground scene . We grew up in the normal underground metal scene , and have already got attention from that scene since the very beginning . Kekal never belong to any church or some kind of ministry and never will . We are 100 % just like any band you would call them as secular band . But then we knew we were also accepted within the Christian metal scene as well , that 's cool to know , although I think it still less than 50 % of our general fan base . "

Jeff Arwadi in particular has expressed his belief in Christianity that is not a religion , but more about faith , as in his opinion most religions are about laws , organizations , rites , and dogmas . In one interview , Jeff clarified that for him personally , faith is something that drives the human life , and , just like diet and exercise , does not have to be associated with religion whatsoever . When asked to clear up the " confusion " surrounding the band 's stance regarding God , Christianity , and religions in general , Jeff responded that his views about religion are " very different than the view in western countries , " and further said that " in Indonesia , religion is not an issue of faith nor tradition . It 's more the constitutional issue , that means the legal and political ones . I am not anti @-@ religion person , but I do against religion in a political and legal context " and then Jeff added his point on Kekal 's stance as a band : " ... we are non @-@ conformists , musical anarchists . We hate being trendy and we never try to be the same with the rest of the scene . People can love us or hate us , I don 't care . "

= = Line @-@ up = =

Former members

Jeff Arwadi (Altera Enigma , Armageddon Holocaust , Doctor D , Excision , Inner Warfare) ? guitar , vocals , programming , drum machine , samples & loops (1995 ? 2009)

Azhar Levi Sianturi (Mournphagy) ? bass , vocals (1996 ? 2009)

Leo Setiawan ? guitar (1996 ? 2001 , 2005 ? 2009)

Harry ? vocals (1995 ? 1998)

Newbabe ? bass , vocals (1995 ? 1996 , 2004 ? 2005)

Yeris ? guitar , vocals (1995 ? 1996)

Guest musicians

Didi Priyadi (Happy Day , In Memoriam) ? session and live guitar , live vocals

Kenny Cheong (Altera Enigma , Soundscape) ? fretless bass

Jason DeRon (Paramaecium , Altera Enigma , inExordium) ? guitar

Doctor D (Armageddon Holocaust , Doctor D , Bealiah) ? vocals , noises and samples , programming

Safrina Christina (Excision) ? vocals , keyboards , programming

Hans Kurniawan (Inner Warfare) ? keyboard

Habil Kurnia ? keyboards , engineering , mixing

Julie ? female vocals

Hana ? female vocals

Vera ? female vocals

Timeline

Note : As of August 8 , 2009 , Kekal has no active members , but former members continue to record and contribute content for the band .

= = Discography = =

Beyond the Glimpse of Dreams ? 1998

Embrace the Dead ? 1999

The Painful Experience ? 2001

1000 Thoughts of Violence ? 2003

Acidity ? 2005

The Habit of Fire ? 2007

Audible Minority ? 2008

8 ? 2010

Autonomy ? 2012

Multilateral - 2015