Thrash metal from Sweden

The late eighties were the glory days of Swedish thrash metal and produced bands that made some sort of mark in Thrash Metal history. The global underground scene was the key and to be successful you had to be really active and make sure demos reached various pinpointed magazines and radio stations to spread the word. MEZZROW were a part of this and established themselves through these networks.

They were of course a couple of years behind the American scene though, but nonetheless there *was* a small scene in Sweden during the last years of the eighties. Bands like MEZZROW, AGONY, ICE AGE, KAZJUROL, HATRED, HEXENHAUS, MIDAS TOUCH, MESHUGGAH, MERCILESS, ROSICRUCIAN and FALLEN ANGEL got international attention and started to get gigs around Sweden and abroad to establish an upcoming movement.

The roots of MEZZROW stretches back to the Bay Area scene and TESTAMENT (LEGACY) was one of the breakout bands during the second wave of Bay Area thrash that really stood out with excellent riffing, aggression and a bit of melody. Other inspiring bands from that movement were of course VIO-LENCE, FORBIDDEN, DEATH ANGEL, HEATHEN, POSSESSED and MERCENARY (MORDRED). All these bands made a big impact in the world of metal! The most influential bands from the early days of the Bay Area scene were of course METALLICA and EXODUS, who were the real pioneers of thrash in general and together with SLAYER set the standards for the genre.

MEZZROW were formed during the autumn of 1987. Formerly known locally in their hometown Nyköping (Sweden) as both NECROMANCY and DARK RIPPER, they changed their name after recruiting lead singer **Uffe Pettersson** and lead guitarist **Staffe Karlsson**. The line-up was completed by brothers **Zebba Karlsson** (guitar) and **Steffe Karlsson** (drums), together with bass player **Niclas ”Slicken” Andersson**.

The band immediately started rehearsing intensely and were really inspired by the thrash metal wave that swept through Europe at the time. The members were most of all impressed by the Bay Area scene, even though Niclas listened to more obscure German stuff than the others.

In December 1987 the band played their first gig at an assembly hall in a suburb to Nyköping called Oppeby. It was a blast and everything felt right! The next step was to record a proper demo which resulted in the *Frozen Soul* tape, recorded on the 21st and 22nd of February 1988 in Studio Svängrummet (Nyköping, Sweden). A deal was then made with legendary metal store Heavy Sound in Stockholm to sell the tape at the shop, which was a success!

From there on everything just went upwards for a long time, resulting in several gigs around Sweden together with exposure in many underground fanzines around the world. The reviews were mostly great and put MEZZROW on the global underground thrash map!

At the beginning of January 1989 MEZZROW entered Studio Svängrummet for a second time to record *The Cross of Torment(ion)* demo. The songs really felt like a natural progression of their Bay Area influenced thrash and especially the riffing was heavily inspired by TESTAMENT and EXODUS. This demo was spread in the same effective way, through the underground, as its predecessor. The reviews were great and this caught the attention from some record labels, often smaller ones though. But during the spring of 1989, UK-based ACTIVE RECORDS made contact with the band and a meeting was held at a pub in Stockholm. ACTIVE RECORDS were a part of legendary metal label MUSIC FOR NATIONS and this felt perfect for the band. A contract for three albums over five years was signed!

A plan for the recording process of their debut album was quickly put together and at the same time the band wrote three new songs to make the album complete. One of those three songs was the title track, *Then came the killing*. The other two were *Where death begins* and *Distant death*. The band went into Studio Svängrummet again and recorded ten songs in same way as they recorded the demos. One song, *Resurrection of the beast*, was left out from the mixing later on.

It was at this point that Niclas decided to quit. The main reason was that playing in the band was becoming too demanding and he was at the same time about to start a family. Rumors of the talented songwriter **Conny Welén** had reached the ears of the band. He played in a doom metal band called MORPHEUS, next door to MEZZROW’s rehearsal studio, and was asked to join in June 1989. He accepted and immediately re-recorded the bass parts on the album.

The mixing took place at Stockholm Recording Studios, situated at Södermalm in the central parts of Stockholm. This was a big experience for the band and they got a new perspective on how to work in a studio. Responsible for the mixing was **Mats Lindfors** (R.I.P.) with **Marcel Jacob** (R.I.P.) by his side. After getting the test pressing in September, **Mats Lindfors** and the band weren’t pleased with how the sound on the album turned out. The test pressing was then taken to Polar Studios for analyzing and remastering. Despite this effort, the sound on the album didn’t really live up to the band’s expectations.

Unfortunately, it took eight months before *Then came the killing* was released. For MEZZROW themselves, the material felt a bit old and new songs had been written during the wait. But after the release in may 1990, things started happening and several cool gigs were made during the summer in support of the album. This continued in the autumn of 1990 with the Active thrashes Scandinavia-tour together with labelmates KAZJUROL and HEXENHAUS.

But there was a bad feeling in the band towards ACTIVE RECORDS. The label had promised a lot and nothing really happened. After a night out, together with HEXENHAUS and KAZJUROL on the tour, the band expressed their feelings towards the label and they somehow found out. This resulted in a phone call where ACTIVE RECORDS informed the band that MEZZROW were no longer on the label. Simple as that!

The years that followed were a bit of a struggling for the band. Bass player **Conny Welén** quit at the beginning of 1991, moved to Stockholm and joined HEXENHAUS. Singer **Uffe Pettersson** took over the bass duties and suddenly they were a four-piece band. A new demo was recorded in the spring of 1991 in an attempt to secure a new record deal but unfortunately nothing happened. The following year, lead guitarist **Staffe Karlsson** decided to jump off the bandwagon and was replaced by longtime friend **Peter Rosén**. A few new songs were written during that year, but nothing was recorded. Despite having a big will to play thrash, and still rehearsing a lot, the band never got back on its feet after losing the record deal and the two members. The magic was somehow lost!

In the spring of 1993, **Uffe Pettersson** got an offer to join thrashers ROSICRUCIAN. He decided to go with that and shortly after his departure the band was laid to rest.