



Undoubtedly, "Hellish Crossfire" is one of the most important albums when it comes to Teutonic Metal that, in the 80s, was spreading rapidly, spawning numerous bands shaping the metal trends at the time. Surely, the influence of NWOBHM was important too, as this genre, as the first one ever, transplanted many Punk Rock elements into classic Heavy Metal.

In this matter, I think, VENOM had a lot to say too. But the real extremity was born in Germany, as it was where the largest number of bands emerged. These bands played more and more

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brutal music; this unique pursuit of speed became popular in the USA as well, and these two countries started to strive against another to prove which country had more brutal bands. It was the time when different musical genres used to blend with each other, resulting in more and more extreme forms of the metal art. Well, back then, the debut album of IRON ANGEL was extraordinary powerful. When compared with other albums at the time, it was as good as RUNNING WILD-Gates to Purgatory, SODOM- In The Sign Of Evil, DESTRUCTION-Sentence Of Death or KREATOR- Endless Pain which was released in the same year as the mentioned "Hellish Crossfire."

Interestingly, both bands recorded their debut albums under a watchful eye of Horst "Hoddie" Muller – in result, the production of these two records has this characteristic sound; especially when it comes to guitars and drums. Weirdly, this kind of production and this characteristic sound have never been present on any other releases. "Hellish Crossfire" is the A-league of the most important albums of the 80s.

NWOBHM, which in the early 80s influenced the transformation of metal music in Poland significantly, was important later as well, due to the fact that the 80s in Poland are the years when the country was behind the Iron Curtain, separating us from the West quite effectively. Still, it was possible to get some new metal records in Poland. In my case for instance, I bought IRON ANGEL - Hellish Crossfire, CELTIC FROST- Emperors Return and DESTRUCTION -Infernal Overkill from a friend who'd brought them from the USA.

All these three albums impressed me a lot. We must remember that at the time, there were no bands in Poland (except for KAT perhaps) which played such extreme music. IMPERATOR's Endless Sacrifice was released in 1986, VADER's Necrolust was out in 1989, so this was why Poland was behind the West when it came to brutal metal music.

It was caused by the fact that new records were brought to Poland with delay – and consequently these records influenced the musical perception of the bands at the time. We should also mention the chronic lack of equipment, rehearsal rooms and all this what was important when it came to building the fledging metal scene in Poland. Certainly, some harbor towns like Szczecin, for instance, had better access to music, and this was where a large number of bands emerged at the time.

There also existed vinyl-record fairs where, from time to time, one could buy some Infernal lp's for horrendal prices. It was really something to get some new stuff. The radio stations at the time did not air extreme metal bands too often. Sure, some classic Heavy metal bands such as Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Accept, AC/DC, Krokus, or more classic bands like UFO, Deep Purple, Budge or Black Sabbath were broadcast quite often. But it was really bad when it came to more brutal bands. Ok, there were some radio shows, for instance: "Metalowe Tortury" by Roman Rogowiecki, or "Muzyka Młodych" by Krzysztof Brankowski, but these weren't enough for the maniacs thirsty of extremity.

I need to say that the phonographic market in Poland at the time was fledging; there were no music shops at all. To get a record was very difficult; these were the golden times for tape trading – dubbing tapes, lp's, and live bootlegs with people from all over the world. Thus, we were able to discover underground music from other countries, the music that was very deeply rooted in the Western culture, and which pleased so many true maniacs with their beautiful yet music of shitty quality.

Well, the quality didn't matter, but what did matter was the emotions the music had, the rebellion and aggression it carried. It was Krzysztof Gerwatowski who run the IRON ANGEL fan-club, and thus we were able to get the band's first demos. At the time, he distributed "Legions of

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Evil"as well as their earlier demo "Power Metal Attack." These demos still fucking rule! But it was "Hellish Crossfire" that in fact made me really excited when I first heard this album. I was so excited that I am still curious how strong this feeling was, and I was just 16 at the time, and really hungry for brutal music. And this music emanated with powerful strength and darkness; it was also full of fire. I was possessed immediately by these tunes; there weren't too many bands which played like that, and I mean this vigorous Speed metal, so heavily influenced by Evilness. Like hypnotized I was looking at the black plate and absorbing the music with all myself. Total madness it was, I am really surprised I didn't lose my head as I head banged like damn crazy back then.

One couldn't associate the cover art with any form of extremity; well – just another heavy metal album, but its musical content was total musical devastation. The vinyl version I have is just of magic value for me, and I do enjoy listening to the vinyl version of this album. Well, when I listen to vinyl records, I always try not let other things distract me – it's a ritual of some kind; I focus all my time and attention on a particular record. It is some kind of return to the past, I can bring back the memories of my youth and emotions where listening to music always highly emotional. "Hellish Crossfire" is one of these albums I come back to pretty often. Hard to believe, but it's been thirty years this year since this important piece of art has been released, and this record is still lethal. This stuff is very powerful and has apparently unlimited source of crushing energy but still remains fresh. The way IRON ANGEL was able to preserve the atmosphere of the mid 80s is simply amazing.

"The Metalion" opens the IRON side. This track is very dynamic, full of unusual energy and is a great opener. The guitars cut the air like the finest Toledo steel. Mike Matthes` drumming, possessed vocals of Dirk Schroder, and this Infernalatmosphere makethis track really memorable. Every single riff just paralyzes with its power. Another classic cut here is "Sinner 666."This track just injects a listener with a condensed dose of intensity, which when combined with Infernal lyrics, is just fucking impressive!

There is so much love for speed and teenage rebellion in this track! I can sense some early RUNNING WILD influences in "Black Mass." It is played in a much more brutal way, yet it remains very communicative and damn catchy at the same time. This band is really talented, as IRON ANGEL were able to combine brutality and melodiousness in these tracks in a perfect way.

As a whole, this is all very catchy and does not become soft at all. Another track from this IRON side is "The Church of The last Souls". This track doesn't give any break at all. It all gallops like an Infernal Storm. The guitar solos are noticeable, though they seem to be moderate they work really well to get this stuff compact. "Hunter in Chains" that ends this side is one of the most anthem-like tracks on this marvelous piece of art. It contains a lot of Infernal Rock N Roll that must have surely unleashed a real storm when played live. Yeah, one gets crazy, so happy one is when listens to this track.

The B side, called ANGEL does not, actually, provide any softer tunes. "Rush of Power" is a really condensed dose of aggressive metal, and one of the fastest tracks on this album. This cut is characterized by untamed and total energy. "Legions Of Evil" starts in a similar way as "Flash of the Blade" does (IRON MAIDEN`s Powerslave), but is heavily influenced by JUDAS PRIEST. Well, it's Devil`s work, this song and that's why it is so sharp!

Amazing guitar duels between Peter "Piet" Wittke and Sven Strüven are clearly visible in the foreground. Pity these two gentlemen are dead. Well, it was one of the more interesting guitar duos able to create amazing, sparking solos. They were also very good at playing amazing riffs

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which, combined with a massive sound were capable of devastating a listener`s mind in a really effective way.

These are the tracks that make "Hellish Crossfire" so damn destructive. "Wife of the Devil" is a song that starts off like a ballad with some choirs a`la BULLDOZER. Well, it doesn't last for a long time, and later provides us with a solid dose of Speed Metal Evilness that gets pumped under our skin so powerfully that we can feel the sign of Hell burnt onto our souls.

In "Nightmare" don't expect any mercy. The album ends with "Heavy Metal Soldiers", which is heavily influenced by KREATOR. This track gallops like crazy, with its memorable refrain and brain damaging guitar solo.

When I think this band was active for 5 years only and released only 2 albums, well, it saddens me pretty much. IRON ANGEL had as much potential as KREATOR at least, and to become a band like KREATOR was totally attainable. Alas, the band was not determined enough, and they didn't have enough faith in their music. "Hellish Crossfire" is an album with no weak points. Every single song is artistry and together they make this album an immortal piece of art. It's a pity there are not too many albums these days that equal to this album. It's been 30 years since this album has been released and this stuff is still damn Powerful.

The Brazilian CD edition (Marquee Records) comes with 6 bonus tracks that are taken from the IRON ANGEL`s demo Power Metal Attack.

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