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## Nox Arcana



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**Interviewed by Gary Hill**

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Interview with Joseph Vargo of Nox Arcana From 2009

**MSJ: It's been a few years since we did an interview. What's been new in your world?**

I've been consumed in my art, music and writing. We now have 10 full-length CDs with Nox Arcana plus two collaborative CDs, *Blood of Angels* with Michelle Belanger and *Zombie Influx* with Jeff Hartz of Buzz-Works. I've also released an art book with over 100 of my paintings and gothic designs, in addition to writing other books like *Gothic Tarot Compendium*, and *The Legend of Darklore Manor*, which is based on the debut Nox Arcana CD. Between painting, writing, producing and running a business, my schedule is full.

**MSJ: If you weren't involved in music and art, what do you think you'd be doing?**

I'd probably do a lot more writing, but I really enjoy designing gothic adventure games. I create one every year for my Halloween parties. Operating a live-action murder mystery mansion would be very cool. I'll eventually get around to producing some computer RPG games of my own design, but I'd also like to write and direct a few film projects.

**MSJ: If you were a superhero, what music person would be your arch-nemesis and why?**

I'm really not into the whole superhero thing, but I've dealt with plenty of villains in the music industry who have tried to rip us off, including buttweasels who lied, cheated and embezzled, and a German rapper who stole three of our songs and put them on an album that went platinum in Germany. But they all paid for their dastardly deeds in the end, so I consider them all insignificant. I haven't met anyone worthy of being an arch-nemesis so I'll just vent my angst toward the villains that have dragged the mainstream music industry down into the gutter.

It sucks that radio stations play the same crappy songs, cramming the same "artists" down the throats of today's listeners. People like Brittany Spears and Justin "Timbersnake" who can barely sing, can't play any instruments, and don't even write their own songs win awards for being the best musical artists in America. I have even less respect for rappers, who don't even attempt to sing. They should be embarrassed, but instead, they gladly accept their undeserved accolades and think they've really accomplished something stellar.

Fortunately, the internet levels the playing field and allows talented underground artists to get their music heard. The record labels are suffering because people are getting fed up with their limited choices and looking elsewhere for a wider variety and new artists with talent. Hopefully this trend will lead to a restructuring of the entire music industry.

**MSJ: If you were to put together your ultimate band, who would be in it?**

It would be fantastic to write a concept album for Trans Siberian Orchestra or Van Helsing's Curse, with Ronnie James Dio and Loreena McKennit on vocals (in addition to our own Gregorian Shadow Choir) and Charlie Clouser as the studio producer. Actually, if I were writing for Van Helsing's Curse, Dee Snyder would have to be the vocalist, which would be great because he's got a terrific voice.

**MSJ: If you were in charge of assembling a music festival and wanted it to be the ultimate one from your point of view, who would be playing?**

I started thinking about some of my favorite bands from the rock, metal and goth genres and my list got too long. There would have to be about 100 bands but the headliners would be old school rock bands like AC/DC and Aerosmith. Actually I think putting together a Nox Arcana concert, the way I envision it, would be my ultimate concert. The idea would be to incorporate actors, visual effects and live illusions to make our various gothic concepts come to life in front of a live audience. The stage would change between a haunted Victorian mansion to the realm of the Cthulhu Mythos to Dracula's castle and the sinister Circus Diabolique. It would be a grand Gothic production.

**MSJ: What was the last CD you bought, or what have you been listening to lately?**

**I just bought Apocalypse: Cinema Choral Classics 3. It has great soundtrack music from films like "Dracula," "Glory" and "Young Sherlock Holmes." Some of these pieces have never been available on CD. If you like the way we use orchestral elements and chanting choirs with Nox Arcana, then I highly recommend this CD.**

**MSJ: What have you been reading lately?**

Joseph Iorillo's *This House Is Empty Now* was a really interesting and original ghost story with a cool twist. I rarely get the chance to enjoy reading anymore. One of the drawbacks to running your own business is that you're constantly working, creating and promoting new products. I don't get much leisure time. Instead of reading, I write, paint and compose new music.

**MSJ: Seen any good movies recently?**

"District 9" was probably the best film I've seen this past summer. I also liked "Quarantine" and "Pathology." For the hardcore horror fans I would recommend a really disturbing French film called "Martyrs." I'm also looking forward to the new version of "The Wolfman." It looks like they made it a lot more Gothic than the original. On the flip side, Rob Zombie's "Halloween 2" was even more ridiculous than his crappy remake of the original "Halloween". He should just stick to music and hillbilly horror films.

**MSJ: What about the last concert you attended for your enjoyment?**

The only concerts I've seen in the past year have been The Birthday Massacre, Loreena McKennit, and Blackmore's Night. All were great concerts in their own way. I don't like to attend big concerts at stadium halls anymore, basically because the ticket prices are ridiculous, the show isn't as intimate as it is in a smaller venue, and the concert will end up on Youtube with 48 hours. I'd rather go to a small concert club to support newer, non-mainstream bands because they aren't jaded and they really give a better performance.

**MSJ: Finally, are there any closing thoughts you'd like to get out there?**

I think it's important to support the bands you like by buying their music. Illegally downloading CDs and songs is stealing. If bands don't make any money because everyone is stealing their music instead of buying it, they won't be able to afford to make any more CDs. In the end we'll be stuck with whatever the big labels deem to be popular music.

**MSJ: This interview is available in book format (hardcover and paperback) in Music Street Journal: 2009 Volume 6 at [lulu.com/strangesound](http://lulu.com/strangesound).**

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