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interview with Shardless

What's the name of your band? Gerry: Our Band is called "Shardless".

How was the band formed? Gerry: The band was the evolution of a former Melodic Gothic/Death Metal band called "The Prior's Diary". Dominik, Chris and Daniel were founding members, while I used to sing in other bands back then.

Can you tell about your band? Gerry: We have known each other for many years and, while I originally used to be in different bands, those bands often played with each other. Dominik and I also used to play together in a Death Metal band some years ago. Therefore the current line-up feels very organic and we also have the experience to push each other in order to get the best possible results music-wise.

Where are all band members from?/Who does what in the band? Gerry: All the band members come from the area around Lahrbach, which is a small town in the south of Germany, close to the Black Forest. I have family roots in Northern Ireland, but grew up there, too. Our line-up consists of Dominik Voigt on Guitar, Christian Obermüller on Bass, Daniel Beck on Drums and myself, Gerry Cole, on Vocals.

What was the ambitions of the band when you started? Gerry: I believe the ambition has always been to write, record and perform the best music we are capable of and to take different aspects we enjoyed from diverse styles and incorporate them in a way that is unique.

Could you explain your music to someone that haven't heard you? Gerry: Our music is probably best situated in the Goth-/Dark Metal genre (although we like to break out from time to time). It is important to us that our music is emotional, so we try to combine heavy, driven parts, electronical influences and softer, quieter passages as well as more classical goth metal parts with modern sounds to showcase the different aspects of those emotions.

Where was your first gig? Gerry: The first gig in this current line up was at a club called "Backstage" in Offenbach, southern Germany.

Where was the latest gig? Gerry: The last show we played was in Pforzheim.

Who writes your songs?/ who writes the music who writes lyrics? Gerry: Regarding the music, that question is a bit difficult, really. Everybody has a big influence on their own instrumental parts and therefore on the song as a whole. Dominik conceptionally writes the majority of the music, but Christian also writes songs and the way Daniel drums to a song may change its whole complexion. Often, ideas like a single riff or a vocal line are bounced around between band members to create a song from one member's idea. The lyrics are all written by me.

What's really good about being in this band? Gerry: We are quite professional and work hard at what we do. Everybody does his part and there is no one who doesn't carry his weight.

Why did you pick that particular style? Gerry: Two reasons. Firstly we all come from a metal background. It was the majority of the music we listened to growing up and as such it will always play an important role in our lives. Since then we have all grown and expanded the music we listened to, so we try to incorporate these things into our sound to create something more modern, yet still rooted in goth metal. Secondly, it simply best fits the atmosphere and issues our songs and the lyrics need.

What are your songs about? Gerry: The majority of our songs are about personal issues and relationships, the way they change you and make you feel in regards to yourself and the people around you. They range from how I relate to society and mankind to very specific relations to specific people. Even though all lyrics are very personal for me, I try to write them at least half-open, so that everyone can find something relating to their own selves in them. There is political and social comment in some songs, but the majority deals with my own personal issues.

Do you write your own material or mainly covers? Gerry: We almost only play our own material, but will throw in an interesting cover live once in a while, done in our own style of course.

Have you made any albums?/If yes what are they?

Discography:

"Newday" (2004)

"Fairytales... Out of the dark" (2008)

"MMXI" (2011)

"The Sound of Shardless" (free download) (2013)

Do you have any clips on YouTube? Gerry: Yes, we made small videostills for all the tracks from our last promotional

recording "The Sound of Shardless", which you can watch at www.youtube.com/shardlessTV. We will also be updating the channel with new stuff and some live clips in the future.

At what age did you start playing? / How old were you guys when you first stood on stage? Gerry: We started in our teens and we all entered the stage in our late teens.

What year was the band started? Gerry: The Band itself was started in 2003 and we have had this line-up since 2012.

Best/worst gig you've played? /What has been the best/most promising gig so far? Gerry: Difficult to say. Bigger gigs are usually more fun and the band has supported bigger acts like Xandria or Schandmaul in the past, playing in front of several hundred people. We also played a memorial concert for an acquaintance last year in front of people who were definitely not our usual audience, but it was a very nice experience. It is more difficult to play in front of only thirty people, yet, as long as there is someone there that connects to what you do, a gig is good.

What places will you be playing in in the imidate future? Gerry: We have no fixed dates as of right now, because we are busy rehearsing and recording at the moment, but we will be back on stage around summer.

Where have you played from then till now? Gerry: All over Germany and some spot gigs in Austria, the Netherlands and France.

Witch band is the best you've seen? Gerry: Very difficult; for me personally that would be either Antimatter with an acoustic gig, Wayne Hussey solo or Death By Stereo.

Is it always the same songs live? Gerry: No. Although we have a certain base group of songs we mostly perform because we feel they are our best ones and the audience often likes them best, we are always writing and therefore changing our setlist.

Have you had any bigger tours from start to now? Gerry: Mostly single shows.

How big crowds do you usually play for? Gerry: Depends, we have played in front of thirty and in front of several hundred.

What are the plans for the rest of the year? Gerry: We are currently revamping our homepage and recording new material. We want to play more shows live in the second half of 2014, but also release a new recording, so that is our main focus right now. We are toying with the idea of doing a proper video for one of our songs, but will have to see where that goes.

Where do you usually play? Gerry: Wherever we are welcome and treated fairly.

How do you get psyched up for a gig? Gerry: Well, we love playing live so we are usually psyched up by that alone. We also mostly have at least one if not more new tracks for a show, so we are excited to see how the audience reacts to them. I am automatically psyched up, because my lyrics are very personal, although that sometimes puts me in, let's say, not the nicest of moods close to a gig.

What are your goals with your music? Gerry: Apart from enjoying doing the music, to be able to touch other people with our songs and also to exorcise some of our own demons.

Is it easier to get your inspiration from older bands or from bands more modern? Gerry: Doesn't matter to us. There is simply good music and boring music. If anything touches us, it can be inspiring, although we often try to blend out other music, when it comes to writing our own songs. I am more influenced by the lyric writing style of certain singers, than the style they sing in, for example.

What are your sources of inspiration? Gerry: Musically, many of the classic goth metal bands like Tiamat, Paradise Lost or Cemetary, but also more modern stuff like Deathstars. Apart from the obvious, it gets very diverse, ranging from electronic music to bands like Deftones and singer-songwriter stuff. But also, playing around with computers, synths and samples can be inspirational. Lyrically, inspiration comes from the relationships I have had with other people and things that have had an impact in my life and an influence on how I feel about the world and the people inside of it. I also read a lot and have a keen interest in world happenings, which is another, but far smaller source of inspiration for my writing. Lastly, I sometimes like to metatext, so I will include references to classic movies, literature or mythology in my lyrics, but usually as a metaphor for something personal.

What's the first step when making a new song? Gerry: Don't piss off the singer...no, really it depends. The foundation of a song can be a single riff, melody or a vocal demo. But the first step in writing a new song is knowing, where you want it to go. If you simply jam, you can end up with great shit or simply shit, but if you really plan through a song, you should know how you want it to feel at the end. This determines the sound you need to go for. So, if the track is based on a vocal line, we need to find the music that will fit the lyrics and if based on a riff, then it's the other way round.

How do you feel about the downloading of music instead of buying albums? Gerry: Both, as an artist and as a consumer, I love the options and possibilities that have been created by the opportunity to download music. A lot more of what happens with music happens online in this day and age. Artists present themselves and their work online and as a fan you have the chance to directly support artists by downloading tracks or albums from them through various services. It is also a great promotional tool for underground/non-mainstream bands to advertise their songs and be able to reach a lot more people. Free downloads are a great promotional tool. Yet, with all this being said...I still love to physically hold a copy of a record in my hands, have a booklet, etc. The one detriment to downloading is that bands can quickly become interchangeable. So, to summarize, I believe having both options is the best of two worlds. You can download tracks and get to know artists better and if you'd still like to own a physical copy of an album you can do that, too.

Besides your own music, what genres and bands do you listen to? Gerry: Whew...far too many to list, I'm afraid. A lot of classic goth metal and death metal, from Carcass through Edge of Sanity right over to Desultory and Paradise Lost. A lot of rock music like Alice in Chains or Pearl Jam, Foo Fighters and Deftones. Then there are many electronic bands I like such as VNV Nation or Leaether Strip and finally I listen to a lot of more quiet music like Antimatter or Tori Amos.

What do you hold most dear? Gerry: The people I love and my pride.

What would be your greatest fears for the future? Gerry: I believe that almost every fear I once had for the future has been already realized to a certain degree, since most have to do with the development of the human race, and boy, the human race has managed to fuck itself...hard.

When you are on stage, what do you fear most then? Gerry: I don't really fear anything on stage. I am, however, sometimes slightly concerned about some fuck up regarding the gear or equipment.

Have you been part of any other projects? / Have you been in any other bands? Gerry: Yeah. The other three were originally founding members of a melodic Gothic Metal band called "The Prior's Diary" and Dominik and me used to play together in a Death Metal band called "Castigate" some years back. He was also part of another Death/Grind project named "Inner Grotesque" for some time. I used to sing in a Gothic Metal band called "Suttee" and a Psycore band called "Utopia Impure". I also do a side acoustic project called "Dead Letters", but all our main focus is on "Shardless".

What do you work with outside of the band and the music? Gerry: We all have regular jobs. I, for example, tutor children who have learning difficulties.

What would you do if there was no music? Gerry: Hate life even more and screamingly recite poetry on the street, I guess...or just end the misery with a bullet to the brain.

How important are your fans? Gerry: Very, very important. What good is creating works of art if there is no audience to reflect them? Without reciprocity, art becomes inane and robbed of value. If you are able to touch another person's life with your art, you have achieved something that no money in the world can buy and no one can ever take that away from you again.

What's the funniest/most memorable thing a fan has done for you? Gerry: I have read some very touching comments and letters over the years and I've also gotten some great drawings from fans. The most memorable thing I have experienced, though, was also the saddest, because someone once took his own life and finished his suicide note with lyrics of mine. He was also listening to me singing on CD when he did it. That was really a trip and it is something that will always be with me. Part of me is honoured he found something there, that made him feel less alone, but it is still some strange, heavy stuff to think about.

How often do you rehearse? Gerry: Usually, once a week.

Where do you rehearse? Gerry: We have a rehearsal room in a former Canadian military bunker out on what used to be the Canadian Army's airfield.

Name 2 of your own songs you like at the moment? Gerry: Well, of course I like all our songs, or we wouldn't have written them that way...but two favourites at the moment? I would say an updated version of an older track called "F(irst) P(erson) S(hooter)", the lyrics of which imagine the whole world being played as a FPS, really speaks to the detached connection from humanity I often feel these days. Furthermore, it is ironically one of the most fun songs to play. Another favourite of mine right now is a song we are actually in the process of tweaking to its final stage called "Kick Drum Heart", which deals with the last serious relationship I've been in. Quite a therapy session and also my two picks because they represent both border spectrums of the band lyrically. So, I'd pick those two right now.

What drives a band that isn't all that famous and renowned to try to make a living on their music and to keep playing? Gerry: What drives a person to breathe? I believe the music we create is a huge part of who we are as people. Without it, we would be less and a part of us would die. And we have never stopped enjoying the feeling of writing and performing songs. Furthermore, if you write niche music there is an acceptance of different success margins and it is all about

touching people and speaking to them about their lives with your songs.

Do you have any webpages? Gerry: Yes, we have a homepage at www.shardless.com, where you can also download our latest promotional EP for free and we can be reached via facebook at www.facebook.com/shardlessband, via Soundcloud at <https://soundcloud.com/shardless> and via youtube at www.youtube.com/shardlessTV.

Any pearls of wisdom for all other bands out there? Gerry: Be aware of what you want to do with your music and, accordingly, find the right mixture between being professional and still having fun. And listen to criticism, even if you don't like to hear it. It's the only way to improve.

How do you view the music industry of today? Gerry: There are two parts to this answer. The music industry itself needs to be fucked up, torn to pieces and everybody who loves real music needs to dance on its rotting plastic corpse. Yet, it is a great time for bands to sneak around the industry, do their own thing and promote themselves. The mainstream has completely swallowed the underground, as far as the industry aspect goes. You will not see the new Alice In Chains for the first time by seeing their video on MTV. But if you invest some time as a fan, especially on the net, you will find what you are looking for.

What are the biggest obstacles for a band? Gerry: Nowadays, there is a lot less of a scene than it used to be. Some years back, like-minded people gathered in scene clubs and you knew there would be a certain amount of people at any gig a band involved in that scene played. Today, there is hardly a scene and there are hardly any clubs, so this makes building up a fanbase in your home region a lot more difficult.

What is best/worst with playing the clubs? Gerry: The best thing is connecting with fans and other bands. The worst thing is staring at the entrance and your watch when the club is relatively empty close to kick-off time.

How would you describe your sound in one sentence? Gerry: Authentic.

What is your favorite crappy instrument? Gerry: A cheap, 30 € acoustic guitar.

Whats your Pre-show ritual? Gerry: I usually go into a certain zone mentally, where I go through several memories connected to the songs we are going to play. Therefore I might be in a strange mood sometimes and my "ritual" is hoping that I don't piss the others off too much.

Would you like to add anything else? Gerry: Check out "Shardless" at www.shardless.com and see if you can find something there that you like. And wear black until there's something darker.



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