

When worlds collide

Voivod prove that there's life after death



LEGENDARY STATUS: Langevin (r) and Voivod

by **JOHNSON CUMMINS**

On Aug. 26, 2005, Voivod's guitarist and chief songwriter Denis "Piggy" d'Amour finally lost his battle with colon cancer and passed away. He was 45 years old. At that point, after a 23-year ride, the band's career was as tumultuous as it was triumphant. It was Piggy's guitar style, merging prog, krautrock, thrash metal and punk, that was the cornerstone of Voivod's original sound, and without him at the helm, it seemed nearly impossible to forge on. After d'Amour demoed two albums of songs on his laptop for his bandmates, and left strict instructions on how they were to be used after his death, the band recorded and posthumously released 2006's *Katorz* and 2009's *Infini* (both featuring Metallica's Jason Newsted on bass).

After receiving numerous offers to reform following the release of *Katorz*, Voivod's remaining members finally agreed to play the Heavy MTL festival in 2008, with original bassist Jean Yves "Blacky" Thériault, who'd left in the early '90s, returning to the fold, and guitarist Don Mongrain from Martyr filling in on guitar.

With the likes of Mastodon, Sepultura, Phil Anselmo, Dave Grohl, Neurosis, Jason Newsted (of course) and others citing the band as a leading influence, Voivod has now become more popular than ever.

"Over the past seven or eight years, I could feel that the name Voivod had been gaining ground," says drummer/artist Michel Langevin. "It's nice to hear that strange music is now becoming popular and it's nice to hear that a lot of these bands found their direction through elements of Voivod or bands like Celtic Frost. We've been underground for so many years, I guess it's nice to be

thought of as people who were there at the beginning of thrash metal, and that we've gotten a legendary status."

One of Voivod's latest achievements is the recent release of Martin Popoff's beautiful hardcover book *Worlds Away*, collecting Langevin's computer-generated designs, drawings, paintings and doodles. The tome also tells the tale of the Voivod saga.

"It was so long in the making, I just didn't think it would exist anymore," says Langevin. "I had archived all of my artwork ever since 1976 because I've always wanted to put a book out of my art. When Martin got hold of me about putting out a book, it was like a miracle to me. The first time I held the book in my hands was one of the proudest moments of my life."

Voivod's miracles hardly cease. Though Piggy's smiling mug no longer thrashes up and down beside those of his comrades, Voivod are playing their adopted hometown of Montreal once again and launching their new DVD, *Tatsumaki*, filmed during their first-ever visit to Japan in 2008.

"When we played in Japan last year, there were kids crying during the show because they just thought we would never make it over there. A lot of people see a lot of negative things associated with Voivod—we have had some pretty bad luck in a lot of ways—but I just feel so lucky that we can still go to all of these places we've never been to, and be able to share and celebrate Piggy's music. It was a lot of work and it's really become my life's project but I really feel blessed."

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