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[Film Review – Pagan Metal: A Documentary \(2009\)](#)

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By Aequitas

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MIAMI—*Pagan Metal* explores the emerging trend of underground European heavy metal bands incorporating folk instruments, native musical techniques, and pre-Christian mythology in their lyrics. Shot in a “guerilla filmmaking” style, the raw, two-hour exposé features many live on-stage performances and candid back-stage interviews.

This style did not grow out of black metal as is commonly mistaken. It has its roots more in power metal, fantasy and speed metal. Also known as folk metal, emerging artists in the 1990’s turned inward to their native cultures, locating inspiration and adding gravitas to lyrical compositions. This sub-genre should not to be confused with Pagan rock, which includes the likes of [Corvus Corax](#), [Dead Can Dance](#), [Inkubus Sukkubus](#), [Faith and the Muse](#), and [Omnia](#), or even Florida’s homegrown [Witch’s Mark](#), who are scheduled to release their new album soon this fall. Pagan rock has styles ranging from neo-folk through dark wave and even gothic rock sounds. Whereas Pagan metal is more centrally heavy metal, infused with folk elements and tempos.

While our lone wolf [Agalloch](#) (Portland, Oregon) plays folk metal stateside, the overwhelming majority of current bands hail from Northern Europe. The acts featured in the film include [Ensiferum](#), [Finntroll](#), [Korpiklaani](#) and [Turisas](#) (Finland), [Primordial](#) (Ireland) and [Leaves’ Eyes](#) (Norway). Other well-known folk metal bands not seen in the film include [Arkona](#) (Russia), [Skyclad](#) (England), and [SuidAkrA](#) (Germany).

All of the interviews conducted by Bill Zebub (Director) were exclusively with band members, with nary a music critic or even a genre enthusiast to muddy their telling of the sound. The conversations toward the later half raised questions about modern Old World social struggles—immigration, globalization, and Americanization—weighing on the psyches of these musicians. Despite their onscreen revelry with heavy drinking, smoking, and juvenile antics, their unvarnished responses were substantive when questions turned intimate and political. Throughout the film, music and performances are featured aplenty. Viewers will have many opportunities to discover if the metal-folk hybrid wins their ears.

Viewers may be left wondering if the upsurge of Pagan metal has more to do with cultural and national reclamation tensions than concerns with purely spiritual, neo-Pagan religious ideals. Yet, the names and stories of the old gods, the elements, and nature are found throughout many of the songs. This documentary is ideal for fans of rock or metal music, or those simply interested in expanding their Pagan music taste buds.

Pagan Metal: A Documentary (Not Rated) was produced by Grimoire Studio and is available through [Netflix](#) or purchase at [Amazon.com](#).

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- 1. [The Witches Garden](#) | 10/08/2010 at 8:04 pm

Great piece, you hit the nail on the head. I actually have seen this video on youtube while searching for pagan rockbands .I was extremely delighted when I found it but rather bummed out after it was all done.The music was great and I was the bands rocked but I was saddened to find that it has nothing to do with our kind of spirituality.

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