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Negura Bunget – Strange and Beautiful

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Our vote for most "out-there" black metal band goes to Romania's Negura Bunget. There's no cold grimness. No need for vast layers of corpse paint...just freaky black metal that zigs when everyone else wants to zag. Just reference the band's two hallmark albums: 2002's 'N Crugu Bradului and '06's OM, both of which possessed the ability to stretch the black metal field to the brink. The band's intense instrumentation and penchant for sinewy, "fog-like" atmospheres is truly one of a kind, as evidenced by the re-recording of their 2000 effort, Măiastru Sfetnic, which now goes by the title of Măiestrit

Măiestrit was the purpose of today's interview, as we caught up with mainman Negru to discuss some of the band's recent lineup changes and what lies ahead for one of black metal's most enigmatic bands...

Blistering.com: The band has recently undergone some lineup changes. Care to explain how this has affected Negura Bunget's production and approach to recording?

Negru: The lineup changes happened while we were in the middle of the recording for Măiestrit. So it was quite a challenge to finish the materials under the new circumstances. On the other hand this album haunted us for a long time, so we were determined to make it right and finish no matter what. In the end it turned out also as a symbolic end for the old formula of the band.

Blistering.com: You were paired with Hupogrammos for quite some time, so has it been difficult to adjust to not having him around?

Negru: It was not easy. We worked together since the very beginning, and we had a lot of great moments in our history. At the same time in the last period it became harder and harder to work together, so compared with this, we are doing much better now with the new members. There have been a lot of adjustments to be made, but we are determined to take things even higher in the future.

Blistering.com: Can you relay how the new guys (Corb – vocals; Spin – guitars; and Gadinet – bass) are working out? NB strikes me as a band that must be hard to integrate into.

Negru: Negura Bunget is a band you have to be 100% dedicated to. That's not easy to do and hence, the difficulty to integrate. But for the new people in the band now I'm quite happy with the results so far. We started from the very beginning explaining what this experience will be about, and so far they are all in 100%. The new album we did is just a first step, and there's a lot more to follow.

Blistering.com: Rewind back a few years with OM and it was definitely a high point for the band. Since we're four years removed from it, do you feel any sort of pressure in trying to top it?

Negru: There's always a pressure from within, to do our best and take things to a new level, bring new elements and new intensities in our atmosphere. You can only do this with a clear mind, as every album has to start from zero. Experience helps of course, but in the end it's a completely new experience, one which we always try to explore at its maximum.

Blistering.com: The band has always enjoyed critical success, going all the way back to N Crugu Bradului. Are you ones to look at what is being said about you?

Negru: Of course, we pay attention to what people and the media say about us. But it's just a different experience, not connected with our musical one. We do our best to express ourselves through the music and when a new material is done we can look on its impact. Doesn't mean at all that we'll do what people or media would like us to. You always need to follow just your own ideas when creating music.

Blistering.com: Describe how your locale of Romania has allowed you to continue to create this unique take on black metal.

Negru: Negura Bunget simply could not exist but on these lands. The local history and spirituality shaped directly us as individuals and the whole development of the band. The spiritual connection we also felt with black metal as well as the universal concept more closely connected with the traditional esotericism are just natural steps we took starting from the local realities, to which everything's still closely related with. We have always been drawn towards these local natural and spiritual elements, and the more we explore them, we discover how little we know about. Each step you take higher, just opens new perspectives. That's why it's such a fascinating journey.

Blistering.com: The concepts, lyrics, and language has always been unique and deeply rooted in your culture. How much research would you say goes into making sure the band properly represents your cultural background?



Negru: We reached a level in which a similar thing would be hardly accessible for others, both through our personal and musical background. That's why there's always a natural pressure from within to keep things at the highest level and do everything impeccable. We see all we do in Negura Bunget as chance for our evolution as well. You cannot quantify the effort put into this matter... Negura Bunget is not something we work into, is who we are.

Blistering.com: What prompted you to re-record *Măiastru Sfetnic*? Were you not satisfied with the original?

Negru: We were never satisfied with the overall outcome of the original *Măiastru Sfetnic*. We just felt there's a lot more we didn't managed to capture on the original recording. So since the very beginning we were set to make it right as soon as we have the chance. It didn't happen as soon as we thought, but in the end we did it. It was just something we had to do for ourselves first.

Blistering.com: Even though it's re-recorded, *Măiastru Sfetnic* sounds in line with your classic recordings. Did you simply not want to add modern production values to it?

Negru: Actually I think the production for *Măiestrit* is pretty modern. It's just modern in accordance with our music and our vision. We never enjoyed those un-dynamic drum triggers and the ultra compressed mastering that's almost a must these days in the black metal production same as we never enjoyed the raw demo like underground productions. We enjoy the natural sound of the instruments, and we try to capture them as close as possible on the albums. That's what we did with *Măiestrit*, and the result is not bat ad well.

Blistering.com: The band has never been strangers to the live arena, so to those who have never seen, describe what the Negura Bunget live experience is like?

Negru: We try to bring live the whole experience of the music we put on CD. We always keep in mind the live perspective when composing, so we are able to put live everything you hear on the CD. We bring all the instruments (some rather unusual for the normal audience: dulcimer, pipes, xylophone, percussions, horns..), and when the conditions are right, we hopefully create an even more intense atmosphere.

Blistering.com: Finally, what's on tap for the rest of 2010?

Negru: We just got back form a very long European Tour and we are getting into the work for a MCD, which we hope to have out by autumn, in time for some new tour plans, including a few dates along Enslaved.

www.myspace.com/negurabunget



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