

# SEVENCHURCH

Metal Hammer reckoned their tape was the best demo by a British band they'd heard in ages. The editor of Metal

Forces positively salivated over the prospect of hearing a full album by them, they are currently receiving upwards of fifteen letters a week from fans as far apart as Iceland, Canada, Thailand and Australia and hot on their tails are a good handful of eager record companies including a few from Germany of all places. Are we talking about the latest thrash sensations from South Wales or the North East, breeding grounds for so many of this Isle's hard rockin' guitar combos? Oh no. We're actually talking about Sevenchurch. Sevenchurch - the slowest, heaviest, doomiest bunch of long-haired guitar grinders you ever did hear this side of the Atlantic who have the blatant audacity to come from Oxford: home of a million and one jangly teenage indie hopefuls surely? Oxford, which is fast becoming a melting pot for any kind of music you care to mention and a veritable hotbed of multifarious creativity.

Sevenchurch (Dave Smart - lead guitar, Dave Capel - rhythm guitar, Paul - bass/backing vocals; Martin - lead vocals and Grahaeme - drums) formed from the ashes of local thrash outfits Mordor and Dying Breed in early 1990 with Martin joining late last year after the demise of Madamadam. Paul was originally the lead vocalist but felt uncomfortable in this task and this left the way open for Martin's inclusion (coincidentally Sevenchurch's first ever outing was as the support to Madamadam at their last ever Oxford gig - Curfew: always first with the really boring bits of trivia).

Since this time Sevenchurch have been punishing audiences with gigs that manage to cram a staggering five songs into an hour long set. Sevenchurch are not easy listening, even for those who like their music a little on the extreme side. Somebody commented that they were unlistenable to. Said person probably reckons EMF are punk rock. Me, being the only person I know who can happily listen to Swan's first album all the way through without feeling the need to either throw up or dig holes in the wall with bare hands, I find their brand of metal (of which there now seem to be 57 Heinz varieties) far more uplifting than so many of the sad cases who seem content to relive the early '80s sounds of Iron Maiden et al. So, where does this Sevenchurch sound originate from?

Dave: 'I just wanted to take the music to as great an extreme as possible. My favourite bands don't reflect what this band is like. I like '70s bands like Black Sabbath and Lynyrd Skynyrd and newer bands like Soundgarden and The Black Crowes but the main influence on my music is films.'

Paul: 'We've always liked the idea of film soundtracks: the way the music gives the film its atmosphere. That's what we're trying to do with our music, to create an atmosphere. Sevenchurch would make a good soundtrack to a really dark horror film.'

I'd personally like to see Michael J. Fox try to act his way through a Sevenchurch soundtrack. I'd quite like to see Michael J. Fox act full stop.

Dave: 'As I say, my favourite bands don't make this sort of music but films really inspire me to write songs.'

What about not-so-metal bands like Swans and Godflesh? They're more in a similar vein aren't they?

'Yeah, those are the sort of bands we'd like to go on tour with so we could really crossover rather than just play with metal bands all the time. Especially since Martin joined we've got a lot of appeal to anybody. For weirdos anyway.' Is there a much broader appeal for heavy rock and metal now than there was in the '70s and early '80s when those type of bands were much more easily classified? I mean, like Nirvana are sort of metal for people who don't like metal at all.

Martin: 'People have always liked heavy guitar sounds but they've been put off by that typical heavy metal image. Also the lyrics and vocal style put some people off - that high-pitched Ronnie-James Dio thing.'

Dave: 'The bands that are still doing that sort of thing are doing it well, like Def Leppard, but there are a lot of different bands around now.'

What about extreme death metal bands like Decide?

Martin: 'Gimmicky. They're good at presenting themselves and causing a bit of controversy but the records are very badly made and mixed.'

Your sound is pretty extreme, dark and sinister, how seriously do you take yourselves?

Dave: 'We're not taking the piss but...'

Paul who up 'til now has written the band's lyrics interrupts:

'The lyrics are quite emotional, maybe even spiritual in a way. People have asked us if we're a Christian band. We're not but we're not anti-Christian.'



So there'll be no burning inverted crosses into your foreheads then?

'No, none of that I'm afraid.'

No sacrificing goats or biting the heads of bats?

'No.'

Sad to report Sevenchurch limit their mutilation of animals to ordering a round of sausages and chips from the bar of the pub where we are enjoying a few 'beverages' amid clusters of small, screaming kids and people wearing very short shorts even though it doesn't suit their figures. I spot a few prime candidates for ritual slaughter but remain silent.

'People can read into our music what they like - just as long as they're entertained.'

One of the very strangest things about Sevenchurch is the way that Martin has so radically changed his vocal style from when he sang with Madamadam. Gone is the Lydon-esque whine of yore to be replaced by a deep-throated guttural growl. Was it a difficult change-over?

'Quite difficult because we had to record the demo two weeks after I joined but I enjoy singing in a lower register much more than a high one. You don't come off the stage completely hoarse for one thing. This style is much more relaxed. Also the slower pace of the music gives me more chance to set up on stage, to move around more. With Madamadam it was all at breakneck speed with no time to do anything. With Sevenchurch there's also a lot more potential for the lyrics which tended to get lost in Madamadam.'

Martin, unlike the rest of the band, has short hair and looks like the last person you'd expect to find fronting a doom metal band. Is he really a closet metal head?

'Not at all. I'm not into very much metal really. The vocalists I'm most influenced by are people like Ian Curtis, Morrissey, Howard Devoto and Scott Walker. Anybody who has a morose delivery. Also American High Energy singers, people like Madonna and Martika. Lyrically I'm investigating people like Diana Ross, even Abba. People think I'm sending that stuff up but I'm not at all. Diana Ross' lyrics are very much about the negative side of romance and I can see Sevenchurch, going back to the film thing, being the soundtrack to some 'love lost' story.'

All this is very much removed from the stereotypical idea of British metal bands with closed minds listening only to metal, merely trying to emulate Led Zep or Def Leppard.

'That's one of the biggest problems with a lot of new British metal bands - they only listen to one type of music and what they produce is very depressing.'

'So many British metal bands just don't compare to American ones. If you go to a gig and there are two British bands and one American band then it's always the American one that stands out - but when British bands do get it right they're the best in the world.'

The general subject of metal is discussed, particularly the lack of real stars in the recent scene.

'All the stars there are now are the old ones like Ozzy Osbourne and Alice Cooper. The new bands prefer to be more like the guy in the street, more like their fans.'

What about Axl Rose?

Martin: 'It's all attitude with him. I don't like him at all - his voice or attitude. he's not a star in the same league as David Bowie was. Maybe he's a star to some people.'

Did metal reach a crisis point in the late '80s with bands playing so fast that the only direction left for them was to slow it right down like yourselves?

Dave: 'When bands were playing so fast things got to saturation point with everyone doing it and a lot of crap bands

appearing.'

Paul: 'It lost everything except the speed.'

Do you think you can be that much more intense by playing slower. Certainly it takes much more concentration to listen to.

Dave: 'And it's more emotional.'

Dave: 'I left a thrash band because it wasn't what I wanted to do. At first the idea of combining punk energy with metal appealed to me; again that all came from America.'

Were you surprised at the reviews you got in Metal Forces and Metal Hammer?

'Surprised at the extent to which they praised us. I've always written music to please myself and if anyone else liked it then all the better. It was great to see those reviews, especially since it was the editor of Metal Forces who reviewed the tape.'

'We've always wanted to get everything dead right before we did the tape or played live. We spent ages rehearsing. Oh if only a few other bands would follow this manner. It might just spare everybody concerned a lot of torture.'

As well as causing Sevenchurch to be deluged with mail from around the globe their rave reviews have caught the attention of a number of record companies and put them in a stronger position when trying to get a deal - something which is now more a case of 'when' rather than 'if'.

What of the rest of the Oxford rock scene? What do Sevenchurch think of more traditional rock bands like 2 Die 4 and Graffiti?

'2 Die 4 are great. Maybe a bit manufactured but exciting. They've got a very modern sound, using samplers for instance. Graffiti have got great songs and a brilliant singer but they might have left it a bit late now.'

Strangely Sevenchurch have a lot of enthusiasm for other local bands that I wouldn't have expected them to like particularly. I guess this shows their true eclecticism:

'Comflower Concept - a great band, perhaps not six months ago but now they've really got it. The Daisies, Death by Crimpers. Flash Harry - they're absolutely storming but people won't go and see them because they think it'll be just old pub rock.'

Sevenchurch talk about obscure Scandinavian bands who I've never ever heard of and whose names seem ripped wholesale from various satanic verses so I grin my simpleton grin and let them get on with it. They are five extremely pleasant blokes playing extremely unpleasant music and playing it extremely well. There is absolutely no room for compromise in the Church of the Number Seven and, for all their doom and darkness, the future looks surprisingly bright. Will you be worshipping at their altar?

Sevenchurch photos by Dean

Curfew Magazine Interview July 92

Demo Review from The Organ Fanzine

## SEVENCHURCH

SEVENCHURCH DEMO "NEFARIOUS"

with probably one of the best demo tapes circulating at the moment, total doom in the Candlemass/Cathedral order of things, Sevenchurch manage to come up with some different ideas and some original riffs, almost humorous at times, unintentional I'm sure but Sevenchurch do seem to have injected some humour into their riffs. Martin Spear, one time Madamadam voice is the singer, you'd never know. It's like Doom with added bounce, bounce-core anyone? Beautifully slow, Candlemass with the Sabbath bits, shortest of the four songs stretches out to eight and a half minutes, like the early days of Cathedral.... plenty of light and shade, flavours of Prog at times. Excellent sound quality, excellent packaging, picture of a grave yard on the front, well what else did you expect. Sevenchurch are as good at making slow twisting Doom as Madamadam were at Moshing it up. Highly recommended. Contact Sevenchurch, 83 Hurst Rise Road, Botley, Oxford, OX2 9HJ. Price £3.00 inc P&P payable to Paul Oliver

SEVENCHURCH  
Jeffito Tavern, Oxford

Friday, July 17

THIS MUCH-touted local troupe have had people salivating over their demo for months, according to the promotional blurb. A prospect? Nope.

The reality is that Sevenchurch are a rapid, hackneyed and ill-conceived Thrash band. They purport to be influenced by those monolithic forefathers of mayhem Black Sabbath, but sound as if they're recreating the most tumultuous fart Messiah Marcolin ever conjured with his lumbering frame, together with the sheer din of a DC10 at take-off.

The songs? Well, all being interchangeable drab, the titles are rendered irrelevant, but the material itself lurches morosely along, the drumming roughly paralleling the vocal range of Death Grunter Martin. Martin looks like Ollie Reed mutated into a recalcitrant schoolboy - and actually manages to sound as appalling as he looks. It pains me to denigrate a 'prospect' from my own neck of the woods, but Sevenchurch simply give music a bad name.

ROBIN POULTNEY