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Wyrđ Visions

By Jay Somerset

The crowd is small tonight, about 20 people, not bad for an underpublicized, midsummer noise show at The Tranzac in Toronto. A large stage dominates the room; elsewhere, stacked chairs line the perimeter of the shabby club. In a corner away from the stage, a lone man stands with his guitar. He's playing a single guitar lick over and over. He's surrounded by candles, which cast huge shadows on the wall and give off a campfire vibe. We gather around him as he slowly reveals tales of ancient keys, constellations, and the freezing moon. A repeated refrain draws us deeper into a trance, "W-Y-R-D-V-I-S-I-O-N-S across the sky-ee-y, W-Y-R-D-V-I-S-I-O-N-S across the sky-ee-y..."

The man in the corner is Toronto artist Colin Bergh, a.k.a. Wyrđ Visions. In 2006, he released his lone album, *Half-Eaten Guitar*, on the Bluefog label. Like his live shows, the record is a study in trance-inducing drones on acoustic and electric guitar. Listening requires patience, but the reward is a deeply satisfying mental state. "It's like tantric sex," says Bergh. "You spend about five hours with heavy petting and at the end there's a big explosion. I'm not really about exploding but I like a little bit of resolve in the songs."

Bergh, who was born in Sweden but grew up in Toronto, chose the name Wyrđ Visions after discovering his first choice, Wyrđ Sisters, was already taken. "I had visions of me dancing on treetops, chewing on wood and strumming on tree bark," he says.

At this point, I'm supposed to define the music through an amalgamation of "folk" terms: psych, black, drone, apocalyptic. Bergh covers "Freezing Moon," written by infamous Norwegian death-metal unit Mayhem, so a reference to black metal adds credibility, as does anything related to forests, elves, mushrooms and D&D. But none of these terms or allusions gets to the crux of Wyrđ Visions, and besides, Bergh isn't interested in talking "scenes" genres. "I am not about the apocalypse at all," he stresses. "It's a tragic thought that the world would end. It's also a very

Christian way of thinking, that things start and end and that's it. I think everything revolves in circular motions, you feel me?"

Circular sound with resolution is a better way to describe the music on Half-Eaten Guitar. The album begins with a set of three acoustic guitar-led songs that build slowly, his voice hushed for the most part. About 20 minutes into the record, a bell tolls and a female voice tells us "it's night again." The slower and quieter the record gets, the heavier it feels.

Side 2 starts with a whimsical hum and whistle coupled with guitar and what sounds like a fuzzy organ. The song, "Bog Lord," took Bergh four years to write and is arguable the most distinctive cut on Half-Eaten Guitar. The 10-minute song concludes with a tireless refrain before launching into "Air-Conditioning." Like a storm, the final track kicks in and swaths of electric guitar cut through the murky bog as we're led through nine minutes of doom and the trance is lifted. "That's the secret to getting tranced out—taking your time and just relaxing and feeling and eventually falling asleep or laughing," says Bergh. "The slower, the better."

Equally unhurried in his writing, Bergh is working on his new album, titled King, so-called "because it is very powerful and macho and has a supreme feeling to it," he says. Similar to Half-Eaten Guitar, it will be a solo record "with a few guests here and there." King will be released on Toronto's Bluefog label...sometime. "It could take years to complete."

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