# ANTICHRISIS: THE STORY SO FAR...



**There are only few artist renowned for their capability to merge innovation, mutability, style as well as attitude without trying to catch up with the next big thing or losing their very own identity: The Clash, Radiohead or David Bowie have proven their artistic ability of change while always maintaining their individual approach throughout their careers. All this goes for Antichrisis as well, a band that was founded way back in 1995 in a small and godforsaken village near the german-belgium border...**



"Originally Antichrisis started as a solo-project," says Sid, who set up the band in 1995. "At this time I was working on a pretty peculiar blend of Doom, Gothic and Folk with a slight touch of classical music which was quite ambitious considering the fact that my equipment consisted of just an 8-track-cassette-recorder, two guitars, a bass, a tiny Alesis-drum-computer and a cheap little keyboard with just one tolerable string-sound at that time. Nevertheless I got along fine."

And within just a few months Antichrisis' demo *Missa Depositum Custodi* was brought into being. The first and only edition of 500 copies received an amazing feedback within the underground and was sold out soon after its release in early 1996. That success led to negotiations with various independent labels, and Sid decided to sign to Ars Metalli, at this time a new founded german company with only limited financial options but the guarantee of complete artistic freedom, which still is one of the vital prerequisites for the musical work of Antichrisis.

**Cantara Anachoreta**

September '96 saw the beginning for Antichrisis' first studio session for their debut album *Cantara Anachoreta*: The recordings took place in a neat little village somewhere in the outback of East Germany. Sid - by this time still known by his nom de plume Moonshadow - recorded the album within only 14 days with the help of female vocalist Willowcat, who already had a guest appearance on *Missa Depositum Custodi*. "The recordings were a pretty peculiar affair," recalls Sid. "Right beside the gym that was supposed to be our studio was a nursery school, which meant we had to take a few hours break each afternoon when the kids next door were taking their nap. On the other hand we couldn't do any microphone recordings during the nursery school's regular opening hours, because the little buggers were always causing such a fuzz that would have been a nice side effect for your average Black Metal album, but definitely not for our purposes. So we had to make the best of it by working in the evenings and late at night!"

The classic atmospheric worktime for any Gothic act, isn't it? "I never considered Antichrisis to be a Gothic-Band," denies Sid. "All I care about is music itself, not any kind of style or classification. At the time I worked on *Cantara Anachoreta* I was in a very desolate situation concerning my private life - and the best way to express my feelings and to deal with an utterly fucked up relationship was to play that gloomy, melancholic but also furious and pushing kind of music. That's what Antichrisis is all about: to reflect my feelings and emotions in the best possible way without any restrictions or musical limitations. I listen to so many different kinds of music, hence there are so many influences that I simply don't want to get restricted to just one particular style: Just like painter using all the colours he needs to get his picture right, a musician should use all styles available to achieve the best expression possible. Moreover it was my intention from the very beginning to make every Antichrisis album sound completely different from its predecessor - I mean there ain't no use to record the same album twice! If I can't add new musical dimensions to a new album, there's absolutely no sense in recording one!"

*Cantara Anachoreta*, the band's striking debut, hit the audience by January '97 and was enthusiastically received by the press: Quite a surprise for a rather unknown act that had not even appeared live on stage by then, supported by a small label not being equipped with a big budget. Only once in a blue moon had a newcomer's debut indicated such well-defined and incisive style aligned with an amazingly vast number of different musical influences with enormous implicitness and distinction. "Considering the fact that *Cantara Anachoreta* was recorded and mixed in a fortnight with a small drum computer and a 16 track tape machine, the result wasn't too bad," utters Sid. But Antichrisis being labelled as a Goth act by press and audience was something Sid didn't like at all. Nevertheless *Cantara Anachoreta*'s reputation turned other record companies' attention on Antichrisis, and so inquiries on that matter were somehow inevitable.

**The strange encounter with a pied piper**

"By that time my life had turned into a real mess," explains Sid. "My former girlfriend had left me and I was so depressed that they had to put me in the loony bin for 3 months - and when I got out I had not only lost my job but my tenement as well; enough inspiration for an entire new album, I guess. But those changes were also for good: After I got myself together again I found a convenient flat share in the remote parts of the city - and just a few houses away lived a lad who played uilleann pipes: I heard him practising every time I went past his house, and as it sounded fucking brilliant I just knocked on his door and asked him if he'd be interested in joining Antichrisis - that's how Naex got involved!"

That chance meeting turned out to be some kind of windfall: Although Antichrisis' music beared lots of folk influences even afore, they weren't that apparent due to the band's conventional instrumetation hitherto, whereas Naex with his musical background (besides uillean pipes he also plays a multitude of other Folk instruments) added a completely new timbre to Antichrisis' sound. "Finally I could make use of those sounds I always had in mind. Of course I could have used similiar keyboard sounds instead, but if it comes to acoustic instruments, I'm a bit of a purist: no keyboard can compete with the uilleann pipes' range of expression! Moreover, me and Naex cooperated very well from the beginning: I come up with an idea to a new song, play it to him - and he turnes up with a perfectly fitting tune," comments Sid his comrade-in-pipes

**A Legacy of Love**

So almost everything seemed to be alright again - except for the problem of finding an appropriate female vocalist for Antichrisis, because Sid didn't want to continue his collaboration with former singer Willowcat. "She was just a guest vocalist without any option for a long-term partnership."

Meanwhile Antichrisis had signed to austrian-based label Napalm Records, and in spring '98 it was high time to record *Cantara Anachoreta*'s successor. "Many of my songs are arranged like stage plays, requiring different voices for different characters - and I was in urgent need of a suitable female leading actor to record all those new songs of love and loss. We were pretty much under pressure because all tracks for the new album were already written, pre-production was finished, the studio was booked - and we had a serious shortage of female vocalists!"

As push came to shove Napalm Records suggested an appropriate singer just in time: her name was Lisa, and after a few telephone calls she agreed to join Antichrisis for the forthcoming album and was sent the pre-production-tapes two weeks before the band entered the studio in April/ May 1998. "My aim was to record an album that would Antichrisis get out of the Gothic-trap we got caught in with our debut." And although *A Legacy of Love* did bear a few Metal references again it became a wonderful and brilliant Folk-Pop-album, containing songs that could have easily entered the charts like *Nightswan, Our Last Show* or the smashing *Forever I Ride*. But despite this meanwhile classic album, Antichrisis had to put up with their status of winning over all the critics without achieving the commercial breakthrough they deserved.

Then in Spring 1999 the band was hitting the stage for the first time during an European tour with Tristania, The Sins Of Thy Beloved, Siebenbuergen and Trail of Tears. "I was quite aware that a Metal-package like that wasn't exactly the proper framework for Antichrisis", maintains Sid, "but I wanted to prove that the concept of Antichrisis would work live as well. Unfortunately Naex couldn't be with us due to his exams at that time, hence I had to re-arrange the songs of our live-set in a way that they could be performed by sequencers and two session-musicians."

On this tour Antichrisis' new female vocalist Dragonfly, who had replaced Lisa, received her baptism of fire. She had joined the band just a couple of weeks before. Not only did Antichrisis promote *A Legacy of Love* live on stage, but they also took the chance of introducing some new stuff to a quite flabbergasted audience. "I had same peculiar ideas on my mind concerning the sound of our new album," confesses Sid. "I wanted a rather minimalistic, raw and dancefloor-orientated sound without those more baroque arrangements that I've used on *A Legacy of Love*."

**Perfume**

So Antichrisis entered Jens Bachmann's Blue House Studio again by late summer 2000: The cooperation with Jens had worked out very well during the *A Legacy of Love*-recordings, and with the help of Tilo Rockstroh on keyboards and Jens-Nils Kuge on drums Antichrisis forged their third album *Perfume*, which contained for the very first time in the history of the band a cover version (Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love).*

Though songs like *Like the Stars, Goodbye to Jane, Hole in my Head, Carry me down* or *Wasteland* proved once more Antichrisis' claim for the charts, Sid isn't too satisfied with *Perfume* in resrospect: "*Perfume* was simply an experiment, and as with all experiments they sometimes fail. Some songs on *Perfume* are indeed pretty good, whereas others didn't sound the way they could have sounded if I had been holding on to the method and the sound I had developed with *A Legacy of Love*. Hence *Perfume* doesn't sound as dense as *Cantara Anbachoreta* or *A Legacy of Love*. But the good thing

about an experiment is that one does learn from it - and I've learned that my songwrighting qualitites work best when developing a song through its melody and not through grooves and rhythms as I did on *Perfume*."

But why that long period of silence after *Perfume*'s release? Some fans received the impression that Antichrisis hadn't survived the *Perfume*-experiment. "No, Antichrisis itself was never in danger", assures Sid. "Actually I had written and pre-produced enough songs for an entire new album, but after the first studio sessions in spring 2003 Dragonfly, who had become my wife in 1999, left me. This separation also affected my physical health seriously, hence I was forced to put Antichrisis on the back burner for over a year - the more so as a further involvement of Dragonfly with Antichrisis was beyond question. After I was back on the track again I decided that it was about time to leave my former hometown Bonn. Somehow I ended up in Nuremberg, where I met Bianca at a Folk-Session in an Irish Pub - and after our first rehearsal I knew that she was just the singer I was looking for to take Dragonfly's place in the band."

Now the line-up was complete again - but why didn't Antichrisis come up immediately with *Perfume*'s successor? "Simply because I didn't want to use some of the the songs I had written the year before," explains Sid. "I had to find a new concept for that album: Some of the old songs got the chop, others came along and most of all the topic of some lyrics had to see a large revision. Furthermore we had to re-record a few tracks because we had to suit them to Bianca's pitch."

**A Legacy of Love Mark II**

Quite a few bands would have cracked under such pressure, but Sid's unperturbedness kept him going. "I didn't want to let neither myself nor Antichrisis down by this breakup" explains Sid. "Besides, there were also some changes for good: I had found a new female singer in no time, and finally we had fulfilled our contract with Napalm Records, so we were free to sign to a new company. To be honest, I was really looking forward to this because I was n't too satisfied with Napalm's business conduct. And as Jens, our producer on *A Legacy of Love* and *Perfume*, liked to sign us for his newly founded label Reartone Records, we were all of sudden in the favourable situation of having a studio budget at our disposal that we had never dreamed of because Reartone's contract contained no restrictions towards studio time or artistic freedom."

Above all Antichrisis had developed from the former one-man-project to a proper band, because in the meantime Tilo "Waran" Rockstroh (keyboards), Jens-Nils "Kugator" Kuge (drums) and Jens "Gnu" Bachmann (guitar) had become permanent members.

"As we regained the publishing rights of our old material from Napalm Records we decided to do a reissue of *A Legacy of Love* for Reartone - most of all because we wanted to bridge the time gap until the next regular Antichrisis-album *The Legacy remains*."

But the revised version of *A Legacy of Love* that saw its release in early 2005 as a digipack-edition titled *A Legacy of Love Mark II* didn't sound at all just like a simple re-issue. "We had gone slightly round round the bend," admits Sid with a grin. "At first we just wanted to replace the old drumcomputer-parts by proper drums. After we finished that, we didn't like the old guitar-parts any more, hence Jens had to re-record all E-guitars again. When this was done we suddenly considered the keyboard-parts as being no longer appropriate any more, so Tilo had to do all these parts again, too - and after everything was said and done, we finally realized that we had accidentally re-recorded an entire album except for the original vocal lines and the pipes. We've almost spend 12 months of studio time, which is an expenditure that normally only the likes of Pink Floyd of Metallica could afford."

But once you listen to *A Legacy of Love Mark II* you will easily realize that this expenditure was worth while. The new versions of those already stirring songs develop an almost irresistible maelstrom - they seem like aural environments waiting for the listener to enter: *How can I live on Top of the Mountain?* is simply one of the most beautiful soundtracks never used for a movie score; R.E.M. would meanwhile take themselves to the cleaners for a Folk-Pop-jewel like *Nightswan*, *Our Last Show* couldn't have been done better by the Doors in their heydays and someone not being close to tears after listening to *Dancing in the Midnight Sun* probably never loved. *Baleias Bailando* and *Planet Kyrah* are evidence of Sid's capability of creating magnificent pop songs with rather unorthodox sounds and arrangements, whereas *End of December* seems like a brilliant outtake of a session that Paul Weller, The Pogues and Bruce Springsteen could have had in a Galway Pub late after midnight. *Forever I Ride* proves that blending Knopflerian guitar riffs with McKennittish romanticism and Sabbath's abrasiveness doesn't necessarily have to be a mission impossible, and the raw guitar power of *The Sea* and *Trying not to Breathe* should as well raise hell in every moshpit of this planet without attenuating some very catchy qualitites while at last *The Farewell* is the successful psychedelic conclusion of an album that is simply the most emotional roller coaster ride one could ever experience. Basically each song on *A Legacy of Love Mark II* could make easily a smashing hit single!

"With *A Legacy of Love Mark II* we have created the perfect transformation of my musical imagination," comments Sid on the album. "It captures the way that Antichrisis should have always sounded. Of course we'll maintain this mode of operation that we've developed now for our next album *The Legacy remains* without just duplicating the formula of *A Legacy of Love Mark II*."

**The Legacy remains**

Anyone being familiar with Sid and his work with Antichrisis knows that he would never come up with mere self-plagiarism. In order to bridge the time gap until the release of *The Legacy remains*, Antichrisis have put outtakes of their current pre-production on their website (see download area of http://www.antichrisis.de). These outtakes will give you an impression of the band's mode of operati-

on because they let you anticipate how a song evolves from first draft to ultimate studio version. Furthermore tracks like *Stone Rain* or *An Endless Flow* already prove that Antichrisis are about to cross all boundaries again without sacrificing the band's unique musical idendity. *The Legeacy remains* actually seems to become the logical sequel to *A Legacy of Love Mark II*...

And if mastermind Sid should manage to avoid further detachments, breakdowns and strokes of fate that blocked the band's succession in the past, Antichrisis' future should look bright enough to make him wear shades: He sure has more than enough ideas and visions for many years to come!

**Present Lineup:**

- Sid - Vocals, Acoustic Guitars, Bass
- Alexander "Naex" May: Uilleann Pipes, Flutes & Whistles
- Bianca Fina: Vocals
- Jens "Gnu" Bachmann: E-Guitars, Bass
- Tilo "Waran" Rockstroh: Keyboards & Loops
- Jens-Nils "Kugator" Kuge: Drums

**Discography:**

1. *Cantara Anachoreta* (Ars Metalli/Rough Trade), 1996
2. *A Legacy of Love* (Black Rose Productions/SPV), 1998
3. *Perfume* (Black Rose Productions/SPV), 2000
4. *A Legacy of Love Mark II* (Reartone Records), 2005