

ALBUM REVIEWS

Album Review: Portrait - The Host



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Like a thunderstorm comes heavy metal from Sweden with **Portrait** and their sixth studio album **The Host** which will be released on June 21st, 2024. 20 years into their career and they continue to deliver their “heavy metal darkness” to the world.

Band Members

Per Lengstedt - vocals

Christian Lindell - guitars

Karl Gustafsson - guitars

Fredrik Petersson - bass

Anders Persson - drums

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Occultism, sorcery, and swords are the themes in this album, all musicalized with strong heavy/power metal. **The Host** is a concept album. The story takes place in 17th century's Sweden and tells the experiences of a protagonist who seeks truth and strength in an injustice and hypocritical world.

The album starts with the intro '*Hoc Est Corpus Meum*,' which carries us into a dark album, anxiety builds up for what is to come— an unsettling feeling. I was listening to this album in the pouring rain in my house and it was the perfect soundtrack for that day.

The first song is '*The Blood Covenant*.' It begins with a great guitar solo. A heavy/power metal song with nice drumming, good high-pitched screams, excellent guitar solos and a catchy chorus.

Portrait - The Blood Covenant (Official Video)



'*The Sacrament*' brings impressive guitar riffs and vocal changes. '*Oneiric Visions*,' states an epic feeling which is carried by the guitar riffs, bass and drums. I like the increase in deepness that the singer provides to the song here at times. A power ballad comes next with '*One Last Kiss*,' with some heavy moments as well. It has my favorite guitar solo on the album.

Heavy metal returns with '*Treachery*,' which has impressive drum fills and a high-pitched voice. Before the guitar solo, the song slows a little and then when the vocals return, the song comes back to its previous pace. '*Sound the Horn*' starts with a sword blade sound; a perfect battle cry song. '*Dweller of the Threshold*' is a faster song with a rapid and amazing guitar solo. '*Die in My Heart*' has great guitar work here with different small guitar solos throughout the song. I like the diverse voice inflections. '*Voice of the Outsider*' arrives only with drums, and then guitars and bass enter. The singer sings in lower tones in most parts with sick bass lines playing in the back as the guitar solo unfolds. '*From the Urn*' has more great guitar solos, high-pitched vocals, kind of in a **King Diamond** style. It has a mysterious, haunting atmospheric vibe; my favorite song on the album.

Portrait - From the Urn (Official Video)



'*The Men of Renown*' kicks off with a guitar solo and all the instruments following the melody and then the singer appears. '*Sword of Reason*' is a super fast-paced song, the drummer is going crazy. The last song on the album is '*The Passions of Sophia*.' It begins as a soft ballad but a change of tone comes after a while, transforming itself into a heavy song. It has an interlude with an acoustic guitar while a tale-like voice recites a message, giving the song a mystical vibe. Then it transforms in to an oriental-style tone and some great bass lines. This song has many special details that make it interesting and very appealing.

If you like heavy metal with mystical and occultist lyrics, this album would be perfect for you. The tone of their vocalist **Per** reminded me a lot of **Bruce Dickinson's** solo work. Very versatile in his approach and different types of voices. The guitarists, **Christian** and **Karl**, are amazing, every song has great guitar solos and guitar work. Same as the bassist, **Fredrik**, who in some moments stands out even more. The drummer, **Anders**, is super skilled too, bringing more complexity to the sound.

Rating: 7/10

Release Date: June 21st, 2024

Released By: Metal Blade Records

FFO: Mercyful Fate, Iron Maiden, Night Demon



Tracklist

1. Hoc Est Corpus Meum
2. The Blood Covenant
3. The Sacrament
4. Oneiric Visions
5. One Last Kiss
6. Treachery
7. Sound the Horn
8. Dweller of the Threshold
9. Die in My Heart
10. Voice of the Outsider
11. From the Urn
12. The Men of Renown
13. Sword of Reason
14. The Passions of Sophia