

*Interview: Kris Verwimp*  
*Made for: [www.metal.de](http://www.metal.de)*  
*Questions: Proserpine*  
*Answers: Kris Verwimp :)*

*Note: This interview is part of the "Inside The Wire"-special. We interviewed many persons that are involved in the scene to show the business behind (promotion, sound studio, graphics, label...etc. etc.)*

**1.) When and how did you start to draw in general? And what was the first stuff you made?**

I never really didn't draw... I have always been doing it! Ever since I was able to hold a pencil I guess... When I was very young I already loved my father's comic books much more than children's books. So one of the first things I did was drawing my own comics. At first I based my stories on movies or TV shows that I liked, but later on I developed my own comic book character "Odoric". I started drawing the first Odoric comic back in 1984 I believe... It was really great to create this entire imaginary world, so I never stopped !

**2.) Why did you decide to draw for metal bands etc. Or was it just a natural evolution?**

When I was growing up I was mainly attracted to the Heavy Metal cover artworks. I really liked those old Manowar and Iron Maiden covers ! So I started buying albums because of the covers and started listening to Metal as a result of that. So I think it is only natural that my work has evolved the way it did and I never really thought about any other musical style I would want to draw for. So when I got a request to do an LP cover for Ancient Rites back in 1993, I didn't hesitate to accept the assignment. After that LP cover was released, I got a call from Osmose Productions from France to do covers for Marduk and Absu... after I did those covers, things really got started and I got lots of assignments. It was a very exciting time for me of course!

**3.) How did you get it, that you have such a big name in the scene nowadays? There are so many booklets that have the "Kris Verwimp"-sign on it... Where do you see the important points/steps of your "career"?**

I think one of the reasons why I've done so many covers is just because I work really hard and I try to devote myself entirely to each cover. I think the hardest part is to come up with new designs or concepts every time... new colour combinations, new compositions... Almost everything has been done by now, so it's not easy to create a striking image. I always take my time to listen to the music, to read the lyrics and try to visualise it all. I also try to come up with new ways of painting with every cover... I've learned a lot from that. I realise that because of the many covers I've done , maybe some people may think that it's just business for me and that I just try to do as many covers as possible. They couldn't be further from reality. I'm not a business man, I'm just an artist who enjoys creating something and who still finds it great to see his creations on CD-covers and all... I never really intended to become a big name... it just happened that people recognised my style and started noticing my signature. At first I didn't even want to sign my work, because I think that a signature ruins the atmosphere of a painting. A signature tells you that it's a painting and takes you back into reality. But my friends told me I really needed to put my name under it. There's still stuff out there that I never signed... mainly T-shirt designs...

The most important steps for me were obviously my first comic book back in the '80 's, the Ancient Rites LP cover in 1993, the Marduk and Absu covers in 1994 and 1995, the first

officially released full colour Odoric comic book " The Wall Of Doom" in 1996 , and the next big thing will probably be my second full colour Odoric comic book "The Heart Of The Serpent" !

#### **4.) How do you get your "orders"?**

I get my orders mainly from people who contact me through the internet ( I have a website : <http://home.tiscalinet.be/krisverwimp> ) or by regular mail. I've never contacted any label or band myself... When I don't have any CD-cover assignments to do, I just devote my time to my comic books.

#### **5.) How is the co-operation with the bands and labels. Do they give you concrete instructions how they want the graphics?**

The co-operation varies of course. No band or label works the same way, so sometimes I get complete instructions and other times I can do whatever I want to do. I'll always try to find inspiration from the music and the lyrics though... Some bands ( like Absu ) give me highly detailed descriptions of what the cover should look like, but others really just have enough faith in me to let me come up with my own stuff.

#### **6.) Now you have the order from a band or a label.. what is your next step? Could you describe how an artwork for a band develops until it is finished?**

I always do some conceptual sketches and designs first, which I send to the band by e-mail to see what they like or dislike about them. If necessary I'll do some adjustments or try to come up with something else. As soon as the sketch is OK for the band or label, I start painting the real thing!

#### **7.) How does the band receive the finished picture then... do you scan it and send it via mail? Or how does it work? I guess you don't give away your original drawing...**

At the moment I 'm scanning my artworks and I send them to the band or label on a CD-R. Sometimes, when something is really very urgent, I'll send the artwork through e-mail. In the past I always had slides made of my artworks... it was very costly and sometimes the result wasn't too good... I'm happy that those days are past ! It's very frustrating to see a cover that's printed too dark or too light, or in totally different colours.

The original artworks are not for sale in fact! I never send them to anyone... people have often asked me to buy my artworks, but I just cannot part from them. I've spent too many hours creating them and I don't like the thought of people making a business out of selling my drawings.

#### **8.) What are the techniques of drawing you use for your pictures?**

I use a combination of several different techniques actually. I also use a lot of experimental techniques ( just stuff that I try out, like mixing acrylics with soil for Absu's "Tara" cover )... I paint mostly with acrylics on paper or cardboard ( never on canvas ). I also use oils to paint over the acrylic surface in order to make highlights or to create certain effects. For large backgrounds or colour adjustments, I use airbrush. I don't like drawings that are entirely airbrushed too much though, so I try to paint as much as possible. I also use a pen and various kinds of ink to create details and stuff... I like paintings with lots of details in them, but it should never be over-detailed I think. Some parts should be left a little vague... I'm mainly trying to create a style that

is very detailed and at the same time leaves a lot to the imagination of the person looking at the picture...

### **9.) How would you describe a "typical" Verwimp-picture?**

Well, that's really difficult for me to say... I just do my own stuff and don't think about it being typical. I guess there's always some kind of story going on in my artworks... I always try to tell something. I like epic stuff, so there are almost always warriors, battles or other fantastic elements in my artworks. I also love Celtic artworks and try to work it into a painting whenever possible. I also pay a lot of attention to the composition on a subconscious level. If you look at my artworks more carefully, you'll find that almost everything is on the right place in the composition. Many of my artworks are constructed around geometrical figures, which is something that just happens when I'm working on them. I guess my use of colours could also be considered "typical" in some cases... I tend to use mostly dark colours. I don't like bright colours too much... I need to mix them all up until I think it looks right.

### **10.) How long do you normally need for a cover-drawing?**

Normally it takes me two weeks to paint a cover, but that's not counting the hours of time spent on sketches and compositions. When I've finally started painting, I tend to work rather fast though...

A lot also depends on the amount of detail... A massive battle scene will obviously take much more time to paint than an image of a lone warrior.

### **11.) How does your day normally look like? Are you that kind of person who is in his studio for 20 hours a day? ;) Do you have a real studio at all?**

On a normal day, I have to go to work first. I leave at 07.45 hrs. in the morning to do my daily ( rather boring ) office job. I'm back at home at around 18.00 hrs. and at around 20.00 hrs. I start working on the drawings or paintings until 01.00 ( sometimes even way until 03.00 hrs... ). So I don't really get much sleep at all. Many people think that a cover artist such as myself earns lots of money, but they forget that Metal is still mainly an underground musical style. Labels come and go and are never entirely reliable when it concerns payment. And also, if they have to pay too much for a cover, they'll just create something on their computers themselves using some photographs or ripping off some stuff from the internet ( which is of course a lot cheaper ). So it's really very difficult to live from art alone and I respect all artists who can manage it, because they either have to work really hard or they are famous enough to afford asking lots of money. However, during weekends or at vacations I tend to work all day long. I totally forget about the time when I'm into a painting. At the moment I have a "drawing room" ( I wouldn't call it a studio at all ) but it's much too small really... Most of the times I'm surrounded by piles of books and CD's... I have a very large collection of inspiring stuff ! In the past I didn't even have that room... I created covers such as "The Sun Of Tiphareth" ( Absu ) on a little desk in my bedroom with extremely bad lighting...

### **12.) Do you draw pictures for other "non-metal things" too?**

I've done some illustrations for Roleplaying games (mainly Michael Moorcock's Corum and Hawkmoon RPG's ) and some book covers... I'm also continuously working on my comic book

"Odoric" but I wouldn't consider that to be entirely non-metal. I don't do advertising drawings or any contemporary stuff... everything I do is related to fantasy or epic imagery.

**13.) What bands do you like and are they important for inspirations etc.? Would you describe yourself as "a part of the metal scene"?**

I listen to music all the time while I'm drawing! I find music to be very inspiring.... The main theme of all music that I like is that it needs to be heavy and epic... I grew up with the 80's Metal such as Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Mercyful Fate, Manowar, Queensrÿche, etc... I can't possibly name them all! Nowadays I still listen a lot to Black Metal bands such as Limbonic Art, Golden Dawn, Summoning, Primordial, Vintersorg, Falkenbach, Hel, ... but I also enjoy the new generation of epic Heavy Metal bands like Domine or Doomsword. And apart from that I also like to listen to soundtracks or music from bands such as Mortiis, Pazuzu, Dargaard, or just plain Medieval stuff...

I visit many concerts in Belgium and Holland and most of my best friends have been into Metal their whole life... I also know many of the local bands and lots of people from all around the world who are into metal. I always try to be supportive and do my best to write back to everyone who contacts me... I don't know if that makes me part of the Metal scene, but I guess so !

**14.) Do you like to give such interviews and talk about your work or is it more the "negative side of drawing"?**

I don't think of interviews as being negative. It means that people have noticed my work and want to know more. I only wish I had more time to answer all questions properly, because there's a story behind every CD-cover. I really like telling those stories, but in the end I would rather be spending my time on creating new artworks !

**15.) What else do you think is important to know about your occupation as an artist? Some hints or background information you want to share with our readers? ;) Or maybe any last words?**

Even after doing so much stuff, I think I'm still running high on inspiration and I'm sure that my best works are yet to come. I'm never entirely satisfied about my work and I'm still learning a lot every day, so I hope I'll be able to become better and better. There's still so much that I want to paint... I'll never have enough time ! Also, my second Odoric comic book should be finished next year and there's even a soundtrack in the works. So there's a lot to look forward to ! To end with, I would like to thank Rebecca for this interview and I want to hail every individual who has been reading these words and who has taken the time to sit down and pay some attention to my artworks!

Kris Verwimp 2003.