

A T R I B U T E T O

NASUM'S
MIESZKO TALARCZYK

(1974-2004)



Friends and former bandmates remember
their brother in grind.

B Y

A L B E R T M U D R I A N

WHEN THE MOST POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE in more than 40 years struck deep under the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004, it triggered massive tsunamis that demolished entire cities throughout South East Asia, killing nearly 300,000 people in a dozen countries. One of the victims was Mieszko Talarczyk, frontman of Swedish grindcore band Nasum. After nearly two months of silence following the disaster, Talarczyk's body was finally identified on February 17, providing a sense of closure to friends and family, but leaving a massive void in their hearts, and in the Swedish underground music scene.

Talarczyk was on the island of Phuket, vacationing in Thailand with his girlfriend (who survived, but suffered serious injuries) when the tsunami struck. According to Robban Becirovic, editor-in-chief of popular Swedish extreme metal magazine *Close-Up*, Thailand is actually a huge tourist destination for many Scandinavian residents during the Christmas holiday.

"I don't know how many hundred thousand people from Sweden are going there every year," he says, "but some places are totally Swedish villages. I remember seeing Mieszko the last time Nasum played in Stockholm in late November. I was DJ-ing, and between the sets Mieszko came up to me, because he knew I always go to Thailand every year, and he said he was



going there with his girlfriend. I told him he shouldn't be going to Phuket, or the west coast because it's too crowded, too touristy. You should go to the east coast where it's a little more alternative. He ended up on the Phuket side anyway."

To most American extreme music fans, Talarczyk was only known as the frontman of Nasum. But his impact on the Swedish scene stretches all the way back to the late '80s—several years before he joined Nasum with founding drummer Anders Jakobson (who declined to be interviewed for this piece).

"Mieszko used to do a lot of stuff back in the days before things started happening for Nasum," confirms bassist Jesper Liveröd, who played with Talarczyk in Nasum from 1999 to 2003. "He used to put on shows together with Anders, and he did an extreme fanzine called *Scen Kross* (translation: "scene crush") in the beginning of the '90s. He was always involved with different metal bands and punk bands and stuff like that. He has always been very much a vivid part of the music scene without everybody really realizing it until just now."

"The first time I met him must have been in '93, but I didn't really know him back then," recalls Tomas Lindberg, former vocalist of At the Gates, and current frontman of half the metal bands in Sweden, Disfear among them. "He came to shows with At the Gates when we played. The scene wasn't that big back then, but there's always been a tight bond between certain groups that all know each other—Entombed, Nasum, Disfear and Nine. Everybody in those groups knows each other really well and has been touring together a lot. Of course, there's a lot more groups involved in the scene, but these four groups are really close-knit. We're best friends, and everybody knew Mieszko, so it's kind of everywhere you go and every phone conversation you have, or every e-mail you get, the spirit of Mieszko is there because he was such that kind of guy that everybody knew and liked."

Swedish artists also familiarized themselves with Talarczyk through his impressive studio work. As co-owner of Soundlab Studios (along with partner Mathias Färm, guitarist of Millencolin) in Örebro, Sweden, Talarczyk produced and engineered dozens of Swedish

▲ Nasum circa 2000

(l t r) Jesper Liveröd, Mieszko Talarczyk, Anders Jakobson

▼ Nasum circa 1993



▼ Nasum circa 2001 live in Japan



Mieszko Talarczyk Select Discography

NASUM

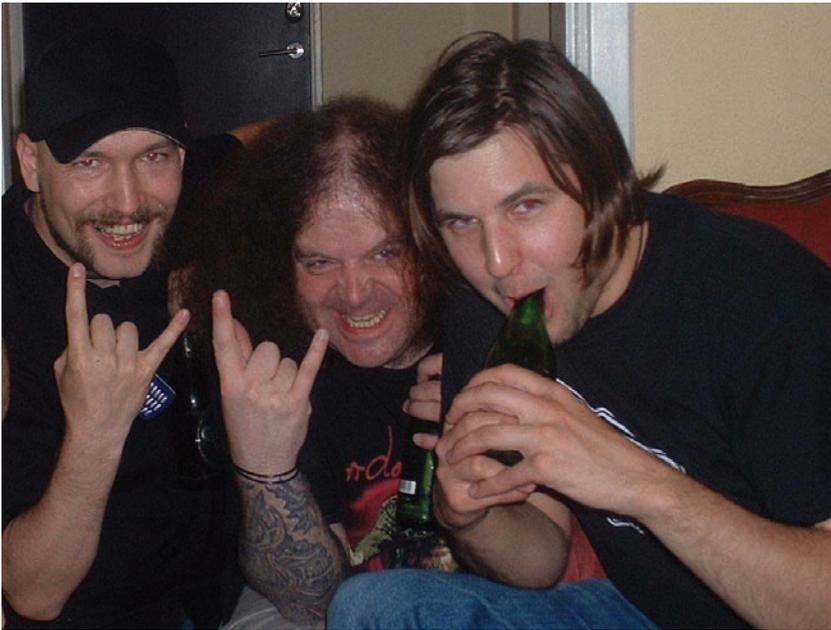
Domedagen demo	[1994]
Industrislaven EP	[1995]
Inhale/Exhale	[1998]
Human 2.0	[2000]
Helvete	[2003]
Shift	[2004]

Guitar and vocals on all releases

GENOCIDE SUPERSTARS

Superstar Destroyer	[2003]
We Are Born of Hate	[2002]
Hail the New Storm	[2000]

Guitar and vocals on all releases



- ▲ **Helvete release party, 2003**
(l r) Mieszko Talarczyk, Shane Embury, Jesper Liveröd
- ▲ **Mieszko at Nasum rehearsal**
circa 1994
- ▶ **Nasum's first US Tour**
in 1999

bands—from hardcore punks Voice of a Generation to death grinders Insision.

“He’s been easily one of the most popular producers in Sweden,” says former bandmate Liveröd. “His studio has been one of the most popular studios lately for recording all kinds of noisy music, basically, so I guess his sort of developing of the sound of the early 2000s has been kind of important, at least with the Swedish bands and the European bands that have come over here, too.”

“In Sweden, he is much more famous as the producer Mieszko than the Nasum guy,” seconds *Close-Up*’s Becirovic. “Nasum is a great band, but it’s not that commercial. But everybody who’s into heavy music knows about Mieszko as a producer. He did a really good job in that studio. He understood all kinds of heavy music. He could record black metal, death metal, hardcore, crust punk, grind—he could do it all. For example, if you go to Studio Friedman, he’s a good guy but he’s more into the big pompous metal stuff. And Sunlight, I feel like that’s yesterday’s news. Mieszko was the best option for a lot of people.”

His work with Nasum, however, will endure as his greatest musical epitaph. Formed in 1992 with the intention of blasting forth pure grindcore in the tradition of early Napalm Death, the band recorded four full-length albums (1998’s *Inhale/Exhale*, 2000’s *Human 2.0*, 2003’s *Helvete*, and 2004’s *Shift*) for Relapse Records. And with their arresting debut LP, Talarczyk actually managed to directly influence one of his favorite bands—an accomplishment most musicians only dream about.

“The first time I heard Nasum was when we were in the studio in 1998,” recalls Napalm Death bassist Shane Embury. “We had two albums that we just bought—Slayer’s *Diabolus in Musica* and Nasum’s *Inhale/Exhale*. The Slayer album got five minutes and was thrown in the bin as a piece of shit. The Nasum album was like, ‘that’s it’—it got me going. At that particular point in ‘98 we were slightly coming out of the experimental bit. The Nasum album was the one that we were listening to, and we did what we used to do when we used to listen to the Voivod albums when we were 15 years old—we used to hit the floor with our fists and go, ‘Fuck, I can’t

believe this.’ He had a huge impact on me, I’ll go out on a limb and say that my writing for the last three Napalm Death albums are because of him and Nasum, it’s as simple as that. He kicked me in the ass and just made me realize that Napalm should do exactly what it does best, and that’s because of him, really.”

In fact, Embury remembers another instance when Talarczyk provided his band with valuable assistance. In 2000, Napalm Death was scheduled to perform at a festival Sweden. But just as the band was about to depart for the airport, vocalist Barney Greenway’s fear of flying—an anxiety that’s plagued him for the better part of two decades—prevented him from boarding the plane. Napalm decided to make the trip sans Barney after learning there would be help waiting to greet them at the festival.

“Barney made phone calls [to friends in Sweden] and said, ‘Mieszko says he knows some of the songs.’ So we got there, and Mieszko sang half the set,” Embury explains. “He was just jumping up and down with this fucking big smile on his face because it turns out Napalm was one of his favorite bands. I assumed he liked Napalm, but didn’t know how much he liked the band, so he had this look of just, like, delight. Tomas Lindberg sang the other half of the set, and I think some other guy from fucking Vomitory jumped on stage as well—it was just complete chaos. But that was the first time I met Mieszko.”

Such behavior, according to Liveröd, was indicative of the fallen frontman’s complex persona.

“Mieszko had a very, very peculiar personality,” he says. “He could be hilarious and fun, but he could also be really arrogant about a lot of stuff, which felt kind of far from what I was used to. Everybody around me was always super duper humble about everything, and here was this guy who was like super-confident about himself and all that he did, but he was still able to sort of combine his arrogance with humility that was extremely strange and rare—you really had to know the guy to understand his ways more accurately.”

Perhaps Tomas Lindberg sums up everyone’s feelings best.

“He was one of a kind,” he offers. “No one can fill his shoes, and I know most people say this when someone has died, all the good things come out, but he meant a lot to everybody, if not for something else, he meant a lot being a big part of the scene. There’s definitely going to be a void there.” [dB]

