

Legal disclaimer: This story is entirely a work of fiction. All characters, settings and incidents portrayed are the work of the author's imagination and that of any commissioner/trader where present. Any resemblance to actual persons, whether living or dead, or real locations or events is purely coincidental. Any views or opinions expressed in this work are those of the characters only, not of the author or anyone they belong to.

Severed Head Biography and Discography

Written by Blue Kitty Tales.

17/06/11

Amended draft: 16/03/19

Origin: North Ashford, North Triston

Musical genre: Brutal Death Metal

Activity: April 1988 – November 2001

Record label: Cosmic Ray Records, Reptirron Records, Storm Force Records

Final lineup

Victor Hargreaves: lead vocals, rhythm guitars, programming, songwriting, album art (1988 – 2001)

Mikhail Tsimanis: lead guitars, programming (1993 – 1995, 1996 – 2001)

Ivan Savitskas: bass guitar, backing vocals (1994 – 2001)

Rob Davidson: drums and percussion (1988 – 1990, 1993 – 2001)

Former members

Alex Starling: bass and backing vocals (1988 – 1994)

Fred Potter: lead guitars, programming (1988 – 1991) (died 1991)

Sarah Lister: lead guitars, programming (1991 – 1993)

John Carter: lead guitars (1995 – 1996)

Harold 'Flare' Stevenson: session drums (1990 – 1993)

Releases

EPs:

From Flames to Decimation (May 1st 1989)

Knifed In the Back (February 16th 1990)

Inflamed (September 5th 1990)

LPs and full-length albums:

Facing Demise (February 12th 1992)

Slipping Away From Consciousness (April 22nd 1994)

Castrated Mitigation (January 2nd 1997)

No Time to Decompose (July 5th 1999)

Graves of Despair (November 14th 2001)

History and formation (1988 – 1989)

Severed Head got its start in April of 1988 when Victor, a gold bat, formed the band with three of his former schoolfriends at the age of 17, each of whom he had witnessed playing their instruments in their music classes. Fred, a muscular panda, Rob, a ginger-haired human, and Alex, a blue and white fox, had all earned reputations at their school for their music.

Having arranged to meet at a youth club Victor and Fred had favoured throughout their last year at school, all three of them had reacted enthusiastically when Victor had proposed the idea to form a band. It originally began as a way of staving off boredom, but it quickly developed into a full scale project in the space of several weeks. Fred's parents, however, had not approved, and had tried in all their efforts to stop him from participating including selling his treasured guitar, though he later managed to recover it at a car boot sale.

Jamming sessions saw each of the members surprised at each other's abilities, and the first defined line-up would begin the band's lifespan. Victor would act as the frontman and handle the lead vocals and rhythm guitars. Alex would play as the bassist and backing vocalist. Rob took on the role of the band's drummer. Fred would assume the position of lead guitarist, and the stage was set for the bright flashes they would face

for their future. Victor would also handle the album art and the writing of the lyrics, while he and Fred collaborated in the programming and songwriting.

Early releases and EPs (1989 – 1991)

Influence taken from the Death Metal that was rearing its head led to the band composing their music in a way that also infused elements from Rock and Classical Music, though their music would not feature the solos and complex rhythms that Severed Head would become known for until they released their first full-length album in 1992. The release would also signal when Victor extended his vocal range beyond mid-pitched growling, which would include high-pitched screaming amongst this.

With the help of a recording studio Victor had got in touch with, they recorded their first seven track demo release *Flames to Decimation*, which was released through the record label working actively with the studio, Cosmic Ray Records. However, this was not well received due to the poor recording quality of the release, and only twelve thousand copies were ever produced. Later on in the year, they produced the five track EP *Knifed In the Back* and released it through the same label in the February of 1990, and the cover album *Inflamed* later that year.

These releases would propel their career to new heights, leading to much anticipation surrounding the first LP when Victor announced its development at one of their early concerts. But shortly afterwards, Rob left the band, citing personal problems caused by him breaking under the pressure of the touring. Victor was forced to recruit the session drummer who sometimes operated when Rob could not, a fellow bat who went by the name of Harold Stevenson.

Fred's death and *Facing Demise* (1991 – 1992)

Frustrated with the poor production quality, the band quit Cosmic Ray Records and searched out a different label. Following on from this, they signed up with Reptirron Records that the vocalist of Stabbed to Death, whom Victor had formed a friendship with, had recommended backstage after he'd announced the album's release. Having been pleased with the samples they recorded, the band was ready to begin constructing their next release.

Production and songwriting for the album began in the month that followed from Rob's departure, and they continued to tour within and beyond North Triston as normal. However, the band was repeatedly refused access to South Triston due to the then governing United Front refusing them visas due to not being of the human species. Recording and development for the album was completed by the August of 1991, with the art for the album following in September.

On December 14th 1991, Fred was involved in a car accident on his way home from a family party when he lost control on a high street near to their previous venue and crashed head-on into an oncoming coach. Paramedics had tried to save him but he died from massive internal bleeding at the young age of 19. Upon hearing of the news, Victor plunged into a deep depression in the days that followed on from his funeral.

It looked like the band would split up, but Alex's girlfriend at the time, a black and white panda named Sarah Lister, offered to fill Fred's role. Victor had been reluctant to admit her at first, although he relented when he saw her audition. This led to the band dedicating their next three tours and their entire first release to Fred in his memory, the latter of which they named *Facing Demise* after the first song he had written for the album, which was also listed as its opening track. This release would then go on to become one of the most recognisable and respected albums within the genre, having been among the first to introduce complex song structuring to Death Metal.

"When we heard what happened, it came as a devastating blow to us all." Victor explained in a January 1992 interview with *Grey Horizon*. "We were very close to him, and it felt like a piece had been taken away from our lives and out of the band's very soul, as he was an integral fragment of the style we're known for. It felt really strange performing without him, but I know he'd be proud that his work has achieved what it has."

***Slipping Away From Consciousness* (1992 – 1994)**

The band withdrew from touring for several months while they wrote new material for their next album, which from the onset of its production was named *Slipping Away From Consciousness*, a name inspired by Alex's comments on a vivid dream that he'd experienced the night before one of their most prominent

concerts. The name quickly stuck, and this would become the first song to be produced as well as the title track. Three of the songs from their previous releases, *Enthralled and Entombed*, *Wasting Lives Away* and the title track of their first demo, were also remastered and completely rerecorded, and would be included as the final three songs.

During this time, Rob returned to the band, having voiced a reawakened enthusiasm for his position and what he hoped they could achieve. Plus, the regime in South Triston had been violently hurled out of power a month before he rejoined, meaning that for the first time, the band would be able to tour there. More determined than ever for the band to succeed, Victor gladly re-admitted him into the line-up, while Harold would step down from his duty and return to his role as the session drummer.

After seven of the twelve songs had been recorded, however, Sarah and Alex's relationship rapidly disintegrated following a particularly vicious argument after one of their concerts, and with this she departed from the band after breaking ties with Alex. This meant that Victor had to record the guitars for the remaining five songs by himself and the band was forced to withdraw from the *Two Seconds to Armageddon* tour that was advertised on their website, much to the dismay of fans.

Nonetheless, they were able to finish developing and perfecting the album, which they eventually released in early 1994 to a highly receiving and anticipating audience. Headbanger had given particular praise to the album, citing, "While the album is crushingly heavy and hits as hard as they clearly intended, it remains beautifully harmonic and you'll still want to bang your head."

Castrated Mitigation (1994 – 1997)

During their prior album's production, the band opened auditions for a replacement guitarist and programmer. They remained mostly inactive until the search ended a month later, which eventually resulted in an albino-furred skunk whom Rob had met in his time out of the band being delightedly welcomed into the line-up in late 1993, though he was not credited in the album. Mikhail Tsimanis, who at the tender age of 15 had emigrated from Latvia with his parents the year before, noticeably impressed all of the band's members with his skill on his guitar, and his astounding ability to keep up with the solos that he'd practised.

But the problems within the band had not dissolved. Only a few weeks before *Slipping Away From Consciousness* had been made available, Alex had talked about leaving the band because of his desire to pursue a career in aviation, though Victor and Rob had managed to convince him to hang on until the album's release and until development began. But, it wasn't to prove enough, for it soon became clear that his contributions were losing the very heart and soul that the band had admired him for. The two finally decided to let Alex go one month after its release, leading them to audition again.

This time, however, their search took only a week, which saw the recruitment of a large but rather nervous Naga named Ivan Savitskas, who impressed the band with his instrumental ability and his vocals despite his young age of 14. However, neither he nor Mikhail would play particularly active roles in the band until they began developing their next release in August 1995, having chosen to focus on touring with their new line-up.

The third album would prove to be their most decisive release, for it would present an advance in their musical style that would be perceived as unique to the genre. It would also include several more remakes from their earlier demos, bringing the number of tracks up to thirteen. However, they encountered problems with their record label partway through its development. Reptirron Records had begun to loosen their support for them due to the often changing line-up and they had dropped their two most prominent bands not long before. This led to Severed Head cancelling their deal with them and signing up with Storm Force Records, who had supported more widely known bands such as Asphyxia and The Flowers of Hell.

It was about this time that Mikhail broke his wrist and his tail after he accidentally tripped over one of his guitar's cables near the finish of one of their concerts and fell from the stage, leaving him unable to continue performing. Severed Head exited from the concert early, later recruiting a black fox who had previously auditioned for the role, John Carter.

While each of the members maintained close contact with Mikhail while he recovered from his injuries, Carter showed barely any interest in him or the band's music, seeming to desire merely his stardom. Sure enough, his career with the band didn't last long. He was soon fired when Ivan caught him stealing money from Rob's bank account, and two weeks later he was arrested and then jailed for having abducted and raped a feline woman just a fortnight before his audition. Just a week afterwards, Mikhail announced that he had fully recovered from his injuries and would rejoin the band in the February of 1996.

After numerous delays, the album's development was finally completed in September of that year, and it was later named *Castrated Mitigation* after the first track co-written by Victor and Mikhail. January of 1997 would see its eventual release, where it would receive the highest reviews of any of their releases.

"Making this release was an interesting journey," Victor said to begin the final song of their last concert before its release, "and it covers a lot of the themes that we'd talked about in our time spent together, despite all the things that cropped up. After Mikhail came back, we decided we were gonna give it all to perfect this album every way we could."

No Time to Decompose and later history (1997 – 1999)

Active production continued throughout the duration of the band's tour schedule, though Victor no longer announced their developments backstage, preferring to keep them shrouded in secrecy, much to the surprise of their fans. Following his readmission back into the band, Mikhail had shown far more enthusiasm for its progression than he had when he'd first joined, and Ivan's confidence and charisma had grown since his first days in the band, which put him on par with that Victor had become known to show on stage.

Eventually, each of them had noticed a change in Rob's behaviour. After their album was finished, he began behaving erratically and rapidly became more secretive about his actions, which had led to a vicious row between he and Mikhail when he'd confronted him backstage. Fearing escalation, Mikhail had remained silent about it, though this hadn't stopped Victor or Ivan from drawing suspicions or conclusions of their own. Nonetheless, these had been largely brushed off, though Victor had not inquired about this out of the same fear.

Development for their next album continued, though they would switch to a different studio this time and part from the producer who had faithfully served them since the band's switch to Reptirron Records, Damien Oxley. They entered Force Field Studios in June 1997, and their music would this time be based around a phenomenon surrounding the world's end that had been predicted not long from that point.

Each of the members had dismissed it, though Victor then suggested basing the album's lyrical and musical content around the idea. This led to all of the tracks on the album being based on the theory, although it was not classed or marketed as a concept album. However, none of the band's members disclosed their true reasoning behind why they decided to choose the subject matter when they were interviewed by Skull Crusher Studios at the end of the year.

However, during the last stop on their Commercial Rubbish concert on January 26th 1998, Ivan left after their third to last song to pay a visit to the stage's restrooms. He returned looking very shaken. He then revealed that one of the concert goers had tried to mug him backstage, but had not managed to take anything from him. Feeling their security had failed them and that their safety was compromised, the band immediately dropped out of the concert. Ivan later revealed that he caught a glimpse of the perpetrator, who had been a human he had not recognised or seen.

"We just couldn't believe that something like this had happened," explained Mikhail in an interview a month later with the now defunct television station, *Cole Media and Underground*. "We thought the venue was secure and then somebody comes and tries this. Ivan's changed since that night and now he's become distant around Rob. None of us knew of anyone who could have had a grudge against him, as he never talked about anything he did before he joined."

Development was completed in November 1998, though it was from this time onwards that Victor was beginning to lose his passion for the band. Rob's behaviour had continued to deteriorate, and he would regularly arrive at their sessions and their rehearsals heavily intoxicated or fatigued, leading him to suspect that he had been using the drugs he had heard that the Smokestacks Cartel had been distributing in South Triston.

Ivan had remained faithful to the band and had maintained a close friendship with him, though had not fully recovered from his attack and was no longer putting his full heart into his role. Mikhail had settled deeply into his position, but he had begun to treat the band as though it were his own business, which included him arranging concerts without consulting the rest of the line-up and holding parties despite their objections. There were also reports of conflict between Rob and Mikhail, though both denied it in subsequent interviews.

Later history, *Graves of Despair* and disbandment (1999 – 2001)

Severed Head contacted their producer once more in mid 1999 after completing their series of *Get High In Bind* tours, though there were problems even before production for their fifth studio album began. Their producer, Phil Garrison, had been fired from the studio, and their original producer had fled the country after having been found to have close links with The Prime Movers, a criminal organisation known to be on friendly terms with the Smokestacks Cartel. This led to the development being delayed for several months until another could be found, though their record label had proved very unsupportive, pressuring them to write their music despite having been unable to find a suitable producer.

Eventually the search ceased in September 1999 and the band joined up with Kirk Romsey, the former producer of Asphyxiation before their dissolution the year before, and production began once more. This time, one of the tracks was based around the coming turn of the millennium and would also include a second CD containing a complete rerecording of the first demo they had ever released.

Indeed, the problems that the band faced were growing worse with each concert. Victor had walked into a vicious argument between Rob and Mikhail, where he had overheard mention of the Smokestacks Cartel and the possibility of Rob sharing a link with them. From this point onward, Victor and Mikhail refused to communicate with him, which led to a violent outburst from him in September 2000.

After the second song had been played, Victor addressed the audience and was about to thank each of the current and past members when Rob cursed at him before kicking over his drumkit and storming away from the stage. Though Harold volunteered to take his place, Mikhail refused to continue performing and he too exited from the stage, followed by the other two members.

The band eventually embarked on another round of tours between the production of their next release. Rob and Mikhail still refused to communicate with each other and it became rare for them to make eye contact. Rob's performances were starting to suffer as a result of his increasingly unpredictable behaviour, which led to several of the songs having had to be entirely rerecorded in order for their release to be secured. With some delays, *Graves of Sorrow* was released in November 2001 and received favourable reviews.

But the final straw came just three days after the album was released, just before Victor's thirtieth birthday. News quickly surfaced on a local news channel that Rob had been arrested in Banebridge National Bank when he had gone to withdraw money from his bank account. In the same report, Victor's deepest suspicions had been confirmed.

It was revealed that Rob had been working as a syndicate for the Smokestacks Cartel since mid 1995 and had been responsible for orchestrating a money laundering operation in an attempt to keep the attention of the authorities away from the drug factories they had been constructing. He had also been convicted of drug and arms dealing as well as insurance fraud. Finally pushed over the edge, Victor announced the immediate and permanent breakup of the band on his website.

"I knew immediately that we couldn't continue with the way things were going," he explained in his final interview associated with the band in December 2001. "The problems started after *Castrated Mitigation* went out. I knew there was something up with Rob. He and Mikhail weren't getting on and he'd become very edgy and closely guarded around us. What he has done sickens me. He's tarnished this band's reputation."

Legacy

The band's music still remains popular amongst fans of early Death Metal to this day, with *Castrated Mitigation* frequently coming into the spotlight. *Facing Demise* has come to be regarded as somewhat of a landmark in the genre. Each of the members have gone their separate ways, though Victor instantly broke off all contact with Rob and refused to answer his e-mails or calls. He remained in touch with Mikhail and Ivan, but later lost contact with them. He also announced that he planned never to reform the band.

For his actions, Rob received a fifteen year prison sentence, and has been denied parole on each occasion he has tried to appeal. Mikhail and Victor kept out of the spotlight, though Victor formed another band named Unprovoked Attack in 2005, while Mikhail played as the lead guitarist for Quartered from 2004 to late 2007 before leaving to serve in the North Triston Armed Forces. Ivan, however, turned down a role as the bassist and backing vocalist in Stabbed to Death, but has since become a Trance composer with the alias of DJ Cyprium.