

*“First time I heard them, I wanted more.”* These are the words of In Flames front man and Insense manager Anders Fridén, when talking about his exposure to Norwegian metal quartet Insense.

*“They have this amazing ability to sound extreme yet poised, dark yet beautiful, hardcore yet soft, technical yet simplistic, all without falling into the “pathetic”-trap. They are an extreme metal band that’s comfortable to listen to. They’re difficult to categorize that way.”*

He might just be on to the very essence of the Oslo-based four-piece. Created in 1999 by vocalist/guitarist Tommy Hjelm and guitarist Martin Rygge, and with the addition of drummer Truls Haugen and bassist Ola S Hana, the band steadily climbed the ranks in the Norwegian underground metal scene, one step at a time. Their schizophrenic mesh of death metal, thrash, grind core and hard core was an acquired taste for a somewhat conservative Norwegian metal community. *“There really wasn’t a place for a band like us on the Norwegian scene”,* recalls Hjelm. *“You were either a black metal band or an Adidas sweats sporting Korn-wannabe. And if you were, you definitely didn’t like Insense. We fell between two stools.”*

Regardless, influenced by the 90s’ American and Swedish metal scene, Insense toured the entire country from top to bottom and Europe twice over, gaining a reputation as a formidable live act, both musically and, perhaps especially, live, with their ferociously aggressive performances. As a result, Insense were more than once hired for support slots, only to be dropped because the headliner was uncomfortable with the competition.

*“The band’s performance was no less than perfect. Rarely have I been witness to a more crushingly superior show on local soil. I still get revved up thinking about it,” - heavymetal.no*

During the first decade of the new millennium, the quartet released three cult status records, all of which received rave reviews from a unison global metal press.

*“Insense fuse the relentless mechanical assault of Fear Factory and the seething hardcore aggression of Hatebreed with phat Entombed-style grooves.” –Metal Hammer*

*“Playing compact, grinding metalcore, Insense never offer groove at the altar of technical overkill, attacking every note with a furious snarl, grunting and kicking its way onwards.” –Ink19*

While recording their third release “The Silent Epidemic” (2007), the band got in touch with renowned metal producer Daniel Bergstrand (Meshuggah, In Flames, Strapping Young Lad). During the mixing of the album it became obvious there was a connection. *“We knew then and there that we wanted him to do our next album,”* says Rygge. *“He pushed all the right buttons, no pun intended, had all the right ideas, and the right attitude to boot.”* He was the natural next step.

Fast forward two years and Insense are ready to record their fourth full-length album. The call to Bergstrand was obvious. The band had made 18 songs – 10 made the cut.

*“I was surprised. They don’t look like metal heads, and they certainly don’t act like metal heads. Still they’ve come up with some of the best material at least I’ve heard in a long time,”* recalls Bergstrand. Together, they spent a month making the 10-track, 39-minute, hard-hitting

metal monster “Born In Beautiful Fire.” *“I’m really proud of the result. I’ve worked with bigger names, bigger budgets and bigger productions before, but this one stands out. It’s become a reference to me. A milestone – the album I got right.”*

So much did Bergstrand like the finished result, that he phoned his good friend, In Flames vocalist Anders Fridén. Fridén was invited to join Bergstrand and Hjelm at the mastering of the album at Stockholm Mastering, knowing that they shared musical taste. Sure enough, “Born In Beautiful Fire” went down well with the screaming Swede. *“Whenever I listen to this record, I can still pick up on new things. It continues to be a source of musical discovery. That’s a good vindicator. I was right the first time I heard it.”*

Coincidentally, Fridén had recently established a managing agency with good friend Daniel “Tive” Tivemark, called Selective Notes. The two did not waste much time before asking Insense to join their roster.

Armed with a managing agency, Insense soon found themselves signed to Norwegian metal label Indie Recordings – another big step in the band’s steady climb on the Norwegian metal scene.

*“It’s redundant to say “this is the best album we’ve ever made”,” says Hjelm. “Of course you’d say that. But this time, we’ve managed to focus our many influences into one, strong output. This album is much more of a whole than our previous efforts. I think those who liked us before will love us now. They’d be crazy not to!”*

And so, with a new label, with a new amazing album, Insense look back on their history of small steps, preparing for the big leap: world domination – born in beautiful fire.