

10 Finally it begins! American Guitarist Stephan O'Malley has played for a wide range of cult underground doom metal bands, including Thorr's Hammer and Burning Witch. He currently plays guitar in uber drone metal druids Sunn O))), and was responsible for the legendary extreme music zine, "Descent". Here he plays with a very experienced band made up of drummer Tim Wuskida of Blind Idiot God, "vokillist" Alan Dubin and bass player and production guru James Plotkin, both of Old and Scorn. Khanate landed with such a massive force on their debut that they have rapidly become notorious, and, thanks also to Sunn O)))'s Earth worshipping genius, O'Malley's star is in the ascendant. It is not hard to see why. "Things Viral" marries the guitarist's impeccable influences and credentials to painfully slow drums, Plotkin's excellent production technique, and a vocal performance of frightening insanity. Sunn O))) may find greater acceptance in the wider musical world: they're less metal, and less painful to listen to, but it is Khanate who have the most depth and mastery of sound. As the surface of the Earth is three fifths water, so three fifths of this c.d. is actually feedback, space and the empty gaps between notes. Strong discipline enables the players to let each hit die off until you absolutely cannot stand it any longer, before they let the next lumbering crunch knock against you. A cavernous brooding atmosphere of grimness, borrowed from the coldest of Black Metal bands, pervades throughout. In fact, Khanate is the spiritual twin of primitive and meditative Black Metal like Burzum and Darkthrone. First "song" "Commuted" starts slow and gets slower, spreading its sickening form over twenty minutes of agony. It begins like a boat ride down a heated delta and into the heart of darkness. As amps crackle in readiness, war toms bang an ominous slow beat from the shore. "No good times in here," screams Dubin. As always, the waiting is worst of all. Like a frontline soldier who'd rather go over the top now than sit endlessly, you want the full weight of the music to crash down on you. And, after six long minutes, it finally begins. Drums and a massive sounding bass land like heavy slabs of Earth, while Dubin goes into himself and becomes the worst psychotic you could ever hope to not have to sit next to on the bus. "The hunt". The change! That's what I love! After eleven minutes of self absorbed spite, the song breaks down into feedback, scrapping, occasional drum hits and large amounts of silence. On the back of all of the violence, such empty confusion seems sinister and strange: pregnant with an anger that is on the brink of exploding. Such a section is more appropriate to Japanese psyche like Fushitsusha than any metal band, but also surely takes Doom to its logical limits; stretching the song's form out until it tears holes in itself. Ringing Sunn style monochords, feedback and subterranean rumblings announce "Fields". Dubin rants as he puts you under the knife, and sheets of guitar go up on all sides, like the lonely walls of a pit dug just for you. "This is for you". A new beginning! Vast expanding! An open field! Just tell me what it's like! The lyrics are a rambling monologue, possessed snatches of sentences, from a man with terrible things in his basement. Musically, the barren harshness compares to Winter, early Cathedral, Burning Witch and the other O'Malley projects. Only more. The guitar crackles and screeches with barely musical fury, hallucinogenic effects drift around the stereo field like dub gone wrong after seriously bad weed. The space between beats is so long that you cannot pick out anything approaching a rhythm. It feels like the scene in "Gangster No. 1" where you witness the slow torture and death of a mob boss through his own eyes, as your murderer screams imprecations at you. "You're in between, see what I don't! can you hear the past? You're on both sides! Is there light? Tell me, tell me, tell me!" If Khanate suddenly, fifteen minutes into a track like "Fields", broke out into a Slayer style thrash

Khanate - Things Viral

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assault, it would probably be the greatest moment of your worthless life. The fact that they don't, and never will, is what makes them so fantastic. Imagine if Pole covered Burzum songs, imagine if Keiji Haino was an American metal head, and not a little Japanese elf, imagine a music balanced halfway between AMM and Godflesh. Khanate are lords of pain after two of the greatest extreme doom albums of all time. Long may it continue. You deserve it.