

LARS & KIRK

THE SO WHAT! INTERVIEW 2001

The following chat with Lars and Kirk took place in Hammett's basement games room during late November 2001. It had, indisputably, been an annus horribilus for both of them. Jason Newsted had officially quit as the year began, and steaming progress had then been achieved on a new album before James Hetfield suddenly announced he was taking off for rehab and didn't know when he'd be back. Furthermore, due to a sense of uncertainty within themselves, Lars and Kirk hadn't been speaking about the band or anything publicly, leading to strong rumors that the band was close to breaking up. This was the first time either had spoken at length about Metallimatters since James had entered rehab.

Editor – January, 2004

SO, JANUARY 2001. HOW DID YOU EXPECT THE YEAR TO PAN OUT?

KH: I thought 2001 was going to be a great fucking year, you know? I thought 2000 was pretty good for us, you know, moderate, good, had a lot of time off. I thought 2001 would be very fruitful, but it's all turning into a big pile of shit! We were going to do it all! We were going to record, we were going to tour, we were going to continue as a band as usual, go on our merry way and do things like they always had been going...

LET'S BACK UP A BIT AND DISCUSS SOME OF THE EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO THIS STRANGE YEAR. OBVIOUSLY THE JASON DEPARTURE IS PERHAPS THE MAIN ONE.

LU: ...From when we played the last of the six make up shows in Dallas, Atlanta, and Kentucky (late summer 2000), there were only two times that the four of us were together in one space. The third week in September, when we were doing the 'Black' album thing (a TV documentary was being filmed about the making of that album – ED), and then again in Los Angeles in late November when we were doing the VH1 Awards thing. Those are the only two times we were together. It was clear from the unfolding of events in Los Angeles for the 'Black' album thing that there was some serious stuff that needed to be resolved, because that was basically when the whole thing came to a head between James and Jason. So, when we started the year in January, we had a lot of cleaning up to do, and I think it was unclear for me what the long-term picture of the band was. What was clear for me was that we were at a point where, in order for things to move forward, there had to be a lot of resolving. And then at the same time, I'd say the worst two months in my personal life were November and December of 2000. So in January the band things were just starting to turn the corner, but I was still very wrapped up in my personal life.

KH: You know, I could feel tension in the air when we were down in Hollywood doing the "Black" album thing. I could feel the tension between James

and Jason and it was kind of a scary thing, you know? Because in the past neither of them had very much success communicating properly, and this was a much more serious thing than any of the issues that they had failed to communicate about in the past. So, frankly, I was a bit nervous because Jason came up to me at one point and said, 'James wants to speak to me' and Jason was pretty freaked out. I mean, he was practically shaking. It had everything to do with Echobrain and nothing else. And so I left, I had to make a couple of stops before I got to the airport, but when I got to the airport I saw Jason in the bar and I went over to him and said, 'hey man, how are you doing?' He goes, 'I'm doing all right, our flight's delayed by two hours.' So, he proceeded to sit down and talk to me about the meeting and it was pretty depressing, you know. Hearing Jason's perspective. And he was very, very bummed out. And that kind of set my mind racing and in the next few months when I saw everyone again for the VH1 thing in November, you know, frankly I was nervous to see all four of us in one spot. I was nervous to see what sort of... what was going to happen, what this thing was going to parlay itself into. And we all kind of got the word from Cliff and Peter that we were going to have a band meeting, a management-imposed band meeting so that we could talk things out. But after the VH1 thing, Jason just left and I was very hurt by that and I know James was pretty hurt, too. I mean, if I remember correctly he was pretty floored by that and I knew Lars was pretty hurt by it, too. And by the time the holidays went by, New Years went by, I knew that we were heading towards pretty stormy waters. And, I knew that the next six months or so were going to be interesting.

LU: I think there was one thing that happened, which was my real first involvement with any of this nastiness... in some perverse way, it's sort of interesting how little I had to do with this whole thing, and I have to tell you it puts a rare smile on my face... but anyway, in mid-October, we were offered to play this new VH1 award show. And I remember that Peter Mensch called,