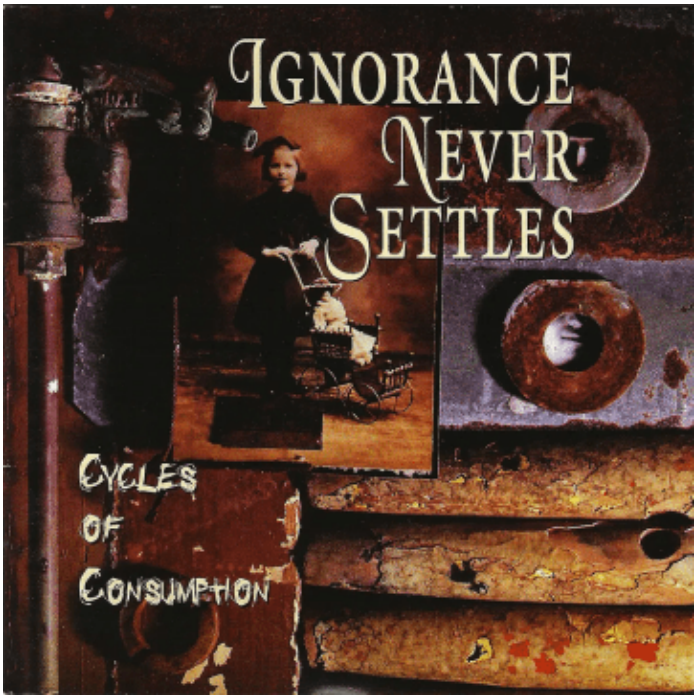
Upheaval Records Interview

This is the second interview in a series of Canadian record labels, and this is one of my all time favorite record labels! Everything released by this dude was amazing! And it definitely stands the test of time! Dan actually has copies left of the New Day Rising 7″, Lockjaw CD and Day of Mourning CD. You can email him to acquire some copies for your own.

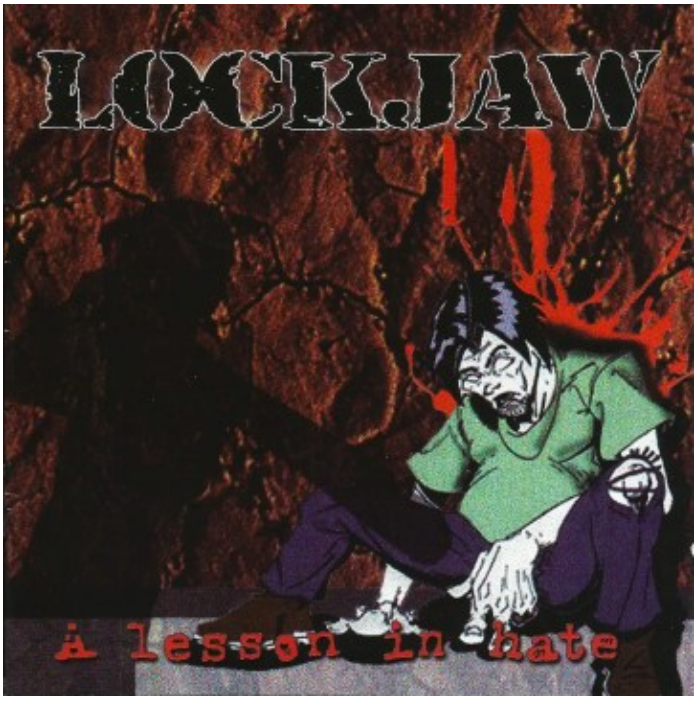
The complete Upheaval Records discography includes:

- UR-666 – New Day Rising double 7” (1996) – Less than 2000 copies
- UP002CD – Ignorance Never Settles “Cycles of Consumption” (1996) – 1000 copies
- UP003CD – Lockjaw “A Lesson in Hate” (1997) – Less than 1000
- UP004CD – Day of Mourning “Reborn as the Enemy” (1998) – 1000 copies

UR-666 – New Day Rising double 7” (1996)



UP002CD – Ignorance Never Settles "Cycles of Consumption" (1996)



UP003CD – Lockjaw "A Lesson in Hate" (1997)

UP004CD – Day of Mourning “Reborn as the Enemy” (1998)

up·heav·al (up hē′vəl) *n.* **1.** act or instance of upheaving; being upheaved: *volcanic upheavals.* **2.** profound or violent disturbance or change: *the social upheavals caused by the outbreak of civil war.*

Instead of using the label logo, Upheaval Records used this definition on the outside of the New Day Rising 7″

-When was the label formed and where was it located originally?

The label was formed in 1996. I ran it out of Hamilton. At first, I would trade my releases with other labels from all over the world, so the whole room would be just packed with records. It was kind of neat where it was my fantasy equivalent to business people who dream of wanting to roll around in money. I didn’t actually want to roll around in records, but I loved having boxes of them everywhere. It was a great way to hear of some new record from somewhere else that was so good it would end up in my personal collection. You get enough records that end up being not so stellar as well, though.

-Why did you decide to form the label? Had you worked with labels before or did anyone help you out to start the label?

And how old were you when you formed Upheaval?

I was really into collecting records ever since I was in my single digits. By high school, I was got into punk, hardcore, grindcore, etc. By 20, I thought it would be fun to put out records. So, I started to draw finds from my savings that I acquired from working an insane amount of hours at Zellers.
I didn't know of anyone in relation to the scene. There was only one guy in high school who was also into hardcore. So I didn't grow up with those who basically comprised the scene in Hamilton. They all went to different schools, so I had no scene related connections. Through the one friend in High School who actually liked the same stuff as me, I was led to a show at the House of Zack. Great night. Cease Fire (Bill from Lockjaw, Buffalo was in that band years before I ever met him), Mayday who were just phenomenal and Edgewise were also great.

Like I said, no connections, though. No clue what I was doing which was totally evident. Especially the social aspect which I find is similar to working in a corporate environment to this day.

The first Upheaval Records logo, as appears inside the New Day Rising 7″ booklet and the Ignorance Never Settles CD

-Were you a musician yourself? Did you play in any bands?

I played drums. At the time, I played in a band called Drive By. The era when I was putting out records was overcome with a lot of screamy emo bands in Ontario. Drive By was great for me because they were heavy and not trying to do any of that. They were all relatively younger than I. I was in college, they were in high school. It was a band more influenced by Roadrunner bands and stuff like the Deftones etc. More metal and post hardcore I guess. It only lasted for a year. It would have been great to see how much better we would have gotten. Musically, I got to use my double pedal, so I was pretty happy. I really like the people in the band, especially looking back. I miss it, actually. The lot of them were great as far as human beings are concerned. It was pleasantly different from some of the DIY emo kids I would cross paths with when I started putting out records, truthfully. I later played in a power-violence band called Crossbow Zombie Attack Scene.

-Upheaval Records. What was the inspiration for the name?

The name Upheaval? A friend of mine actually came up with the name. I thought it was great. To this day, everything about this world is just wrong and is in need of being turned upside down in order to be fixed. I don’t only blame the powers that be, the general population doesn’t do anything about it, either.

UR-666 – New Day Rising double 7” (1996)

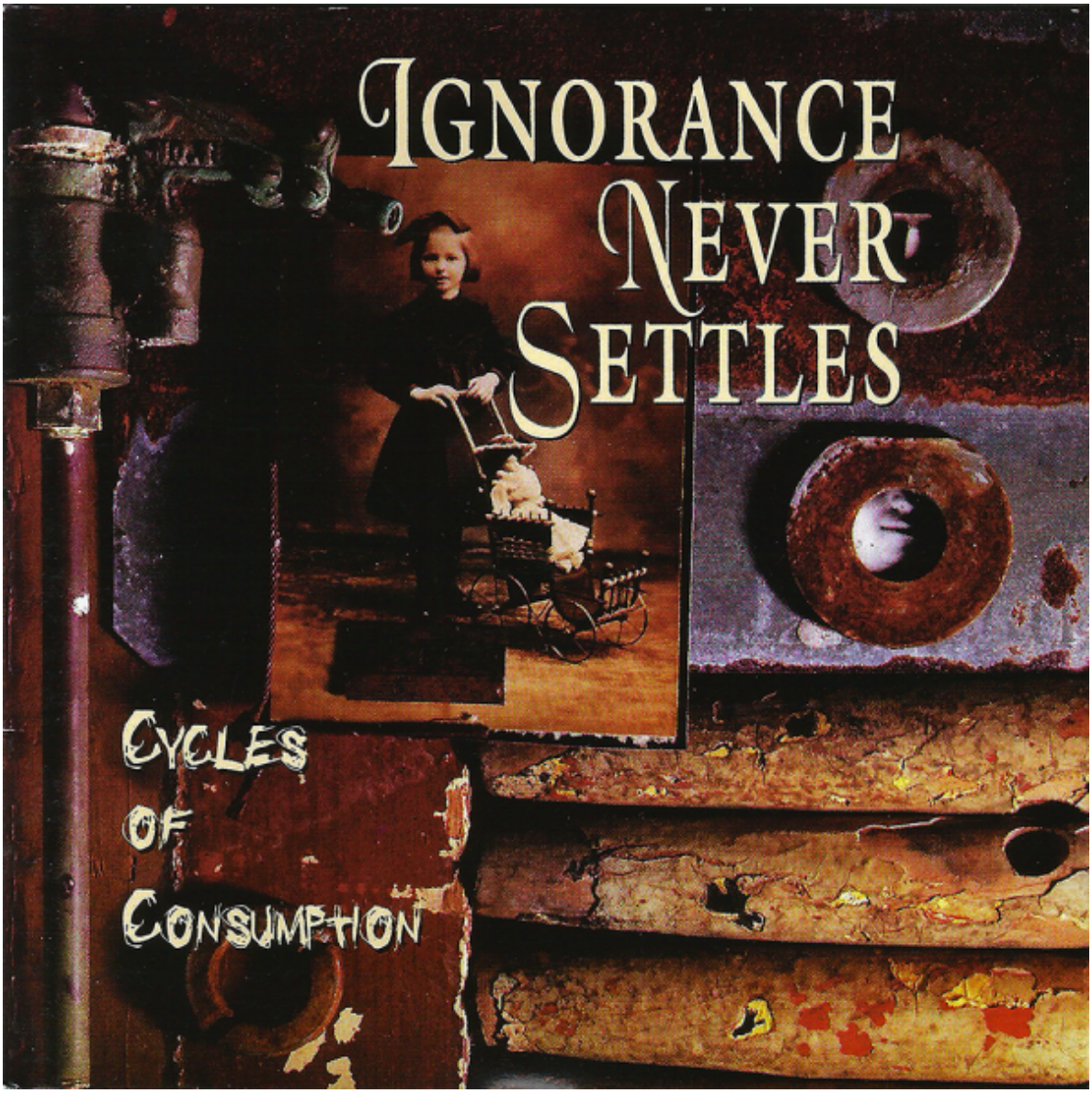
-Your first release was New Day Rising’s double 7″. How did you choose to work with NDR as the label’s first release. What was your relation with the band?

Before I put out records, I started a distro to break the ice with people at shows. I remember bringing a box of records to sell at a show that was going on in a Church basement in Mississauga. It turned out that a member of New Day Rising was a family friend of mine. So naturally, we were talking and I said that I was interested in putting out their record. So he hooked me up with the powers that be in the band.

-A double 7″ isn't something you see often, how did that happen, and what was the reason for it? How did it represent your label at the time, since NDR already have a few releases on Moo Cow that were doing very well. How many copies were pressed of this album?

It was only supposed to be a single 7". Someone else was to put the other one out but they backed out. I think my release was their first post demo. Truthfully, I wasn't a huge emo fan. It was my least favorite era of punk and hardcore. It was rather disappointing that there were not more faster bands. I like all the subgenres to some extent or another, but there was very little fast and heavy bands in the area and I had no connections to the bands in the US at the time. That is why I found myself crossing the border with whomever into Buffalo a lot to see bands like Snapcase, Sick Of It All, Agnostic Front, Spazz, etc. The show that was the true highlight in Ontario was when Catharsis played with Ascension and Morning Again in their original line up. Funny thing is, Rye Coalition ended up bailing on their location elsewhere to play that same show. This was probably back in 1996. I think it was 1998 when an early Converge did a show at the same location in Oakville. It was rare for the heavier US bands to come here at the time because the emo kids led by the more prominent emo bands often ridiculed the more heavy sounding bands, especially if they were not as popular, and to those who would want to dance to them at a show. They kind of acted like John Lithgow's character in the movie Footloose when he made a law against dancing. I am being totally serious.

Back to New Day, despite not being an emo kid, I thought they were a great live band in the beginning. There are close to 2000 copies of the double 7". Some still remain in boxes somewhere. Some were thrown out because of space.

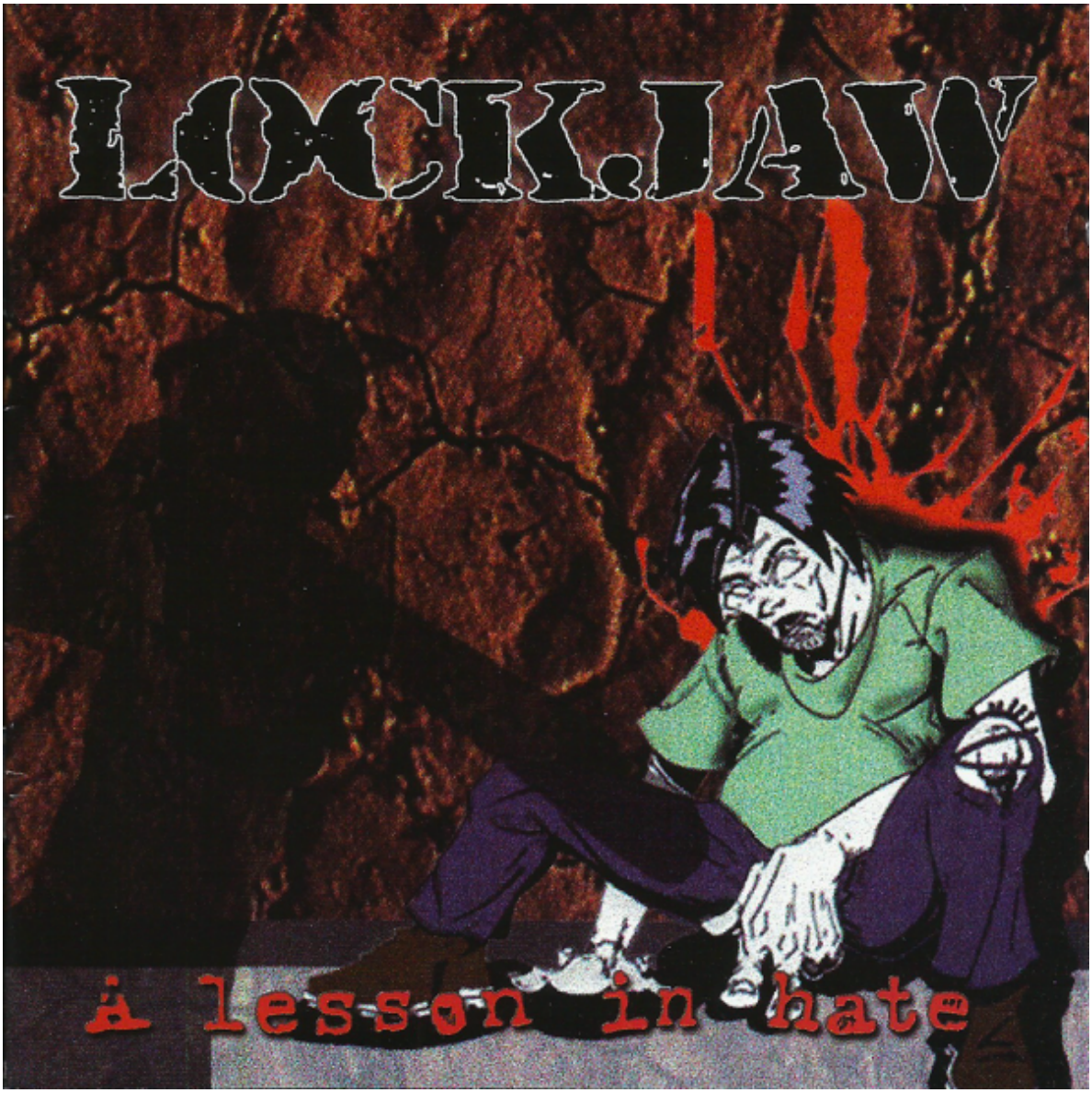


UP002CD – Ignorance Never Settles "Cycles of Consumption" (1996)

-Second release, the Ignorance Never Settles CD. A band that even today, is recognized for its importance on the Ontario hardcore scene. How do you look back on that release? What can you tell us about that album? Can you also recall the pressing amount of this album?

INS were a lot closer to what I liked, musically. Despite not having fast parts to their music, they were heavy and really enjoyable in the studio and live. Because of their kind of sound, the label went CD as a lot of their audience were not in on the vinyl thing. That was an avenue I regret going down, especially because the planned vinyl release of

the their album never came to fruition. Only 1000 copies on CD. Most sold to Germany and its surrounding countries. I tried to encourage Mike from the band to get INS to go there, but they weren't too motivated to do much touring locally as it was. Too bad, I felt they would have had a better run if they put in the effort.



UP003CD – Lockjaw "A Lesson in Hate" (1997)

The second Upheaval Records logo, as appears inside on the Lockjaw CD

-Now in 1997 you decided to work with an out of Canada band, Lockjaw, from Buffalo, NY. How had you come in contact with this band? How was it working with a band from a different country (even if its was still pretty close). How did that album do? It seems to be the most obscure one of the releases by the label. How many copies of this cd exist?

Lockjaw was finally the kind of band that reflected what I enjoy listening to. Fast and heavy while not afraid to put in breakdown parts. They found their way to a show in Mississauga, so was I ever happy when they started playing. Unfortunately, it was still the tale end of the emo situation here, still. The heavier situation was in full swing States side, but unfortunately, the band broke up not long after the CD release, anyway. Notice a trend here? Needless to say, that album did poorly. Despite that, I ended off on a good enough note with the band. I still see Bill (vocals) from time to time. Good guy. It helps not caring about the financial loss of a release when the go to person from the band was good to you when everything was

said and done.

UP004CD – Day of Mourning “Reborn as the Enemy” (1998)

-Finally you put out the debut Day of Mourning album, “Reborn as the Enemy”, which was a total masterpiece. What was your feeling towards working with DOM?

Day of Mourning. Overall, I really liked my release of their CD and they were pretty good to work with. Along with New Day Rising, they were the hardest working band as far as touring was concerned. They never caught on like they should have despite their efforts. I was going to release their next record as well, Your Future’s End. However, I was

growing exhausted of my personal experience with the label-band dynamic as a whole, not specific to Day of Mourning, by this release. So I quietly just kind of fizzled out of site when it came to putting out any new records at all, anymore. Saying that, Your Future's End wound up being released by Sounds of Revolution and is such a remarkable feat. Just unbelievable. I am happy to see that Domenic is now in the US doing his thing. That is where he belongs and hopefully he is happy where he is at with all is efforts. The last time I saw him was years back in Hamilton. The show line up was an early Fucked Up, Out To Win and Integrity who didn't show up. Dom was in great spirit which really helped me get over some of the disappointment over the whole label experience.

The third and last Upheaval Records logo, as appears inside on the Day of Mourning CD

-I'm sure the record did really well even back then, because it is still the most easy to find release from your label to this day. How many copies were pressed?

Only 1000 copies of my Day of Mourning CD were made. I still have about 40. None of my CD releases went beyond 1000. The extra pressing of the New Day double 7"s wasn't necessary, either.

-Did you ever tour with the bands on Upheaval?

I would only venture out with a band the odd time for a single show in a single city. For example, I went with New Day Rising was scheduled to play the Clevo Hardcore Fest back in 1996. We went up with one of the members in my car, the rest of the band in another vehicle. I remember walking in to the place. Catharsis was playing. I just got in a few copies of their first 7” released by Endless Fight earlier that same week and was really into them. So I already felt at home. Emo bands were the minority there, not the majority. Plenty of hard dancing without emo kids and emo bands standing off to the side, making fun of the heavier bands and the kids having a good time on the dance floor during their set. The same evening, Integrity did a kick ass set. It was a Clevo fest, and they were a Clevo band. Needless to say, they owned the place. Once their set was done, they brought One Life Crew on stage, uninvited by the girl putting on the fest to what I recall. That was the night OLC went barreling through the audience to beat up a kid who was giving them the finger as they began Pure Disgust.

To give you an idea as to how busy I was, I was playing in a band, going to school, and have to find the time to get records pressed or whatever. I would literally be falling asleep at the wheel while driving around, from city to city, to get things done.
So typically, I would go to shows across the border with whomever, but never toured with the bands. Hell, two of the bands never really toured, anyway.
Consequently, that was THE detriment to the label. See next question for further explanation.

-How did you distribute the releases throughout Canada and the States back then?

I was distributed in Canada through FAB and relied heavily on the bands taking the releases on the road, which was the reason I’d never see much of my share of the money from

sales. There was always a reason with certain members of some of the bands as to why they did not have my cut when they came back from a tour or out of town show. I'd get mad, so some would try to make me out to be a capitalist which is a no-no in the scene. In reality, my cut was only to cover the manufacturing costs of the releases. My releases were beyond the quality of photocopied covers, after all. So every new release was more out of my savings from working at Zellers because I could never recuperate financially from the previous release. I couldn't tour with bands to really supervise the sales of the CDs. So I actually had to trust people. Big mistake. Now I won't even give to a charity.

Ironically, Kyle from Grade took a bunch of my INS CDs with Grade to a Florida gig, once. Get this, he actually sold all the stuff of mine he took there and actually gave me the money when he returned. I couldn't believe it considering doing anything for me would be of no benefit to him as I had nothing really to offer a band of Grade's status. I will never forget that as some of my own bands were not that honorable. There is some good in the world.

In the US, my releases were carried by Very Distro and Ebullition, to name a few. Then there was Green Hell out of Germany.

Day of Mourning stickers by Upheaval Records

-Did you ever press other merch for bands, other than the albums? If so, what?

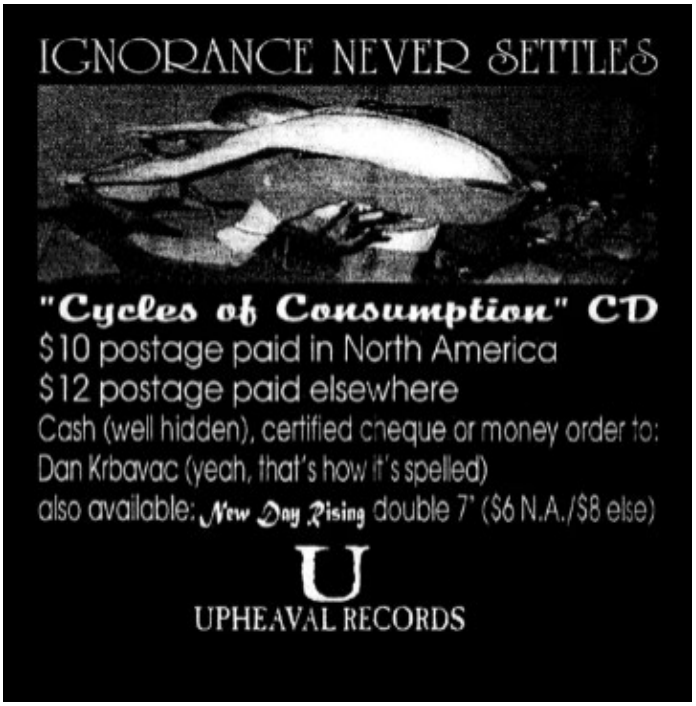
I had shirts made for Ignorance Never Settles. The first incarnation were terribly made and faded after the first wash. The second incarnation was done by someone else and looked slick. Half sold in Canada, the other half was sent to Europe. I was told that bands touring Europe couldn't help but notice kids wearing them from one town to another. Free bumper stickers for Lockjaw. Stickers for Day of Mourning.

-What were some of the planned releases that never happened or releases that you talked about doing but didn't happen?

Planned releases that never came to? There were some bands I was casually talking about a possible release with. I only lasted for four releases, however.

-What was the story with the Blake/Gates of Dawn split 7″? It was even advertised in the HeartattaCk zine as UP003.

The Blake/Gates of Dawn 7". I remember putting that in an ad. Blake ended up not being part of it for whatever reason I cannot remember. No drama there. However, we were still on for a full Gates of Dawn 7". I was pretty excited. I really liked them and it was a chance to get back to releasing vinyl. So I went to the studio with them to record the tracks. Later that week I think it was, a third party tells me the band decided to do the release with someone else who did not even have a label [Gorilla Warfare Records]. The last I heard about that Gates recording, one of the songs from that recording session appeared on a compilation because the 7", of course, never happened with the other party. I know this sounds lame but I was really disappointed in them. The couple of them that I knew somewhat did at least put some effort into leaving off on a good note, which I did appreciate.



Upheaval Records ad from the HeartattaCk fanzine, May 1996

Upheaval Records ad from the HeartattaCk fanzine, November 1997

-What was the story with the Crossbow Zombie Attack Scene/Coalition Against Shane split 7″? Apparently it was to be co-released with Overlord Records? I read the titled was going to be "The Pepsi Challenge" and cataloged as UP005 in 1999.

Unfortunately, there is nothing much to say about Crossbow Zombie Attack Scene. We had a bunch of songs (I was the drummer) but the band did not last long enough to do a show. It was my kind of stuff from a drumming standpoint: Power Violence with double kick, so it was too bad.

-When and why did the label fold? Have you worked with any other labels since? Is there any future plans for Upheaval, or with the already released material, which is now pretty hard to find?

The label basically folded in 1998. At this point, you can tell why. No plans for any new releases. With the exception of Ignorance Never Settles, I have spare copies of everything else, so they are not as rare as you would think. It is highly unlikely I will ever put out another release again. If I were to put out more records, it would be under a different name, much more limited runs and far less involvement in funding the studio recording. That way, if a band wants to bail for any reason, I have so little invested I could care less.
Finally, thanks for your kind remarks, Alexandre. I really appreciate your interest in the label as it was a really tough go. All the best.