

Dirge Official Biography

Dirge was an early to mid-90s metalcore band from Ontario, which eventually became Day of Mourning. At first they were almost what you now call nu-metal, though a lot heavier. But their later material became just like DOM.

Dirge formed in 1994 with Dominic Romeo, Jason Kehoe, Fudd Bokhari and Greg Rodriguez, who all lived in Malton. Jay and Dom were in a band called Creed that were highly influenced by Jane's Addiction, but wanted to do something in the veins of Sepultura and Biohazard, Machine Head, Fear Factory, Madball, Pantera and White Zombie. Fudd had a brother who went to Morning Star High School with them and had known G-Rod for years before that. That was the initial line-up.

They recorded a 2 song demo in 1994 and started playing some shows. But their first serious demo was "I Am" in 1995 which was recorded at Rumblefish Studios in Etobicoke. The band gained attention with their full length "Hazing Rituals" which was self-released on their own record label AYJ Music. This one-off label was actually named after Dom's uncle stage name. The full length was also recorded at Rumblefish, and was produced by Dave Caravaggio. Dom and Jay would also end up working there. The record featured a load of samples and featured a DJ scratching on the song "Break It Down". At the time nu-metal wasn't a genre known and many bands were trying out the "rap-metal" stuff, and Dirge was definitely one of the early ones doing it.

Greg Rodriguez left the band and was replaced by Rob Vargas. The band went on a full Canadian tour with Shutdown and at some points Candiria. They then went down to the states and played with pioneers of metalcore Overcast and Dissolve. Upon coming back Rob was replaced by Conrad, and a second guitarist came in as Greg from the band Grift. In 1997 they would release a split with that band entitled "Guilt by Association"

which would end up being the final material released under the name Dirge. This was once again self-released under a brand new one-off label Deadly Venom Productions. They were then invited to be the first band to play at the Syracuse Hardcore Festival of 1997. By this time TJ Kareer was the second guitarist and Shane Blakemore was on bass. This of course brought them a load of new listeners, and somehow it got to another band in Canada also named Dirge. They decided to send court proceedings to the band if they didn't change their name, even though they had not released a single thing, as compared to the prospect Malton's Dirge was gaining.

They played a final show (not intend as a final show) in Quebec, and on their way back crashed and totalled the van, costing the drummers finger. Dirge decided to take some time off, and Dom started Coalition Against Shane. Jay recuperated rather quickly and they decided to continue working with the material they had written (which would be demoed on Guilty Innocence Roaming and officially released on Reborn as the Enemy). Dom Romeo remembers a story of the early days of name choosing. "Funny enough we told TJ that we were changing the name to 'The Blood On Satans Claw' and got him to believe it. We called a band meeting where we came in with proposed artwork of a demons claw and each of us on a fingertip rocking out. He was not stoked at all, and I remember we tried to record the conversation to use as a hidden track on the CD but it never turned out. Satan's claw got the last laugh."

Day of Mourning became huge and one of the most important metalcore bands Canada ever had.

Dirge – Hazing Rituals + Guilty by Association

The first 2 demos are practically impossible to find. If you find them, please let me know!