Redstar Records Interview

Redstar Records was a record label operated by Brendan Munn and Paul G. from Hamilton, Ontario. Their best remembered release was the Confine/Avarice split CD, but everything they put out was amazing and did really well in hardcore (as you will read). After trying to trace down either of the owners for nearly two years, I finally got to talk to Paul, and he had some tremendous information to give about each releases! Redstar Records would for sure have become a top Canadian hardcore label had they stuck around for a just a few more years. I hope you all enjoy these great memories!

The Redstar Records catalog:



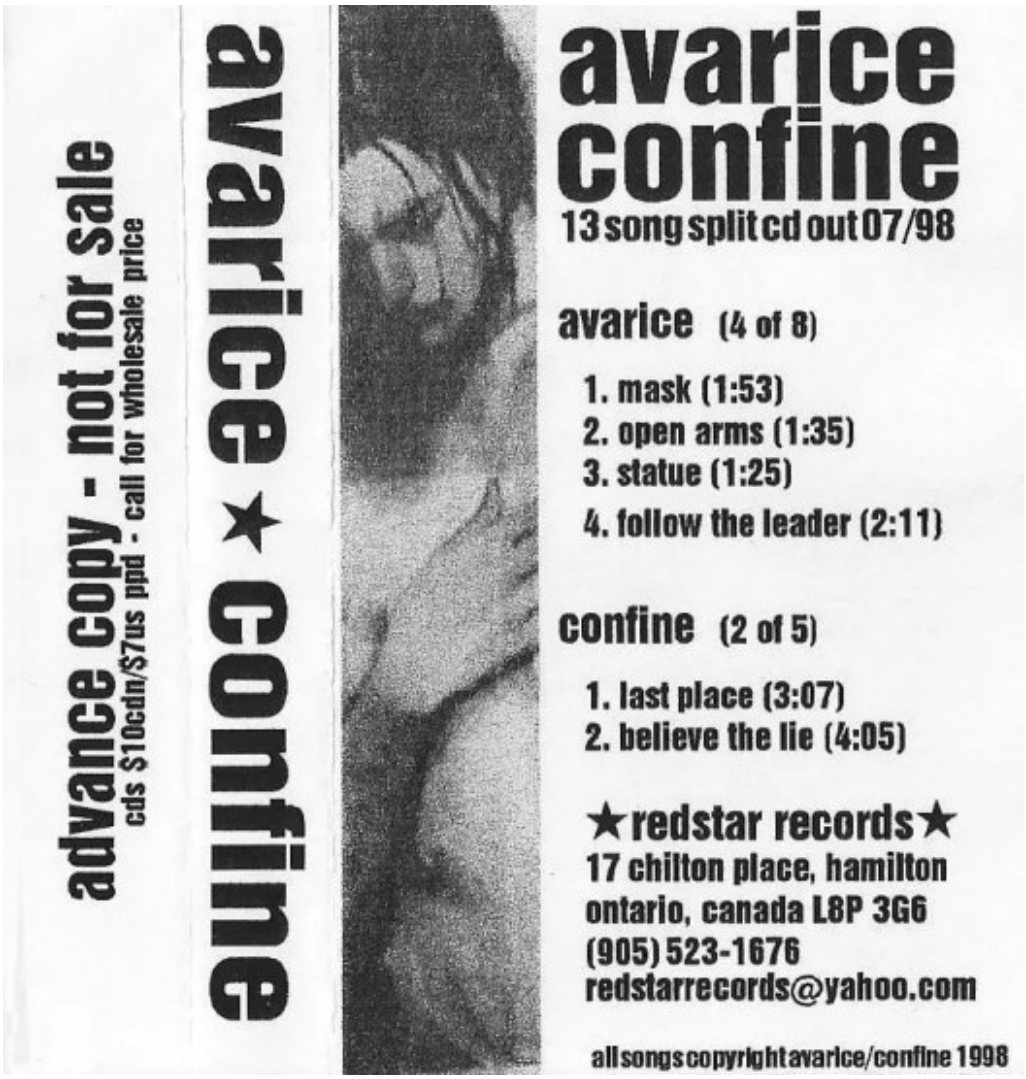
RSR001 – Garbagedrink "StoryForest", Summer 1996



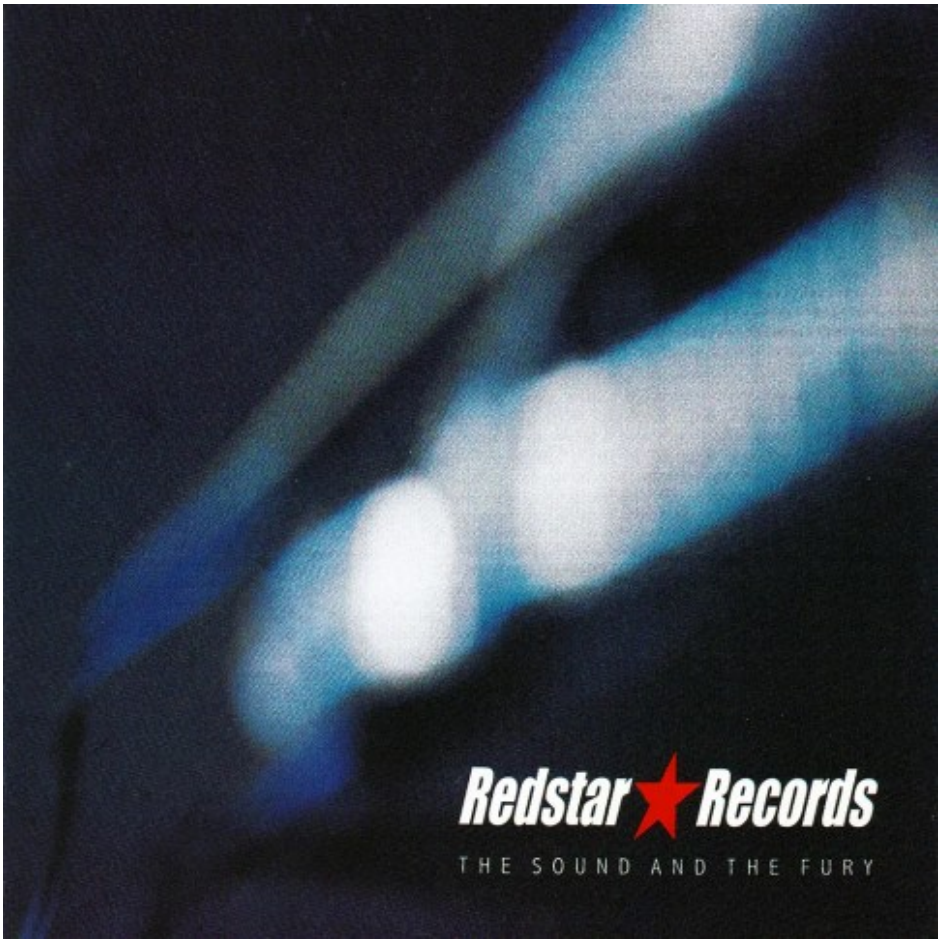
RSR002 – Avarice demo tape, December 1997



RSR003 – Avarice and Confine split CD, summer 1998



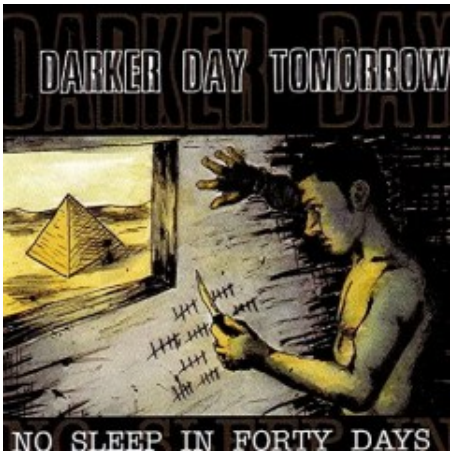
Avarice & Confine split advance copy tape sampler. Photo courtesy of Jun Matsumura



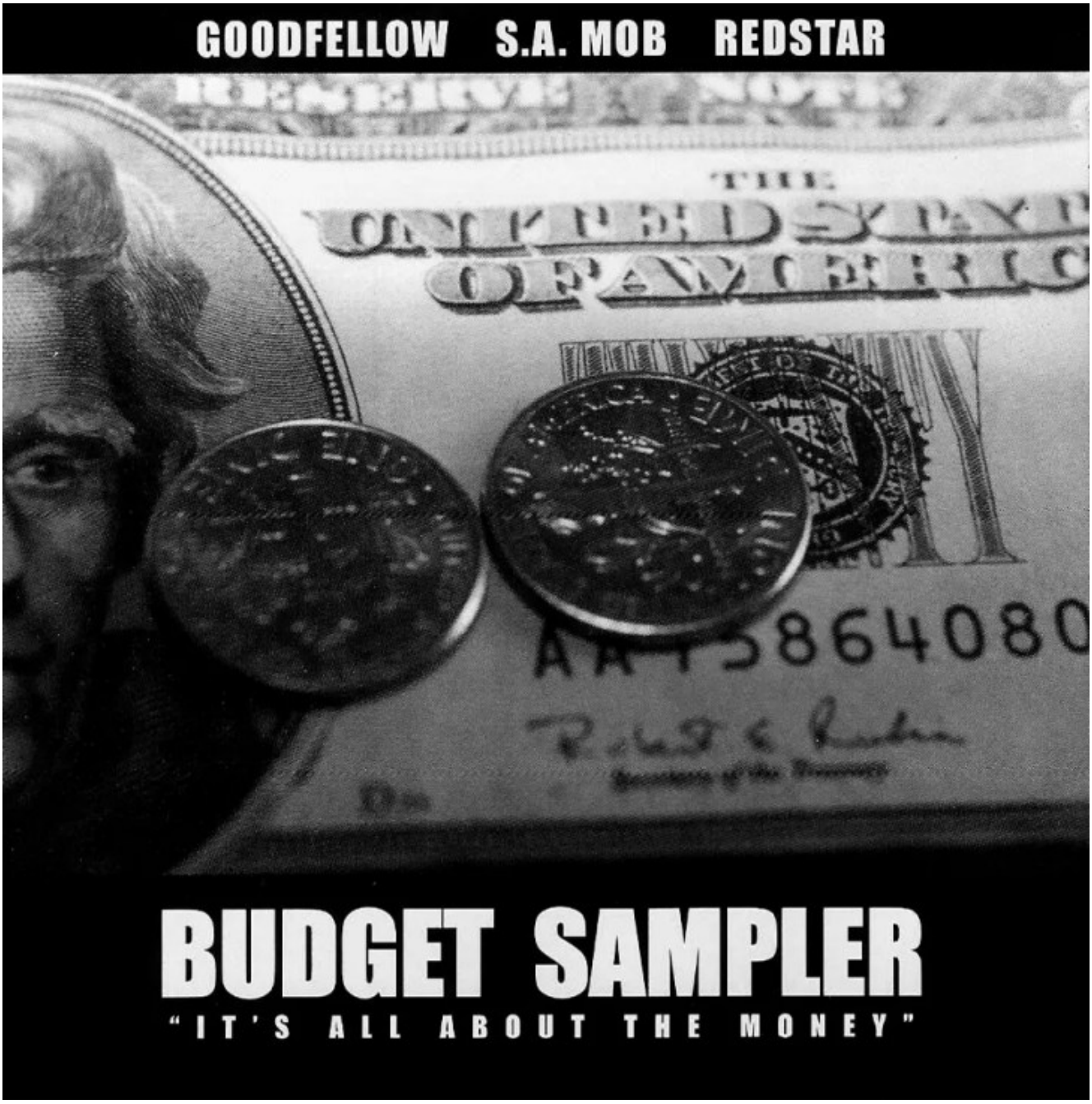
“The Sound and the Fury” compilation, Redstar Records, October 1999



RSR005 – Dead to the World & Kid Gorgeous split, 2000



RSR006 – Darker Day Tomorrow “No Sleep in Forty Days”, 2000



"It's All About the Money" compilation, Redstar Records 2001

- RSR001 Garbagedrink – Storyforest CD (Summer 1996)
- RSR002 Avarice – Demo tape (December 1997)
- RSR003 Avarice/Confine – split CD (July 1998)
- RSR004 The Sound and the Fury comp CD (October 1999)
- RSR005 Dead to the World/Kid Gorgeous – split CD (March 2000)
- RSR006 Darker Day Tomorrow – No Sleep in Forty Days CD (November 2000)
- RSR007 Budget Sampler: It's All About the Money comp CD

(March 2001) with Goodfellow and Surprise Attack



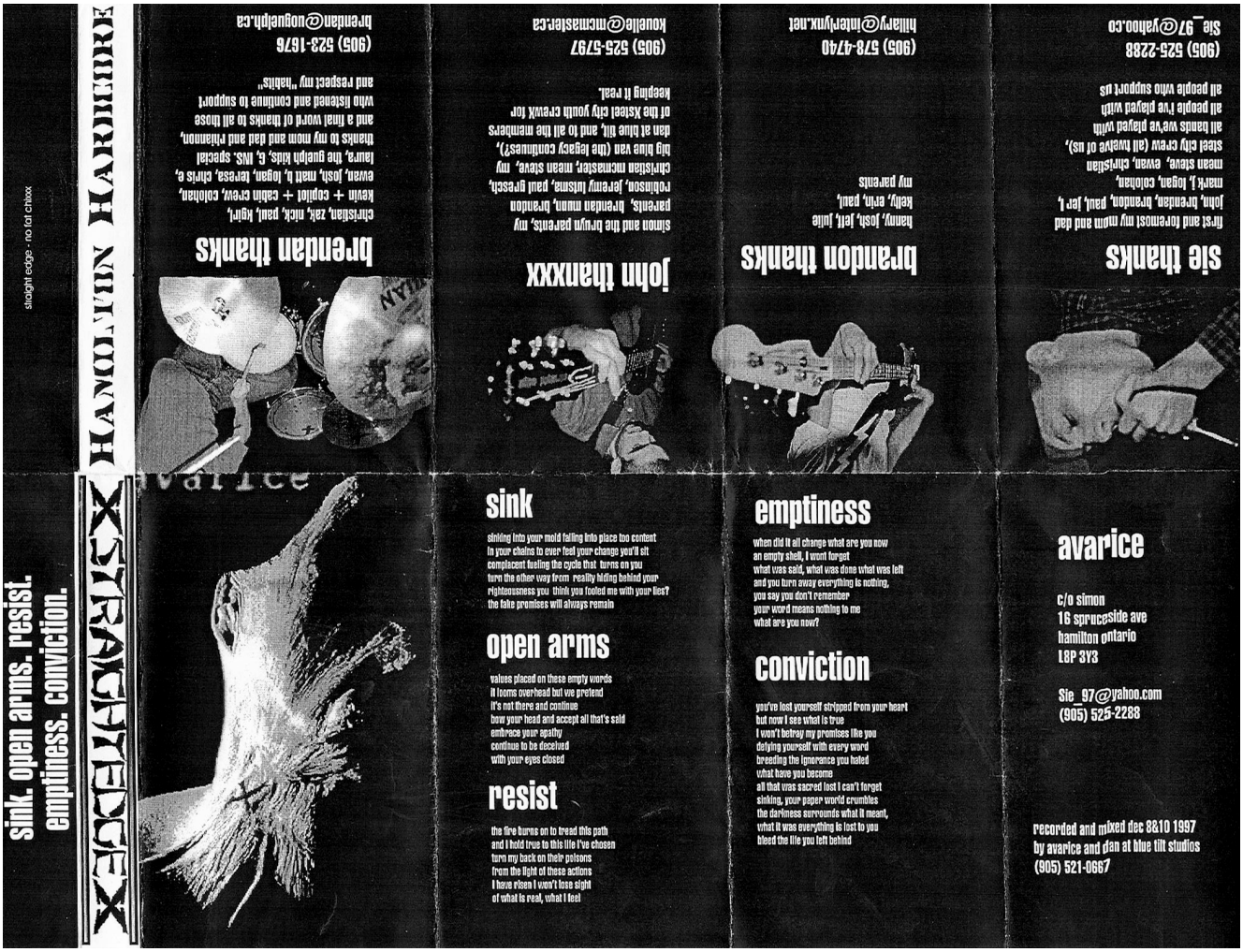
RSR001 – Garbagedrink "StoryForest", Summer 1996

-Let me start out this interview by saying that it's a huge pleasure to finally do this, after trying to trace you down for a couple years now! Redstar was an amazing record label! What is the origin of Redstar Records, and how did you guys come together?

Brendan and I met in high school in Hamilton. He played drums in the school jazz band and in a couple of indie rock bands. He was acquainted with some friends of mine, and we met through them. Hamilton has a great indie scene – everyone sort of knows everyone – so it was inevitable that we met, and that's how it happened. In terms of founding the label, Brendan founded it with his indie rock band Garbagedrink so they could release a CD. The name of the label was a not so veiled reference to communism. Basically, each person, through pre-ordering a CD, would communally pay for a large percentage of the record's manufacturing costs and, in return, they would get two additional CDs to sell to some other friends who, hopefully, didn't go to our school. If they sold their two CDs, they'd get their initial investment back, and people in other places would know about

the band/label. It was a communal idea with a capitalist kick in the ass. But it worked out well for them. For small labels, “worked out well” meant you approached breaking even. That’s what you hoped for.

In the next few years, as Brendan was involved more and more in the hardcore scene, and in playing in hardcore bands, he wanted to have a label to release this music. I pointed out that he already had one, though it hadn’t been used for a while. In the meantime, we were running a distro through Sonic Unyon Records that sold hardcore records at shows and by mail order, and we needed a name for that too, so we used the old name and moved into a new genre. The label was something I could contribute to. I had time to do it. I wasn’t in a band and have no musical talent. Brendan worked, played drums in Avarice and Ignorance Never Settles, and commuted to and from the University of Guelph. I was just working and going to McMaster. Our first release was a demo tape for Avarice, and then we put out a split CD for Avarice and a band from Oakville called Confine.



RSR002 Avarice demo tape, December 1997

-The Avarice demo is now a forgotten release, mainly for the reason that it was so horribly recorded (according to the band), and you mentioned that it was a very DIY type of release. How did you and Brendan team up for this tape release? How many copies were made?

> The demo WAS badly recorded. It was done at Blue Tilt Studio, a studio in downtown Hamilton that a guy ran out of his basement. We could barely load all of the equipment down there. It was tiny. The guy who ran it ended up specializing in hardcore bands, not that he intended to, and not that he wanted to, but his equipment was so bad and his room was so small, that the only music that could even begin to hide the poor recording quality had to be loud, thrashy, screamy, and heavy. A lot of incredible music came out of that place. Left for Dead recorded all of their songs there. Chokehold

recorded their Tooth and Nail 7″ there. Haymaker did some of their stuff there. Ignorance Never Settles recorded their demo there which, remixed and remastered, became the split CD with Mark of the Devil, and the song for their split 7″ with Incision also came out of that session. It's too bad, because all of the songs on all of those records were great, and they would have benefited from better production – although it's hard to say that anything about those Left for Dead songs could be improved. But the studio was incredibly cheap, and bands could do a lot of takes and not have to worry about how much it was going to cost, so it was a great place for bands to go, which is likely the only reason anyone went there – aside from it being local.

I think we made about a hundred copies of the demo, at the most. We had some CD-Rs of the songs made, and then we dubbed all of the tapes on as many tape decks as we could get our hands on. Brendan and I did as many as we could at our houses, and the guys from Avarice were dubbing them too. It was a collective effort that took a long time. We did the typical handmade, photocopied black and white inserts – totally inspired by the Left for Dead demo, on the same brand of cassettes they used too – and just kept making them and selling them as they played shows. We did the layout on a really slow computer and it took ages. Brendan found the cover photo in a book of photography documenting the casualties of the two World Wars and we really liked it, so we scanned it and he modified it in Photoshop.

Most of the songs on that tape were good songs, and the band re-recorded many of them for the split CD with Confine. When Brendan and R.J. recorded the Avarice songs for the split 7" with Daemon's Jaded Passion, from Germany, they re-recorded another song from the demo so, in the end, there was only one song on the demo that wasn't re-recorded, because it was the worst song on it. So it didn't make sense to make the demos anymore. Why would anyone want poorly recorded,

slower, sloppier versions of the songs when better ones were available?

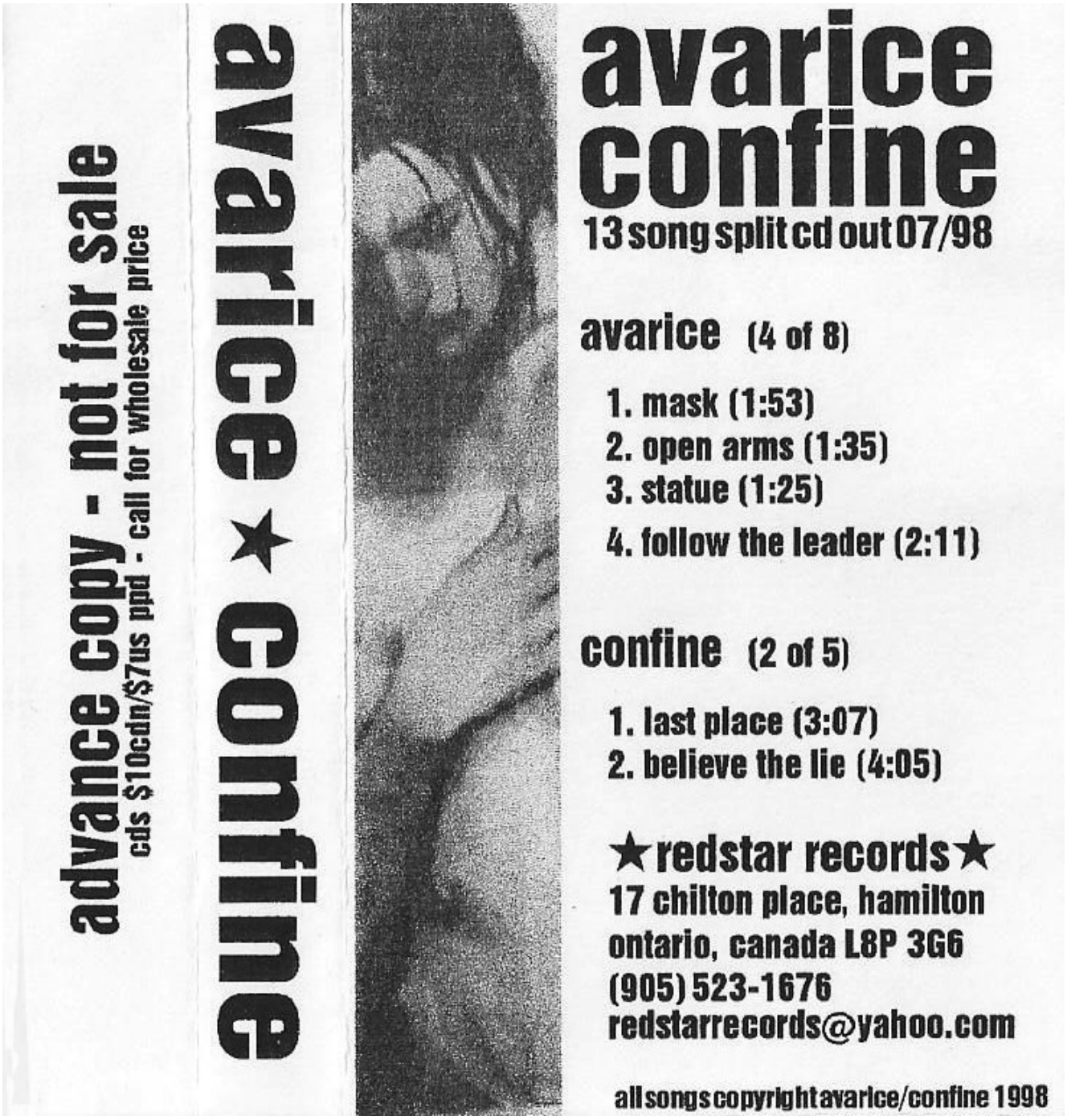


RSR003 – Avarice & Confine split, summer 1998

-I saw on a very early design of the Avarice / Confine split CD the label was spelled “Red Star Records”, and it also had the catalog number of “CD 001”. Was there some changes of the spelling of the label name during its run? And how come the original design was labeled as “CD 001” while the released one was “CD-3”? Why was this artwork never used?

The label was always Redstar Records – spelled that way – so the spelling on the early design was a mistake. In terms of the catalogue number of 001, that was also a mistake. When Gordie Ball, who played guitar in Confine, and James Hamilton, who later went on to do Re-Define Records, did the layout for the CD, they weren't aware that Redstar had already released an indie rock record, or that our first hardcore release – admittedly amateurish – was the cassette we did for Avarice. The Avarice/Confine split CD was our third release, so we asked them to change that.

The early design wasn't used because, frankly, a couple of the guys in Avarice didn't like it. I think Gordie did the artwork for the cover, and James did the layout, but what we ended up with was so much better, I'm happy we didn't use the early design. James and Gordie were a bit frustrated to go back to the drawing board, but they did a great job on the second layout and, from a design perspective, it is much more unique and creative. The first design was pretty plain, and it was similar to a lot of things in the scene in those days, but the second one is aesthetically more professional. Gordie's sketch on the final layout is darker, and we really liked what James did with it. Those two guys are really creative people. Back then, Gordie was a solid guitarist, a great artist, and a terrific photographer, and he's probably even better now. James is a computer genius. Literally. And he's one of the most creative people I know. He can paint, draw, you name it. The nicest, kindest, most sincere person you'll ever meet.



RSR003 – Avarice & Confine split advance copy tape sampler. Photo courtesy of Jun Matsumura

-I saw a tape version of the Avarice/Confine split. Can you explain what that was?

> We taped a few songs [six total, four for Avarice, two for Confine] from each band from the split CD on Maxell blank tapes and made photocopied inserts to send to magazines and some college radio shows. We couldn't afford to give away CDs for that one – it was our first REAL release as a

"serious" hardcore label – the one that we were trying to be, anyway. CDs cost two bucks to make, but you can sell them for ten. Tapes cost a dollar and a quarter to make, but you can't sell them at all. So we did what made sense to us at the time. We didn't do it again and gave out CDs from that point on with all of the other Redstar releases.

-The split with Confine and Avarice was incredibly well received both in Canada and the states as well as Europe, getting Confine signed to OneDaySavior and Avarice to Alveran. How do you look back on this fantastic release? There was also some issue with three Confine songs that were reused on their OneDaySavior album "The Beginning of the End"?

The record WAS well received and, please don't take this the wrong way, but we knew it would be. The songs were recorded by Fred Betschen in Buffalo, New York. This was a huge step forward for both bands. Fred had recorded so many great hardcore bands – Snapcase, Slugfest, Zero Tolerance, Brother's Keeper, Despair – so Avarice and Confine were really excited to work with him. Acacia had just recorded their Untune the Sky EP for Goodfellow Records with Fred, and SeventyEightDays were working with him on their Trustkill Records EP, Revolution Through Anonymity, and when we heard those records, we knew that our bands would be well-suited to his production style, and we couldn't wait to hear what he'd do with their songs. When we heard the recordings for the first time, we were blown away and we knew we had a great record in our hands. We couldn't wait to get them back from the pressing plant. That was always simultaneously the best and worst part about running a record label. When you got the copies from the pressing plant, you were always thrilled. We always had good experiences with that. But waiting to get the records? Torture.

We knew that the CD was a quality release, but we were definitely surprised at how quickly we sold them. We pressed

1000, and we sent them all over the place. Chris Logan at Goodfellow Records was our hugest supporter, and our most valuable ally. He had lists and lists of contacts at distributors all over the world, and we shipped boxes of records to anyone he recommended. We didn't get ripped off by anyone on that first CD, and we learned to trust the people in the scene to help us out. And they did. Overwhelmingly. Sadly, as time went on, things didn't stay that way, but it was a great initial experience – completely positive. The bands played a lot of shows, and did some small tours, and they sold a lot of records themselves. Everyone who runs a label wants their bands to tour more, but we were pleased with what they did, and we couldn't support them financially in any way, so wherever they could play, whenever they could play, was really a bonus for us. We did some advertising in zines, but only if they promised to review the record, and we made up some flyers to hand out at shows, and we sent out some tapes of the CD for college radio play. Our distributors sold the records quickly. The reviews certainly helped, and the advertising didn't hurt, but we certainly didn't expect orders for the CD to come in from all over Europe and South America – even Australia. But word gets out in the hardcore scene, and that's what happened with that record. I don't think we could have done better. Selling a thousand CDs was a good accomplishment. It was our first professional release, and we knew a lot of bigger, established labels didn't sell that many copies of some of their records, so we were happy.

The thing with Confine re-releasing three songs on the Beginning of the End CD they did for OneDaySavior was that they pretty much killed our CD off. We were hoping to repress that record, and to keep it in our catalogue going forward, which we would have done had Confine not re-recorded those songs, or had Avarice not broken up. But, that being said, Confine paid for their own recording, so they were free to do what they wanted, but we were

disappointed that they didn’t really talk to us very much about it beforehand. It seemed like it was a done deal by the time we heard about it. I wasn’t angry with them. I understood their position. They wanted a solid record that they could tour behind, and that would stay in print, and they got one. I was, however, quite angry with Chris Tzompanakis at OneDaySavior because he didn’t ask us, or even talk to us about it at all. He was re-releasing three songs from our record to beef up what was essentially an EP for his label, which meant that he could sell it for a higher price and it wouldn’t cost him a cent to do that. It would make pure profit for his label. I thought that was pretty unethical, and he didn’t see it that way, and we were involved in a fairly heated e-mail exchange that lasted some time, but, in the end, he sent us some free copies of his records, and we sold them, and that was that. In hindsight, the irony, of course, is that Confine was about to break up anyway, and the title of their record pretty much summed it up. So it was much ado about nothing, because we wouldn’t have repressed the CD either way, as things turned out. It’s a shame that Confine wasn’t able to release the CD they recorded after The Beginning of the End. Neil, Sparky, Gordie – nice people in a great band. If anyone has a copy of that record, or if it’s floating around online someplace, I’d love to hear it.



RSR004 – “The Sound and the Fury” compilation, October 1999

-Now the next release for Redstar was the mind blowing compilation “The Sound and the Fury”, which features one of the most amazing line-ups I’ve ever seen: Another Victim, As We Once Were, Avarice, Chokehold, Chore, Dead Season, Dead to the World, The Death of Us, Every Time I Die, From Here On, Ignorance Never Settles, Kid Gorgeous, Left Behind, SeventyEightDays, Sinclaire, Sinsick, Subsist, The Swarm aka Knee Deep in the Dead and Withdrawn! How did a masterpiece like this come together!? And who was the band that did the bonus song at the end?

The compilation was a huge leap for us. We weren't just releasing Brendan's music anymore, although two of his bands are on the compilation. Since you asked, the band that recorded the bonus song for us was The Swarm. They gave us that as a special treat and we thought it was hilarious. The compilation was also the first time I took a bigger hand in the label, as I'd made a lot of contacts with the bands by doing shows in Hamilton and by distributing the Avarice/Confine CD. We'd done the first Every Time I Die show, in Hamilton with Buried Alive headlining and Kid Gorgeous as support, so that's how those bands got involved. They recorded blistering songs. We were floored by them. And Chris Logan liked Pincushion so much, he signed Every Time I Die for Goodfellow immediately after he heard it the first time, as soon as we got the CD-R in the mail, and he released The Burial Plot Bidding War EP for them shortly afterward. Buried Alive were going to give us an old demo song, and we were really excited about that, but even though Scott Vogel really pushed for us, the other guys in the band didn't want to release the song. Then they were going to record a cover song, but that didn't materialize either. That was the only disappointment with the record. We'd done a lot of shows for them, and they were easily my favourite hardcore band at the time – it would have been incredible to have them on it.

But we got Another Victim to do it – they'd played a show in Hamilton with Endeavor and they gave us a song, even though we didn't know them very well. That would change, obviously, when we got the opportunity to do the Darker Day Tomorrow record, and then we got to know a lot of people in Syracuse. Avarice went back to Fred Betschen and recorded a song with their new lineup, but with Chris Colohan from Left for Dead/The Swarm doing the vocals, and that is one of my favourite songs on there. Sinsick was basically the Burst of Silence guys giving it another go, and they were a short-lived Hamilton band. We met Dead to the World through Mike

Charette of Ignorance Never Settles, and they played a show with Disciple in Hamilton, and we became close friends with their drummer, Mike Jeffers – the hardest working man in hardcore. Period.

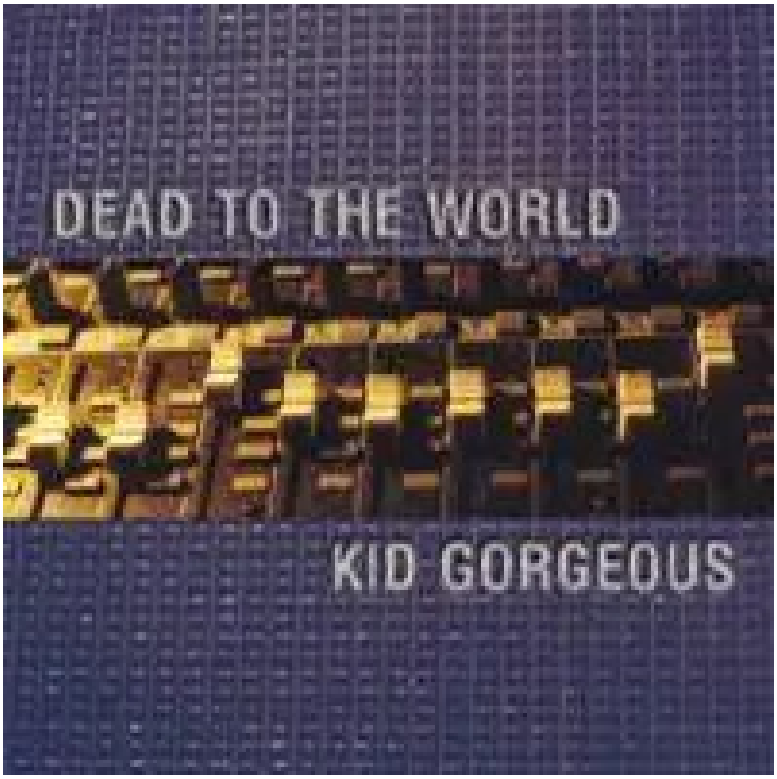
From Here On sent us a CD-R, looking for a label, but by the time we got around to writing them about it, they'd already broken up. Some of those guys went on to form Between the Buried and Me, and they signed to Victory, selling a ton of records. But they said we could use a song, and the song we picked was absolutely crushing. There are so many great songs on that record. The Swarm track, Lament, is my favourite song they ever recorded, and the Subsist track is an epic metal masterpiece. The Chokehold song was ancient, and pretty bad to be honest, but a lot of people liked it and we got a lot of letters about how happy people were to hear them record a Breakdown song. Chris only gave us that so we could sell more CDs, and we appreciated it. Europeans love Chokehold, and they ordered the record like crazy. We got money orders from all over the place because of that song. I know Chris hated the song, and Jeff Beckman was disgusted with it, but it helped us a lot. We also wanted a new SeventyEightDays song, or an unreleased one, but they had already broken up, and they didn't have anything in the vault, so Chris gave us a previously released one, as the Canvas EP was already out of print, and it was the title track and the best song on that CD.

The Dead Season, Chore, and Sinclaire songs are out of place on what is basically a metal record, but I love those songs. They were well-recorded flawless rockers. Sinclaire signed to Sonic Unyon shortly after that, and Chore got an offer to demo some songs for Revelation Records because of their song, but they stuck with Sonic Unyon. They didn't like hardcore and they weren't a hardcore band. But they are one of my favourite bands, and they deserved to be much more successful than they were. As a side note, they recently

reunited, just for fun, and played their two biggest shows ever – opening for Alexisonfire and Wintersleep.

I did the layout for the compilation with Sandy McIntosh at Sonic Unyon, and it took a long time. I wasn't sure what to do with it, but we had a lot of ideas and we finally came up with something we were happy with. Brendan was in Guelph, e-mailing suggestions, and we mastered the record with my friend Toby on his computer in his parents' attic. It was all totally DIY. We did everything ourselves with that record. Everything. We had a record release show at the two-day Rocktober festival in Oakville at a community centre. Many bands on the compilation played that show, doing the songs from the record, and I think we sold 150 of them in two days there – maybe even more. We sold out of it quickly. We ordered 1000, but ended up with 1120, and we sold every single one of them. We thought about repressing it, but so many of the bands had released the songs, or had plans to release the songs, on records of their own, so as much as we would have liked to keep the CD in print, it just didn't make sense.

But, at this point, the distributors we had were working really well for us, and we were lucky to know so many honest people. Tim and Mark at Sonic Unyon hooked us up with a pressing deal that saved us a lot of money, and we were fortunate to know them too. We ended up renting an office in their building – they gave us a huge break on the rent – and we shared it with Goodfellow Records. My parents were happy I was moving all of those boxes out of our basement, and Brendan's parents had stuff stashed away at their place too. Chris and I started working at Sonic Unyon around then as well. At the time, it seemed like we lived in that building. We worked at Sonic Unyon during the day and at our own labels at night, helping each other with whatever we could. And Brendan was there on the weekends working away too. We had a lot of fun together doing that stuff.



RSR005 – Dead to the World & Kid Gorgeous split, 2000



Flyer advertising RSR005, Dead to the World & Kid Gorgeous split



Flyer advertising RSR005, Dead to the World & Kid Gorgeous split

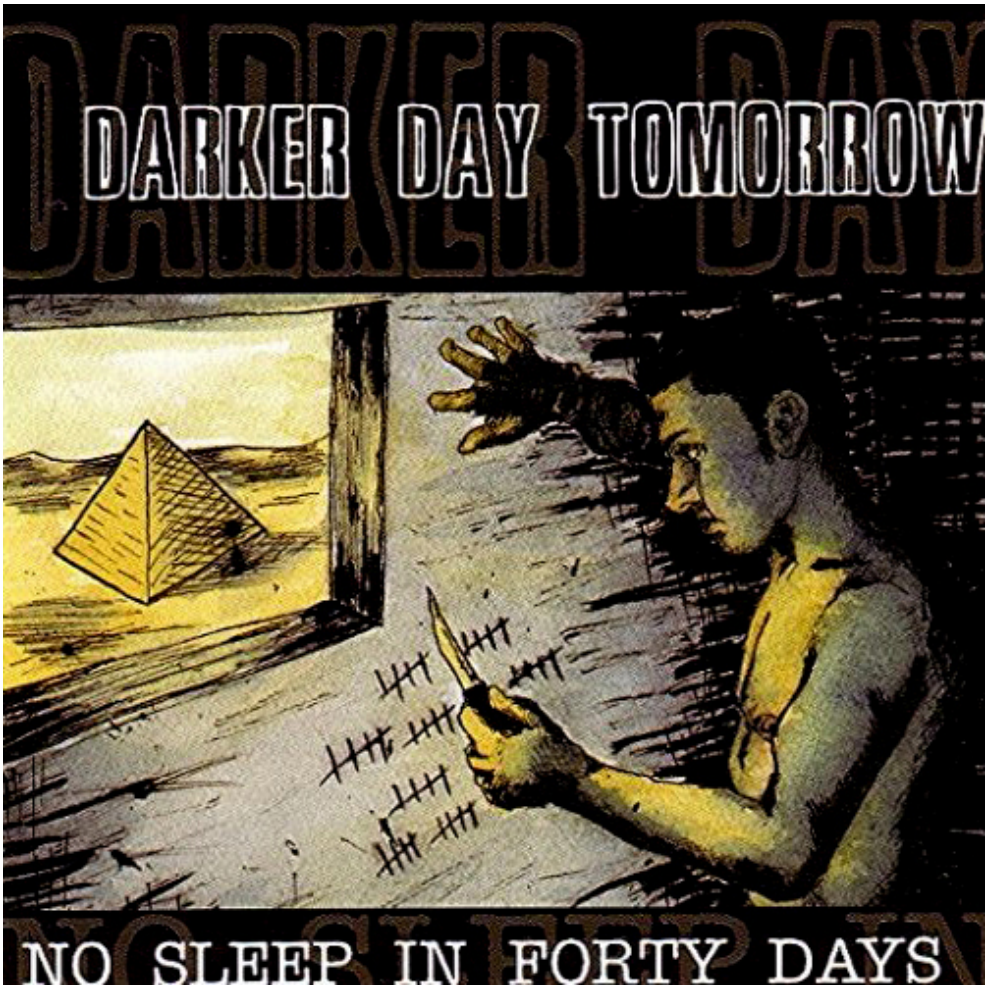
-Two bands from the compilation, Kid Gorgeous and Dead to the World did a split for Redstar in 2000. How was this split received and how did it compare to the Avarice/Confine split? I also read that there was supposed to be a special edition repress of this split in 2001 that featured an additional song from each band, was this ever released?

That CD was another successful one. We ordered 1000, and I think we got 1100 or so. We sold all of them. It was well received. It got good reviews in all of the magazines that reviewed it. I'm not sure how to compare it to the Avarice/Confine split CD. I did the layout for this one again, again working with Sandy, and I took a lot of photos for it, so it was more in-house, in terms of my involvement with it. Fred Betschen played a part in it, as with the Avarice/Confine split. He mastered the record, and he did a great job with it. He also recorded the Dead to the World songs. Kid Gorgeous recorded their half with Doug White at Watchmen Studios, who'd also worked with some heavy hitters: Another Victim, Buried Alive, Every Time I Die, Disciple. The record sounded slick. Both producers were always good. You could depend on them to deliver a quality recording. We were pleased with the way everything came together with that CD.

Kid Gorgeous was a solid band, and Brendan and I liked them a lot, but they didn't get many shows outside of their area, until much, much later, and by then they'd already replaced their drummer twice, and their vocalist once, and I think a guitar player or bassist – or maybe both. It's a shame too, because they had the chops to be a bigger band. But, I have to tell you, my favourite experience from that record, and from running Redstar, was getting to know Mike Jeffers, the drummer from Dead to the World. He played drums in Union before Dead to the World, so he was no stranger to touring and to working hard. He is a true hardcore kid through and through. His work ethic is incredible. They toured behind

that split CD non-stop. They played everywhere and anywhere they could. Every weekend they were off someplace. They sold more records for us than any other band we had on our label. I mean, we always sold out of everything we pressed, but they sold a lot on their own, aside from what we moved through selling records at shows, through our distributors and through mail orders. It was a big help to us at the time. If every band was made up of guys like Mike Jeffers, running a label would be a piece of cake. He was always appreciative of whatever we did for them. We did a lot for that record. We did a lot of press, a lot of radio, and we advertised it in a lot of magazines. It was distributed by every major distributor at the time, and by a lot of minor ones. You could get it anywhere. Mike found it in huge record chains all over the place when they were touring. He was so pleased with that. But, sadly, not everyone is like Mike. So many bands think it's up to you to sell their records, and not up to the band at all. Their job stops at recording. Once the record comes out, it's up to you. What nonsense. And then they're on you to print posters for them, and stickers, and shirts, and who knows what other stuff, but they don't tour, they don't play many shows, and you can't argue with them. What's the point? This always frustrated Chris at Goodfellow too, because Chokehold was in a van every time they had the chance. It paid off for them. It's sad that Dead to the World couldn't maintain a solid line-up. They had three or four different vocalists, and I don't know how to even guess at how many guitarists and bassists they'd replaced before Mike finally packed it in. When their LP came out on Stillborn Records, the label run by Jamey Jasta from Hatebreed, they got a lot of good press, and they could have been a bigger band than they were if they'd just been able to keep it together. Poor Mike. He had a chance with that band, but he couldn't keep people working as hard as he did. And we certainly knew what that felt like.

About your last question, we may have planned a special edition of that record, but I’m not sure we would have actually gone forward with it. My memory of this is hazy at best. I think Dead to the World had already broken up, and Mike had already formed his new band, Herod, by that time. Kid Gorgeous had already signed to Uprising Records, and they were going to do a big tour for their new CD, so perhaps we thought they might have sold more of our CDs if we re-released it, but I can’t imagine we would have done that. We might have re-pressed the original version of the record so they could take it with them, but I’m not sure that we would have done even that. We were already working on the new Darker Day Tomorrow CD by that point. I assume Kid Gorgeous would have recorded any new songs they had for their Uprising CD. We may have floated around the idea of including each band’s songs from The Sound and the Fury compilation on an updated version of the split CD, but that would have meant that each band would have had to re-do the vocals on those songs with their new vocalists, as both bands had already replaced them by this time, and to include a song from each band with a different singer than the ones featured on the original version of the CD would have been terribly confusing for any listener. We also would have had to make a new master plate for the CD, and we would have had to make new films for new artwork, so although I think we may have talked about doing that, I’m not sure it would have made financial sense to do it. Especially with Dead to the World dead to the world..



RSR006 – Darker Day Tomorrow “No Sleep in Forty Days”, 2000

-“No Sleep in Forty Days” was the only full length album (apart from the indie band) released by Redstar. Was there a special approach to this?

> Yes, it was our only full-length album. Darker Day Tomorrow had already released a short EP on Alone Records. It had three songs on it, and a short interlude. Brendan and I liked the idea of split CDs because, essentially, you got a full-length record with two bands on it for only a few more bucks than an EP. When you got an EP, it was nice because bands made sure they recorded their best songs for it – think of Burnt by the Sun’s self-titled EP, or Dillinger Escape Plan’s Under The Running Board, or Disciple’s No Blood, No Altar Now – great records, but, unfortunately, an EP was always nearly the same price as a full CD, and it was

only half the length. Plus, from a label point of view, if you released a split CD and one band broke up, you still had one band to sell the CD for you – which wasn't possible with an EP. And, in hardcore, bands were breaking up all of the time, so this made a lot of sense to us. You can see what I mean from the other split CDs we did…

But getting back to Darker Day Tomorrow, their first CD was actually only their demo tape re-released on a CD with new artwork, so they were looking to do a full-length. I'd known Tony from when he played drums in Another Victim, and I bumped into him at a few shows in Buffalo and Syracuse, and he gave me a copy of their demo. I really liked it, and I thought it would be great to work with him, because he was another guy like Mike Jeffers – he'd been around the scene for a long time and he knew about working hard. He'd played in a lot of bands and he knew the ropes. He is another stand up guy. Always appreciative of everything you did for his band. He told me that he thought we worked his band harder than any other label he'd worked with before, and he'd worked with some big ones before us in his other bands. That was a huge compliment. The other guys in his band were creative, and they were really smart, socially aware people. They had great ideas for the record. They were professional to work with. They did an intro and an outro on the record, which was pretty cool for a hardcore record. We loved the songs on that CD and it was a progression from the Damnation-esque songs they had on their demo, although you could obviously still hear that influence behind what they were doing. That seemed to echo in a lot of what was going on in Syracuse then. But on No Sleep in Forty Days they used a lot of different guitar effects, probably inspired by Earth Crisis I'd imagine, and we were thrilled when we got the CD-R. I mentioned before that Doug White recorded it, and we were happy, as always, with his work.



Flyer advertising RSR006, Darker Day Tomorrow “No Sleep in Forty Days”



Flyer advertising RSR006, Darker Day Tomorrow

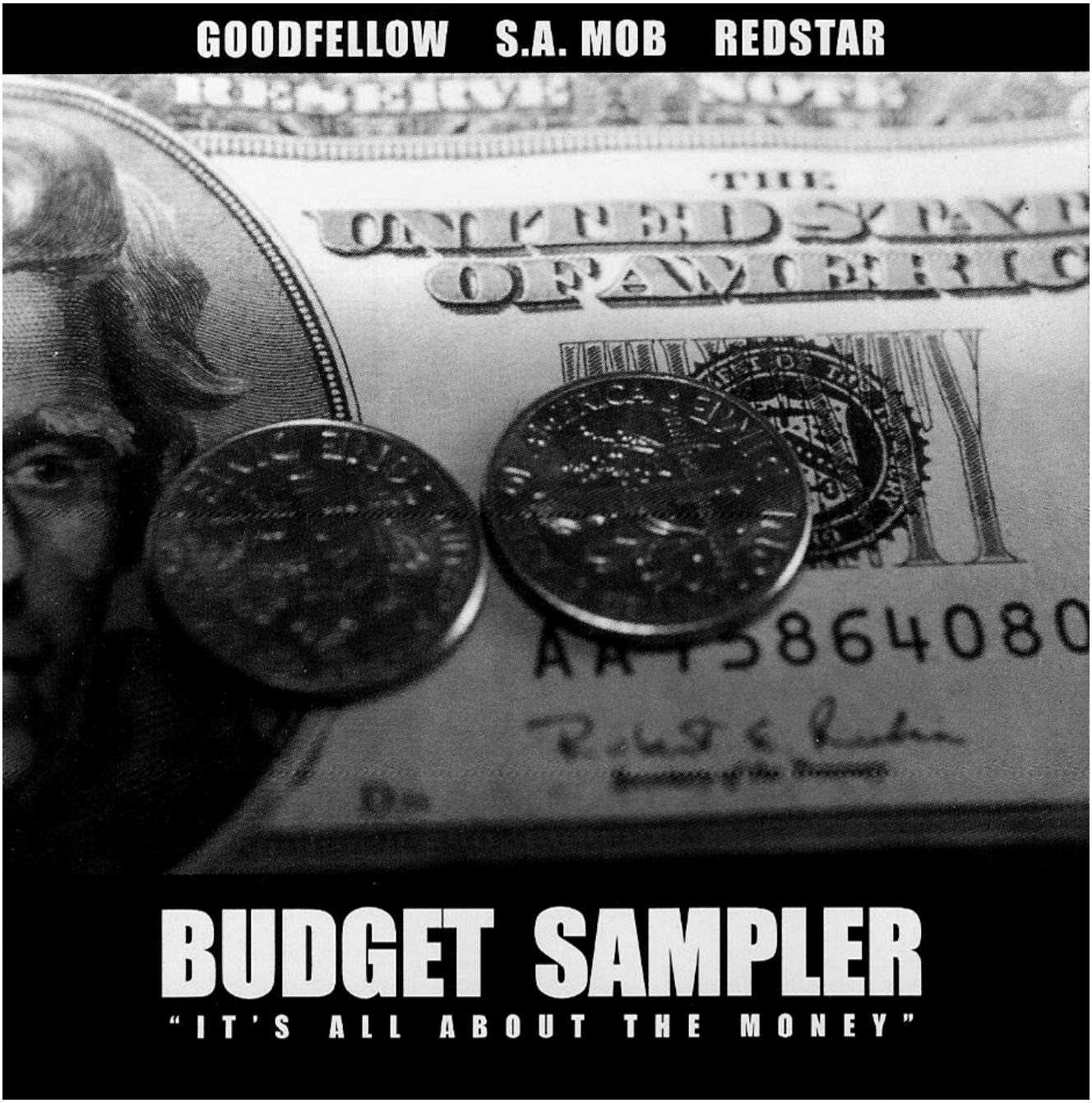
“No Sleep
in Forty
Days”

-I read that you had t-shirts made for this release? Was it the only merch made, and was this the only time you made merch for a band on the label?

In terms of your second question, we did make shirts for them for this record, and we made stickers and posters too. We pushed that record harder than we’d pushed anything before it because people knew these guys were in good bands before, so they were interested in seeing what their new band was doing, and we knew they would be. Distributors ordered more consignment copies of that record than any of our previous records, and they sold them more quickly than any of our others. I think the music on the record was a huge reason for this. They were older guys and experienced musicians. We also knew a lot more about what WE were doing by this time, and our contacts were well-established and we had more of them by then. Dead to the World sold way more records on the road than Darker Day Tomorrow did, but Darker Day Tomorrow sold more records through our distributors. But DDT also played some big shows with bigger bands, and the word got out about them too. Mike Jeffers talked us up to Tony at a show in Buffalo, and he called me afterward, saying, “You have to fucking sign these guys. They played here last night and they were great.” So that was that. In any case, we sold out of their initial pressing of 1200 copies, but they ended up breaking up pretty quickly after their next record came out on Lifeforce Records, so there wouldn’t have been any point in repressing that one. Do you see a pattern developing?

Back to the second part of your question, we had made a few t-shirts for Avarice, but we didn’t make merch for Kid Gorgeous or Dead to the World, aside from some giveaway stickers promoting the CD. Dead to the World made their own merch because Mike knew their band would make more money

that way. And they did. They had so many different shirt designs, and all different kinds of merch. That was all Mike. The business-minded hardcore kid with the work ethic to do it all. I'm not sure if Kid Gorgeous had their own merch when that CD came out. I'm sure they must have had some at some point, but I honestly don't remember. We also made shirts and stickers for the label. We sold a lot of those shirts. I don't know how many.



RSR007 – "It's All About the Money" Budget Sampler compilation, 2001

-When and who came up with the idea of the 3-way split-label compilation "It's All About the Money"? Which of the bands on the compilation came from Redstar, and what was the goal with this sampler? The majority of the material was non-exclusive, or was planned to be released by the labels in the future correct?

The compilation you're talking about was a low-budget sampler that we did with Goodfellow Records and Surprise Attack Records from Erie, Pennsylvania. We all came up with the idea together. We'd talked about doing it for a long time, as we wanted to work together on a project. Eric had always distributed our records, and Goodfellow records, in the States, and Chris, Brendan and I had distributed his records here. At the time, we were still looking to get wider exposure for our labels and bands, and we thought selling a cheap sampler CD, charging enough to basically cover our costs, was the best way to do that. It was a CD in a plastic sleeve with a black and white glossy CD insert – the typical one fold CD booklet. It was much cheaper for us to press the CDs and booklets separately and stuff all of CDs into the bags ourselves, so that's what we did. And, yes, it took a long time to do it that way, but it saved us money, so we did it. I did the layout for that with Sandy again, and everyone was pleased with it. I loved how clean and simple it looked. We used photos that a hardcore kid took that he posted on his photography website, and he was happy to have his art on someone's record.

We didn't sell them through our distributors, as mailing them out would have cost us too much. We gave them to our bands to sell, we dropped them off at local record stores, and we sold the majority of them at shows. We sold most of them to people standing in line outside, waiting to get in to see bands play. It's embarrassing to say, but I'll admit that sometimes we didn't even go to the shows at all. We kept boxes of the CDs in the trunk, and if we saw metal

dudes waiting around to get into some show, we'd grab a box and try our luck. It was only two bucks, in Canada that's only one coin, so most people were willing to take a chance on it. It worked well for all three labels – we certainly had more visitors to our websites – and we did sell more records via mail order following its release. The title, It's All About the Money, was a reference to the fact that we were selling them so cheaply, we wouldn't make anything at all by doing it. But it was cheap advertising – better than doing expensive ads in magazines, that's for sure. I can't remember how many we pressed, but I think it was 3000 – a thousand for each label.

All of the songs on that CD were on records that had just come out on our labels, or that were coming out soon. We were excited to have a new Poison The Well song on it, as they were absolutely huge then. Trustkill was cleaning up with their records. I'm sure that's one of the main reasons we sold so many of those sampler CDs. And, the funny thing is, I don't think they ever ended up releasing the 7" they were supposed to release with Eric. I think it was supposed to be a split 7" with Throwdown, actually, but I don't think it happened. The Redstar bands were the ones on our label I've already mentioned, except for The Swarm. We took their song from The Sound and the Fury compilation CD we'd released. They weren't ever on our label, but not for lack of trying. We talked to Chris Colohan about releasing a CD of all of their vinyl-only releases and compilation tracks, but he said he thought Var at No Idea should do that, if anyone was going to do it, and we agreed, as he had done a lot for them, and he had spent a lot of money on The Swarm. But I don't think that CD ever came out either. I wish it would have. I have digitized versions of those songs that I downloaded someplace, but they don't sound very good…



Redstar Records logo, 2001



Redstar Records Sticker. Shirts were also made.



Sticker made by Redstar Records for the never released Dead to the World album “Vengeance in Mine”

-After both splits and the full-length sold out, and both of those compilations doing extremely well, the label ended? How did it end? Were there any releases that were supposed to come out but didn’t?

> The label ended for a number of reasons. The first nail in the coffin was that Brendan’s new band broke up very abruptly. After Avarice and Ignorance Never Settles finished, he formed a new band called Funerary. That was an amazing band. He played drums, Chris from SeventyEightDays/Chokehold was on vocals, Christian McMaster of The Swarm/Left for Dead played guitar, as did R.J. from Avarice/Ignorance Never Settles, and Tom Piriano, soon to be

a founding member of Cursed, played bass. They played metal influenced hardcore. We were listening to a lot of At The Gates, Carcass (Heartwork-era), In Flames, Soilwork, Meshuggah, Converge, and a bunch of other metal bands – and Logan had just signed a similar sounding band, Shogun, to Goodfellow. But Funerary was great. Really technical. But they broke up, and Christian was already playing in Haymaker, so that was that. Brendan was upset. He'd put a lot of work into that band. And the other guys were upset too, especially Chris. He said it was the best band he'd ever been in, and he wrote good lyrics for those songs. I know he would have loved it if the band kept going. I was disappointed too because Redstar was going to release their first record – it was going to be a five or six song EP – and then they were going to see where that took them. They probably could have done a record for any label back then. They had the talent, that's for sure. Obviously that didn't end up happening. Redstar also had plans to release a full-length CD for Rise Over Run, who'd just released a split CD with Society's Finest on Goodfellow (Chris already had a full release schedule planned and bands he'd committed to, so he couldn't do it for them), but we didn't have the drive to do anything after Funerary broke up, and they were fine with that. They ended up releasing that CD on Ironclad Records, which was run by one of the guys in Unearth, so it was probably better for them anyway. They also broke up soon after.

Around this time, I stopped working full-time at Sonic Unyon because I got a full-time job teaching English and History, and that job, between preparing lessons and marking papers, left very little time for anything else. I'd always wanted to teach, and I wanted to do a good job with that, and if you want to do a good job doing that, you have to put in a lot of time. I certainly did. Brendan was on his way, or soon would be on his way, to do his Masters Degree in Engineering at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, and he

was going to have his hands full with that. As you can probably imagine, that's a pretty tough task. We talked about the future of the label, and it seemed like it made sense to pack it in, but I guess we didn't conclusively decide that. I sent out an e-mail to everyone we'd worked with letting them know that we were calling it a day, and then Brendan sent me an e-mail saying he was planning to continue the label on his own. I didn't have a problem with that. I was happy he was going to do it. It was his label at the beginning, after all. He wrote me a cheque from his line of credit for the small balance I had on my line of credit, and he started to make plans for the next release, which was going to be a CD for a band called At The Mercy of Inspiration, which played music inspired by the same bands Funerary was inspired by – Tom from Funerary was also in that band – but Brendan didn't end up releasing their CD. I'm not sure who released it. I think someone did. Brendan ended up selling the rest of the stock we had, and that was the end of the label. It made sense to stop then. Chris was doing really well with Goodfellow Records by that time, and he had a lot of releases planned, and we were happy for him. We still went to shows and we helped Chris whenever and however we could, and I still worked here and there at Sonic Unyon in the summer and on the odd weekend when they needed someone to work in the store, so we were still contributing to things. I still did shows occasionally, including a few for our friends in The Swarm when they started Cursed, and for Tony from Darker Day Tomorrow when he started The Funeral, and for Mike Jeffers when he started Herod. It was great to help old friends. Why wouldn't you?