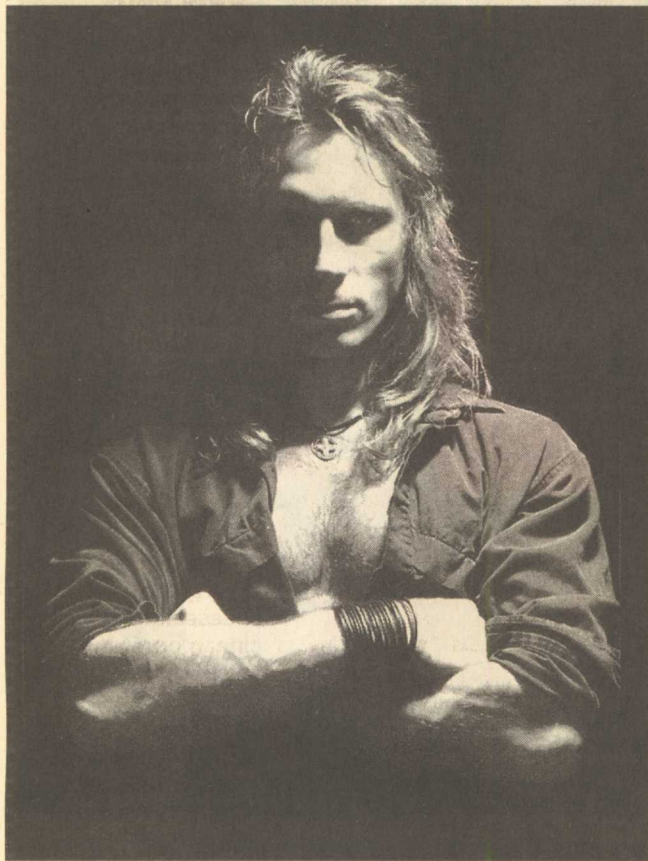


pd Q&A

TEN MINUTES WITH . . . Joseph Vargo



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY JOSEPH VARGO

Goth entrepreneur Joseph Vargo began his business with the intent to sell his prints, like the one here called "Born of the Night." It has now grown to include T-shirts, calendars and tarot cards.

Gothic empire

For the past 20 years, Cleveland resident **Joseph Vargo** has been bringing his original and compelling Gothic visions to life in a variety of media. This world-renowned fantasy artist is a Renaissance man with talents that encompass art, music and literature. Vargo's chilling, mist-shrouded world of forlorn ghosts, brooding vampires, living gargoyles and other creatures of the night have earned him a large and loyal following with fans from every corner of the globe, including The Plain Dealer's **Tim Bennett**.

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When did your interest in Gothic and dark fantasy artwork begin?

I've been fascinated with Gothic art, literature and film all my life. Ever since I can remember, I have drawn all sorts of strange, monstrous creatures. I guess I never outgrew it.

You created your own publishing company, Monolith Graphics, which focuses on this dark style of art and music. What was your motivation?

I founded Monolith Graphics in 1991 as an outlet to distribute prints of my Gothic artwork. The business prospered and eventually expanded to include T-shirts, calendars and tarot cards. My partner, Christine Filipak, and I have also operated our own art gallery, produced books and music CDs and for the past five years have published Dark Realms, a nationally distributed magazine of Gothic culture.

What type of books have you published?

My art book, "Born of the Night," was recently released by Monolith Graphics. The book features more than 100 of my most popular works. The illustrated anthology, "Tales From the Dark Tower," contains 13 short stories from various writers including

myself and Christine Filipak. The stories revolve around a central theme concerning vampires and other lost souls who haunt an ancient castle with a sinister curse.

What made you decide to produce music, and how did your band Nox Arcana form?

After launching the career of the local band Midnight Syndicate by producing and directing two Gothic soundtracks with them, I formed a new band, Nox Arcana, with a talented young composer, William Piotrowski. At the young age of 15, he had already written and produced a musical score for "Ghosts of Ohio," a video documentary about Cleveland's original "Ghost Whisperer," Mary Ann [Winkowski]. Together William and I write and perform all our own material and have taken our symphonic music and concepts to new artistic heights.

Each of the Nox Arcana releases has been a concept album. What are some of the themes you have explored with your CDs?

With our first CD, "Darklore Manor," we explored a haunted Victorian mansion with a sinister history. Our second CD, "Necronomicon," was inspired by horror writer H.P. Love-

craft's Cthulhu mythos. Since then we have taken our listeners to the ruins of a haunted cathedral for our holiday release, "Winter's Knight." Our latest album, "Transylvania," was inspired by Bram Stoker's classic novel "Dracula" and explores the mysterious land of vampires, witches and werewolves.

Halloween must be your favorite time of year. How do you celebrate this holiday?

Yes. I love Halloween, and although it's our busiest time of year, I always make some time to put together a really elaborate murder-mystery style theme party. Each year's event centers on a different horrific theme, such as a haunted asylum, a witch's curse, an evil toymaker or a mad scientist's laboratory. I have even based some mysteries on the works of Poe and Lovecraft. This year's theme deals with a team of psychics who must investigate a mysterious mansion once owned by a ghoulish cult.

Where do you market your merchandise?

Aside from the Monolith Graphics Web site, our merchandise can be found in regional shops such as Ambergram, Jinxed, the Odyssey and the Exchange, as well as Hot Topic stores and Amazon.com.