

# ASGTHS



OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

## ASSASSIN BIOGRAPHY ENGLISH

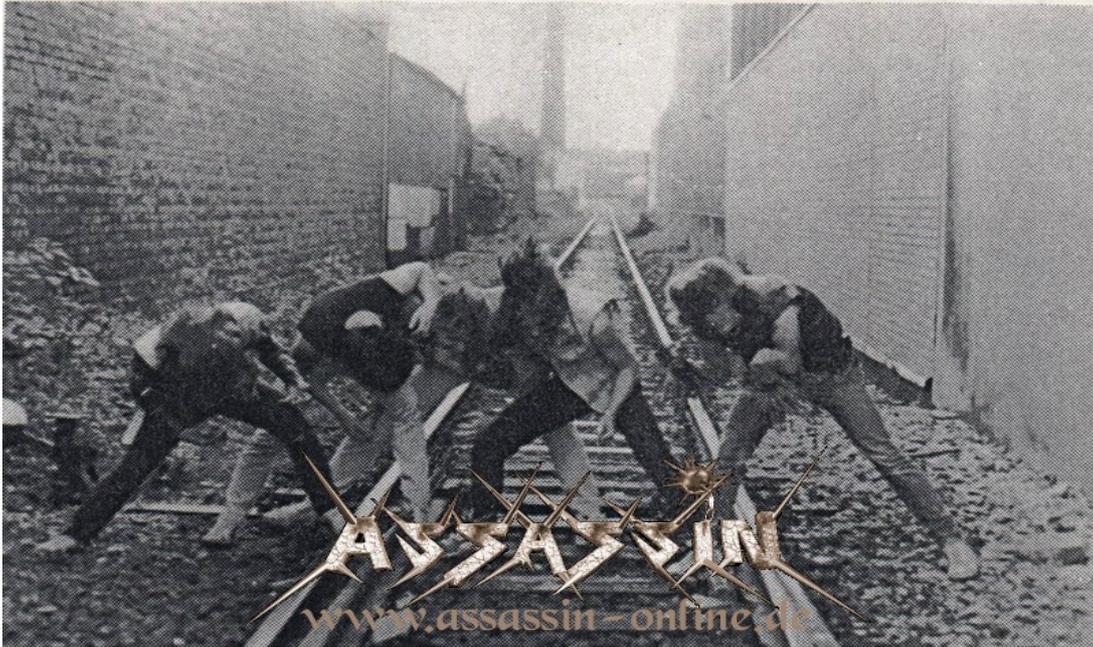
### The beginning...

In 1982, two diehard metal fans, Michael Hoffmann (guitar) and Markus 'Lulle' Ludwig (vocals) totally into bands like Venom, Metallica and Slayer decided to form a band. They called their new project "Satanica" (what could be better?!). Shortly thereafter, Lulle met Dinko "Fasthand" Vekic (guitar) and their third metal maniac was found however, the band didn't own any equipment apart from Dinko's guitar & a 10W Mini-transistor. The three met up at Dinko's and first riffs were exchanged but that's about as far as it got. After pondering their dilemma, they came up with a brilliant idea to meet up at a music instrument shop and "test" the guitars. As they sought out the best available guitars (2 Gibsons) they plugged them into the Marshall tower on display. Technically, you could say that was their first band rehearsal with a proper sound. They continued these "rehearsals" at various shops around town. After repeatedly being kicked & thrown out of all the shops, they soon ran out of shops where they could rehearse.

In the meantime, Michael had to serve his duty in the German military so they recruited a replacement named "Mettmann" who was terrible especially covering Judas Priest's "Breaking the Law". Mettmann was released of duty and replaced by Juergen 'Scholli' Scholz after he answered an ad placed in the newspaper for a guitarist.. Still in the formidable stages of their band, Psycho/Danger (the drummer with two nicknames) took his place behind the drums and Lulle changed from vocals to bass guitar. Last but not least, Robert Gonnella joined the band on vocals. It was only logical that Robert would sing since his English was better than the rest of the other members and he had a hell of a shout & scream!

Next came the ever daunting task of coming up with a band name. It eventually came down to "Assassin" and "Sadist" with "Assassin" coming out on top. With the name out of the way, it was time to start composing. In the cellar of a retirement center, Assassin started work on their first songs, head-banging while composing and working on their tunes. After outgrowing that space, the band moved to a new rehearsal room at Duesseldorf's Ronsdorfer Strasse (famous Duesseldorf rehearsal rooms). Taking over the old "Warlock" room (popular, local 80s Duesseldorf band fronted by Doro Pesch), Assassin suddenly were neighbors with

“Deathrow”, “Sadist”, “Voelkermord”, “Warrant” and more. It was quite a metal community and the D.D.T. (Duesseldorf's Death Thrasher) was formed. Their rehearsals started to become small gigs just by propping the door open and anyone who passed by was invited in to bang along especially if they had stuff to smoke or beer! Through 1985 the band rehearsed regularly and composed their first songs.



### **The origin of “Assassin” and why it was chosen as band name**

In 1983/1984, Psycho/Danger was the one who first suggested the name Assassin. In Anglo-American terms, Assassin means a “politically motivated murderer”. The Assassins (arabic “Hashish consumers”. French = “murder”) were members of a political, Islamic, Shiite secret organization in 11A.D. who also acted in their own self interest for power. Disliked kings and leaders were kidnapped or assassinated and the reward for the “soldiers” was hashish which gave them a euphoric feeling of paradise which was a strong motivator for each Assassin.

The band chose “Assassin” as it's band name for it's shock value, the threatening nature of the word and it being easy for metalheads to remember. Another good reason was that Assassin starts with “A” so in alphabetically arranged lists, Assassin is always mentioned in the beginning.

Unknown to the band at the time, there were already two American bands in the early 80s who were also called “Assassin”. Subsequently, it was found out that there were more bands that existed with the same name.

A French rap band and a glam metal band from Taiwan to name a couple.

### **Musical influences of the band like the “Speed of light”**

Everyone has their own opinions about Assassin’s music but everyone can agree that the majority of the songs are very fast; some over 200 beats per minute!

At the time, each band member was listening to current British and American metal popular between 1981 to 1984. Venom, Slayer, early Metallica, Exodus, etc... as well as hardcore punk bands like Discharge, GBH, Exploited, etc... had very fast guitar riffs and heavily influenced their sound. They also listened to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (Motorhead, Iron Maiden) as well as AC/DC, Trust, Kiss, Sex Pistols and Pink Floyd.

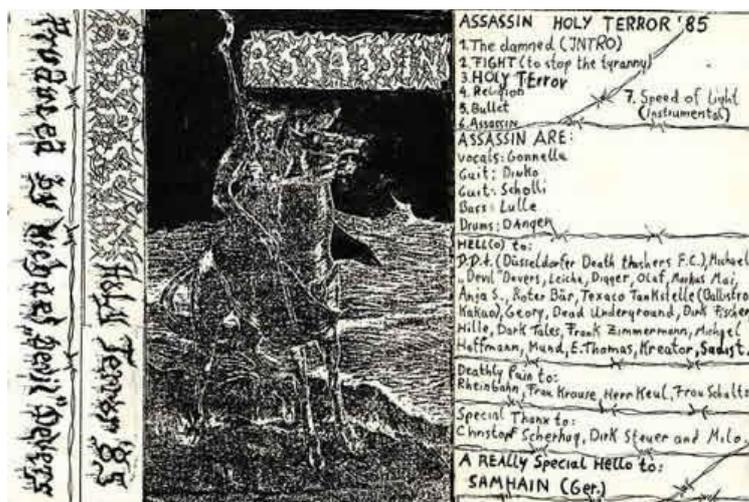


### **1985: The first Demo “Holy Terror”**

In August 1985, Assassin recorded their first demo “Holy Terror” with a tape recorder. They sold over 500 cassette copies around the world. It caught the attention of American record label, King Classic, from Waukegan, Illinois. King Classic wrote a letter to the band offering a record deal in March 1986. They decided to turn down the offer and wait for an offer from a German label which would be easier to deal with.

The city of Duesseldorf held a competition for up and coming bands with the winner landing a record deal. Assassin came in last place with only one point given to them by a famous German punk band, “Die Toten Hosen” and Jury member Breiti. (Thanks Breiti !). It was a small set back,

but the band forged on.



### 1986: The second Demo “The Saga of Nemesis”

In April 1986, the band recorded their second demo “The Saga of Nemesis” in a small studio in just three days. The sound quality was much better than the first demo with help musically and monetarily from Warlock's producer, Rudy Graf (thanx, Rudy)! The Saga of Nemesis demo sold between 600-700 cassette copies which was competitive to other elite, German Thrash bands.

The music can be described as fast guitars, groovy doom parts and rough vocals which helped the band to define it's original sound, style and song writing evident in the instrumental song “Speed of light” which is full of tension and the powerful beginning of “Forbidden Reality”.

The band continued to rehearse regularly and strived to be a lethal live act. Assassin's debut show was in a castle club “Mephisto” to an audience of over 200 headbangers. Opener that night was “Voelkermord”, a punk band with German lyrics, which members were comprised of Assassin and Deathrow members. More live shows followed to ethuastic crowds of the 80s.

In September 1986, SPV/Steamhammer offered the band a record deal which was signed by the band and record label.



### **1986/1987: The debut album “The Upcoming Terror”**

It was recorded in November 1986 at Karo Studios. It was produced by Kalle Trap and was released in January 1987. It was received with great reviews almost everywhere. Robert's original, socially critical lyrics would prove to be timeless even 15 year's after the album's release.

In “The Upcoming Terror”, fans were delighted to discover super fast guitar riffs integrating speed & thrash metal, rock, punk, science fiction and utopian themes into one. It was highlighted by the great cover of a future tank painted by Paul R. Alexander.

After the release of the album, many gigs were booked from Hamburg to Rotterdam and all parts in between and beyond. In February 1987, Assassin had a very special gig in Duesseldorf's Tor 3 Club. Anthrax was scheduled to play with Celtic Frost and Crimson Glory but their drummer broke his leg so Assassin was recruited to be the opener band replacing Anthrax. Backstage, Dinko was approached by Celtic Frost's Tom Warrior to ask to what key the guitars were tuned (C, D or D flat) which Tom Warrior misunderstood as “can you tune my guitar” ..lol. Maybe Tom was just tired.... During Assassin's show, three quarters of the of the 1,200 strong crowd stormed the stage resulting in the drums being wrecked twice and the whole PA system had to be shut down as too many maniacs were celebrating with Assassin on the stage. It scared Crimson Glory into thinking it was one of the most violent gigs they had ever witnessed. Following Assassin, Crimson Glory's singer was welcomed to the stage by a towel thrown full force to his face by someone from the crowd. The Upcoming Terror was re-released by “Teicho”, Japan in 1992 and by the

French label “FLG Productions” in 1998.



### New 'old' Assassin line up

Psycho/Danger (drums) was the only member who did not sign the contract with SPV/Steamhammer for personal and professional reasons but agreed to play drums for the album “The Upcoming Terror” as a final act. It’s one of the reasons he’s called 'Psycho' on the album and not 'Danger' as on previous demos. The band worried they wouldn’t be able to find a good drummer to replace him.

Frank Nellen, a great & talented drummer, was finally found in March 1987 and the worries were gone but then suddenly Scholli announced his plans to depart the band for personal reasons. Actually, Scholli skipped out on many rehearsals while Frank brought along original Assassin member, Michael Hoffmann (who finished his military service) and who used Scholli's equipment when Scholli was not there. Then one day Scholli came and took all his equipment and left the band. Some people say that Scholli's short hair was also a reason but that is questionable since many modern metal bands have members with short hair....

With the new line up, Robert (vocals), Dinko (guitar), Michael (guitar), Lulle (bass) and Frank (drums) the band rehearsed nearly daily and intensely on new material for the second album “Interstellar Experience”. They played their first live show with the new line up on

May 23, 1987 in Pforzheim, Germany.



### **Change of Management**

In mid 1987, the band decided to stop working with their first manager, Anja Moeller who did a lot for the band (Thanx, Anja)! They started working with new manager, Donald Campell, who became a new partner. In the beginning it seemed like the right choice but in the end that decision was a mistake. Anja Moeller was not a professional manager but she was loyal to the band until the end which Donald Campell was not. Donald's intentions were to just make a quick buck using the band and they parted ways. After the Assassin re-union in 2002 until the end of 2009, Rudy Schmitz (good friend & chief editor of the legendary 'Metal Warriors' fanzine) managed the band with all his heart. For personal reasons he decided to part with the band which is very regrettable. Currently, the band is still looking for the right management and hope with the newest album "Breaking the Silence" a good and loyal manager will sign with the band. In the meantime, the band members have to deal with the management duties.



### **1988: The second album: “Interstellar Experience” and the first tour**

In January 1988, the band travelled to West-Berlin (near Checkpoint Charlie) to record the new album “Interstellar Experience” at Music Lab Studios which became one of the best thrash metal albums from Germany. In a 2009 “Rock Hard” magazine, there was a special 80s thrash metal story and “Interstellar Experience” was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> place for thrash metal of all time from Germany. The producer was legendary Harris Johns of Kreator & Voi Vod fame. The album consists of murderous riffs, the sound is over distorted but still clear and a great force of speed power. Lyricwise there were serious topics but there was also the fun factor with the songs like “Junk Food” (the band’s favorite food), “Baka” (stupid in Japanese) and “AGD” a secret song featuring band members from Kreator, Destruction, Sodom and Deathrow.

After the release a few months later, Assassin booked their first tour with the “Death Angel” from California and “Rumble Militia” from Bremen. Some of the antics from that tour were when Destruction came to the show in Tuttlingen and later in the hotel rooms there was brown, yellowish smoke. Also, there was a show in Eupen, Belgium and everything that could go wrong, went wrong, There was only one guitar amp and for the other they offered an old radio. The effects pedals got

stolen in the beginning of the show. Imagine the sound... The guitar belt screw broke off the guitar and with no replacement, Micha had to sit most of the show. The band got the worst of the worst reviews for that show. According to Assassin, the band was only able to give 50% because of the circumstances but the Eupen show did not give the band a setback, the band looked forward to recording a 3<sup>rd</sup> album.

In 1992, 1998 and 2008, "Interstellar Experience" was re-released under different labels and in the summer of 2011, SPV/Steamhammer will re-release Interstellar Experience as well as the first album, "The Upcoming Terror".



### **Another line up change and Assassin Demo III**

In November 1988, Dinko who took part in all demos and records announced his departure from the band. Rehearsing five days a week was way too much for him and it didn't leave him much time to enjoy his philosophical studies (works of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Mainlaender, Cioran) and wanted more time on his own. Plus Dinko was not motivated much anymore, so the band approached Juergen 'Scholli' Scholz (demos and "The upcoming Terror") once again but Scholli declined due to personal problems. Soon 'Olaf' was found. With Olaf the band recorded a 3<sup>rd</sup> demo with three new songs. Two of the three songs were written with Dinko. Olaf did not stay long in the band and after he left, the band decided to continue with just one guitar. It was the first time the band did not play with two lead guitars.

## **1989 The end of Assassin for the time being**

The end for Assassin came in April 1989. Almost daily the members met at their rehearsal room to work on new material. One day the band discovered the steel door of their rehearsal room was broken and most of the band equipment was stolen. The thieves were never found by Assassin or the police. Neither the band members nor the band management had an insurance policy for their equipment since a lot of credit at the bank was needed in order to get an equipment policy which none of them had at the time . Also, the band had to pay back SPV/Steamhammer money that was fronted to them. To top it off, the band's morale was at an all time low so the band decided to take a hiatus.



## **1990 - 2001 Each Assassin member in his own action & first trials for a re-union**

### **Michael Hoffmann:**

In 1989, he joined the band "Sodom". He recorded the album "Better Off Dead" and toured with them all over the world.

In 1991 Micha moved to Bahia, Brasil for 6 years. He worked there as a producer and sound technician for local bands which included Samba (Gang do Samba, Cassia, Zelito, Miranda, etc.) and rock & thrash-/death metal (Catapulta, Mystifier, etc.). He also worked for the theater and live concerts as a sound technician.



### **Frank Nellen:**

Frank joined his friend, Micha, in Brazil after Micha had been living there for a couple of years. They both worked on several music projects and started their families in Brazil. Frank & Micha currently live with their kids in Germany.

### **Dinko Vekic:**

Dinko concentrated on his university studies and devoted time to his major hobby collecting comics. His favorite are US Superheros, horror & science fiction. He also regularly writes a column for professional comic collectors magazines. He's played in retro psychedelic bands "Weired Kids" and Void Forum which Lulle later also joined.

### **Juergen 'Scholli' Scholz:**

Scholli also continued his university studies and continued to make music but not heavy metal. Scholli played in Suspiria (1988-1992), Atmosfear (1992-1994), Secret Discovery (1994-1996) and Syland (1997-2000).

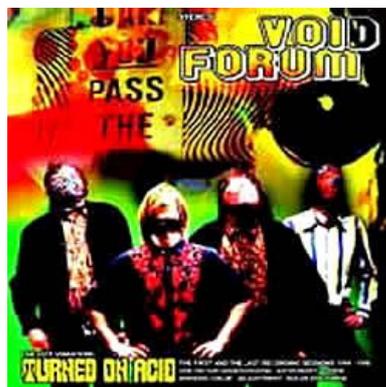
### **Robert Gonnella:**

Vocalist, Rob finished his apprenticeship and worked for a Japanese forwarding company. From 1992 to 1994 he moved to Japan to study Japanese. In 1994, he moved to Beijing, China where he currently resides. He graduated with an MBA from Peking University in 2002 and is running a football club “International Friendship Football Club” (IFFC) where his own team is “Fortuna 94 Beijing”.

In 2006, he formed local band “Raging Mob” with 4 Chinese musicians and released an album in 2009. With Raging Mob, Robert won the best heavy metal singer 2009 award of the Wacken China Competition and in 2010, Raging Mob was voted best heavy metal band 2010 of the Wacken China Competition which qualified for a spot at the big Wacken Open Air 2010. For that gig, the Raging Mob musicians did not get their visas ready on time, so Assassin’s new line up played under “Raging Mob” the Metal Battle show in summer 2010 in Wacken.

### **Markus 'Lulle' Ludwig:**

Lulle finally finished his apprenticeship and joined Dinko in the retro & psychedelic music scene playing in 'Weired Kids' (1993-1995) and Void Forum (1995-1997). Band leader, 'The Doctor’ has since become a good friend of the Assassin members. Today the Doc has current Assassin bassist Joachim in the band. In 2003, Void Forum released an LP (red vinyl) which includes a cd with video clips. One clip was filmed in Duesseldorf No.7 Club by Robert Gonnella who is not mentioned by mistake...lol



### **Psycho/Danger & Olaf:**

After each respective band departure, there was no news from these two dudes. For the band reunion, Psycho/Danger was contacted but he showed no interests in rejoining Assassin.

### **1996 First trials of a re-union of the band:**

In 1996 Rob, Scholli, Dinko and Frank wanted to reform Assassin. Lulle was not interested so bass player, “Baerchen” took the spot. It was a futile attempt because Frank was not serious enough and Danger/Psycho was not interested in loining the band. A new drummer was not found so the idea came to a halt.

In October 1999 a second try was attempted but with Rob, Frank, Baerchen and three lead guitars (Scholli, Dinko & Micha) but it also failed to gain any momentum.



### **2002 The Assassin reunion**

A new enthusiasm for another attempt at a reunion was inevitable. Many friends and fans who actually waited for Assassin to come back, motivated each of the members with a burst of fresh energy and spirit. Successful sales of the re-release of the first 2 albums in different years by various record labels were some of the main reasons for the reunion. It was brought to Assassin’s attention by a friend (thanks, Andre) that there was a re-release of the Axe Killer record in France and the band had to contact the record label and ask for their royalties.

After failed re-union attempts in 1996 & 1999 then in 2002, Assassin

finally managed to get something going with Robert Gonnella (vocals), Dinko Vekic (guitar), Juergen 'Scholli' Scholz (guitar), Baerchen (bass) and Atomic Steiff (drums). With the new line up in 2003, the band celebrated a reunion gig at Duesseldorf's Zakk Club and one week later in Wacken at a reunion show. Shows in various places followed. A demo was produced in Essen but record label was not offered.



### **2004/2005 The Assassin line up changes once more...**

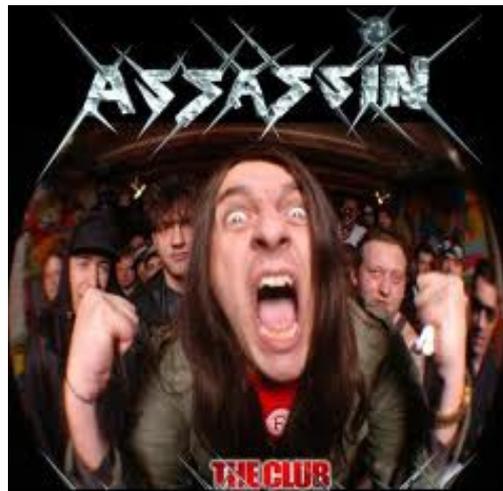
Dinko was on the move back to Croatia and once again the band found itself looking for a replacement. Michael Hoffmann was asked to rejoin and he accepted.

In February 2004, the band parted ways with Atomic Steiff who moved back to Velbert and could not make consistent rehearsals in Duesseldorf as he had done while he worked in Duesseldorf during 2002-2003 which made it convenient for him to make band rehearsals. Frank Nellen once again joined Assassin.

While recording their 3<sup>rd</sup> album "The Club" in 2005, the band realized that Baerchen was unable to play his parts so he left the band in January 2005. Up until the time Joachim joined the band in 2009, there was a total of five bass players who played for Assassin. The one with the most mileage and recorded on "The Club" was Ufo Walter, a great guy and professional musician. Ufo has performed with Buddy Miles (ex-Jimmy

Hendricks & Santana drummer) and Maria Glenn and fit in perfect when he played in his first real Metal band. He is responsible for introducing Bjoern & Joachim to Assassin. Then there were 3 more bass players: Michael Hambloch (Oberhausen 2008), [Stoer-Basser] on the Sodom East European tour and [der kleine Basser vom Niederhein] who played with the band at the Witchhunter Tribute show 2009.

There were 2 shows (Prague and Essen) in 2006 where Assassin used another drummer, \_\_\_\_\_ because Frank was suffering from back pain and was stung by a wolf-wasp.



### **2005 Assassin produced their 3<sup>rd</sup> album “The Club” and first live shows with the new line up**

In January 2005, Assassin went into the studio with following line up: Robert Gonnella (vocals), Michael Hoffmann (guitar), Juergen 'Scholli' Scholz (guitar), Uwe 'Ufo' Walter (bass) and Frank Nellen (drums). All the material for the record was composed between 2002-2005 by the current members and former members Dinko Vekic, Baerchen, Atomic Steiff. The cd was self produced and self released by their own label “AGD records” during spring 2005. With so many people with a hand in making this album, “The Club” had various musical influences and the result was not a pure Thrash Metal sound.

The first live show with the new line up was on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in Roveretto, Italy where the band was headliner of a local festival. 1.000 Headbangers were especially excited to celebrate the older songs “Abstract War”, “Assassin” and “Baka”. Gigs in Germany (Keep it True) and Napoli followed.

## 2006-2008 Assassin live on stage

In 2006 the band toured with Sodom through Eastern Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Germany). 18 of the 20 people on a tour bus were smokers and the 2 non smokers ended up smoking all the smoke filled air on the bus. In 2007 Assassin flew to Russia (Moscow and Nizhni Novgorod) and had 2 great shows performing in front of hardcore Russian Thrashers. In summer 2007 Assassin played at the Obscene Extreme Festival along with various Death Metal and Grindcore bands. It was 8C (46F) degrees cold and it rained throughout the show.





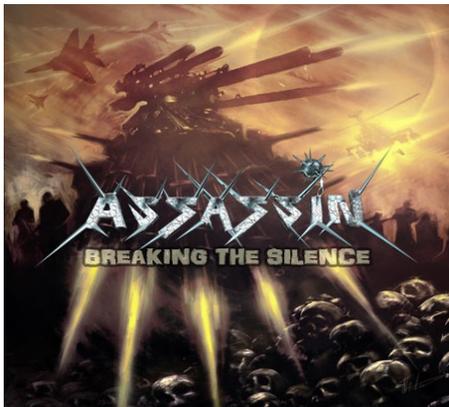
### **2009-2010 Assassin final line up change and first live shows**

Frank Nellen left the band after spending a lot of time being absent from many band rehearsals. Frank still managed to play the drums for the 2009 'Breaking the silence'-Demo which was sent to record companies only. Some songs were available to hear on Assassin's my space page. In addition to looking for a drummer, the band also looked for a permanent bass player. Ufo could only make it when it fit his schedule so he gave the band a couple of musician contacts. Finally Bjoern Sondermann (drums) and Joachim Kremer (bass) joined the band. The band concentrated most of their energy in the songwriting for a 4<sup>th</sup> album but there were shows committed to that needed to be played: In 2009 Assassin had a show in Hagen supporting Destruction who had their live cd release gig. Assassin also took part in the W.O.D. (Way of Darkness) Festival once again with more Death Metal headbangers. In March 2010 Assassin had their first appearance in Asia. They played their first show in the Mao Club in Beijing China in front of a crazy packed crowd, and then Assassin went over to Japan and headlined the "True Metal Festival" with At War (US) and Warparth (England) along with some local bands. The concerts were filmed and a Japanese DVD is planned to be released in 2011.

## **2010-2011 Assassin resign with SPV/Steamhammer and record their 4<sup>th</sup> album “Breaking the silence”**

It took lawyers from both sides (band & record label) about six months to agree on the final wording of the new contract for the label SPV/Steamhammer. It was finally signed in Autumn 2010. In summer 2010 just a day after Robert got married, the band went into the studio along with old school producer and friend Harris Johns to record the new album “Breaking the silence”. In the end, 10 songs were chosen for the album which was to be released on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The album is the outcome of hard work which is a simple “old school 80<sup>th</sup> Thrash at it's best in a great production”. Almost every song is a killer and makes you headbang as soon you listen to it.

That year the band took the chance to re-release their first two albums in a digi-pack they called “Chronicles of Resistance”. In addition to the original old records they put some bonus tracks on it, like “Low Intensity Warfare” which Assassin performed with the old japanese thrashers Casbah.



## **2011 Assassin's “Breaking The Silence” in Europe**

2011 Assassin start touring in Europe to promote their 4<sup>th</sup> album “Breaking The Silence”. They started in Greece to play two concerts in Athens and Thessaloniki.

They went on to play some shows in Kopenhagen/Denmark, Umea/Sweden and the “Ages of Metal”-Festival in Oostrozebeke/Belgium. Assassin finished this year touring with Hirax (Los Angeles/USA) and some local bands in Warschau, Katowitz and Bydgoszcz (Poland).

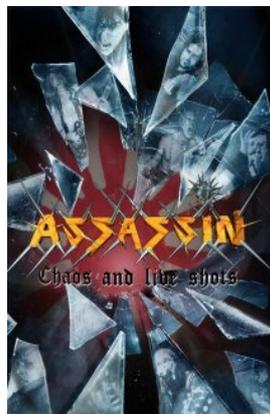
## 2012 Assassin DVD release “Chaos and Live Shots” and “Doomsday Preventin”-Tour Southamerica

The year 2012 started with some recording sessions for the upcoming DVD “Chaos and Liveshots”.

Further on this year the band was asked to play a couple of shows in Brasil, which developed fast to a whole headliner tour all over Southamerica. The band plaid twelve shows in Brasil, Bolivia, Peru, Argentina and Chile. 25 flights and 40000 kilometers had to be done!

Assassin finished this year live playing with two gigs, one in Zeche Carl in Essen/Germany, where they did the support act for Pro-Pain. The second in Mailand to play the Rock Hard-Festival.

After Assassin returned to Düsseldorf, the band finished the productions of the DVD. Once more Harris Johns did the mixing and mastering and in november 2012 “Chaos and live Shots “ was released by Assassin's record company SPV/Steamhammer.



## 2013 Songwriting and recording for the next album

New year, new plans! 2013 just started and Assassin is planning a new album. The band wants to compose and record at the same time in one studio to make the new album more in a concept and to keep the members more in a flow.

Another Southamerica tour is about to be planned and the band is searching for a new booking agency to play more shows in Europe.

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