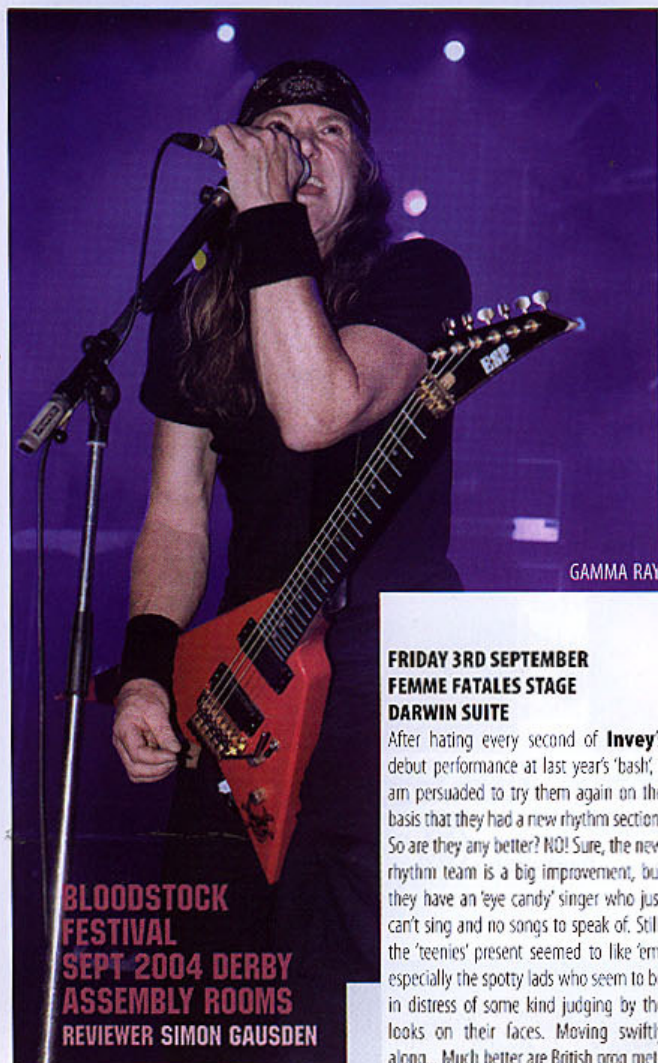


MOVING TARGETS LIVE REVIEWS



GAMMA RAY

**BLOODSTOCK
FESTIVAL
SEPT 2004 DERBY
ASSEMBLY ROOMS
REVIEWER SIMON GAUSDEN**



GUTWORM

The Bloodstock festival, now into its fourth year, has become the biggest and best REAL Metal festival in the UK and this year played host to no less than 25 bands over a two-day period. Juggling time between taking photos for both stages, interviewing bands, doing a 'Live On Air' Radio Broadcast for CMR/Pulse Radio (Sky Channel 913) and everything else that goes with a metal festival meant that I didn't get to see every single band, but here is a festival rundown from my own point of view.

FRIDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER FEMME FATALES STAGE DARWIN SUITE

After hating every second of **Invey's** debut performance at last year's 'bash', I am persuaded to try them again on the basis that they had a new rhythm section. So are they any better? NO! Sure, the new rhythm team is a big improvement, but they have an 'eye candy' singer who just can't sing and no songs to speak of. Still, the 'teenies' present seemed to like 'em, especially the spotty lads who seem to be in distress of some kind judging by the looks on their faces. Moving swiftly along... Much better are British prog metallers **Liquid Sky**, who turn in a very impressive performance and whose singer possesses a fine and strong voice, though a little more confidence wouldn't hurt next time around. The pick of the pack are goth metallers **Season's End**, whose show is mightily impressive. As a unit they shine brightly - their power, poise and passion for what they're doing surely marks them out for bigger things.

MAIN STAGE

I expect a great deal of **Sinergy**, maybe too much, as in the event I find them to be a little disappointing. Kimberly Goss certainly has a powerful voice and has charisma to match, and I would previously have expected any band containing Alexi Laiho (Children Of Bodom) to be amazing anyway... but they aren't. The mix does them few favours, and worse still, after a while I feel as if I am hearing one 45-minute song. A letdown, really. English prog metal gods **Threshold** should (by rights) have ruled the festival outright, but, mysteriously, the sound engineer totally bolloxed the mix up so that they sound dreadful for most of their set. They are amazing to watch, and clearly from their point of view the sound's fine through the monitors... but from most points in the hall? Oh dear! With a back



NOWHERE NEAR THE GARDEN

catalogue to die for, their set is jam-packed full of amazing songs and the joy with which they play them is fantastic to see. Truly a case of grace under pressure. Even more mysteriously, the sound miraculously rights itself to crystalline perfection for headliners **Gamma Ray** - the games people play, eh? Yes, they are entertaining, yes, they are energetic, but when will they get a 'real' singer? Because as great a guitarist as Kai Hansen is, as a singer, he's no Ralf Scheepers. Very assured, very Teutonic, Gamma Ray please a large majority of the crowd, but a lot of people depart well before the end of their set.

SATURDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER DARWIN SUITE

Surprisingly brilliant and previously unknown to me are the curiously named **Nowhere Near The Garden**, a band

who mix emcore with post-grunge, and funk metal with punk - think Nickelback [nooooo! - LM] jamming with Primus and At The Drive In and you're sort of getting there. At face value the Birmingham-based quartet are totally out of place, but for me anyway, run out as surprise victors of the whole weekend. Brilliant! Extreme metalcore act **Gutworm** are good, bloody, bruising fun, their rabid and furious set loudly applauded by a growing audience, it is good... all good. What I can't figure out is why have a My Dying Bride sound-a-like band at the festival [sounds like you're going all Columbo on us, Simon! - LeC], when you could have had the real thing? I'm talking about **The Prophecy**, who are good, proficient, but nowhere near as good as the genuine article. Next... Headliners **Fourwaykill** are a genuine revelation, their high-powered fusion of metal and hardcore is a blisteringly severe kick to the aural gonads (or so to speak). Serving up my favourite chorus of the weekend, I can only repeat their murderous mantra - "Give me the gun... I'll pull the fuckin' trigger!" Excellent.

MAIN STAGE

The single biggest disappointment of the weekend surely has to be **Edenbridge**. Gods, how I'd looked forward to savouring these Austrian's brand of symphonic metal, but what a wet fart their tedium inducing set turns out to be. Vocalist Sabine looks like the proverbial rabbit caught in the headlights, and try as ▶