

Speaking of development, that's also what occurs in phase 5, the last phase of my compositional process. That phase starts when, for example, songs for Rage are so far along that I think they're ready to be introduced to the band in the practice room. I tell them what I imagined for each song, try to play each individual part they way it sounds in my head and try to interpret the images that go through my head so that they're comprehensible and clear to Peavy and André. I do this by playing it out for them and giving them the corresponding explanations. Good ideas, inspirations, and other types of input are completely welcome. I absolutely won't use the recorded demos I made in the earlier phases, because the guys would only be distracted or influenced by the sound levels, recording technique, or the program I used. The danger of misinterpreting what I meant by the song is too great. I want everything to flow intuitively and to use the initial impression as a benchmark for further development. It goes something like this...

The starting point is a raw jam session, during which I give appropriate guidance notes during short breaks. Of ultra importance is finding the right sound, because that's really tough to correct later on. If you haven't gotten the intention of the creator (composer) locked down in your mind, then you can cement til the cows come home. That's why pre-recorded demos tend to nip good ideas in the bud that would come out of loose jam sessions. When I compose something, I do it completely until the last drum break! I show Peavy the melodies within the structure of the song – usually before we meet together in the practice room – and they are already tuned to his singing range, as I always do when I compose for a particular singer. And even if I'm still not sure who the right vocalist for a song will be, I always compose the vocal melodies for a particular voice, vocal range, or vocal color that I have in my head. In any case, Peavy can reasonably extract the singing parts and sing them, often with very silly phantom lyrics, so that André doesn't have to sit around waiting for half a day.

Interview with Peavy Wagner on July 6, 2014

I'd gotten Victor's phone number in 1993 from Bogdan Kopec, the former manager of Rage. Even that far back I would have liked to have called him but unfortunately I had two other guitarists already, and could only come back to Victor in 1999. I still regret today that I waited so long. I was just about to record

our CD "Ghost" in the studio. These two guitarists had evidently decided behind my back that they were more geared toward being a pop band and were in the process of going in a new musical direction. During our recording, they suddenly decided to chuck everything and bail on me. In a panic, I remembered that I had Victor's number. I had since learned what a gifted guitarist he was. I still have this bit of paper. Because Victor was and is also an excellent studio musician, he could play the missing guitar parts in no time and he absolutely killed it. It was obvious to me that I should also ask him to join me on the tour I had already scheduled. Thank God he agreed instantly. Everything was still operating on a temporary basis. We understood each other very well, the tour and our first show in Wacken were also great, and by the end of 1999 Victor became a permanent band member of Rage.

One thing that must be said in advance:

There is likely no one else that has such a comprehensive musical education and the extremely well-trained, skilled craftsmanship at his fingertips that Victor does. The gigantic rift between the best professional musical education in the world, from which Victor comes, and that of our western hemisphere is apparent. We have always complemented one another in some way. Sometimes we met up and found we'd each come to the same idea. The big difference: I played him a few riffs on my acoustic guitar and Victor transformed it into a metal riff storm. His ideas were far more than pure character ideas...they were complete, arranged songs that we gave the finishing touches to in the rehearsal room.

Victor has worked with various producers in his countless studio jobs and learned their work from the bottom up, making it his own bit by bit. His absolute masterpiece as a producer was published in 2013 as the CD "Lingua Mortis Orchestra". We're talking about a production that included more than 100 musicians in addition to Rage and three guest singers. The whole thing took many months, used two orchestras in three countries and four studios. As he had done with prior Rage CDs, in particular with our recording of the "Strings To A Web" CD, Victor borrowed from the complete production of his self-composed orchestral work, "Suite Lingua Mortis". Finally, I want to say one more thing:

In addition to his musical abilities, the likes of which not only the metal world but the entire world has never seen, Victor was and is a gifted teacher of mine. It's not that he gave me lessons but during our many years of work together I have learned so much from him, more than I ever could have possibly imagined... guitar, composition, arrangement – the whole spectrum of music.