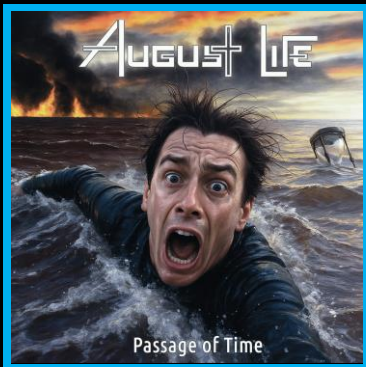




Band: August Life
Album Title: Passage of Time
Label: No Dust Records/
Animated Insanity Records
(USA)
Genre: Progressive Metal



Influences:
Dio, Rainbow, Judas Priest,
Savatage, Dream Theater,
Ayreon, Threshold, Shadow
Gallery, Evergrey, Vanden
Plas, Pagan's Mind and
Pantera

Band Line-Up:
Bryan Ketelaars - Vocals
Gert Nijboer - Guitars
Harry den Hartog - Bass
Guitars
René Kroon - Keys
Richard van Leeuwen -
Drums

CD Track Listing:

- 1- Guidelines
- 2- Blackened Ground
- 3- Passage Of Time
- 4- Constructing Monsters
- 5- Tidal Waves
- 6- Lost In Nothing
- 7- The Water
- 8- Air To Breathe

Hailing from Breda, The Netherlands, we find progressive metallers **AUGUST LIFE**. They have an excellent new eight track album now called 'Passage of Time' which clocks in at around fifty-two minutes long and is the quintet's second full length release.

It is a beautiful late summer day in Holland. After a long and warm summer, it starts getting dark earlier in the evening and the bands singer **BRYAN KETELAARS** has just enjoyed a nice salmon Pasta for dinner as we hook up to discuss all things August Life. August Life kicked off as a project between singer Bryan Ketelaars and

guitarist Gert Nijboer. Bryan remember being at the guitarists birthday party when he dragged him up to his studio to show some rough ideas that he had recorded. "I immediately heard the potential and told him I could throw in some vocal melodies and lyrics. From day one, and still today, Gert and I craft the songs together before sharing them with the rest of the guys," he explains to me.



Every single track on the band's new album 'Passage Of Time' is its own beast. There's no

formula, no cookie-cutter template. "In that sense, maybe we're a little like Queen," he points out. "Every song completely different, yet unmistakably us. I'm convinced we've carved out our own sound, raw and unmistakable," he enthuses.

When Bryan was three years old, he was already obsessed with the violin. "It is such a magical instrument," he smiles. His parents took him to the local music school, but they said he was too young. First, he had to do a year of "General Musical Education for toddlers," and his parents often dragged him there kicking and screaming. "I thought it was ridiculous!!! Toddlers banging away like lunatics on crappy little percussion toys to even crappier children's songs. Total torture," he chuckles. After that, he played the viola for a year, and then he finally I got his hands on the violin. From the age of thirteen to eighteen, Bryan played in a symphony orchestra. Then when he was nine years old, he discovered rock music, and from the age of fifteen onwards, he was fronting various bands. With his second band called Armageddon, who at the time were one of the first heavy bands in the Netherlands, the band recorded a demo that got an amazing response. "That was back in 1987, and just like that, my name as a rock singer was established. After that, I sang in several other bands, always coming close to a breakthrough, but never quite hitting it." Bryan cannot remember a time when he wasn't singing. Whether he was walking down the street, sitting in class, or lying in bed at night, he

was always singing. As a little kid, he was already belting out ABBA songs. Then, in his early teens, he discovered Kiss, Motörhead, and Iron Maiden. "That sound just blew my mind, it was new, raw, and it completely inspired me. My vocal heroes were Rob Halford, Ronnie James Dio, and later Geoff Tate, Jon Oliva, and Midnight from Crimson Glory. Their voices weren't just powerful – their techniques had this almost classical precision, which really clicked with me since I was playing classical music at the same time. That combination of intensity, drama, and power... I was hooked. And of course, the sheer adrenaline of that music was irresistible," he expresses.

Bryan's musical inspirations have always been a mix of two worlds: classical music and heavy rock/metal. "On the classical side: Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Paganini... and even Piazzolla from Argentina. Their music is pure escapism - you can just get lost in those masterpieces. On the rock and metal side: early Crimson Glory, Queensrÿche, Savatage, Dream Theater, and the early Ayreon records. These days, I listen more to progressive rock and metal – Neal Morse, Transatlantic, and many more. Honestly, I've been listening to music for so long, and so intensely, that countless bands and artists have shaped me along the way. Music isn't just a passion - it's a lifeline. I couldn't, and wouldn't, live without it," this is something that yours truly agrees on, music is a lifeblood that never goes away, you either love it or you don't. Outside of music, Bryan us also a visual artist. "I love

drawing and painting. I actually studied at an art academy, graduated, and now I teach at a high school. But before all that, I spent a lot of time in England - mostly around Canterbury - painting decorations for fairground rides. There was this factory that built wild rides, and I painted the huge backdrops for them. Those rides ended up all over the world! I did that for years, and it was an incredible time. These days, life is a bit calmer. I've traded the massive projects for more personal artwork – drawings, paintings, album covers, and book illustrations. I even did the artwork for our albums and Cd's, as well as for other bands. Besides that, I love exploring new places and visiting museums. There's always something to discover."



Guitarist **GERT NIJBOER** has had music in his veins for as long as he can remember. When his dear brother brought Deep Purple's compilation '24 Carat Purple' home and he consequently heard Ritchie Blackmore play for the first time consciously. "I instantly felt what I wanted in my life. It took years, however, before that came into effect. I put it mildly when I say that I was not particularly raised in a family that inspired musical ambitions, so consequently, I had to grow slowly into the actual act of picking up the instrument seriously. However, once I had tasted playing in a band live, in the early 80s,

there was no turning back," he smiles.

After that first experience with Ritchie, Gert was just eleven years, and he got hooked on players like Jimmy Page, Rory Gallagher and of course the mighty Van Halen in the 70s. In the 80s it went to players like for instance George Lynch, Vito Bratta, Yngwie Malmsteen and of course Criss Oliva (from Savatage RIP 1963- 1993). "This was the era I became more of a serious player and really felt the need to get to know the instrument more and more. I was hungry and tried too many bands and projects to mention. In the 90s a guy named John Petrucci really gave me the inspiration to push my own boundaries forward even more," he explains to me.



Nowadays Gert has so many musical inspirations, not limited to guitarists or even only heavy music. "The fun thing is, where I perhaps used to have more conscious inspirations like Edward Van Halen, Criss Oliva, John Petrucci, I no longer find myself writing music without having a particular style or player in mind. I just let it flow depending on the mood, the moment if you will, I feel which comes from what I listen to every day. This goes from classical music to more extreme metal and from experimental to AOR and everything in between and outside," he expresses. The guitarist was always involved in as many

musical projects humanly possible. He has played with Dutch early hard rockers Highway Chile for many years and also played with the very first Dutch metal band Picture. Gert also did many tributes like, for instance, Ronnie James Dio and Savatage, and he also played with original Anthrax singer Neil Turbin. "Only a few years ago I came to the conclusion I wanted to limit myself in order to focus on quality and creation only. So, next to August Life, I now play in another 80s Dutch legacy band called Vengeance which had Arjen Lucassen (Ayreon) as main song writer. Apart from this there is this new band called Saint Hêlens which is an outfit of seasoned musicians and singer extraordinaire Edwin Balogh (Omega, Tamas, Ayreon) writing compact yet brilliant songs right now," he tells me. Outside of music the musician loves to walk and cycle in nature. "I have a special love for Greece, especially the Greek island of Corfu/Kerkyra. The good life actually, good beer a nice wine, delicious food. I am into a little website building too. www.augustlife.nl is built by me."



When drummer **RICHARD VAN LEEUWEN** was just a little kid, he wanted to be a cartoonist or a drummer, "I was always drawn to drummers, kike when listening to pop music, or watching them on TV," he chuckles. "Also on the few

occasions that I saw live music, for instance at a family event, I made sure I could sit in a dark spot behind or next to the drummer so I could watch his every move." His cousin played in a marching band and he had just purchased his first drum set. Once, during a family visit, his cousin explained a few basics to him. "I picked them up so fast that my parents agreed that I should have a drum set of my own. I was going to school in those days, but my parents had a great social network, because they owned their own bakery shop. As it seemed, In our region, there were a lot of singers and guitar players in their mid-20's early 30's, looking for a drummer. So there I was, at age 14 playing with adult musicians. My father also provided me with a place to practice, and I could bring in a full band once a week. I was so lucky that my parents were so supportive," he enthuses. Back in the day Richard's inspirations were all about KISS, Van Halen, Judas Priest, and Iron Maiden. "Later on I got inspired by more technical drummers like Neal Peart, Steve Smith, Gene Hoglan. But also drummers like Cesar Zuiderwijk (Golden Earring), Tommy Lee and Tommy Aldridge who had this visual showmanship thing." There are a lot of incredible metal players nowadays and Richard is just trying to keep up with them. "I'm into the jazzrock/fusion stuff. The last couple of years I've been studying the legends, like John Bonham, Nick Mason, Mick Fleetwood. And I enjoy watching and listening to female drummers. They give another twist and another vibe to playing

drums. That inspires me a lot," he expresses. Richard likes to keep playing on a daily basis, then he finds that the live shows go smoothly, with no physical burdens at all. "The things that tire you are the travelling and the waiting and stuff. When on the road, I find it important to get a good meal and don't drink alcohol," he adds. He has had many highs and lows throughout his career. "More lows than highs actually. If you're not into playing music 200% then you have a hard time persevering. Luckily, I'm on a high right now, but that can change in a moment's notice," he smiles. Outside of music the drummer is interested in technology and philosophy. "I also like to read SF books. And just spending some time with my family."



Back in 1979 bassist **HARRY DEN HARTOG** was asked by a school mate to form a band (Roundabout, later changed to Black Sheep). At first, he was supposed to be the singer, but after a while the guys decided it was better for the band that he quit singing. "In August (yes indeed!) 1980 I started as the bass player for that band, which resulted in our very first gig only six weeks later. You can imagine my nerves," he chuckles. "I couldn't even adjust the volume knob on my bass due to my heavy shaking hands. The gig was a true struggle for me, but still a thrill! I wouldn't have wanna miss it! Ever

since that time I've been roaring the low-end with great pleasure and enthusiasm! Been playing throughout the years in a great variety of musical styles (from jazzy to metal and from classical music to blues-rock) in hundreds of bands/projects," he expresses. The reason that he started playing bass, was that in August 1980 (when he was still with Black Sheep) when an audition from a fellow bass player didn't went that well. "So I asked if I could try it, just for the fun. The very first riff I ever played on bass was "Black Night" by our fav band Deep Purple, that riff I had done at home on a classical guitar on which I always did the basslines, I don't know why ... It turned out that a bass fitted quite well with me! And the rest is history," he smiles. Musically he has a lot of influences but mostly Geddy Lee from Rush for his independency (singing, playing bass and (foot)synths/keys). "This makes him one of a kind. I love his basslines and sound. Billy Sheehan (Mr. Big; David Lee Roth; Winery Dogs; Sons of Apollo and many more ...) he is for Rock-bass, what Eddy van Halen was for Rock-guitar! It's bass on steroids. Steve Harris (Iron Maiden), defining metal-bass ... His "galloping" signature style makes you recognize him immediately. Mike Porcaro (Toto and 100.000 other recordings /projects), The grooving timekeeper pur-sang! J.S. Bach, if he had lived nowadays, he would be making beautiful rock music, no doubt. His skills in harmonizing was ahead of his time. I've done some renditions on bass guitar of some of his cello-suites, which you can find on you-tube ... that

was a great turning point in my playing-skills," he enthuses.



Besides music Harry has a passion for electronics and programming (a.o.: LUA, HTML, PHP, JS, Java, Visual Basic for applications) which he combines with domotica, just for the fun. "I also love reading, my favourite writer is Terry Goodkind (The sword of truth series), besides that I love reading autobiographies and some scientific books. You can also find me taking a walk with my girlfriend in the beautiful nature of the Netherlands. And sometimes when I'm feeling bored, I like to play videogames PS5: Sniper or Grand Turismo."



When keyboardist **RENE KROON** was really young, his family had an electronic organ in their house. "The person who did the maintenance, played extremely well and inspired me to start playing organ," he tells me. He started taking lessons when he was around seven or eight years young. "Sadly the lessons at that time were very uninspiring, so I quit two years later. Then I discovered the music of Michael Jackson and later Toto. At that time I didn't know Toto played on the

Michael Jackson albums, but all this playing motivated me to start playing organ again. Still the lessons were uninspiring, but I had a goal. I wanted to be able to play like David Paich, although I wasn't focused on learning other people's music, but more focused in writing music myself. Then a lot of things changed and I started to discover Heavy Metal. In 1993 I started making music with other musicians. In 1994 I joined my first complete band called Stigmatheist," he tells me. Since then Rene has always had one or more bands at the same time, until today. "I joined the band "The Barstool Philosophers" I think in 1998 or so. In that band the drummer (Martin Kuipers) knew Marcel Coenen and told me "Sun Caged" was looking for a new singer and keyboard player in 2004. Originally only our singer (Leon Brouwer) did an audition. When he came back, he told me that the music didn't fit his vocals to well and that I HAD ;) to do an audition. I did the audition and became the keyboard player from "Sun Caged." Through Marcel Coenen I got to know more musicians, like Hans In 't Zandt who played with the Marcel Coenen solo shows, that I also joined. And through Hans and Marcel I've joined bands like "The Dutch Disciples," "The Gary Moore Tribute," "August Life," "Savatar." Also with half of the "Sun Caged" members, we've joined "John Macaluso" on stage where we've played songs from a lot of music that John originally recorded the drums for, like "Ark," "Yngwie Malmsteen," "TNT" and many more. I think that was somewhere around the year 2012," he smiles.



That is a lot of different music that inspires Rene. "I never try to copy a certain artist, but I'm probably influenced by: Toto, Dead Can Dance, Devin Townsend, Spock's beard, Meshuggah, Protocol, Opeth, Genesis, Yes, Sting, David Bowie, Peter Gabriel, Depeche Mode, Front Line Assembly, Pink Floyd and many more," he expresses. Outside of music the keyboardist enjoy walking in nature, especially mountain forests. "I also love great food and drinks. Good friendships paired with great conversations. I'm also very interested in not following the news and not letting all the negativity in this world influence my life in a bad way anymore and focus on the positive things we actually can do, so we'll be able to enjoy life despite all the "noise" around us." Bryan has already mentioned his musical inspirations, but when it comes to their new album 'Passage of Time', the musical spark comes from Gert. He lays down the skeleton in his home studio, programs the drums, and plays bass and guitar. Then it's Bryan's turn. "I figure out an exciting, fitting vocal line, usually recording it phonetically at home. Lyrics come later. I also sometimes bring my own melodies, which can turn into the seed for a full song," he tells me. His lyrics are fuelled by what he sees and hears in the world around him.

"Take "Constructing Monsters" for example when he saw Klaus Schwab of the WEF on video, claiming they could implant chips in everyone's brains within ten years to manipulate thoughts. "He even said, "He who masters this technology in some way will be the Master of the world..." It's shocking – and terrifying – that our 'leaders' are plotting stuff like this behind our backs. That anger and disbelief became the heart of that song. Then there's "Blackened Ground," inspired by the devastating fires tearing through the world. But this isn't just about destruction – it's about the brave firefighters risking everything to stop it. We released it online in January as a tribute to the heroes in LA. Raw, real, and unflinching. The opener of the album, the twelve-and-a-half-minute epic "Guidelines," deals with the ever-growing obsession with compartmentalizing. Everything is numbered, categorized, and weighed; we're pushed to the left or right of the political spectrum, boxed into protocols, and in the process, we risk losing the human touch. "Passage of Time" is one of the most personal songs on the record. I wrote the lyrics to lift someone's spirit – because time does heal many wounds. And if we give people the attention they need, and take the time to let them find themselves again, I truly believe we can help each other as human beings. At the same time, time itself is something we only get once in our lives – and I can tell you, it flies by incredibly fast! "Tidal Waves" is a larger-than-life track about tsunamis and massive

waves – an epic ride that drags you into the overwhelming force of all-consuming water. It's the kind of song that makes you want to yell, 'Run for your lives!' Next comes "Lost in Nothing," which kicks off underwater before blossoming into a real feel-good track – one you'll want to play on repeat and sing along with every single time. And listen out for Gert's guitar work on this one – the solos are absolutely insane! The album closes with "The Water," a reflection on the future of our past. What will remain standing? What will be carried forward? And what will be torn down by the new cultures that rise after us? Will humanity stay connected, or will we drown in our own destruction? As a bonus track, the CD features "Air to Breathe," a gasping, poetic ballad. With that, I've managed to cover all four elements – water, earth, fire, and air – across the record," explains Bryan in regards to the albums songs and what they are about.



For this album August Life were able to work at their own pace and really push themselves to deliver the best they could. "Apart from the drums, everything was recorded in our own studios, which meant no pressure from a ticking studio clock or hourly rates. We also gave ourselves plenty of time to revisit and re-listen, making sure that even as the weeks passed, we were still proud

of what we created," he smiles with pride. The drums were tracked at Jack Nobelen's studio in Belgium, which has fantastic acoustics. The guys also worked with Jack on their previous record called 'New Eternity'. "After recording the rest of the parts in our home studios, Gert and I headed to Germany to work with sound wizard Markus Teske. He added some keyboard parts and handled the mixing and mastering. Markus did an incredible job - every detail shines through, and with every new listen you discover something fresh. We didn't give him a deadline either, which allowed him the freedom to work whenever inspiration struck - and you can hear that in the result," he enthuses.

For Bryan it's the fact that besides contributing musically, he also created the artwork and all the graphic design which is a highlight for him. "It's deeply satisfying to see everything come together into a complete piece of art, where the music and visuals strengthen each other. Another highlight for me are the contributions from guest singers on the choirs, and the stunning vocals of Liesbeth Cordia from the band Ylisia on "The Water." Those moments bring pure emotion and goosebumps." For now August Lifee want to see how "Passage of Time" resonates with everyone. "After that, we'll definitely hit the stage again. We're also planning to create a series of videos for our YouTube channel, and of course, there's already new music brewing. On top of that, I'll once again dive into designing new artwork. So plenty of creativity ahead," concludes Bryan, bringing

an end to our conversation. Make sure you check this fabulous band an album out. Full in-depth track for track review in the next issue.

Web and Social Media Links:

<https://augustlife.nl>
<https://www.youtube.com/@augustlife7196>
<https://www.facebook.com/augustlifeband>
https://www.instagram.com/august_life_band

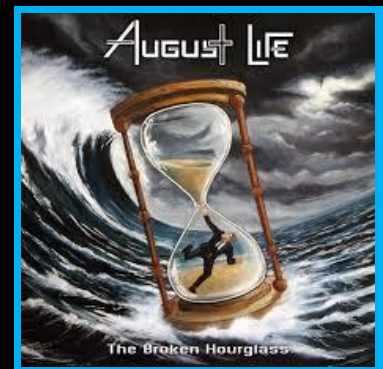
AUGUST LIFE

Discography:

2018 - New Eternity

2021 - The Broken Hourglass

2025 - Passage of Time



THE MUSIC IS OUT THERE
By Nicky Baldrian