

# NERVECELL



## The trials and tribulations of the UAE's most extreme metal band

**N**ervecell's wheel of fortune has been very mixed these last few months, having found after a long search their new UK based drummer, booked to appear in a rock bash in Lebanon, rehearsal space secured, things looked to be locked down.

Then luck decided to take another spin on the Nervecell highway. Rehearsal space was cancelled and along with it the use of the drum kit, a new kit is duly purchased from the bands limited financial coffers – Ouch! Creative Kingdom donated some jam space, back on track? Not quite – the rock concert was cancelled and the drummer breaks his toe's in an unfortunate accident.

However our four horseman of the Desert are made of strong stuff, the band explained to **LOUD** that much better things are appearing on their horizon.

**What is the hardest challenge you guys face as a Dubai based metal band?**

**Barney:** The only real problem I would say we faced or still face is getting local gigs. I mean we would love to play as often as we can but there just isn't any shows taking place in Dubai, it's been five months now since Desert Rock 2006. Apart from that we have the usual jam space problem that we still not to date really solved.

**Gavin:** Quality rehearsal space still remains a real issue especially as we are on a really tight financial budget.



**James:** Things are looking better though, I mean we all graduated now from University and so that gives us more time for the band for sure.

**Rami:** There is no actual media support in Dubai for rock/metal music, I mean there's no rock or metal labels that actually sign bands, promote them, send them on tours etc. but still, we've done it all by ourselves; recording, releasing, distributing our music, selling merchandise and playing shows of course.

### What is the song writing process for Nervecell?

**Barney:** We don't have a fixed plan when it comes to writing music, it's a collection of ideas brought to the table by each individual, which in turn becomes a blue print for how the song will pan out.

### How are the songs put down vocal first or a riff?

**Barney:** It's mainly guitar oriented but we could at the same time easily base a song on a bass line or drum rhythm. The bottom line is the final product of any of our songs should always be convincing to each of us and once we feel a 100 percent about it, that's when we are satisfied.

**Rami:** Most of the songs written previously started off with the guitar parts. Barney and I come up with the main riffs and then the bass and drum work comes in, and the final step is the vocal work, which is drafted into the song.

### Tell us about your influences.

**Rami:** Grunge and hard rock music is what got me into playing guitar really. Then I grew up listening to heavy metal and thrash metal bands such as Megadeth, Testament and Pantera. Then got into death metal, listening to most bands in the genre from old school Morbid Angel to modern extremists Cryptopsy. I'm also into progressive metal in the vein of Symphony X and virtuoso guitar music mainly Yngwie Malmsteen.

**Barney:** I'm definitely a huge thrash metal fan, it was during the 80s when I grew up and that was the decade when thrash metal was all I would listen to, learning to play the Guitar. I have always loved bands like Pantera, Sepultura and Testament. Other genre's that have influenced me would be hardcore and of course early 90s death metal.

**Gavin:** Early blues such as Robert Johnson,

Howlin Wolf, 60s and 70s rock such as Hendrix, Cream, Led Zep and Deep Purple. Through these influences the next logical step for me being a drummer was getting into heavy metal then in turn power metal and extreme metal you know – death and black.

**James:** I have always been influenced by death metal in general. As far as vocals go, my two main influences concerning vocal patterns are: Glen Benton via Deicide and George "Corpse Grinder" Fisher via Cannibal Corpse. As a bass player, I am influenced by modern death metal bass techniques such as the likes of Necrophagist and Nile.

### What are some of the messages in the lyrical content for Nervecell songs?

**James:** Since I am the vocalist of the band, the lyrics I write are mainly influenced by issues related to reality, inequality, anger and stuff that is going on right outside our own doorsteps. The main point here is to send a message, a clear picture of such situations and events through a philosophical theme not forcing anyone to act or change his or her respective point of view. However there has always been an open ground for all the members in the band to contribute to the lyrical content in our songs.

### How would you describe the local music scene?

**Barney:** The local scene has always been very underground based, simply because most metal bands like us ourselves don't get the opportunity to play as frequently as we would love to. Promoters are not trying to take a risk with metal bands in the Middle East because it simply is not mainstream music.

**James:** In order for metal music to become more popular, promoters need to add metal bands on their regular events. This is the vicious circle that we in Nervecell have always tried to break. We feel we have accomplished





this task in conquering this matter.

**Rami:** A typical Nervecell appearance at an average sized gig would attract about 200 to 400 devoted fans of the genre. We consider that being a great turnout mainly considering Dubai in itself only has a population of one million people.

**Gavin:** Finding a place to put on a show is really hard; all the performance licenses are expensive and are mainly venue related. Any promoters out there? HELP!

**How was the experience sharing the stage with Machine Head, Sepultura and Within Temptation at Desert Rock 2005?**

**Barney:** It was wicked man, I used to have my walls full of Sepultura, Machine Head and loads of other bands posters in my room growing up playing my guitar and then to share the stage with them was phenomenal. No words can describe how I truly felt playing with those guys. We spent a good amount of time at the after party talking to the guys in Machine Head and Sepultura and we made a lot of new friends and fans that day too, which made the whole experience well worth it.

**Rami:** It was great experience sharing the stage with some of the bands I grew up listening to, mainly Sepultura, it was an accomplishment that I can be proud of and would relish the chance to repeat it.

**Recently you did a video shoot for the track Human Chaos with Zee Arabiya. Can you elaborate a little more on that?**

**Barney:** Yeah totally, Zee Arabiya approached us saying they would like to arrange a video for us and shoot an interview to go along with it, so yeah, we just finished doing that and it should be aired during September on Zee Arabiya. We hope that we get the attention of a few record labels and other important people in the music industry once the video is aired on the channel; we look forward to

hearing what the fans have to say and see how we have grown as a unit within the last year.

**Gavin:** The guys at Zee Arabiya were really cool and patient with us, it was a long day but Makram the producer, (cheers dude!) understands our music and knew what he wanted from us. We are all looking forward to seeing the finished product; it is a way of reaching our audience and building Nervecell's international profile.

**Nervecell have been dubbed "Veterans," "Most extreme UAE band" and "Pioneers" by the local media, how do you guys feel about these comments?**

**Barney:** We think its absolutely amazing being a death metal band in Dubai to get such credit within the commercial scene that surrounds us. These comments and references motivate and inspire us to realise and reflect that what we are actually doing is making a positive stamp for ourselves, and also more importantly that the band is



GAVIN



BARNEY



JAMES



RAMI

respected and appreciated by other people out there.

**Gavin:** These positive media comments, we hope, will attract some press coverage in Europe, our main aim is to tour outside of Dubai, so we need all the help we can get. Another way is visit our website [www.nervecell.net](http://www.nervecell.net), it's the bands portal and updated very regularly with press comments, photos, news etc.

**Where do you see yourselves in five years from now?**

**Barney:** Still ripping, thrashing and tearing it up on stage, only this time on tour in Europe somewhere. Whatever it is, we will still be making heavy music, it's what we love to do.

**Rami:** Five years from now we see ourselves playing places where people have never even heard of us.

**Gavin:** Signed to a label, touring full time, headlining our own shows and selling a shed load of albums

**When will there be a new album and what can we expect from it?**

**Barney:** Currently we are heavily involved in writing the new material

for the as yet untitled album. We want to take our time and work on a pace that's not stressful to any of us. The album should be due towards the end of the year.

**Gavin:** Expect a release, which is more brutal, thrashy and melodic yet, an evolution of the *Human Chaos EP*.

**Any advice to the upcoming bands in the scene?**

**Barney:** Keep practicing, work hard and believe in yourself.

**Gavin:** Have faith in yourselves and your music, don't compromise anything.

**Any last words to the fans?**

**Barney:** Stay tuned for the new album and expect to catch us live soon, where we will showcase some of the newer material. We look forward to seeing you all in the pit.

**Rami:** Thanks for all your support, stay true to yourselves and keep supporting metal.

**Gavin:** Thanks for your support and keep checking the Nervecell website for updates [www.nervecell.net](http://www.nervecell.net) and sign our guest book, it lets us know that you're out there, it means a lot to all of us.

**Any last shout outs to anyone?**

**Barney:** Definitely a big shout out to all the fans who believed in our band till this very day, you know who you all are! Also and extra special thanks to George Ward, who has shown us that we are capable of greater things and has been supportive of the band from the very first day we met him. We also want to thank Sipho and the guys at Creative Kingdom for being there when we needed them, Cheers to Laura and Jackie at CSM for keeping heavy metal alive and well in Dubai. Chelsea and *LOUD Magazine* for their interest in the band and lastly Makram and the crew at Zee Arabiya.

