

Halfway through "Astronomy Domine," their final song at Montreal's Heavy MTL Festival, Voivod singer Denis "Snake" Belanger proudly raised the signature guitar of the late Denis "Piggy" D'Amour over his

bands to find international success, but Quebecers have a special place in their hearts for their hometown heroes, as was made evident by the number of fans who showed up at the festival specifically to see



them. "I think it is great, because we were French people trying to sing in English, and we were not seen as traitors from the French community, and that is rare for metal in Quebec," Away says. "And since we were known internationally, we were taken seriously by the Canadian music industry. We got nominations for Junos (the Canadian equivalent of a Grammy), but every time, we would compete against Rush and Celine Dion and it was obvious that we weren't going to win," he laughs. "But we accepted it. That is something I can be proud of – that we

got respect from other bands, critics and the industry as well as our fans."

got respect from other bands, critics and the industry as well as our fans."

French Canada has had an almost disproportionately influential role in the progressive and death metal scene, pumping out critically acclaimed bands like Quebec death metallers Gorguts, Cryptopsy and Neuraxis. "In Québec, the prog rock scene has always been huge," explains Away. "Obscure bands like Van der Graaf Generator and Gentle Giant were really big here. So it was part of normal life, and it was a natural progression for the metal bands here to incorporate prog rock into their metal sound." Away acknowledges that even Genesis had a surprisingly huge impact on the early inception of Voivod. "We learned how to play with the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, but also progressive rock music like King Crimson. Piggy told me once that he found most of his chords from Emerson, Lake & Palmer's organ parts and just altered them to play guitar. So there you go!"

After the Heavy MTL show, the band played at July's Monsters of Rock concert in Calgary, opened for Judas Priest in Montreal in August, and headed to Japan for a couple of shows with Forbidden and Testament in September. Because of the re-incorporation of Blacky back into the fold, song selections for their shows were from albums he played on, from 1984's *War And Pain* to 1991's *Angel Rat*. A good friend and fellow Montrealer, Martyr's Dan

head, pointing it at the clear blue sky. Friends and family of the band stood silently at the sides of the stage, wiping tears from their eyes. It was a fitting acknowledgement to the personal and professional impact that the guitarist, who died of colon cancer in 2005, had on fans, lifelong friends and bandmates. After the show, the band walked around the general festival area, seemingly oblivious to the rubber-necking of fans shocked to see their hometown heroes chilling amongst the peons. Young metalheads rushed former bassist Jean-Yves "Blacky" Theriault (who replaced Jason "Jasonic" Newsted on all their shows this summer), passing him their homemade demos. Despite the outpouring of adulation (a video clip of the guitar moment was soon posted on YouTube), there remained some initial trepidation from the band.

After the Heavy MTL show, the band played at July's Monsters of Rock concert in Calgary, opened for Judas Priest in Montreal in August, and headed to Japan for a couple of shows with Forbidden and Testament in September. Because of the re-incorporation of Blacky back into the fold, song selections for their shows were from albums he played on, from 1984's *War And Pain* to 1991's *Angel Rat*. A good friend and fellow Montrealer, Martyr's Dan

A few days before the show, Voivod's first since the 2003 Ozzfest tour, drummer Michael "Away" Langevin admits that the recent public interest in the band's live reunion is a bit shocking. "Actually, it's funny because we were thinking in context of playing live and celebrating Piggy's music, and now people are talking about a reunion or a re-formation, and stuff like that," he says. "I really didn't think much about it, and it took me by surprise, but we have to deal with it."

Voivod may have been one of the first thrash metal

VOIVOD