

## **Interview with Bruce Soord**

*THE PINEAPPLE THIEF are currently touring Europe with their new album "Your Wilderness". I had the chance to sit down with all-rounder Bruce Soord before their show in Oberhausen on January 25<sup>th</sup> for a rather interesting chat!*

### **How's the tour been so far?**

Really, really good. As a band you struggle to make the tours financially and to make them a success. With the recent tours we've done we actually lost a lot of money. You wouldn't think so but if you look at the crew, hotels and everything it's just that the costs go through the roof. I think that's why a lot of bands offer V.I.P. tickets and Meet & Greets these days. They're desperately trying to make the money. With this tour we actually said to us that if we don't start to sell more tickets it'll probably be the last one that we do. So we're really lucky – Today's sold out and Aschaffenburg last night was packed. I think having Gavin on board has also been a big boost. That being said, it's been really positive so far.

### **On your last tour you also played at this venue but in one of the smaller halls and it wasn't even full.**

No, not even half of it.

### **Did you expect an increase in interest or to even sell out any shows?**

We always expect a little increase. But for instance, last time we played in Aschaffenburg we had 50 or 60 people and yesterday we had nearly 500! And today's show sold out about two weeks ago and the promoter wasn't expecting that either. I saw the figures and last time we had 170 and now it's way more than double the attendants [Note: The hall in Oberhausen fits 500 people and was sold out.]. So no, no one was expecting to sell this many tickets. It's quite a nice feeling for a change!

### **Let's talk about your new album "Your Wilderness". Such a splendid record! It's been said you've "rediscovered your prog roots" with it.**

I know that little phrase has come back to haunt me. For me, after I did "Someone Here Is Missing", "All The Wars" and "Magnolia" it was almost like a group of records where we're going in a certain direction. And then I took a step back and thought 'Actually, is this the direction that I want?'. I felt like I've done everything I could do in that direction. So for this one I went with almost an 'anything goes' approach as opposed to saying this records needs to be more rock or we have to have some radio friendly tracks or anything like that. Not that that was ever an overriding factor but if I have to be honest, we were looking at this dreaded crossover. It's sort of where you're in a progressive rock market but you want to cross over to the mainstream. There's a lot of bands that talk about wanting to do that. And I thought I shouldn't even be worried about that. I should just be doing the music that I want to

make. This kind of implies I was selling out a bit with "Magnolia", but that's not true. As a kid I loved listening to this sort of progressive rock bands from the 70s so I just took that ethos for the new record.

**So you did not sit down and say 'I want to...'**

...do a prog record! No. I mean it's not like a 'prog record' anyways.

**Last time in Oberhausen you said you didn't like people labelling "Magnolia" as progressive although that's probably the stamp most people put on it. So, how do you feel about that in retrospect?**

I'm much more relaxed about it now. Previously there were a lot of bands in the progressive arena who I wouldn't want to be associated with. Like the kind of prog that is a little bit cheesy. Prog can be difficult at times. Sometimes you just don't want people to think that you do a certain kind of music when you say you play progressive. But the prog genre has changed a lot and now I think there's so many great bands who I'm happy to be associated with. You've got bands like Opeth and obviously Porcupine Tree when they were still active, Steven Wilson – and they would call themselves progressive although they're completely different from this sort of 'wizards & capes' image that people have when you tell them you're a progressive rock band. They think of these capes and guitar solos and stuff.

**They think of some nerds just doing very technical stuff.**

Yes, and that's not us. That's what I didn't want people to think when we're really just a rock band. But now I'm more relaxed about it.

**Lately I feel there's an increase of prog influences in metal music and it's also becoming quite popular, especially if you look at the success of Katatonia's „The Fall Of Hearts“ or Opeth's „Sorceress“ which even peaked at No 1 in the German album charts. That's incredible considering it's a very progressive album and not your type of metal for the masses.**

Yes, and that's what makes me laugh about Opeth. You get a certain impression from all the people online going „Oh, I hate Opeth doing this direction!“. They want the growls and the death metal but Opeth are selling more records now than ever! So they're definitely doing it right.

**Do you think that prog may become mainstream?**

Well, it's certainly becoming more and more mainstream. Just look at Opeth who are also doing very well in the States, or Porcupine Tree. When they were put on ice they were breaking through to a mainstream. It's a good sign. I think people are getting a bit bored and want something a bit different in mainstream music.

**Continuing with your album: How did Gavin Harrison and Darran Charles come into the picture?**

I've known Darran for a few years, ever since they [Godsticks] opened for us back in 2011 for a couple of UK shows and we've kept in touch. He played some guitar on my solo record and then on this one. We always share demos when writing and so it evolved naturally that he just

added some guitar and now we couldn't do gigs without him!  
And Gavin... we were without a drummer and wondered who we can get to be a session drummer. Gavin was on the list so I dropped him an e-mail and that was that!  
The fact that Gavin agreed to do the tour was an absolute bonus as he's obviously really busy with King Crimson. It's a different level of touring with us but we're having a great time and he's enjoying it.

### **Did those two have any influence on the songwriting process?**

Oh yes. I had the songs written already but I gave Gavin a completely free range in terms of what to play. When I'm writing songs I program drums and sometimes also the kind of beat that I want but Gavin just took them all out and came back with completely different drum parts – which is great! He just brought the songs to life with his creativity. He's such a musical guy and more than just a drummer. He writes songs and has a studio in his house and everything. He really brought a lot to the record.

And Darran did as well with his parts. He sort of gave us an angle that we've never had before which are really technical guitar parts. That was quite nice to have.

### **Well, you're being hailed as an outstanding guitarist yourself, though ;)**

No, no, I certainly don't regard myself as a good guitarist. Functional, I think.

### **A while ago you also released your first solo album and last November went on tour in the U.S. with Steven Wilson. I read about your visa troubles and missing some shows and how you travelled all alone and drove up to 8 hours.**

Yes, I did 3000 miles. It was great. I drove through Arizona, Utah... it felt really rock'n'roll. You know, just a couple of acoustic guitars, a bag and a car. It was a road trip on my own. I got pulled over by the police a couple of times. It was quite scary.

### **What did you do?**

I think I was doing 84 [mph] at an 80 or something. But that was in Wyoming and they saw that I was driving a hire car with an L.A. plate so they thought 'Right, let's pull him over'. But the trip was great. When Steven asked me, he said "You probably don't want to do it because I don't have any room on the bus, but if you want to..." and I agreed, jumped on a plane and thought 'Yeah, let's do it!'.  
I think I was doing 84 [mph] at an 80 or something. But that was in Wyoming and they saw that I was driving a hire car with an L.A. plate so they thought 'Right, let's pull him over'. But the trip was great. When Steven asked me, he said "You probably don't want to do it because I don't have any room on the bus, but if you want to..." and I agreed, jumped on a plane and thought 'Yeah, let's do it!'.

### **And how was it as a one-man-act, how did the audience receive you?**

They were great! They were fantastic! When I did it, I was so busy and there was trouble with the visa I didn't really have time to think about it. So I got there and was like "Oh shit, I've got to play in front of 1500 people on my own!". But the U.S. audiences were great and I think luckily a lot of them knew of The Pineapple Thief so I wasn't just an unknown act. And I had a looper pedal as well so it was a little bit more than just me on my own. It was interesting and I'm definitely glad I did it.

### **Would you do it again?**

I would! I think I'd rather take some people with me next time though.

**Moving on to a very different topic: You've been making 5.1 mixes for other bands for a while now. To be very honest, I don't know anyone who has a sound system for that at home.**

Neither do I! That's the first thing I always tell people. Who are these people that listen to it? But there are some out there.

**There must be! Do you notice it getting any more popular, though?**

I don't know! When I do the 5.1 mixes I always get lots of good responses, reactions from people who say "Great! Love your 5.1 mixes!". A lot of labels like to do special editions where they make like a thousand with a DVD and a high resolution stereo mix. But I do wonder how many people buy these because they're collectors and don't ever get to play the 5.1. But when people come to my studio I give them a demo, I say "Right, here's a stereo and now I'm going to play the same mix in 5.1" and they're always very impressed.

**Right, I've had the chance to listen to a 5.1 mix in a studio too. But it doesn't seem to be much of an "at home" thing for the average music fan.**

No, these are people who are audio fans who have their music listening room where they sit down to listen. Another thing about the 5.1 market is that they're really fussy. Straight away they're reviewing the sound quality and everything. You don't really want to look at that and I don't go on the forums to see what they say.

But well, I'm a real fan of it now. I was quite dubious about it when I started but I knew there was a market and people willing to pay for it so I thought I should just do it. Now I've got used to listening to it and it's an amazing experience.

We were thinking of doing a tour with the next album. A friend of mine has this big bus that he's converted to a 5.1 studio and we thought of just doing a tour where we invite people to listen to the album in 5.1. Just turn up in different cities, park the bus and have people come down to meet us and have a listen.

**That would definitely be a novelty!**

It would, wouldn't it? I don't think it's ever been done before. Whether people would turn up, I don't know.

**If you really do it, let us know!**

Yes, we will!

**What other projects are you working on in 2017? Any news on Wisdom Of Crowds?**

Oh yes! There is news on Wisdom of Crowds! It's not official yet but it's looking like we might be able to record an album this year later in autumn. It really hinges around Jonas' and Katatonia's schedule more than anything. So fingers crossed there will be a Wisdom Of Crowds release late this year or early next year.

And then we're already talking about doing another Pineapple Thief album for next spring. Gavin said he'd be up for being involved again, so we're just looking at a schedule where it would be recording at the end of the year before he goes off with King Crimson.

Lots to do this year. And another tour as well in September!

## **In Europe again?**

Yes, but we're not sure yet what route. Now that we're actually selling tickets on this tour and not losing loads of money we're thinking 'Right, let's go on another tour!'.

## **Great! Last question: What's your favourite album of 2016?**

Oh, that's a good one... I did the 5.1 mix for "The Fall Of Hearts" and really enjoyed that record. Obviously I'm quite close to it but that was one of my favourites. I quite enjoyed Haken's album too. Technically it's all very clever but I have to say Katatonia.

**Alright then, thank you for your time!**

*– Alina Jensch (Hörspiegel)*

Link:

<http://www.der-hoerspiegel.de/portal/interview/musiker/bruce-soord-ueber-das-touren-prog-und-5-1>