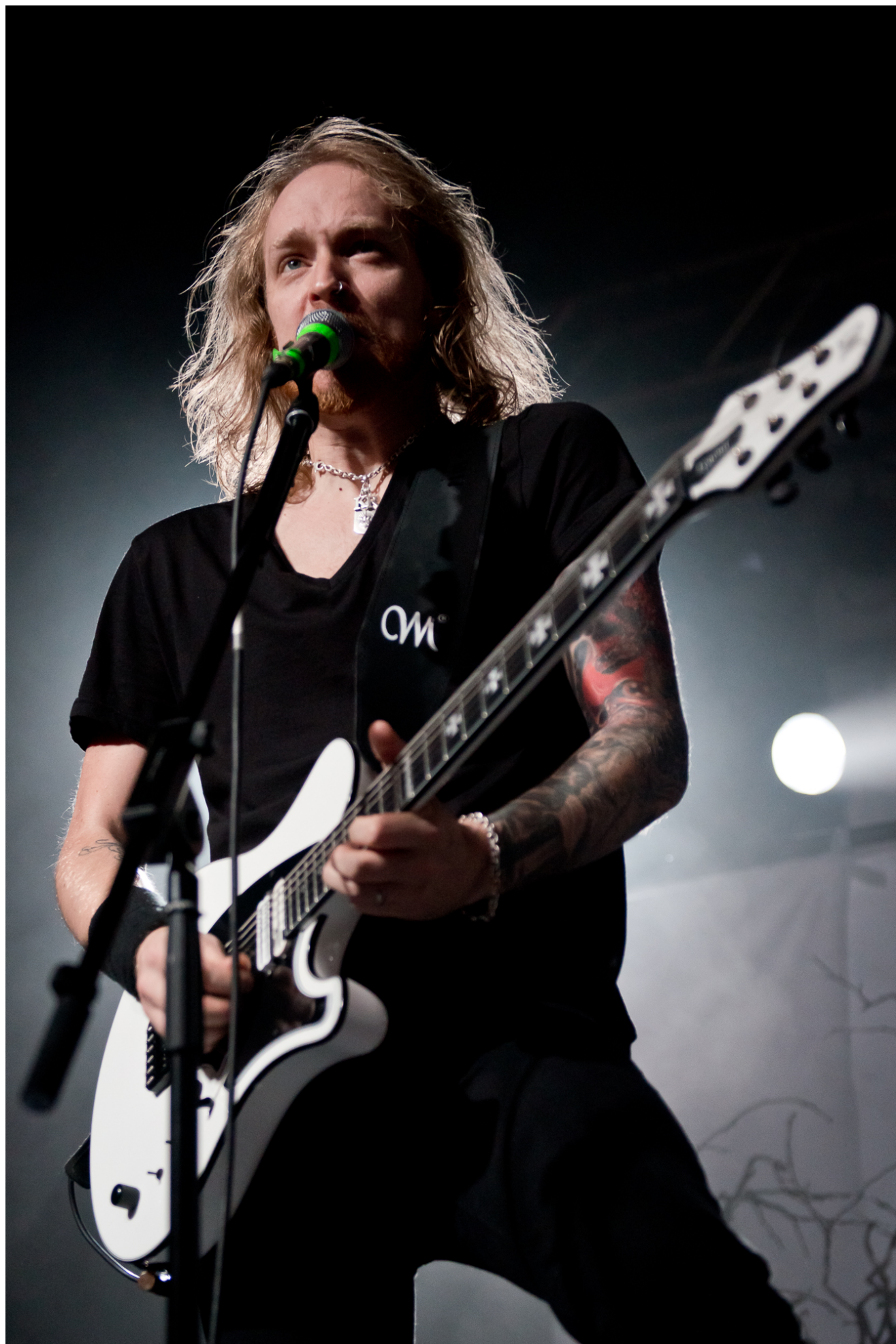


Anders Nyström, Katatonia, on "The Fall of Hearts", new band-members and touring plans

**»It's a play between light and
dark, if you don't have the light,
you won't see the dark«**



Prior to the release of the tenth Katatonia album *The Fall of Hearts* on the 20th of May, I had the chance to speak to guitar player *Anders Nyström* about the recordings and the songwriting of the album, new band members and touring plans of the Swedish kings of dark melancholic progressive metal.

Zur deutschen Übersetzung des Interviews

Anders, the upcoming Katatonia album „*The Fall of Hearts*“ will mark the first ‘fully distorted’ release since 2012’s highly acclaimed „*Dead End Kings*“ (excluding the live release „*Last Fair Day Gone Night*“, 2014). Having worked on the ‘metal-less’ 2013 re-imagining of *Dead End Kings* entitled „*Dethroned & Uncrowned*“ (2013) and extensive subsequent acoustic tours culminating in the Live DVD release of „*Sanctitude*“ last year, how much has this rather long absence from fully plugged heaviness influenced the songwriting for *The Fall of Hearts*?

I think, by doing the many „*Dethroned & Uncrowned*“ and „*Sanctitude*“ acoustic gigs and album we opened up a new door for our audience to choose, to get familiar with, to accept a new sound of Katatonia. We never tried to claim or anything that this was the indication of our new style. It was just a little side experiment to show that we have more sides than just one in Katatonia. We also could show a softer more lushy acoustic side that would still sound like Katatonia. We always planned that the next album would continue where „*Dead End Kings*“ left, which is obviously a mixture of both the heavy and the soft kind of stuff. But for the new album we also incorporate a wider balance of these two elements. The heavy stuff has gotten really a lot of room on the album. There is a lot of straight up progressive heavy moments, so if people thought that there was no heaviness left in Katatonia after the acoustic stuff we definitely proved them wrong. I think we just come up with a good balance of both sides.

The progression between the last three albums, from „Night Is The New Day“ to „Dead End Kings“ and now to „The Fall Of Hearts“ feels naturally growing towards a more adventurous style. Also, the heaviness seems to gradually take some steps back. When you start writing new material with *Jonas* (*Renkse*, vocals), do you agree on a certain direction deliberately beforehand or do you rather let the music and creativity guide you?

Well, we don't sit down and plan like a business meeting or something like that. The music writing has to kind of do it's own, we let it speak for itself. We do steer it in a direction because we know what we want and that is that kind of balance I talked about before. Because some songs can go into the heavier territory, we have a few songs that are entirely soft, then we have a few songs that are a mix of both, but having all this just makes the album way more versatile, way more diverse and it's something for everybody. I would be very bored if a Katatonia album would be just entirely one thing. Now people would say 'but you just made an album that was just one thing with the acousting thing'. Yes we did, but it was just an experiment, I don't even count that album as a studio album.

The gradually reduced heaviness gives more and more way to the atmospheric synths. Were they once again co-arranged, co-performed and co-produced by *Frank Default* like on the previous records?

Unfortunately *Frank* wasn't around on this recording. We asked him to be part of it, but he has withdrawn from music, he is not longer doing such collaborations. I knew he became a dad, so he is busy taking care of his family, doing other things. But it was not really a problem because *Jonas* and me, we always had taken care of the keyboard things, we are really interested in that, have a lot of passion for it as well so even in the past the whole keyboard department was a collaboration with *Frank Default*, so we knew what to do. For

us it's a lot about the textures in the atmospherics. It's the soundscapes and the ambience and we definitely know what we want in the songs and it's not so much about keyboards as in a keyboard player. We have a few piano themes, we have a few string themes, mellotron and things like that but we don't have a keyboard playing that is following the guitar so playing all the time.

A first listen to „The Fall Of Hearts“ not only reveals the most adventurous songwriting of Katatonia to date but also a whole lot of Mellotron and Fender Rhodes sounds. Did you use the real instruments in the recording?

Well, first of all these are the instruments we feel most connected to. It helps to bring something to our sound that is like if you take the vintage seventies feeling and you are getting it married with a modern aesthetics of 2016. It's just a beautiful balance of two different worlds we try to get together and I love that.



„The Fall Of Hearts“ is the first Katatonia record to feature the new members *Roger Öjersson* on guitars and *Daniel Moilanen* on drums. How much did their input and approach reflect on the end result?

Daniel, our new drummer, had a lot to do for the end result of the album, even for the start of this album. Even for allowing us to write this album, because when we found him we knew how talented he was and we asked him if there is anything he would rather want us to hold back with the drums that he can't play or if there is something we need to think about and he just

told me 'No, I have two legs, I have two arms, as long as you can program something using only that, I can play it. But I am no octopus so don't do anything with eight arms or legs.' So we just said ok, but it's gonna be a challenge for you because we are going to program the drums very detailed and with some beats and patterns that might be a real challenge but no, it was no challenge for him, he did everything we had programmed, every last detail. We were so happy to see him perform and he really raised the bar for the album ever since he went into the studio. That's why it was really pleasant to record this album as well. And also with the new guitarist, *Roger*, he came in really late. He came into the band when the album was more or less already recorded, but we had just like a week or something left and I said 'You are such a good guitar player so it would be a shame not to have you give your little flavour to it before it's over.' So we had him put down four guitar solos on the album and those are very cool, they are tasteful good guitar solos.

I believe the lyrics were once again written by Jonas Renkse, is there any album spanning concept behind them, maybe not as much as a coherent story, but more a theme that weaves through it like a red line?

I think the recurring theme for *Jonas* as the lyric writer is that he more or less always write about the same topics but it's not a concept album and he never was into the concept making. He likes to just make small small abstract stories and thoughts about similar kinds of subjects. And those subjects, I think people today they know what they are about. We have always been about the dark side, even since day one. The band has been going now for 25 years, we never made a happy album, people can know what to expect from the lyrics, they just reflect this. But it's not so apparent what all the lyrics are about, because sometimes Jonas likes to keep it cryptic.

Speaking of 'not one single happy album' I just remembered from last night (listening to the Fall of Hearts in

preparation of this interview), that the very start of the first song Takeover struck me with one of the most uplifting moods I ever experienced with Katatonia music. Of course it's not happy, but it sounds a little bit more uplifting.

We wanted to make it sound hopeful. There is a difference between happy and hopeful, but we wanted the hopeful part to really show. It's a play between light and dark, if you don't have the light, you won't see the dark. So this is a little bit how we put the contrast in the music. Sometimes we feel certain parts, we question ourselves, is it too happy or something? No, it's not too happy, it's a balance, it's a hopeful sound, some kind of glimmer in there, but then it gives way to darkness.

Finally, there are gonna be a couple of Bonus tracks on the different formats like the Deluxe Edition or the Vinyl. What can we expect of those?

Those bonus songs are in no way songs that we kept off the album because they are bad or anything. That's a typical misconception from fans that they are like 'Oh, they didn't make the album so they gotta be shit or something.' It's not like this. It's the simple reason that the album was already too long, it's seventy minutes with the twelve tracks and we found such a good track list order we were so happy with that we said 'we gotta stop here, this the album, this is really what we feel is the album.' So the other songs we kind of gave away as a gift to the people who are more like superfans, they want to collect maybe more editions, they are collectors and they want to pick up the vinyl or the deluxe book or something and for them, the other bonus tracks are just an extra gift for them.

One of those bonus tracks, Wide Awake In Quietus, features guest guitarist *Gregor Mackintosh* from Paradise Lost, how did that come about?

It's something we had been, well not talking about, but it's something we had been hoping for ever since we started. We have been huge Paradise Lost fans and we became friends with the Paradise Lost guys, we toured with them a lot. Their singer is even in our own band, our side project Bloodbath. So we've become really close and we just said 'When is the time? We just have to make it happen before we are old and sit in our retirement homes.' We said 'Please, Gregor, could you put down a guest solo on one of our songs? It would make us so happy!'. And he was delighted to do it and we chose one of the songs that we felt sounded already like Paradise Lost so this song is a bit more old school sounding actually.

Touring wise, there are already lots of festival dates throughout Europe (and Brazil) confirmed between the end of April and the beginning of October. Are there any plans already for a possible fall/winter headliner tour?

Yes, it is indeed. And that tour is a European tour, it will start in September and it will go through the whole October and it will finish in Mid-November, so it's a really long tour. And it will go through every country and the most major cities. We don't have the final line up for the bill revealed yet, but it's going to come up in an announcement within maybe two weeks.

That actually leads up to my bonus question. You already spoke of a potential line up for this upcoming tour. You toured the United States with *Devin Townsend* and Paradise Lost, which I found to be a somewhat odd combination, because Devin's music is actually happy at times...

It is a very weird combination, but all of the bands are on the same management. It was more of a business decision to put all of the bands out there. Yeah, it's a very different bill, I mean *Devin Townsend*, Paradise Lost and Katatonia, it's worlds apart.

For the acoustic tour you had Messenger from the UK supporting, which I personally thought was a beautiful fit. Could you think of any new band or maybe old band as well you would like to tour with. Or maybe a young band you just discovered you would like to give the chance to support you?

Yeah of course, I'm open to tour with any band that I personally just like. I want to like the music and I want to like the guys and if that happens I'm the first guy to welcome them on board. Of course there is a lot of talent and good new bands around. Especially there is one of my old pals Martin Lopez, the ex-drummer of Opeth, he has his own band now, it's called Soen, I love them, they would be a perfect band for Katatonia to tour with so who knows, but it's mostly about the timing, if they have a new album out, all that kind of stuff.

Anders, thank you very much for the interview and all the best for the release of „The Fall Of Hearts“ and the subsequent tour.

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Band pic: *Ester Segarra*

Live pic: *Tobias Berk*, 02.12.2012, Köln, Live Music Hall

Artwork/Cover: *Travis Smith*