

Jostein Smeby and Erik Paulsen explain the current development of Arabs in Aspic

»The Arabs in Aspic are back in Norway«

The albums by legendary Norwegian band Arabs in Aspic have previously been released by the well-known Italian label Black Widow. With the new release they are signed by a Norwegian label. Bass player *Erik Paulsen* explains why the band decided to break new ground.

Zur deutschen Übersetzung des Interviews
All english interviews on BetreutesProggen.de

**Would you please provide some key information on the band?
Current line-up, discography etc.**

Jostein Smeby – Guitars, vocals, composer, mixer and producer

Eskil Nyhus – Drums, percussion

Stig Arve Kvam-Jørgensen – Hammond, Rhodes, Mellotron, analogue synths and vocals

Erik Paulsen – Bass and vocals.

Discography:

2003: „Progeria“ (CD, Børse Music)

2004: „Far out in Aradabia“ (CD, Børse Music)

2010: „Strange frame of mind“ (LP, Panorama Records/Black Widow Records/Børse Music)

2011: „Progeria/Far out in Aradabia“ (2LP, Panorama Records)

2013: „Pictures in a dream“ (LP, CD, 7", Black Widow Records/Crispin Glover Records)

2015: „Victim of your fathers agony“ (LP, CD, 7", Black Widow

Records/ Crispin Glover Records)

2017: „Syndenes magi“ (LP,CD, Apollon Records/ Børse Music)

All titles are released in a limited color edition.

Who had the idea for this funny band name?

We had several names before we came up with “Arabs”, but we needed a different name for a gig. We all loved the album “Larks’ Tongues In Aspic” at that time, so we tried to put something else in our “aspic”. By accident we found a book about cricket on ebay with the crazy name “Arabs in Aspic.” We thought it was such a surreal title that we just had to steal it. The title as a bandname also suited our vulgar sound at that time.

Which bands or musicians had most influence on your music?

That depends on who you ask in the band. It started as a Sabbath coverband in the mid-90s. I write the most of the music, and I collect LPs from 1967-1973/74. I also had a period with Stoner rock in the 90s and Classic Modernism after that. *Erik* and *Stig*, on the other hand, come from a more technical progressive camp, inspired by giants like Genesis, King Crimson and Yes, in addition to odd-time Balkan music, fusion, jazz and more. These different approaches make a great musical foundation for the band.

How would you describe your music in just one sentence?

Heavy, groovy Prog-Rock, with catchy melodies.

Is it a studio-only project or do you also play live? If yes, any chances to see you live in Germany/Netherlands/Belgium one day?

It’s not a studio project, but we don’t do gigs that often. 3 of us are family guys with small kids and we all have daytime work, so we do not go on longer tours. We say yes to 1, 2 maybe 3 gigs abroad a year, and about the same in Norway. Our

first gig now is a split-gig with the Norwegian band Wobbler, here in Trondheim January 13th, 2018. We will do some festivals next year also, but we haven't heard from Germany yet.

Is there a well-interconnected Norwegian scene or is it more of a status of lone fighters?

Is there a fruitful connection with the Swedish or Finnish prog scene?

Progressive rock in Norway is growing fast, and I believe we have many dedicated fans and listeners. The bands also dig each other, so the last 2-3 years have been very good in Norway. We have worked with some Swedish bands. We've done festivals in Canada, France, Italy and Norway with Beardfish. Really nice and skilled guys. We have no connection to Finnish prog.

There are so many excellent bands in the current Norwegian prog scene – what do you think are the reasons for this? Any Norwegian-specific aspects that might lead to this?

Well we have buyers of prog on vinyl in Norway, and a very, very dedicated audience, that actually go to concerts to listen to music. We also have one of the best jazz conservatories in Europe, and many skilled musicians are drawn to the country. Maybe that's why a lot of talented jazz dudes decide to play prog?

How did you get into contact with Apollon Records?

Our last album is with Norwegian language only, and the distribution in Norway and Sweden has never been good, so that's why. Our bassplayer has another band on Karisma Records, a sister-label of Apollon Records. So I just sent *Robin* at Apollon a song from the new album, and we had a deal. It's also easier to communicate in your own language and to meet of cause. Apollon Prog is a brand new label with a lot of good ideas and hungry, good bands. We like to take risks, so

we fit in here.

Where do you see the band in let's say five years? Do you think you will still release music on CD or will CD disappear and all your music will only be available through downloads or platforms like Spotify/iTunes? Where do you position vinyl?

We produce ALBUM ROCK for LP only, but as long as people want a CD, we will sell it. I don't care about digital platforms at all, but it's ok for promotion. If you skip through the Arabs catalogue, you will not get the point. We try to take the listener out on a journey with our albums, and it's made for you to discover new elements after your 10th journey.

I write music to have in my own LP collection, with artwork made to visualize the lyrics and the mood in the compositions. You can't get that feeling out of a cell phone.

And good for us, I'm not the only one who sees it like that, we sell LPs.

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