

Interview: Buster Odeholm from Humanity's Last Breath and Vildhjarta

Buster Douglas Odeholm from *Humanity's Last Breath* and *Vildhjarta* about gigantic riffs and creating extreme metal music



The interview begins with a long moment where „Betreuer“ *Gilles Iachelini* praises the music and expresses his deep admiration of *Odeholm's* musical output. Giving this young swedish wunderkind only the chance to nod, say „yeah“, „thanks“ and small laughs here and there.

To german translation of the interview

You have been exposed to music very early in your life. I heard you attended your first Meshuggah Concert at the age of five (jokingly referring to the fact that he was actually something around twelve, which is damn early too)?

(Laughing out loud) Not really. But I was really young. Not that young. But, dude, I didn't actually liked the band back then. I went to the shows, but I went with the drummer from Darkane, and I liked Darkane a lot more than Meshuggah. I mean, I had a good time. But I think my brain wasn't ready for this type of music.

The riffs you can't really predict, are the ones created note by note. Its meant to sound inhuman.

On „Välde“ the music seems so well orchestrated (absolutely not like just four guys rocking their instruments while someone else records it). It seems, there is one (or more?) with a master plan putting together all these different elements such as clean vocals, atmospheric sounds, lowering tempo, the dynamic pitch shifting and all the other various elements I forgot to mention. Where does this come from?



Most of the chord based riffs, or black metal type riffs, which I found through jamming I recorded on the album the whole way through. The stakkato, more technical type of riffs are constructed. Because those types of riffs become better when you actually construct them note by note. You don't have any limitation by your playing. It's the other way around. You have to learn them once you created them. And that is the hard

part. So that kind of riffs, where you don't really know what comes next. The riffs you can't really predict, are the ones created note by note. Its meant to sound inhuman. So, I use tools to make that happen. I am human, so I need these tools to get over myself (laughs)

So it's basically you doing all the work?

„Välde“ and actually most of the albums before happens to be done by me. There is like one song and a riff, that *Calle* (*Calle Thomer*, Guitar since 2016) did. But that was more like me finding old riffs and asking whether he was planning to use them or not. And we had Randy Slaugh (producer/composer working with Devin Townsend, Periphery, Tesseract, Thy Art Is Murder, ...) making synth and orchestrations...

(Betreuer hysterical interrupting) So he did „Väldet„? This is my absolute fav on the album. I am listening to it once a day (at least) with my head high, arms open and nodding like *Jens Kidman*.

(Laughing out loud) Nice! That's my dads favorite song as well.

To me HLB feels like the definition of a very modern, progressive band construct, where a mastermind (you) controls the direction but also gathers others to help him to achieve his goal. This requires true team players by your side.

Absolutely. In the future I will try really hard to involve *Calle* more. So, we are even going to pay him to produce it. I make the song, I send the song to him, he does whatever he feels like and then sends it back. And this all happens, because I am really over making everything all by myself. It's been in the past, that I really wanted to have control over every single aspect of the music and now I have done that 3 albums, I am now open for a new way.

How are the lyrics and vocal arrangements created? It's a bit

hard to imagine cozy campfire sessions. Or you at the piano and *Filip* standing right next to you.

Definitely not. I am using Notes on my phone (he is referring to the „Notes“ app from apple) where I have this one huge file with lyrics. Whenever something pops into my head I write it down. This thing is fucking huge. So when it's time to make vocals for an album, I go through that document and find ideas to make lyrics from. Then I meet up with Filip (Filip Danielsson, vocals).

I pretty much talk the lyrics to the music and Filip listens to that in a loop and sings on top of me. We do that phrase by phrase. When we have a good take, we go to the next. Also during that process I pretty much demand different styles of growling and *Filip* delivers. The more we have and the more I listen to it, I can add my shouting vocals, which are more melodic, on top of it. I am actually the one singing the clean vocals on „Välde“. For whatever reasons (laughs) – I think I decided to simply do it when *Filip* wasn't there (in the studio).

You mean that DadDadDannDuDann-WonkWonk part?

As a (complete amateur) musician myself: Thank you for these playthroughs. It helps so much to get into the music and see how its build and structured. Playthrough to ,Tide': What are these sounds in between the low-string rhythms? It sounds so artificial, synth-alike. Is that all done with midi controlled whammy pedal?

Yeah, you mean that *DadDadDannDuDann-WonkWonk* part? Yeah, that is just me playing very fast and playing it on the middle strings and its pitched up one or two octaves and combined with an automated mute function and that gives that artificial sound. So, I am playing continuously fast and its chopped off. That's how I did it. And when I play that live, I have to automate that.

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If music is midi controlled and automated, doesn't that make the computer to the creator and the human as a servant to the arrangement and machine?

Sure, man. I use technology way more than others might. I am not trying to make music that sounds like a band. Like people being together and playing something. I am trying to make something else. That's why I utilize effects to make us sound inhuman.

To me the music sounds enormously gigantic. The riffs appear to me like waves of colossal size.

That's awesome to hear. Because that's like the main thing with HLB. It's music that sounds big. In the sense of size.

I see you play the guitar left handed (like jmi hendrix did), but...

(interrupting and imitating satanic voice): He doesn't do it, he doesn't do it like me!

...uh, sorry, I thought...

No, he just plays a right-hand guitar but with regular strings (E-string on top, high-e at lower side). He basically restrung the guitar. But I have the low string at the bottom. Write that in the interview, so people can read it.

OFFICIAL NOTE: *Buster Odeholm* DOES **NOT** PLAY THE GUITAR LIKE *JIMI HENDRIX*.

I think the one guy from „Bloodbath“ ... and I personally know at least 2 other people who play like me.

...(let's continue with the initial question) ...but did *Kristoffer Nillsson* or *Calle Thomer* also at least switched the strings to „upside-down“? Because when I was trying to play „Animal“ I sometimes thought, maybe it's easier if the strings are the correct order (like you have them) and not the regular way, like many others have them.

The problem that *Calle* has is that I have the biggest fucking hands ever. (*Gilles: and the longest arms too*) haha. Yeah. The thing is I can do really broad chords, which he can't. And because I have the strings upside-down some chords just don't work for him. So when I create riffs and tab them out for him, he tells me sometimes that it's impossible to play. (Shows an impossible to play chord) He has to jump with his hand instead to play this.

And does it sound alike when you two play together?

It really depends on the riffs. Some riffs just sound the same but others are more accommodated to how I play.

Marcus Rosell is mentioned as „Live Drummer“. How do you get the drums done during composing the songs and recording them? I know you are a drummer yourself (*Buster plays drums in Vildhjarta*).

Yes, he was the old live drummer for HLB. We have a new one now, but we don't know how that turns out, because we haven't played live yet. In *Vildhjarta* I get a skeleton of the drums and then I convert that to what makes sense to my brain. Then I send that back to them and come up with corrections and ideas. And in HLB it's all me.

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The ,Vittring, video deals with substance abuse. Do you had a specific substance in mind (not literally) which lead to these kinds of massive, horrible hallucinations? Or is that rather a symbol for something else?

That song deals with instincts. Animal instincts. People tend to forget that they are animals – but if you put them in the right situation they will do animalistic things. That is the thing in the video: There is this drug which makes you think that someone else will kill you or you have to kill someone to survive, then it doesn't matter if its your friend (like in this video). The song is more about finding your prey. Like being a predator which looks for the places where others feel safe. The sound of the song is a bit like a savanna where a lion slowly sneaks through the grass, trying to be silent, yet deadly.

The video to „Earthless“ reminds me of a ritual where the man is driven by mystic creatures, outside of his reality, but still in full control of his actions. He seems to be completely controlled by these forces. Is he entering a new level of conscious? What happens to him and what is the relation to the lyrics?

Well, the video is based on the ideas of Riivata Visuals. Everything is done by them. I basically said to them: I want blood and I want snow. That's what they gave me. As far as the lyrics go its more something like entering a new dimension, like dying or travelling. Hard to explain.

People say the music of HLB is desolate, almost sad. Are you a sad person?

As far as the atmosphere goes it's definitely desolate sounding to me, almost empty. And if I am a sad person? Yeah, well, I have my struggles, everyone has their struggles. I play metal music and I feel like that I have to express myself exactly like that. Maybe I have a bleak view of my surroundings and world. I think a lot of people have that. And I am thinking: How can you not have that (chuckles). This may sound weird, but to me making happy music right now seems disingenuous. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying there is nothing to be happy about, but maybe these people are trying to express something else, but not like the world is right now. I feel like that I have to express myself in a negative way. Or lets say: I have a lot of this stuff in me I'd like to express.

People (jokingly) say you are the reason why we don't get a new Vildhjarta album. Is that true? *(the question was prepared before the album actually was released and asked after the album was already out for three weeks)*

HAHA, get fucked! *laughs* I am the reason there *is* a Vildhjarta album.

When I look at the timeline and the members of the band, I was wondering what happened between 2012/2014 and 2016.

I think there was activity. It takes time to write new stuff. I think there hasn't ever been no activity in HLB. After the release of the self-titled album the band kind of broke up. I was still continuing, but we were not playing live. Then I did „Detestor“ (the 2nd full length album of HLB) and used the old vocalist (*Marcus Hultqvist*) for the high screams and used the new vocalist (*Filip Danielsson*) for the low screams on that album. But *Filip* couldn't later finish the vocals on „Abyssal“ because he had some medical issues to deal with.

Tour plans?

Oh yeah, we are going on tour in April 2022 with Reflections.

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The photograph was kindly provided to us by *Buster* himself