

Sabaton – Interview with Hannes Van Dahl – About songwriting, Corona and musical influences

The Swedish Heavy Metal Band Sabaton release with “The War To End All Wars” their tenth studio album. With the previous album “The Great War”, they reached number 1 in the German album charts for the first time, which is no easy feat in this genre. With their new longplayer, Sabaton thematically tie in again with the First World War. “The War To End All Wars” will be released on March 4th, and *BetreutesProggen.de* had the chance to ask the band some questions about the new album, their songwriting and future plans. Drummer *Hannes Van Dahl* was kind enough to answer our questions.



Credit: Tim Tronckoe

Zur deutschen Übersetzung des Interviews

All english interviews on BetreutesProgen.de

Hi, guys!

First of all... congratulations on your new Album. Its really impressive. All those stories about WWI. 'Lady of the Dark' and 'Stormtroopers' are my favorites.

At the moment the Promo is rotating here all the time. And I can hardly wait to see you on your tour this year.

My first real "holy shit" moment was without a doubt when I heard Judas Priests Painkiller album...

What music do you listen to besides classic heavy metal? Which artists inspired you?

Thanks for all the kind words, much appreciated!

I've been listening to all kinds of music, throughout my life. I've always found a good song being a good song, no matter the genre... And early on in my musical career I also realised that listening to different styles of music and genres improves your playing and ultimately your understanding of music. My wife is a academically educated opera singer, so in our house there's all kinds of music being played, from Fleetwood Mac to Dimmu Borgir. My first real "holy shit" moment was without a doubt when I heard Judas Priests Painkiller album... that really had a massive impact on me, and since then Ive always had a massive respect for them and the discography. But also, other things in life can inspire your playing, nature, conversations, movies or books, you just gotta be open for it.

Before you writing new material. Whats your first step. Writing the lyrics and the historic background, or the song itself? Are you building the song around the story?

Usually the music comes first, we write throughout the year, all the time a little bit, Even on tour. Everybody brings a “touring” studio in case ideas pops up. And then the puzzle of choosing the topic and making sure that the music does the story or theme justice.

How long did you work on the new album. Did the Corona Lockdown Break help your creativity, like “more Time, more ideas”?



credit: Tim Tronckoe

As mentioned before, the process of writing is a constant, so it's hard to set a date of when exactly we started to work in “The war to end all wars”. For sure we had some more time to focus on only that, but it also came with great challenges, for example when we entered the studio to start recording we had to minimise the risk of someone getting sick and have to postpone the process...So we had to be smart and plan well ☐ It all turned out great and Im so proud of this album, both musically and sound...our greatest sounding album so far, without a doubt. But I don't think the pandemic made us focus more or less, everyone in this band is up for the task of recording an album and shows up 100% prepared, focused and

hungry, in pandemic times or not.

The song 'Versailles' has a very folky and traditional mood to it. Did you ever think about adding different instruments like bagpipes or flutes as a stylistic device?

Well, I think this songs says just that, for one it's in major key which is great fun! And then trying to make sure that whatever you put on there fits the song and improves it, that's always the balance, adding more instruments doesn't necessarily make the song better, but finding the right one for sure does.

The artwork of "The War to end all wars" is once again ingenious. As with all your albums, it immediately catches the eye. Also here it fits perfectly to the new album, and makes directly desire to hear. Do you let your own ideas flow in, or do you get it completely out of your hand?

Once again we worked with there talented artist *Peter Sallai* to create this album cover, we've worked with him for many years now and this time he outdid himself. The artwork is also huuuuuuuge!!

The whole process is a back and forth with ideas and input from both sides.

Short Nerd Question: Maiden, Priest or Saxon?

Priest!!!

I enjoy the process of rearranging and making sure songs works as acoustic versions, which is not always the case

In the past you also did acoustic gigs. And there is also an acoustic version of 'Christmas Truce'. Would it be an option for you to include more acoustic sounds in your music?

We actually did a tv performance shortly before Christmas last year where we played 'Christmas Truce' acoustically, so much

fun! I think it turned out great. I enjoy the process of rearranging and making sure songs works as acoustic versions, which is not always the case. It takes quite the amount of work, but it's great fun.

What collaborations would you want to do in the future? You played with Apocalyptica on your last tour. This was awesome! Are there any other ideas like this?

Tons of ideas in store, not much I can tell about though! I think these kinds of collaborations are great, challenging and fun. Well see in the future!

Since your historic subject matter is partly very extensive, and the songs only tell a fraction of it, have you ever considered writing longer songs and more progressive music?

Here we're back to the everlasting balance, what does the song need? To be longer? Does it make the song better? Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. This can rarely be decided on before hand, but the process of creating the song will tell.

What was the best thing that happened to you on tour? And what was the worst?

Oh, so many great things have happened it's always hard to pick one! But meeting and touring with your child hood heroes, (Priest, Maiden, Scorpions, Metallica and so on) is always a surreal experience, especially when it turns out they're really nice guys, always super inspirational. I remember when we were touring with Iron Maiden and *Nicko McBrain* shows up behind my drum kit when Im playing, and gives me the thumbs up!! Totally cool dude!! I had to pinch my arm there for a while...

Worst thing? Not sure, but we were involved in a pretty bad car accident in Tunisia a couple of years back... that sucked to say the least.

What will be your next historic topic? Maybe Middle-Age,

Egyptian history and pharaohs or a new Scandinavian album about your Country History, like “Carolus Rex” Part 2? Are there any ideas for the future?

Now we focus on “The War To End All Wars” and when time comes it’ll be revealed ☐

Thank you so much for this interview and your time! See you on tour! Let’s hope that Corona will let it be happen. Stay healthy...and rock on!

Thanks for a great interview!

To the Review of Sabaton – “The War To End All Wars”

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