



Person responsible for the interview and translation: Marcel Szczepanik

Good afternoon Mr Tomas, I'm Marcel from a Polish metal webzine called kvlt.pl. To begin with, I'd like to tell you that I'm beyond excited about this interview. You're one of the biggest influences I've ever had, and you're the one I look up to with respect. I can't believe that I'm talking to such a prominent figure. How do you do?

I'm doing fine, really fine. Thank you for the nice words.

You've recently put out the first single off the upcoming album entitled 'To Drink from the Night Itself'. I must admit that I love it. What's your opinion about the album? How do you see it in comparison with your previous work, 'At War with Reality'?

Well, we really felt right after we were finished with 'At War with Reality' that it could have been more adventurous. It could have been little bit less accessible. We really wanted to do something more challenging for ourselves and for our listeners this time around. Something that would take a little bit more of an effort to get into. Also, something a little bit less polished, a little bit more death metal basically. And a little bit more progressive. That was the plan for this record.

On 18th May your new album is due to be released. What is the meaning behind the very name 'To Drink from the Night Itself'? I'm aware that the line first appeared in the lyrics to the track 'Order from Chaos' from 'At War with Reality'.

That's true! You're the first one to notice that! (laughter). You know, no one has ever noticed that.

Thank you very much (laughter). I've done a lot of research while preparing for the interview.

We always do links back and forth from our albums and from our lyrics to create the appealing of a master gates universe in the way. So you could get into the special kind of emotions that I try to create with the lyrics and the music. So of course, it's a little bit of a reference to that. But it's basically the idea of trying to describe the emotional impact of creating urgent and important art. That's the very metaphor to 'To Drink from the Night Itself'.

I'd like us to talk about the past a bit. What was the reason for the break-up back in 1996? It can be said that with the release of 'Slaughter of the Soul' you've literally broken through to the mainstream. You had the world at your feet, and yet you decided to put ATG to rest.

Yeah, we were precisely at the start of our 20s. We were a band and all of the sudden we were under everybody's eyes. There was also a lot of touring and a lot of stress. We haven't even started working it through, we were just out of college, we didn't know how to behave in that situation. We were really tired of touring. Now we would just take a break from touring, talk about it. But at that point we were just like David Shore, you know, more into drama than trying to get ahead and be

constructed. I think that was our age basically. If it happened now, oh well, it almost happened now. Anders had probably the same feeling now as he had during the 'Slaughter of the Soul' days. But now we talked about it, we gave him a chance to think about it. He left the band, but we found the replacement and did a new record. Now we can cope with that kind of stuff. We couldn't back then.

Did you enjoy the worldwide acclaim that met 'Slaughter of the Soul'? How can you relate to that album being a milestone of the melodeath scene? Are you content with the impact it had on the modern metal scene?

Well, of course we're happy with the responses that have been given to that album through the years. Back in the day, we were just an underground death metal band that had just released a record. It got little bit better reviews than all our previous records, so we got to tour more, but we never really saw the breakthrough as such. That whole thing started after we broke up anyway, so it's hard to say. And about that melodic death metal tag, that's something that other people have invented. We never called ourselves melodic death metal. We are death metal. And not only.

But do you feel as if your music influenced such bands as In Flames, Dark Tranquillity, etc?

These guys are friends from our local town. We would hang out together from the age of 16 and 17, so we probably influenced each other. Something like inspired to start a band, tried to be better than the other bands. But musically there's a big difference between these bands. I think that everybody from In Flames and Dark Tranquillity would say the same, there's a big difference between the bands. Whereas At the Gates is probably the one that has always been more of a death metal band than the rest.

How did it feel to be back with At the Gates, especially when your comeback album has been received so well?

It's amazing. I mean, it's a very fortunate position that we can come back, our fans have been so receptive. They didn't take our new material too hard, it seems like they really try to understand what we do, even if it's challenging music, they really try to get behind it, understand it, and enjoy it. Songs from 'At War with Reality' go down really well live, have always done well live from the start, and now when we started playing 'To Drink from the Night Itself' live a few times, it seems to be the same thing there. We're very lucky to be in this position. We've succeeded with the comeback in that sense, but it's all because of the fans.

Let's come back to the very beginnings of the band. The debut AtG album is one of my favourite works of music of all time. I've always felt a strong incentive to know the story behind the album. What is that 'Red' in the sky? What can you say about the concept of that album? Is there any concept that binds the songs together?

It's more of a feeling on that album, I mean the songs are not incorporated in a big lyrical concept. There are different things on that record. But we all went in writing that record with a statement from ourselves, it had to mean something. It had to have a little bit of a desperate, revolutionary vibe. 'The Red in the Sky Is Ours' is, of course, a metaphor for claiming your own world and life back. That's why I always say that 'To Drink from the Night Itself' is like a twin album to 'The Red in the Sky Is Ours'. Maybe not soundwise, but like emotionally wise, for us it's the same kind of burning,

important urgency in our hearts now as it was when we did that record. That's why 'To Drink from the Night Itself' also has a red cover art.

Speaking of the first album, to me songs like 'Windows', 'Within', and 'Neverwhere' are impeccable and completely perfect. Is there a chance that you'll start playing them live? I know that your current setlists do not really trace back to your roots. You mostly focus on the material from 'At War with Reality' and 'Slaughter of the Soul'. Will you go on and unleash some deep cuts?

Well, we have almost always played almost at least one or two songs from 'The Red in the Sky Is Ours'. We've always played 'Kingdom Gone'. If it's not a really short festival set, we always try to do at least one. But also a lot of times we've played 'Windows' live. On our reunion tour we also played 'Neverwhere' a few times as well. But yeah, everything is possible, when you have many records and people like different albums, it's hard to choose which songs should be played. We try to play at least one from every record if we're not restricted to a short festival set.

I forgot to add that I'm a zealous fan of your lyrics. Do you recognize those?

I hear music and it guides me
On my quest to infinity
A harbor appears within the mist
It's lighthouse, a sunrise
For a soul starved of light

Oh yeah, that's from 'Within'!

Indeed! I love the fact that you recognize those lyrics. 'Within' has to have the best lines ever! Where do you get the inspiration for your lyrics?

It's different every time, but it's usually from literature. Back in those days I had just discovered Aleister Crowley and his works, so I was really into that. I really tried to understand the more philosophical side of Crowley on those early records. There's always something different that moves me. But to create the kind of a metaphorical, abstract, and avantgarde landscape it's just because I see the songs as almost like a painting that I need to just fill with my words. It's really like a big painting together, so I need to complete each other. It's hard to explain because it's just from the inside.

The next question is about 'The Burning Darkness'. This concept has been introduced with the release of your second album, 'With Fear I Kiss the Burning Darkness'. It later reappeared in the song 'Heroes and Tombs'. What does it mean to you?

Well, 'The Burning Darkness' is also like 'Let's go on with yourself, open up yourself from your emotions, and be fully alive. Don't fear anything, live life to the fullest'. That kind of metaphor is 'The Burning Darkness'.

Let's put At the Gates aside for a while. Last year your second band, The Lurking Fear, released the debut album. I'm really into it, and I even got a chance to review it. I'm really impressed with the sound incorporated into that album. Did you enjoy playing some raw death metal again? What do you think of it, what are your reflections on it?

We have really great feelings about that time. We really wanted to play this raw music together. Looking back as you say, but also looking forward, we're not losing the essence of pure death metal. We are super excited, and we're still going. We have some shows planned for the spring and summer, and we've also started writing for the next record. We're doing *At the Gates* full-time, and this thing is still going. You seem to understand the bum.

Do you plan on visiting Poland in the foreseeable future? The last time you were here was 2015, and since then our hunger for *At the Gates* has intensified drastically.

That's great! Well, of course, we have to go through Poland. We're now looking into the European tour and we're trying to schedule it, you know, stuff like choosing bands which we're supposed to tour with. I think there'll be an announcement within a month or so. If Poland's not included in the actual tour, we'll do like last time and come over for like 4 shows or so, a short Polish one.

And for the end, I'd like to ask you about your secondary (or maybe primary?) occupation. I heard that you teach social studies in the schools of Sweden. Do you like teaching? How do you reconcile touring with your bands with trying to impart your knowledge to children? It must be extremely difficult to manage such diverse activities.

Oh, they're not that diverse actually. It's about waking people up and getting them interested, that's the same thing. Catching people's attention with what I'm saying. In that sense they're pretty much the same. I don't really have to go in and out of my roles that much. Both works have taught me stuff that I could use in the other work. But it's of course more of a logistic nightmare sometimes, but I have very much support from colleagues, from my boss, and also from the band. But of course we're touring *'To Drink from the Night Itself'* now, so maybe I'll have to take a little leave of absence to be able to focus on the tour for this one more.

And do your students actually know that you're in a death metal band?

Yeah, of course, they do. But I don't make that much fuss about it. You know me, I'm a humble person, I try not to make too much noise about it. They understand that we're trying to focus on what we are there for in that preference.

But don't they get distracted from lessons because their teacher is a legendary death metal vocalist?

Well, death metal is not really on their radar (laughter). They listen to different types of music altogether, but I think that's funny that they can go to youtube to show their friends and say 'Oh, that's my teacher!' I mean, if it would be some other style of music like hip-hop or something, maybe they would be more amazed.

Thank you very much for our little conversation Tomas. I wish you all the best for the future. Hope to see you back here in Poland shortly. I'm also impatiently looking forward to the release of *'To Drink from the Night Itself'*. What can I say, all Hail Tomas Lindberg, the greatest death metal vocalist of all time!

Thank you very much, man! That's a lot of nice words in one sentence. Thank you too, it was so nice to hear you. Take care, man. Bye!