

TRIBULATION: “A newly lit spark “

Not all bands with death metal roots can be expected to evolve into a much more complex musical acts – fortunately, such evolution was the case of Tribulation. Their death- and black-metal tinged past combines with a gothic touch and hypnotising melodies, turning out to be ever-fascinating. Dark sound.

It’s been a while since Tribulation came back from their first post-pandemic tour and we got a chance to catch up with their guitarist Adam Zaars. Read about their favourite places to play in, how the preparation for the new album are going and what else the band wants to achieve in their music – find our conversation down below...

Hi Adam. As a first question, I’d like to ask about your recent tour with Watain. What was it like to play before them and Abbath? It was nearly a month, after all.

It was a fantastic tour in a lot of different ways. We knew all of the people on the tour from before. We’ve been playing with Watain on and off for the past ten years and we’ve toured with Abbath before. We’ve also met with Bølzer multiple times.

First of all, it was fantastic with the social aspect of the tour, which was great. We shared a bus with Watain, Bølzer and our crew, so that was just great. Lots of days off on tour as well, which I find necessary, but which can be quite dull at the same time. Still, it was very well organised.

Tribulation works in many different contexts and you’re never quite sure how well it would be received. But the reception on this tour was very good with a lot of great shows. Before this tour, you couldn’t know because of the pandemic and playing live again. All the bands are like cows being released in the springtime! (laughs) The market’s just quite overcrowded, but for us the tour was really good.

Glad to hear that – when I caught you at one of the shows, the energy onstage was great. Is there any favourite country to perform in, actually? Maybe somewhere Tribulation are welcomed in the warmest way?

There are a few places, but I think it changes throughout the years. Poland is actually one of those countries where we really like to go. I don’t know if it has something to do with two weeks on tour we did with Behemoth back in the day.

Other than that, you never quite know because it’s different from city to city as well. Lisbon was great this time, for example. We’ve been there before and it’s always good. Still, this time, it was just one of the better shows. Stockholm was also great - I mean, we’re from Sweden, but that was really great. So was Tilburg, and also one of the first nights of tour in Paris was good. It’s always chaotic on the beginning of the tour, but it all went pretty well. And I’d also say it’s always good in Germany. By now, I’ve probably said almost every country!

It’s interesting you mentioned Lisbon because it was the show I saw from you last September. The reception can definitely depend on the venue, but maybe also pandemic has changed something here. How do you think performing live is now?

Well, I couldn’t tell the difference between then and now, to be honest. It’s always different, depending on what tour you’re on as well.

Like I've said earlier, the market got overcrowded and many bands combined their tours - like we did with this one, actually. It's basically a combination of different tours, which doesn't force the audiences to choose from many different gigs. I'm glad to be back and to play live again.

I agree, this is what matters the most. And since there were some new events after the pandemic and also changes in your lineup, I was wondering what changed with composing when Joseph (Tholl, new guitarist) joined you and when he also composed a track on the Hamartia EP?

He composed Axis Mundi indeed, the second track on the EP. He does the vocals on this track and on Vengeance (The Pact), the newly released cover of Blue Öyster Cult song.

You knew each other for a long time and it looks like your cooperation is good. Is it because you more or less knew what to expect?

I thought it was going to work, but one can never know for sure. It's him coming from the outside of the thing that we've been doing since forever, so we couldn't be certain that it was going to work. I think it worked really well, though. At the time we wrote the songs together, there was a very creative atmosphere and a very creative environment. Maybe it's a newly lit spark.

I think we needed it. It worked, or at least I think so!

It definitely did. That's some really great news and I also think that it's a good sign for your upcoming album, isn't it?

Thank you. With the new album, we've started slowly and haven't really done that much just yet. When it comes to this album, for me it was the same feeling as working on the EP. It was basically like a small sample of writing the new full-length.

We're going down a new climate and atmosphere, and we're also following different paths we haven't really gone down before. I think it's been the general feeling among everyone in the band. It's the feeling that we have to - we want to and we have to - do something like that.

To evolve, so to speak?

Yes - or at least if not evolve, then do something new, something different. And we'll see where that ends up. I can't be sure in the end, but we have at least a few ideas that seem exciting to explore. You never know if they're going to work or not, but we'll find out, soon enough!

Definitely! The new ideas you've mentioned also made me think of the visual side of your music. Since you designed the cover for Hamartia, I was also thinking that you've maybe designed something for new full length? Will it also be a whole artwork or will you just stick to layout and design?

I don't know yet, actually. We've always done it ourselves and we might do that now as well. I'll definitely do the layout for it and everything around it, but I've been thinking about taking someone from the outside for the cover. Otherwise, the new cover would be different from the previous ones. Sometimes changes are necessary, so we haven't decided on that yet.

Since we're talking about possible collaborations, how did it go with the band's work with Johan Bååth, who directed your video?

He directed two of them, actually - we did two videos in two days, back to back. It was a chaotic couple of days, but eventually, we got them. And in all that chaos, there was also fun.

We've done videos before, but it's been a while since we've had so much control over it. In the past, we've done videos for which we've hired people from the outside, people who have their own vision. This time, it was an idea from the band, which is definitely something we'll do again, and for sure also with the new album.

This sounds like a really thrilling plan for the future. Maybe it's even possible for you to make a movie like the one Johan did with Watain (Opus Diaboli released in 2012)? Do you think it would work for Tribulation?

Yeah, it was a long time since I saw that. We could absolutely do something like that, for sure. The problem is, how do you release it, nowadays? You can't really release DVDs! You just do it on YouTube, I suppose... (laughs)

I think so! Still, as the band you've managed with the live release from the Södra Teatern. Since it's really an achievement, I'd like to ask what else would you like to achieve with your music? Are there any goals you all currently have?

At this point, I think the only real goal is to act like we have more and more music in us. We've always been creative people making different things and in the early days of the band, we've always used to say "art for art's sake". I think that this attitude is still there - but we still have to want to do it.

I've come to the point a few times when I felt that there isn't really much more to give or to express within Tribulation. But I think at the moment, that's not really the case. We still have more music in us to write and to get out. So that's the main goal now. And the other goal now is to grow as a band, to get more successful as a band.

It hasn't been the main priority and we haven't taken shortcuts to do that. But it's still a goal, to be a bigger thing where we could develop more and make our music even better and bigger. That's still one of the goals, to have a bigger show and to be able to tour with that successfully. We are aware that we can write more music, and we want to do it.

I'm sure you can achieve this. There are also some shows you've planned this year, which I guess leaves you with time for the festivals and also some time to write new music?

Exactly, that's the plan now. I would never say never, but I would be surprised if we went on another tour before the new album. We do have shows planned as you've said, but we have to have time to write the album as well. That's going to be the main priority for us this year, really.

Of course. I think it's the perfect goal for the nearest future. I wish all of you all the best for the tour - and also see you at Brutal Assault!

That's great! I can't remember all of the festivals we play, but we're playing Brutal Assault, that's right.

I think that as fans and followers, we all can't wait for it. Do you have any message for the Polish fans and for our webzine?

Well, I'd say a few words of shameless self-promotion. Please buy the new EP when it's out! You will be able to stream all the songs on any streaming platform you wish, of course. But to support the band, please buy the 12" one. Like I've said earlier, we like coming to Poland to play, so I really hope we'll be back sooner than later.