

OOMPH!: „Transfer all the energy of old and new songs“

Hello, it's good to see you all! Thank you so much for your time, I'm really glad that you've found the time for conversation with Kvl Magazine.

Oomph: Thanks for having us!

The first question might be simple, but the answer's more than interesting for all of us. How was the recording process? You've recorded and produced everything yourselves and had more than twenty vocalists to choose from, after all...

Flux: Yes, and we had to choose just one vocalist after the auditions. Otherwise we would have ended up with a choir instead. (laugh)

There has been a point when we were more or less forced to look for a new singer. Of course we wanted to try and keep the band in "the old constellation". We fought hard for it and tried to find a solution, but at one point, we had to admit it to ourselves that it was not possible to keep it anymore. We knew that we had the responsibility for our lifetime project Oomph and we had to continue with it, also for our fans. We know how much our songs, live concerts and lyrics mean to most of our fanbase who follow us for years, just as we know how many emotions they associate with our music.

So for Crap and me, it was never a question not to continue the band. We immediately started to look for the new singer who would fit in this gap and fulfil everything we were looking for. Der Schulz was the first one that we asked, because we've known each other since 2016 when he played with his band Unzucht as a support on our European tour. Ever since then, we know about his good features – that he can sing very well, and that also our fans liked him very much when Unzucht performed before our show. He was the very first one whom we contacted, and after we've invited him and met, we already started to test the old songs together. This was the step that every single candidate had to take. We had to see if it was possible for him to transport the emotions and the feel of our old songs. It's because of course we want to play them on the upcoming tour – we'll perform a lot of classics, so this has to fit with emotions, voice and singing abilities.

Then, we worked on new songs. We prepared five-six songs from the new album that we already wrote and started to work with Der Schulz as a singer to write lyrics, and we also started to work together on the vocal melody lines. And we immediately felt the magic! We felt it between the three of us when we worked together. In just one session, we exchanged lot of ideas which are now on the album in the same form. In one or two hours, we've really been very creative together, and it immediately felt like working on the next Oomph album. It didn't feel like just working on a project, another band or such. It just felt organic and natural, and this was the best advantage that Der Schulz had.

Then we've tried a lot of other singers, as you've mentioned. When it was official that we were looking for a vocalist, we were in contact with other singers, it's been about twenty five of them, whom we've also invited. Daniel had to wait a long time, around five months, until we've been able to make a final decision. It's because we are the kind of people who, if we have the opportunity, try out everything without having to question ourselves later. There have been very good candidates with the potential abilities of singing, but in the end Daniel was just the best one. From the human side we fit very good together as well - we have the same kind of humour, we're in the similar age, so it was the perfect combination.

And then, all of us together, we started to work on the album. Once again, we produced it ourselves, the same way we produced before, but just with Daniel. It was in our studio, since we're the owners, producers and mixers.

The first reactions have also been very positive for us. When we played new songs to our close

friends and family who know the band very well, they all said that they feel the same when they listen to the new songs as when they did when they listened to the old songs of Oomph. So for me, this is totally the same feel. It's just Oomph.

Definitely! You have so many powerful songs on the new album. But is there a song you are particularly proud of?

Flux: All of them! This is why we'll play a lot of songs live. I think we're going to play about eight songs from the new album live because we do love all the new songs, we are very much touched by them. When we select tracks for the new album, we always choose the songs that are the most important for us, and that speak the most to our feelings when we listen to them.

Of course we like the old songs as well, but we wanted to give Der Schulz a chance to sing as many songs live on this tour that he is known for, instead of mostly having to interpret the classics, which he will do as well. We'll play about eight songs from the new album and then, well, fifteen or fourteen classics...

Der Schulz: Yes, we're talking fourteen "classics" here.

Flux: All of them from the thirteen albums that we've done before, so at least one song from each album, or period in our music. The fans will hear them at our shows, this is for sure. And Der Schulz interprets them really, really well! I enjoy listening to "his versions", so to speak.

That's quite a setlist!

Der Schulz: I'm really looking forward to singing the old songs too. I've loved them for many, many years and from time to time when I was DJ in goth clubs, I'd always play a lot of Oomph songs. I actually enjoy them so much that I'd always sing along with them. So already in the beginning, I realised this kind of songs fits really well with my voice, and I'm very much looking forward to singing the old songs too.

(to Daniel Schulz) It was also you who wrote all the lyrics or most of them, right?

Der Schulz: Well, when it comes to the main part, the instrumental parts of the songs were nearly done by Flux and Crap. And when I came in, the main work was to focus on the melody lines and on the lyrics. But in the end, we do it all together.

For the lyrics, a lot of influence came from my side, but then we sat together and talked about every word. Every lyric to every song had to be good for each of us. So yes, we worked together on every part, as they did before me too, which has always been about band effort. It has to work for everyone.

It's also reflected in the first single title, which is from literature, right? But the lyrical themes also deal with society, current events and simply speaking, human nature, from what I could understand?

Der Schulz: Wem die Stunde Schälgt, of course, came from a novel by Hemingway. We love his kind of writing very much, so "For Whom the Bell Tolls", describes the feeling when you're in a bad situation, but don't give up – it's when you find your strength again instead, when you stand up and go on. It's like a way of saying "here we are", of showing that we're still alive, so I think that every person can relate to it and has been in such a situation.

Many people agree that it's the perfect single for a band who came up with a new lineup and we're still alive. Many thought that the band is done when the lead singer is leaving. So I think it was the

perfect single to come up with to confirm that we're still alive and to show that we can and we will do it.

For the first single, it must have been the perfect choice. Another song which also fits perfectly in today's world is Nur Ein Mensch, which is basically anti-war with a pacifistic message...

Flux: Yes, like you've said it's an anti-war song. We've had anti-war songs also on other albums, like Tausend Mann und ein Befehl, which is the opening track on Ritual. Of course now the topic is much, much closer to us, as we have war in Europe. It's very close to us, after all it's in your neighbour country. Each of us is of course much more involved and feels it much more. And for myself, my wife is Ukrainian, so I also have some inside information from our family who is still in Ukraine and either under occupation or under rockets.

This being said, actually all songs on this album are very much on actual topics which have influenced us the last two years. I would say it's the album with the most up-to-date lyrics we ever wrote. And with the anti-war song, Nur Ein Mensch, there is one line "Brüder töten Brüder", which is somehow essential and explains why this war is special, why it's different. In the Soviet Union, they were all one country, and when we played shows for example in Russia and in Ukraine, there have always been fans from both countries on many of the shows we performed there. They travelled to other countries just to see us at another show and partied all together, Ukrainians and Russian fans talked with each other and partied with each other.

And they all had families on both sides, so it's really like brothers killing brothers. For us it's unbelievable that this can happen nowadays again – that someone decides to have war and they can still do it after one and half a year now. And we're not able to stop it, and United Nations is not able to stop it, although we had this institution made up so that things like World War II would not happen again.

So we keep our fingers crossed that maybe our song, as little or insignificant as it might seem, is helping a little bit.

Lrt's hope so. Back to the powerful message of your songs, I was wondering if maybe each of you would have one word to describe this new album of yours?

(Crap shakes his head before answering)

Der Schulz: Tough one, wow! (laughs) But I'll start... "Deep".

Flux: I would say "essential", because it's the most important album for the history of the band, the most important that we've ever released.

Can we expect any word from Crap as well?

Crap: I could do that in one word, I guess... "New era", perhaps!

Flux: It's two words. Well, nearly one word, but you have to say it fast, like "Newwwera"! Now it's one word.

Der Schulz: Well, in German, you can put all the words together, so...

Flux: Yeah, we like to make such long words! There's basically no separation.

(his bandmates laugh)

Moving on to the visual side of the album, the first single has some striking and beautiful setting in a castle. Whose idea was it?

Der Schulz: The Bückeburg castle is in Lower Saxony, not far from Hannover. So it's not far from all of us actually, I live in Hannover and they live in Braunschweig, so it's nearby.

Flux: The idea came from the director. It's Mirko Witzki, who has his company Witzki Visions. When he heard the song and after we've shown him the cover artwork, he came up with a kind of a story which is, in a way, connecting the lyrics and the artwork that we have. After all the goat on the cover has the animal horns and human body... so he made up his own vision and used his imagination, and then he was looking for perfect locations. He knew that this castle wasn't just a beautiful one, it also had a mausoleum which actually resembles Rome a bit. One of our fans has even asked if we filmed it there, as I was in Rome some weeks before... but no, it was in Germany and not far away from us. We liked the final effect and think it turned out impressive.

When it comes to the album cover, who created it? It's impressive with all the symbols.

Flux: The artist is the same we worked with on our previous album, Ritual. It's Stefan Heilemann who has his brand Heilemania. Just as the last time, he also took the main band photos, and then, in communication with us and with the record company, he's also worked on the cover. There were a lot of changes... We talked with him and discussed how to visualise this topic of Richter Und Henker. There have been all kind of possible combinations - like showing only the judge, showing only the executioner, or showing only the victim. So we came up with this idea, and maybe we've just transferred it correctly in the final image – the idea that you cannot really say if the goat is the judge here, or if it's the victim or someone suffering because of somebody who was killed before. But at least this goat character is standing there proud as if it's watching you, which is creating some emotions and thoughts when you look at this artwork. It's even quite iconic how the goat is standing there.

The fans can really interpret it in their own way, so to speak.

Flux: Yes, and it's important to not just write it too clearly. Then it can just become boring. If you look at something and think "oh, it's just like this", then you put it away. If you can look closely and watch it while having some thoughts and discovering things like the guillotine, it's different. It's like being enlightened, in a way.

Yes, it's probably the best way to plan your album cover when you add something that actually speaks to you. Since we also spoke about fans and live shows, is there something else we can expect from your concerts in autumn. Or maybe you can't tell yet?

Flux: We will have NO fire onstage!

(his bandmates laugh)

If there's something we can already say about the upcoming live shows, the main change will be Der Schulz as our new frontman, of course, and new songs from our latest album combined with classics. Just like we did before on our tours.

We want to transfer the energy and to have fun with our fans, just as if we were having a big party. So from this concept what you can expect from an Oomph show, it will not change so much. Of course Der Schulz has his own character and he will probably be a little bit different frontman to the fans. He has his own vocabulary when he speaks with his body, with his words and actions to the audience, which I like. He's also an experienced frontman from his other bands – his own solo project and also Unzucht, so we're not worried that we can transfer all the energy of old songs and new songs to our fans and have a big party event on all the shows. We're really looking forward to that!

This year, Der Schulz played some live dates, but Crap and I didn't since the last Oomph shows, which has now been more than two and a half years ago, so for us coming back onstage is very exciting. Well, starting a new tour is always exciting with all the new songs, when you think how to perform, how to move during these new songs... it all has to be trained after a while, you get used to it. So we're really looking forward, we can't wait to go out and to see our fans again after such a long time.

Der Schulz: And we actually WILL have fire. But inside of us! (laughs)

That's a good way to say it! Now we know what to expect, but what do YOU expect especially from the Polish show? Oomph only played here once and there were no Unzucht shows yet.

Flux: We're happy to come back. We remember the show well, and the first show we ever played in Poland was also the last concert on the last Ritual tour, and it was at a festival. We really wanted to come back earlier which didn't happen due to all the issues that happened worldwide, so we're really looking forward to play this show. Hopefully it's just a start of our Polish shows with the concert in Posen, as we say the city's name in German. As we know, we cannot play in Ukraine unfortunately, but we know that a lot of Ukrainians are also in Poland, and in Germany as well, and will come to our shows. So we're really glad to have this, at least.

I think that in the fans' name, it's safe for me to say that we're all both happy and impatient to attend the show. Thank you very much for your time, it was a pleasure to talk to you!

Oomph: Thank you too!