

SOLBRUD – “ Retain our status as a boundary-pushing band”

Hello! Thank you for your time and congratulations on the release of your newest album. To promote it, you’ve played at Copenhagen Concert House which looked like quite a show. What can you tell us about it?

Adrian Utzon Dietz: Thank you. It went quite well and since the concert was last Saturday, we have just recovered from it. It was most importantly well-received from our peers and our audience. We played the whole album which is, as you know, more than one and a half hour, so it meant quite a challenging show, but it turned out fine.

I’m really glad to hear it. In one of the interviews – quite an old one, though – you did mention that composing one song can take up to a few months. Is it still like that or things have changed since then?

Adrian: You mean writing the songs or recording them? Because writing... that takes a long time!

Tobias Pedersen: Usually, it takes us more than two months. When it comes to some of the songs we used on the new album, the writing started six or seven years ago. On average, writing a Solbrud song usually takes between a half and a whole year before we are done with the track. So it’s quite a long process.

It does make sense that it’s not an overnight process. I guess you’re not one of the bands that can write when touring, then?

Tobias: Oh, no! (laughter) Not when we’re touring. Of course when we’re on tour, we’re still sitting with our instruments and come up with certain kind of riffs and ideas. But all the exact writing process is always in the rehearsal room.

Adrian: We’re huge fans of bands such as Black Sabbath which are known for making up lot of their stuff on tour. With the multiple live sets they had, they had to come up with new stuff and jam. They were like this, but we’re a bit more of control freaks when it comes to writing our songs. Once there is a guitar and we have a riff here or there, it will come quite naturally - from just sitting and preparing for the show, warming up and such.

So even though you might let the tour inspire you, this is not the perfect setting for composing, after all. About touring, I’m not sure if you’ve ever played in Poland? I think you haven’t played too many shows here in Eastern Europe?

Tobias: I think we played Poland once, many years ago on a tour. It was at a festival near the border, if I remember well, but that was many years ago.

Adrian: That could have been Czech Republic, in fact. I’m not sure either...

Tobias: In any case, we would like to come to Poland. It seems like there are decent metal shows out there that would fit us perfectly.

Yeah, the scene is growing here. Your concert definitely needs to happen in the future!

Adrian: You’re welcome to tell your local bookers to set up a show!

It’s a big country, so the possibilities are many. One more tour-related question: is there any “dream lineup” you have and bands you’d like to tour with the most?

Tobias: In Denmark, we usually tour with certain bands, but when we're playing in Europe in general, it's usually what fits with our musical style and what our bookers think is a good match.

Probably it's easier to tour with bands that are similar in style than just throw every genre and make it work.

Adrian: Somewhat similar, at least, yes. But I also think it's good if there is a little bit of variation in a package of touring. Take an example of touring with one more or two more bands. I can see us touring with doom band or a death metal band, maybe even some post-metal bands.

This variation in style is a welcome thing for me. In addition, if you go to a show, you don't necessarily want to listen to blast beats four bands in a row, right? So contrast can also work well.

That's true. Now that we've talked contrasts and live shows, we still need to talk about your new album! It's quite a piece of work. It goes through the genres, the influences... after all, all four of you have contributed when composing one vinyl side each. In all this, what was the most important lesson for you, what did you learn in the process?

Tobias: I think we learned a lot about each other, doing it this way, and giving us space to make exactly what we wanted on each side. The recording process made us see that something which we might have put down in the past could actually work if we just put more effort into it. So I think we learned this lesson.

We also realised that making the next album would not go this way. Most probably, it would be a combination of ways in which we made this album and the way we used on the past albums. I think that for the next album, we will take some of both methods.

This should work really well. Sounds like a 'next level' album, actually!

Adrian: I think this has been very developing for us. For example when we worked with the arrangements, it was developing our skills because we had so much time to do all of it this time. Personally, I think, that it was also about building knowledge - how to arrange music, how to put second guitar parts, how to put acoustic guitars and make it work and in all that, how to make it more orchestral. It has been really interesting and new ideas keep forming from the process. You keep learning every time and certain things fall into place when you are recording in the studio.

The symphonic parts which you've mentioned, together with instrumentals, made me think how cinematic your music is. Have you ever considered creating a soundtrack for movie or series?

Adrian: If someone asks us to do this, we'll do our best! (laughter) Not sure if we could meet the deadline, though, if there was one. Well, especially our drummer has mentioned that he wants to work even further with composing and classical music. He writes and reads sheet music, being the only one of us who does that, so he's fully schooled in music composition by now. So, when it comes to a soundtrack... sure! Sure, why not?

There might always be a chance. From Danish artists, I remember Myrkur's music was even in Netflix series. This has just come to my mind, since I had moments when I thought "this would make a good soundtrack!" when listening to your album.

Adrian: That would be an interesting challenge for us, for sure.

Since all of you have different musical education and different influences, would any of you venture outside your black metal "comfort zone" in a potential future project?

Adrian: For sure. I mean, all of us are big fans of straight-up classical rock music, especially that of the 70s. So that would probably be my genre if I didn't have this band. I'm also working on rock music, still. I think you can also tell the influence from the music we make. I've read that in many of the reviews – somehow, it shines through that we are actually rockers at heart.

Tobias: We're also a doom band, in a way. So going further in that direction would be nice, I think.

That could work really well as a different project. Speaking of new and unusual things, there are concerts you've played not just in Copenhagen Concert House, but also in churches around Denmark and also the water tower. Is there something more you'd like to achieve with your music, something even bigger?

Adrian: I think it would be great to do a show in a more historical place, a church or a cathedral. That could be in Denmark or somewhere else. We have some very beautiful churches here and the acoustic is... well, it's maybe not the ideal scenario for our sound guy, but we cherish the natural reverb. So that would be a goal, to some extent, to be allowed to play a concert in a historical church and maybe record it as well.

Tobias: When we're playing in Denmark, we always try to go for the venues that go out of the ordinary. We always put an effort to make it something special. It's harder to do when we're on tour, in Europe and so on, then we just play the venues that our bookers find for us.

That's a real experience. I can imagine that both the church and the water tower were also really cold venues. No heating, no comfortable way to play and no easy concerts, right?

*** Żadnego ogrzewania i zero wygód/udogodnień, więc chyba nie ma mowy o łatwym koncercie/koncercie z kategorii lekkich i przyjemnych?**

Tobias: Yes, we played the show in the water tower in February. We played inside a building which was freezing cold. So yes, that was a hard one! Halfway through the set, you usually get the heat and feel warmth from playing and moving around, but not at that one.

Even more so when you play two shows, like you did...

Adrian: Yes, we played two dates and it was pretty cold.

That's dedication!

Adrian: Oh, yes! (laughter) We were there for the whole weekend and somehow, it was actually colder inside the tower than outside – and it was already pretty cold outside. It was about four degrees, so it was like being inside a huge refrigerator all through the weekend. It took me the whole night after the show to get warm again.

It's been particularly challenging when your guitar got cold. The strings are really cold, so instantly, they will make your fingers very cold as well, so it gets hard to play.

That's really something next level. It's also a concert you can be proud of, definitely!

Tobias: Well, it sounds good on the record, since you can't hear that we're all freezing. (laughter)

For sure, it's not something people would tell just from listening. Also, since we talked about some of your plans, where do you see yourselves 10 years from now?

Tobias: We never really imagine ourselves 10 years in the future. We will rather just take it step by step, so it's not like we have any huge goal for the future. We're just moving along with the band and with our individual goals.

Adrian: I think we would like to retain our status here in Denmark as a certain boundary-pushing black metal band, the kind of band that pushes the envelope for what is possible to do – both in terms of albums and live shows. I think it's interesting - and it's also one of the most fascinating things about the genre that we play - that you're actually able to do something that hasn't really been done before.

It seems natural for us to just do many things because of a song which is long and on which you can find contrasts. And I think we will continue to do so, to push it even further as we develop ourselves as composers. What would be nice is maybe... (laughter) at some point, to have a little bit more earnings. It's something which we could probably do, because at the moment we're just making ends meet. We're still kind of recovering from the lockdown and the coronavirus pandemic and the band's economy has been suffering.

It would be good at least to have something on the side from playing. That has never been our main goal to begin with, but now that we are getting older, we generally have more demanding lives outside of the band and we have regular jobs. Sometimes it's really hard work to have a part-time or full-time job and rehearse three times a week, go on tours and so on.

Definitely. I think that for all the bands, the pandemic still has influence and it shows. Aside from that, I do hope you manage to reach your goal with pushing the boundaries of the genre. For the last words, I wish you all the best and hope for more people to discover your new record, and I'd also like to ask one last question. Do you have any last words for our readers?

Tobias: We always want to simply thank everybody who listens to our music. We really appreciate it, just as we really appreciate all the people showing up to our concerts, so these are usually our final words. Thank you for making the interview - we appreciate it as well.