

Bob Catley with the gun MAGNUM

20 years earlier 2 years later

In 2005, Magnum did a tour playing the old classic album 'On a Storytellers Night' in it's entire form, celebrating the 20th year anniversary of the album release. Two years later they do the same thing, celebrating the 20th year anniversary of the album 'Wings of Heaven' by recording the tour and releasing it as a live album 20 years from the original release.

Text: Caj Källmalm
Photo: SPV
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-I don't think we'll do that again, we've done it twice now and it would be bit predictable now, wouldn't it?

That is vocalist Bob Catley's response to the album. But before we dig to deep in to the new album, lets look back at how it all started, back in merry old Eng-

land in the ancient year of the mid 1970s...

A Magnum story

With the debut album 'kingdom of Madness', Magnum made their way straight to the top of the British rock scene. Still today many see the title track of that album

as one of the best songs the band has ever done and the album as the most classic one. For Magnum themselves it wasn't good enough and to the second album they improved their progressive, symphonic hard rock with the album 'Magnum II'.

These two albums laid the groundwork for their entire career. A total of 13 studio albums and 7 live album have been released under the name of Magnum and beside that, Catley and Tony Clarkin (guitarist and main song writer in the band) have figured on a lot of different albums.

The peak under the name of Magnum came during the prosperity time for the music industry, the mid 80's when the band released the albums 'On a Storytellers Night' (1985), 'Vigliante' (1986) and 'Wings of Heaven' (1988). The peak ended with the 'Sleepwalking' album that was released in 1992 and only three years later the band announced a split up, their last studio album then being 'Rock Art' from 1994.

Eight years after splitting up, Magnum once again had loaded their gun and was ready to fire. Out came the album 'Breath of Life' in 2002 and ever since, the band has been creating. Latest with the album 'Princess Alice and the Broken Arrow' from last year and in these days a new live album is about to be released.

How do you summon an entire career like that shortly? Well, perhaps by picking out the gold.

- I think 'Wings of Heaven' is my favourite, say Catley. 'On a Storytellers Night' would be another one... and... oh, I like the 'Sleepwalking' album Magnum did. Yeah, that would be my favourite three, I think.

A Magnum figure

Bob Catley is in many people's eyes seen as somewhat of a legend. Except for all the Magnum

releases he's been on, he also have a couple of solo albums and a whole bunch of guest appearances on all kinds of metal operas and other stuff. This last month his name can be seen in the new Ayreon album as well as the new Avantasia album.

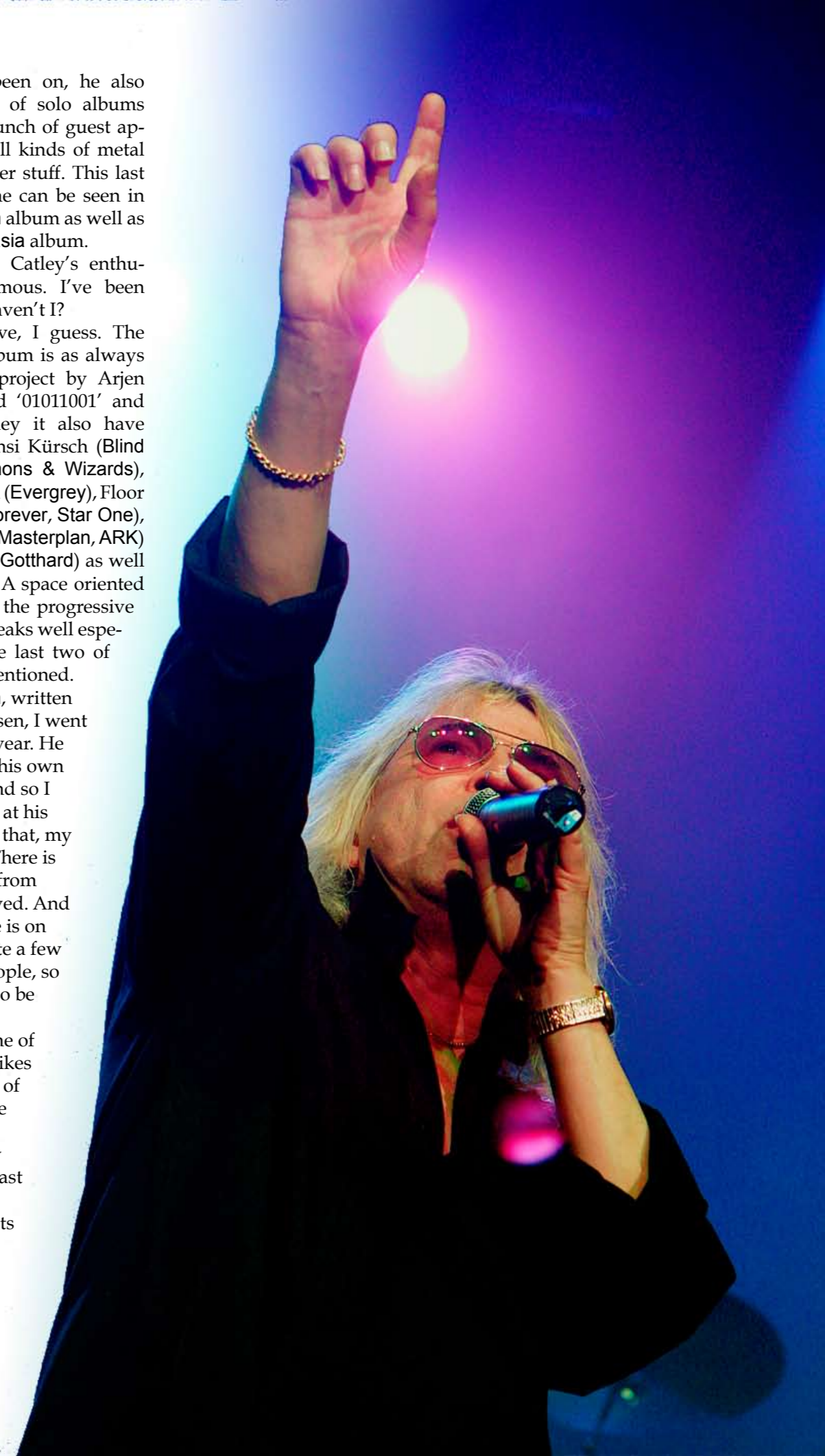
- Yes I am!!! Catley's enthusiasm is enormous. I've been around a bit, haven't I?

Sure you have, I guess. The new Ayreon album is as always an enormous project by Arjen Lucassen called '01011001' and beside of Catley it also have guests like Hansi Kürsch (Blind Guardian, Demons & Wizards), Tom S. Englund (Evergrey), Floor Jansen (After Forever, Star One), Jørn Lande (ex-Masterplan, ARK) and Steve Lee (Gotthard) as well as many other. A space oriented metal opera of the progressive kind. Catley speaks well especially about the last two of the vocalists mentioned.

- With Ayreon, written by Arjen Lucassen, I went over there last year. He has a studio in his own house in Holland so I was over there, at his home to record that, my parts for him. There is also the singer from Gotthard involved. And also Jørn Lande is on there. And, quite a few well known people, so that was good to be involved in.

Bob insures me of the fact that he likes doing this kind of projects, and we probably have guessed that by now, since the last ten years have seen lots and lots of Bob Catley written all over records of all kinds.

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- I like doing projects like that, if the songs are good, which they were. And also last year I recorded my parts for the new **Avantasia** album, *Avantasia III*, which is coming out soon (actually the album was released since two weeks when the interview took place). *Avantasia* is written by Tobias Sammet and I'm on that as well. And there has been some talk about taking that on the festival circuit throughout the summer, as a headlining act on quite a few festivals. I've been asked to the line-up for that as well and I've accepted the part and I'm looking forward to being part of that show. So that will be good, I'm looking forward to that.

A Magnum speech

Everytime I get the opportunity, which aren't that often, and actually gets to ask a question, Catley answer me with about five minutes of monologue. In a way that's good, since I get very much Catley talk and very few Fixxxer talk. But in another way it's bad and another other way it's really bad. Bad since I don't get to ask about that many subjects as I would have wanted and really bad since Catley seems to have amnesia and in one answer he can say the same thing about 2-3 times. Like this, for example, the answer to a confirm of his appearance live with *Avantasia*. Seems like we've heard some of it already...

- Yeah I will perform live with *Avantasia*. It's just being finalised. I had to check what I was doing with Magnum and it seemed okay to do that. So I've accepted the part and I'm looking forward to being part of that show. It's going to be a big show and I'm looking forward to that. I believe it's full dress, it's costume dressed. So it's proper rock opera stuff, you know? Sick, proper stuff. I think Alice Cooper might be involved in that as well.

Yeah, he did a song on the album, at least.

- I think he did, yeah. Whether he's involved with it live, I don't know. But I've been asked and accepted and that will be Tobias

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Sammet again and various other singers. So that's going to be good fun! But all through the summer, Magnum will be recording a new album so I'll be coming backwards and forward. I'll come back to do my vocal parts and then flying off to somewhere to do one of this *Avantasia* festivals. So I'm going to be quite busy I guess, but I'm looking forward to it though.

A Magnum recording

Now hold on a minute there, a new Magnum album this summer? Well, Catley tells me that the summer plans doesn't only involve the *Avantasia* festival tour, but also a recording session

for a new Magnum album.

- We're just ending a tour in Europe in May and after that we're going back to England and start recording a new Magnum album, all through the summer.

But wait a second, if he's doing that all through the summer, how will it work with *Avantasia* live and how will *Avantasia* live work with recording a new album?

- Well, they'll be recording... I mean, Tony Clarkin will be in the studio to start work on the new songs and people will be in there when they need it to do their parts. But that won't be for some time, Tony has to put it all together first. I'll be there initially with him to get the keys for the

songs correct. So the keys are right for my voice. So I'll be doing that first, before I start singing with *Avantasia* this summer. And then when I'm away, the boys will come in and do their parts and I'll be coming backwards and forwards to do my parts. So it's better to do when I'm not there, you know. But the album will take all the summer to record and be finished by the autumn and be released by the early spring of 2009.

And what about that tour in May?

- Yeah, we should be on tour, in May. All around Europe, including Sweden, to promote our new album. And we will be

doing a mixture of new songs, older songs and also quite a lot of the 'Wings of Heaven' album, within that show. It will be like a 1 ½ hour show and that runs all the way through May. So we'll be quite busy I guess, we have a lot coming up.

A Magnum album

Yes, because you haven't forgot, have you? That Magnum is about to release the live album 'Wings of Heaven live'. Please Mr. Cat-

ley, fill us in about that one...

- What we have coming out at the end of February is an album that we recorded on tour in the UK in the November just gone. We did all around the UK and we recorded all the shows and each show was 20 songs. We had some new, 'Princess Alice and the Broken Arrow' songs because we were still promoting that album. We also did some older fire bits of ours, like *Kingdom of Madness*, *Sacred Hour*, *Vigliante*, *How far is*

Jerusalem... Some newer and older songs, and that was the first part of the show.

Catley never did a paus here, I just put in some nonsense to ease your reading.

- Then the second part of the show, we took an interval and then came back on and did the entire 'Wings of Heaven' album. Strike the way through, that was the second part of the show. All that was recorded. We spent a couple of weeks mixing the al-

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bum, picking the best performances of each song of which ever show it was recorded at. And put it all together and it's coming out in the end of February and is called 'Wings of Heaven live Magnum'. It's a double CD live album. Alright?

Sure, count how many repeats he does if you want to, but I for one wonder how come the album was divided as it is. Why aren't the 'Wings of Heaven' songs more in focus, like for example first on

the album? Catley reason that the tour was built up that way and it would be a bit strange to sort the songs on the album different from the shows.

- Well, the show was two one hour halves. The first half of the show as... we're still promoting the new songs from 'Princess Alice and the broken Arrow', you see. So we thought we'd go out and do those first, with some old favourites. You know, that people still love and that we still do.

And then have a break and come back out, as a bonus come back out and do the whole of 'Wings of Heaven'.

Okay...

- So, starting with *Days of No Trust* and ending with *Don't Wake the Lion*. It seemed better to do it that way around and it went down really good. You know, we didn't want to do 'Wings of Heaven' first and then have an anticlimax, the whole tour was built up around 'Wings of Heaven' so



Bob Catley på mspace:
www.mspace.com/bobcatley

Magnums skivbolag:
www.spv.de/eng/magnum/default.html

we thought we'd do that second because we thought it would be good that way.

A Magnum mix

Crystal clear then. Just like the sound. I don't think I've ever heard a live album with this clean sound. How on earth could they get it this good?

- Well that's thanks to the mixing, is Catleys short response. The only time in the interview he doesn't answer with at least one minute of talking. But no Catley without a long answer, right?

- Yeah, we took some time mixing it and getting the sound reproduction right. I mean, it's not a live album that's only been recorded quickly and put out just like that. I mean, it's all live but we've... we spent time making it, a clear sound you know. Getting the best out of the mixing

desk in the studio. And getting the best out of the band and the instruments and we wanted to have a very clear sound. And we did some work mixing in the audience as well, just giving it the right atmosphere. I mean, we took our time doing it, you know? I mean, an album is there forever, isn't it? So we wanted it to sound good every time you put the album on. And there is no reason for it to sound a bit daft, because we got the time to mix it and make it sound good. So I think we've done the right thing there and I think people will appreciate it, I mean you pay a lot of money for a record, so you don't want it sound crap do you, Catley laughs and that's probably the first time he did that in the interview.

But then there was that thing with mixing in the audience,

what did he mean about that? Is the audience faked?

- I'm not quite with you, I mean, what you hear is what happened on the nights. But we had like audience mikes set up around the hall and we were just trying to get the right balance. Some people are louder at the back than they are at the front so you just try to mix it so it involves everybody that was there in the audio.

Yeah?

- Yeah, not just the people in the front... so as I said, we tried to get that right and it sounds great in surround sound, Catley laughs. Sounds really good, really clever. Eh, I think we've done a good job with it, Magnum is a band where quality counts, you know? Not quantity but quality. And it's important to the fans.

A Magnum venue

Now probably everyone that's a little bit in to rock music have at least heard about Magnum and that's not for any reason. The band were big in the 80's with a best as second place on the English album charts and 'Wings of heaven' even managed to have 3 top 30 singles at the same time on the U.K. single chart. This also resulted in great success and playing at all the big places, but how is it today? For example, where did they play when they recorded the live album this winter?

- If we played at big venues? Well, we do kind of middle sized venues now. Sort of the larger clubs and the smaller theatres.

And are the placed crowded?

- Oh yeah! Oh yeah, it was all packed out! Oh, it was great, but you'll hear that in the live album.

Earlier then? No changes?

- Yeah, or no... well there was those days when 'Wings of Heaven' was in the charts, back in 1988 all over Europe; we were playing the NECs (a large arena in Birmingham) and the Wembley arena (you know, the tennis stadium). You know, the big venues, because we had quite a few hits on that album. It was on the "telly" all the time and... with promotional videos on the TV all the time, in the U.K. and all over Europe. So that was Magnums' kind of peak, you know. And we're just trying to get back to a little bit of that era, you know. So it's good that we can still play and we still want to and that people still want to see us. It's just like it used to be only on the slightly smaller venues, you know. You can't do the NECs all your life, so we had it good back then.

Not surprisingly, Catley do find

an excuse for not playing those places anymore...

- But I prefer the smaller places anyway, it's a lot more personal with the fans, you know? So it's a better gig for me, were I can actually speak to people in the audience. Instead of being stuck on a screen if you're at the back of the NEC and the Wembley places and all you see is a screen, I don't call that a good show at all. So I rather play at the smaller places, and it's really great for them (the audience), they get really hot and sweaty and... no smoking any more, but that's okay. They still got plenty of atmosphere and I'm looking forward to touring around Europe, especially going back to Sweden - it's been quite some time since we played in Sweden. So that's going to be a good one, I'm really looking forward towards the tour now.

Magnum



För dig som vill köpa Magnum-prylar:
www.blastwaves.com/508.Magnum.store

Fan-sida för Magnum:
<http://magnum-biography.piranho.de/>

A Magnum lie

I say it right out, so it's very clear, I never mentioned I'm from Sweden (someone that booked the interview did so). I never asked Catley about Sweden and I never would have, but Catley was just so eager to say how much he loved coming back to Sweden so I had to ask him: What do you think is so special about being in Sweden?

- Eh... fans! Oh, Swedish fans are brilliant! Yeah, they're so noisily during the songs and the music. And they really go in to the music. A lot like fans all over the World but the Swedish fans... they're like the English fans, you know? Very committed and... German fans as well, they're very committed... well all Magnum fans rally are very committed to us. You know, once they... once the rock fans like a band, they kind of sticks with them album after album and that's what's happened in Sweden, that's why we sell a lot of records in Sweden. So it's going to be good for us to be playing there again. I'm looking forward to it, it'll be great. I like to come back to Sweden, we have a good time there.

But this is not the only thing he says about Sweden, not nearly.

- You know, 'Wings of Heaven' is the perfect album to play for people. And that's what we're gonna be doing, in May. In Sweden, and it's going to be great. That's the end of May, actually. The Swedish dates will be towards the end of May.

And...

- I'd like to say hi to everybody in Sweden! Hope you're going to enjoy the live album, coming out in the end of February. Looking forward to be playing in Sweden at the end of May. And... come and say hi! And thank you for sticking with us over all these years. Cheerz! Okay, we'll see you on tour. Hope you enjoy the al-



bum, cheerz people!

Though the last one I actually said he could say something to the fans if he wanted.

A Magnum live thing

But it seems like we ended up on a side track there for a second or two. Back to the live album again. I'd like to know why they did this, what's the reason for doing a tour with songs from 20 years ago and record it and all that? For a second here I almost think Cat-

ley don't have an answer...

- Because... well bec... eh... because... Well, we did it on 'On a Storytellers Night'. We did the entire album on tour, second half of the show. And it worked. And we felt that this could possibly work with 'Wings of Heaven' as well. And again it's been 20 years. With the tour of 'On a Storytellers Night' it was 20 years since we did 'On a Storytellers Night' when we did it, alright? Back in 2005. And 2008 was 20 years since

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'Wings of Heaven' was released, so that's why we thought it would work again. But I doubt we will be doing this again. We've done it twice now and I don't think we'll do this again, but I don't know. It does work, it's better than to go out and just do another tour, you know. It makes it special like a 20th anniversary tour again. We might do it again in the future, I don't know. I doubt we could do it every time, though, Catley laughs, that would be a bit pre-

dictable, wouldn't it? But everybody thought it was a wonderful idea and some of those songs we haven't played ever on stage, you know. So that was good to do then. And it was nice just to bring it back in it's entirety after all this time.

Sigh... loooong answer guy...

- And in the future, I think we'll keep quite a few of the songs from 'Wings of heaven' in the show from now on. You know, I doubt we'll keep them all but quite a few

or at least half of them anyway. So I think the show will work around *Don't Wake the Lion* and *White Swan*, *Must have Been Love*. I think we will keep those songs in the set-list for quite a long time from now on. And we're all proud of all of them, really. And fans love the songs still, so they must be proud of them as well, I guess. But it kind of works both ways, you know. We wouldn't do anything that people aren't interested in or thought was rubbish. We always give the right songs to people. And for us selves as well, you have to enjoy what you're playing and singing about on the stage as well. But you know, 'Wings of Heaven' is the perfect album to play for people.

A Magnum addition

Okay, a neat little answer there... but the end result then? What about that one? How proud can one be over this with an impressive discography as Magnum?

- Yeah! I'm really proud, I mean really proud of all of Magnums songs and all of Tony Clarkins songs. I'm really proud to sing them, I've been doing it most of my life. I think you have to be proud of what you do, otherwise don't do it. It wouldn't be in the show, I don't think.

Something you're extra proud of then?

- Extra proud of? Eh, *Don't Wake the Lion*. Yeah, *Don't Wake the Lion* from 'Wings of Heaven'. It's just an absolute brilliant song. It's 11 minutes long, a real epic. I'm extra proud of that one, absolutely.

And now for the final question about the new live album: What do Catley actually think about the album?

- Well, we started... as I've said, we did something like this before, with the 'On a Storytellers Night album', we did the show in two halves. And people were saying after that "you don't do

many 'Wings of Heaven' songs" you know, song from that album. So we thought it would be a nice idea for the next tour, you know. Just to make it a bit different, to do the same thing again with a show in two halves with the 'Wings of Heaven' as the second half. And a lot of these songs from 'Wings of Heaven' we haven't played in years. But that was fun, you know, getting to know the songs again and rehearsing them. And I think we have improved the songs from the way they were recorded 20 years ago. And I think people can tell that from listening to the live album. And I think it's a very good live album, you can hear all the crowd and people want to hear themselves from when they were there. Yeah, so I got everyone to really shout and sing along. And there's a lot of audience on there, you know, they're levelling up sometimes. And it's a really good vibe, you close your eyes and you're back at the gig where you were that night, you know. So I think it brings the show back to your memory. Which I think people enjoy.

Once again, he didn't actually stop here, I just put this nonsense here to make it easier to read...

- It's a good live album, some lovely photographs in there and the whole thing is about two hours. And it's the best of Magnum, really. All in one, live actually, they're all in disc one and 'Wings of Heaven' on the second disc. So I think it good value for the money, it's good package and it's on SPV records (what do you mean with sales-talk?). And it comes out at the end of this months and I think everyone will enjoy

it and we're going to be on tour to promote it. So it's going to be a good year for Magnum, I believe. I think we're starting off in a good way. And it's going to be

"I prefer live because you are in front of the audience, obviously, and you bring the songs to life" Catley likes it live

busy for us all. And it's good to see Magnum back where we belong, in front of people and you know, all the fans have come back to see us again and I think it's a really good time for Magnum now, I really do!

A Magnum/Avantasia crossover

As mentioned in the beginning, this is far from the first live album released by Magnum, nor the first tour and having 13 studio albums to lean back on it feels like they have some experience. Catley has also released a handful of records under his own name and guest appeared on a whole legion of albums. So how about it, is he a live person or does he like it better in the studio?

- Oh, either!

A short excited answer, followed by a long and not as exciting explanation.

- Well, I prefer live because you're in front of the audience, obviously, and you bring the songs to life. And it's a little bit different to the records but recording the record is great pleasure. So I like them both, but I probably would prefer performing them on stage because I could just, you know, let it rip and everything. It's just great to just have that backwards and forward feedback with the audience, you know, which you can't get in the studio. So I prefer the live things, but with this next

album that we're making, I look forward towards recording that in the studio. And taking that out on the road next time. Again the reward or the fun part is going out on the road and playing them to your fans. You know, the studio side is kind of the business side and you should get the album done and finished in time and all that but you can have a lot more fun with it on the road. So yeah, it's great. I love touring.

But how about all of them guest appearances you do... on for example Avantasia?

- Yeah, I like doing that as well. I enjoy that but don't normally do anything live with my guest appearances. The Avantasia thing is the first live show I'm doing beside of Magnum, apart from my solo stuff. I don't normally bother with it, I'm too busy with Magnum, but I got time to do this now, between recordings, so I look forward to doing it. It's going to be great working together with Tobias Sammet again, he is a nice guy, a good friend and we get along great. And Jörn Lande, I'm really looking forward to working together with him again. So, great. Great stuff!

Something to conclude with

The Avantasia festival tour is when writing this still not confirmed for that many shows, but it's an ongoing process I guess. On Catley it sounds like they'll probably play every major festival in Europe (and maybe other places too) during the summer.

- That will be quite a few headlining shows around Europe. I believe Sweden Rock is one of them as well.

Well, let's hope so.

- With Avantasia, I believe we're doing Sweden Rock too. But that's waiting to be confirmed. Maybe. But that's the idea, that's what I've been told at least.

And for all of you wondering



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when Catley is releasing a new solo album, he promises that even that will be recorded during the year and released sometime within the nearest months.

- Yeah, my studio album, it's going to be released later in the year, but I haven't recorded it yet so not for a few months.

And as if we haven't heard it several times already from Cat-

ley, I say it out loud. He will have a busy year this year, Mr. Catley. Let's hope it all works out for him as well.

- Yeah, let's hope so. But you'll get Magnum in the end of May and Avantasia with me in June. So yeah, I'll be practically living in Sweden. All right, yeah?

Do you remember Catleys top three album list? Well, there was

just one thing he needed to add:

- 'Sleepwalking' a great album! We don't actually do any songs of that, it's a shame. Maybe we'll do in the future. But anyway, 'Wings of Heaven', 'On a Storytellers Night' and 'Sleepwalking', that's Bobs favourite three Magnum albums. Okay?

Sure. And that is the end of that... Fixxxer