

Rather living than Dying

AS I LAY DYING

For years now we've been forced to listen to crap after crap from the American death scene. If they don't copy Morbid Angel, Deicide or Cannibal Corpse, they've gone on some Korn or Slipknot version that all suck. Finally, As I Lay Dying has grown big and their latest album, 'An Ocean Between Us' is by me considered as one of the years' best death albums.

Finally an American death band that doesn't stink!

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From: 2007.09.25

On their first Swedish tour, Nick Hipa (guitar) takes the time to sit down with me and go trough AS I Lay Dyings latest album.

- I'm really proud of the album, Nick starts. I'm excited that it came out the way it did because it was kind of a shitty process with random set-backs like computer crashes and random problems with the gearing in the recording studio and so on. But at the end of the day, I'm lucky we had such good songs and were working with Adam D, who is our producer. I think we captured the songs at the best that we could and now I'm happy that we put that album out and that we have like ten more songs that we can play live.

Tours

And touring they've done. This entire last year have consisted of touring, touring, releasing an album and then touring some more. They actually ended an American tour just a week before the album was released and then started to tour in Europe a week after the release.

- Actually we were writing for the album from like September 2006 until, I'd say, Mars 2007 but were doing tours in between. So we were writing, did a tour, wrote, did a tour and by the time Mars came about we went in to record the album and we recorded the whole thing in about 2-2½ month and then we did some other tours. And while we were touring the album was already

recorded, it was just being mixed, mastered and pressed, you know - getting the artwork finished - so it looks like we were touring and then popped an album out and went back out, but actually we had already done all the work before we started touring again.

Considering how this band is from America, they don't get that much shows in Europe as the other bands in this more melodic version of death (like the Swedish and Finnish bands that rule the genre). This is actually the first real tour in which they stop in Sweden, earlier they've only done one show at the Hultsfred festival - Sweden's' biggest rock festival and Europe has not been as covered as the band would have wanted.

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- Oh yeah, it's awesome to be here! Last time we were here, all we did was all this festivals and, you know, bigger shows. And now that we've come back and our new album is out, we're doing a headline tour with bands that we're friends of and everything like that, so it more of our own thing this time and every show we play - you know, the kids are there for us. This time it really feel like it's our own thing and I'm really happy to be back here and play more extensively in places like for example Sweden. 'Cause the last time we were here, we've only been in Sweden once before, was for the Hultsfred festival, and this time we've actually been playing in Malmö, Gothenburg and now Stockholm.

Didn't it rain in Hultsfred also, when you played?

- Hmmm, yeah! It was raining in Hultsfred, but we were lucky enough to play in one of the indoor theatre stages, but later on when I was walking around and tried to watch Ozzy or whatever it rained.

Sweden

Many bands often say Sweden is their favorite country to visit. Mostly, I guess, it's because they are in Sweden when I, whom born and living in Sweden, ask. But Nick actually makes it sound as he have a genuine fascination for Sweden.

- I just like how clean everything here is. It just feels like a refined and neat place. When I was

walking around here in Stockholm today, there weren't any trash on the ground and the buildings are very nice to look at, the air was really crisp and it just feels like a really cleaner place and that's just what I can say about it. And also it feels like people are very diligent here, you know, a lot of the friends I have from Swedish bands are meticulous and really good at what they do so it seems like people are the real deal here.

A few days before I read in a newspaper how Stockholm had been awarded the finest city in the world by honorable magazine Reader's Digest and Nick doesn't really sound that surprised.

- Well, I've only been here this last year, so my impression is just that it's a very organized and

clean and it's awesome that they thought so! It seems like people take care of themselves and their city here and I like that.

Back to the album

So how about that album? 'An Ocean Between Us' it's called and both me and Nick agree over how this album is the very best from the band so far.

- I think what makes this album better, is that it's just more ... like elaborate in the song writing. We didn't go too far off with it; it's just a little more interesting on a musical skill. There's like more interesting drum-beats, the riffs are a little more technical - there's more guitar-solos and stuff. And that's just something that I like - a bit more complex. But it's not like... (Nick looks at my t-shirt with a Children of Bodom motive) Bodom or... Opeth or anything that's off the wall, it's just...

Bodom aren't THAT technical, I interrupt Nick by saying.

- Well, they aren't too technical until you get to the leads. Then it gets a little more on the fast side. I'd say it's very technical when it comes to the lead side - not the arrangements, they are pretty, I guess like other bands that are out there but I really think they are pretty great at their instruments!

But we're not talking about Bodom here, Nick. Tell us more about the album.

- Well, I would say it's very energetic and, you know, intense



even though there are different types of sounds going on. Some songs have more clean singing than the others, some songs are a lot faster than the others and I think the whole feel to it is just... you know, energetic. Like when I listen to it, it kind of gets my blood boiling a little and I think, also, we try to write music that has some sort of purpose. Like

you listen to the songs and they make some sort of impact on you and you can feel them, not just writing riffs because they are cool to play, but writing music and arranging songs that when you listen to them you get excited and you feel a certain way. And that's how I would say our songs are on this album.

- For me personally, Nick con-

Quickie

Beer **Water**

I'm gonna go with water because I *really* like water and have to have water on the stages and all. But beer is a close second.

Meat **Ham**

Meat... but ham is a form of meat, isn't it? But more of a pork thing... Well, I'd say straight out cow! It's tastier to me.

Spandex pants **Leather pants**

I'm gonna go with leather, because you can't really be brutal with spandex. Leather, you can still be rock or brutal or, you can be anything: metal, glam or whatever. Leather is more universal.

Metallica **Iron Maiden**

I'm going to say Metallica because Metallica was more a staple of my youth. I love Iron maiden, don't get me wrong, but I think Metallica was more influential to me when I was growing up.

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tinues, it's kind of like "yeah, I can feel this song" and that's something that we try to do as a band, because if you can't feel the music it's just like something that your ears are hearing and that stuff. And that's the way I am towards music in general, like that's the kind of music that I listen to - that everything I listen to makes me feel a certain way.

So, what feelings do you get from listening to 'An Ocean between us'?

- You know, I wouldn't say aggressive but kind of just ... like if I'm tired or anything, if I start listening to it - I mean, I don't listen to it that much now because I hear it all the time - but when I did listen to it, it was kind of getting me excited and giving me a

little burst of energy, you know. Like when I listen to some other metal albums I get like "yeah", I get super ... What's the word now ... Well, I just want to jump around and stuff, I can't just listen to metal albums and like chill or anything. I need to kind of nodding my head a little and you know ... So those are some of the vibes I get.

CD **mp3**

CD, I would say. I mean, mp3s are great, I love my iPod - it's my favorite thing I know, but I also love my CD-collection at home. The whole wall with CDs - and like "let's check it out! Look at the artwork and stuff". I like something to hold in my hand.

Surfing **Skateboarding**

Not much to add since Nick loves surfing and comes from Hawaii

Live **Studio**

Live! Just, it's fun! In the studio you can like stress out about making everything sound perfect, live - just put on a good show and play as well as you can! It speaks to me more.

Live album **Studio album**

Studio album actually, I prefer. Because sometimes you listen to live albums and they doesn't really sound good.

An album with many ingredients

The album in itself is very diverse. It mixes elements and songs of all kind and not even though you hear they belong together, you never feel they do the same song over and over on 'An Ocean Between Us'. So how did it end up this way? I ask Nick if all the touring between their writing and recording had something to do with how the album have all this many flavors.

- Yeah, I would think that has something to do with it. Plus we wanted to do a well-rounded album were the songs aren't quite like the others because on my favorite albums - that's the way they are. You can listen to the whole thing and each song have a character of their own. And I think the biggest reason to why the album turned out like that was because we had a lot of time and we were able to break it up. We would write for two or three months and then we would record those songs and then when we went on tour for a couple of weeks, we had time to sit and listen to the songs and it would be like "hey, this - we need to change this and this" and then we came back we had time to write more songs and we had like this group of song so let's try writing something different, you know?

So which songs have ended up as your favorites in the end?

- My favorite songs on the album are *The Sound of Truth*, it's a really fun song to play on the

guitar, and there's a song called *Forsaken* that was one of my favorite songs when we wrote it, I was just like "oh that song is so sweet" and we haven't played it live yet, and there's a...

Well, you should do, I say interrupting Nick.

- Yeah, we're going to soon, but we're playing, on this tour, four or five new songs of the album and that's not one of them yet, but it will be. Next time we'll come back we will play it! We'll definitely play it next time!

Okay, I hope so! Other songs then?

- Well, I like all of them! But *Wrath upon Ourselves* is one of my favorites just because when we went in to the studio with that song, I was like "I don't know, it seems like the least together of our songs and we're done with it". It seems to be so extreme in such as ups and downs and what was in the song that it starts to be really crazy and then it has more ... it goes into this kind of strong chorus part and then there's some lead guitar playing and it kind of ends with this, I don't know,

Sweden or the States

Well. I live in the States and I would probably rather live in the States, but I don't enough of Sweden. If I spoke Swedish, I'd probably say Sweden, but I don't speak Swedish so I say the States just because I know my way around better.



kind of triumph and ambient at the same time but it was just so all over the place but still sounded like a good song to me and that's one of the reasons why I'm so partial towards it, you know. But it hard like picking out my favorite from the album because I like all of them.

More about touring

Live then, which songs work best live one might wonder. Here Nick have a more distinguished choice.

- Oh, *Within Destructions* works out really well live, because that song is so fast and so aggressive and like march pit or circle pit oriented that kids respond really well to. I would say that song works the best live, because before we actually put out the album, we played that song on Warp tour, the tour we did in the United States this summer, and even though the kids hadn't even

heard the song it was something they could get in to because of the way the music is.

- It's hard to not like feel that "dra damp dra damp dra damp damp", you know? That groove, or anything like that. But some songs, like *An Ocean Between Us*, we didn't want to play because there is a long chorus in it and if the kids don't know they words in it or know what's going on, it probably wouldn't have

Dying or Living

I'd say living. I would rather be living than dying!

But with your band name...?

Yeah, it's kind of ironic that I say that, being how our band is so doom-sisch and all but I would say living!

gone so well so that's why we played *Within Destruction*. But now that we do have the album out and the people do know the words in it, we play *An Ocean Between Us* and people are singing along, so it's cool

How do the songs work live in general?

- Oh, they're actually a little more difficult for us to play than the other, but you know - that's the way they always are when you're done recording an album. After two years it will be like "yeah, whatever" but it's been working out quite well seen to the fan-reactions because the album has only been out for a little more than a month and when we started this tour and played the new songs, kids were singing along and they knew the words. So that was a good dealing since the CD had only been out like a week then and it was already something that the people were familiar with. And it's been fun! The transition from playing like 'Frail words Collapse' and 'Shadows are Security' songs to be playing 'An Ocean Between Us' songs, it's been great. And it makes thing more interesting for us live too.

A new member

The band also changed a member before they started to record and tour for 'An Ocean Between Us'. Out came Clint and in came Josh. A win-win situation according to Nick.

- It was just one of those things

were it simply worked out better for all. It's gone really well. Clint left in like august last year and it was just the four of us; Tim, Phil, Jordan and I that wrote the record and at that time we also were looking for a new member and Josh was in a band that Tim had just known of and he got in contact with Josh after his band broke up and we really liked him as a person and he was a great bass player and had a great voice so he recorded all his parts on the album really low so we were pretty stoked on him and live he has been coming along and doing that.

Nothing bad from it at all?

- No, Clint wasn't exactly the most stoked dude on metal and he didn't really like playing bass. He wasn't just as enthusiastic about the band as the rest of us

and so, him leaving is something that he wanted to do and that we got a bit happy of because he could do something that he wanted to do and we could get someone that was as enthusiastic about this as we are.

And the response to everything that has happened the last year has just been positive so far. Nick tells me stories of love and romance and how everything has worked out for it's best.

- Yeah ... people have come up to us after the shows and a lot of our fans have said like "I liked this album way more than all the other albums" and I'm not going to kid myself, I'm sure there are a lot of people out there that likes the old song better but for those people, they haven't really come up and been incredibly vocal about it. It seems more likely that

someone with something positive to say would come up and say it, so we've been hearing good feedback because the kids have wanted to say that they liked the record.

Something to end with

I don't have that much left to ask, but I thought it would be good to straighten one thing out before we end.

Most bands in this genre have some dark or evil touch on their name - like Dark Tranquillity, In Flames, Cannibal Corpse and so on, and then there's these bands like The Black Dahlia Murder, Children of Bodom and As I Lay Dying, which you might need to know the story behind... So what is the actual story behind As I Lay Dying - how come a band uses a name like that?

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- Oh, well... Not to let you down, but we did it just because we thought it sounded cool, Nick laughs. It's the name of a book in the States and when we were trying to find out a name for the band, our guitar player looked at the back of this book and thought like "As I Lay Dying, that's kind of brutal, let's go with that!". But yeah, it's kind of something that sticks out so that's why we went with it.

Well, it kind of gives you the feeling that this band is about to die, we have to hurry to buy your albums because you are going away soon.

- Hahaha! Yeah!

Otherwise then, who are you as a person?

- Oh, well being a guitar player isn't like just limited to being in a band so I play a lot of guitar

when I'm at home. And I'm a big fan of surfing, we live in San Diego, right by the ocean and I was born at Hawaii so the ocean has always been my thing. So, I surf a lot, play a lot of music and hang out with my friends... you know, just chill out. Nothing too interesting, the same interests as everyone else, I would say. Like watching movies with my girlfriend, and cook. Cooking has always been something I'm really stoked on. You know, stuff like that. Homebody stuff.

What kind of food do you usually cook?

- I really like making Thai dishes, you know. With lots of curry in it, like Indian and Thai. It just seem like you can try so many different things with it, plus you can eat it raw. Yeah, so things with fish and all that stuff. That's

pretty much all I do when I get the chance to cook. I don't get all that much time to get crazy with creels or anything.

Okay, I think we know everything about you and As I Lay dying know, the last words are yours to use as you wish to:

- Well, if I do have anything to say, I would say: If you go to a show, be sure to wear earplugs. I mean, I'm 24 and my hearing is really bad. You know, not to get all motherly on everyone, but it's not hard. Just make sure you use earplugs, you can still have fun! And I also would like to add that it means a lot for us to have all you people out there that listen to us. That they give us so much time is just great and we appreciate it!

Welcome back to Sweden whenever you want to! Fixxer



Gather around children and I shall tell you a tale!