
THE ROCKFORD HEROES

We at Hallowed continues our assiduous work to to bring out new up and coming bands in the musical swamplands, a band with both interesting music and exciting ideas is the Swedish band The Rockford Heroes whose name comes from the private investigator Jim Rockford out of the television show The Rockford Files. I have had the pleasure to discuss both the band and ideas around the musical distribution of today with Rockford himself, sorry meant to say Jonas Arvidsson who handles the guitars and the keyboards in the band.

The story begins in 1974 when the first episodes of *The Rockford Files* was aired on NBC with James Garner as the main character, it was on air for six years to 1980. Since then the show has been syndicated and running almost continuously and in 2010 it was brought to life again with pilot for a remake that was written and produced by David Shore but that one did not go down too well with the network but the project is apparently still ongoing. 2010 also noted the beginning of *The Rockford Heroes* by said Jonas Arvidsson and Dan Hultstrand who handles the vocal duties.

They had met some year earlier and noticed that they had much

in common regarding taste in music, goals and methods of work, they played together in another band before which Jonas believes never got a name.

- So, some year after that we broke loose, recorded some songs to have as an example of our work and then started hunting for new people. It went a bit so and so to begin with, but a few months later we had found both a drummer (Marcus Johansson) and a bassist (Pekka Kiviaho).

It was not quite as easy as it seems in the comment from Jonas though since it was a few months between the arrival of Marcus and Pekka which meant the band had to start over twice with rehearsing the songs from zero and it still hasn't reached the workflow that they desire since Pekka now has left his place vacant as he started studying this fall. Jonas points out that interested bassist can contact the band.

When it comes to inspiration it can be found in several different sources, generally from music one likes, but also such that one doesn't like, Jonas points out.

- If one is to namedrop a few of our most common influences it is bands like Queen, Rainbow, Styx, Rush, Led Zeppelin, Whitesnake, Meat Loaf, Kansas, Bon Jovi and so on. But a good song is a good song even if one doesn't like the production. Got a eureka moment when I heard norwegian Wig Wam do *I Turn to You*, the song is great, but that is something I of course missed when Melanie C was doing it. But one learns. Therefore nowadays I might as well (well, maybe not really as well...)

be inspired to write something in the vein of a song by Tomas Ledin (known boring swedish artist) or Katy Perry (Max Martin...) like from Rainbow or Queen.

The lyrical inspiration though comes not from music but rather from films,

books, things in life that needs to be worked on and so on. So there you have a short background to the heroes of Rockford.

Creation & Distribution

In the first mail we got from these heroes they told a little about their method of releasing their music in doses of one to five songs in digital format a few times a year, both through streaming services so that they can be slightly paid for their music and through free downloads from their website. This sounds like a modern way to work and Swedish band Grande Luxe whom I interviewed last year was on the same track that they might work in a similar way in the future now that they have released their debut album.

We will return to this form of distribution later but let us first start with how these Rockford Heroes' music takes shape.

- As it has been so far it has been either me or Dan who have written all music. We

usually finish the songs more or less before we present them to the rest of the band.

This way to work has been chosen to allow them to play the entire song immediately and not waste time rehearsing something that isn't finished yet. They record a simple demo that they present to Marcus and Pekka so that they can practise the songs a little. Then, a week or so later the band meet up to make a first recording of this after which they discuss the material to find out if there are things that doesn't feel good and in those cases how they can improve it. It is during this kind of work that Marcus and Pekka can put their touches on the song. And this is a work that continues until they have something like three to six songs says Jonas and it is then the "real" recording of the material begins.

- As soon as they are finished we publish them on our website and through the

distributor Ubetoo.com, whom in turn distributes to around 500 commercial services like i.e. spotify, iTunes, Amazon and so on. We have decided to call such a release "EP" but I don't really know how good that expression is in digital circuits.

EP or Extended Play which it is short for was in the beginning of times was something that was longer than a single but shorter than an LP (Long Play), it was often used for seven inch vinyl records on 45rpm with two or more tracks on each side. Three to six tracks with a playing time around 20 minutes should qualify as an EP if one wish to keep using such titles in our more modern world where the vinyl disc no longer is the preferred format for music.

While recording these EPs the band are also working on new songs and rehearsing on their Queen tribute project. And this despite the fact that they all have families/girlfriends, work and all of those boring daily things that take up a great deal of one's time,





something making the time for the music is limited. That is one reason for the chosen approach which also aims to keep up the interest and to use the time in the best possible way.

- Some parts are funnier than others, personally I enjoy best to write songs, listen to the finished result and to play live. Even though it can be just as much fun to both rehearse and sit down and mix it is still the aforementioned that is the most fun. So with decently tight releases (that doesn't contain that many songs) one arrives at the funnier moments more often than with releasing for instance one album a year.

Jonas admits that this way of working has its foundation in both egoism and laziness but at the same time he says that it is probably the way he would work even if he made music full time. Jonas also believes that the fans appreciate if something listenable comes more often even

if it isn't a complete album since many people today don't seem to get or listen to complete albums at streaming services or places to buy musical files. And new times maybe demands new ways of distributing music, **The Rockford Heroes** are not alone in looking for new solutions Jonas means.

- I have read about other bands/artists that have tried to find an alternate route of distributing. Maybe not in hardrock/metal but for instance Marit Bergman has a sort of subscriptions system where the members on here site pays a yearly fee (around 60-70 SEK) for a promise of one song a month on average. Surely not optimal for everyone but in these days all kinds of new ideas for distributing music feels like good ideas.

Sofia Talvik whom we interviewed a while ago gathered donations from her fans in exchange for feedback and special stuff which lead to here "L.O.V.E. vs

H.A.T.E." project which was a series of EPs both done by herself and in a metal versions by four metal bands. That is another way to make it, which ones will work will be seen in due time.

Jonas also believes that the major part of music sold will be distributed in digital format and the physical product will be mostly reserved for special editions which are aimed at those who really collect music. Already last year more music was sold digitally than on record so that is a scenario that should not be seen as an unlikely scenario.

And when we are looking at new times and formats we might also say that the playing time of an album is one aspect that has been changed when the CD was introduced and Jonas points out that today an album is often called short when it plays for less than 50 minutes while it on the vinyl record's time was alright with album on 35-40 minutes. It

is a view we here at Hallowed do not quite share as we are very negative towards long albums and in many of our reviews you can read this and see how we are down on album that are experienced as too long. But at the same time it is a view that seems to be rather widespread and with such long albums yet the same time to work on them as before is something Jonas believes can lead to the quality suffering on the albums.

Light Scores

"Light Scores" is what the debut by **The Rockford Heroes** is called and it was unleashed upon us in 2011 and consists of new recordings of previously mentioned songs that was used to find new members for the band. Some of these songs are a few years old says Jonas while others were new, Jonas explains that he has a rather large archive of songs in different phases of completion but that his

writing isn't exactly one that comes in an even flow.

- It is more like that I in some periods write a lot, and even if I have thought a song is completely finished it still ends up with some adjustments (that one likes think are improvements) when the song is being played for the first times.

- Otherwise there is no red line in which songs we have chosen, other than it has been the ones we have felt the most finished with at that moment. We have not spoken of any certain direction or so, but writes songs, plays, and if we all like it we go for it.

Jonas says that the favourite song on "Light Scores" is *Embrace the Moonlight* if he has to chose just one of the songs.

- I hope to be able to put up any good live version of that song during the year as it is a song that is growing a lot when played live.

Jonas also says that it is a lot to evolve in their work, especi-

ally on the production side but that they are learning all the time and also that they are definitively pleased with "Light Scores".

- Still think that it feels good that we now feel able to handle everything ourselves, from song writing to mix and distribution and with a good result while still learning new things all the time.

And what about the reception? The author saw only good reviews when researching the EP for his positive review of the same and Jonas says that the reception has been alright.

- Personally I recollect the first release with my former band **VII Gates** ("Fire Walk With Me" 2004) which got some ridiculously good reviews, so I will probably always have a little too great expectations. But from the reviews we have gotten so far it has with one exception been between "quite alright" to "really good" which of course is something we are pleased with. Especially since



we know we have more to bring.

The last said is something both Jonas and I think most bands believe, that they evolve and all the time reach higher levels which often is something the fans rarely agrees with when most of them wants the bands to remain as they were when they first discovered the band.

Heroes Live

Many live shows are not that realistic at the moment Jonas ex-

plains, this since that is something that requires lots of time, especially to book or nag oneself to a show and that is not something anyone in the band spends any time on at the moment. They have no plans or dreams of a regular record deal either says Jonas but he can imagine some kind of deal with a booking agency or some sort of management deal which can handle that part with finding live shows and such for the band. So, if you are one of those and in-

terested in helping them you can always contact the band says Jonas.

- Some big sold out arena somewhere would not have been wrong! Then if it is in Sweden, England, USA, Ukraine, Morocco or something else doesn't really matter. But it would probably in some way have felt grander to sell out Ullevi (in Gothenburg) than Wembley, actually.

That is what Jones answers to the question about which would

be the dream gig if they had a free choice. Still, he is a bit indecisive as he adds that it maybe could be as cool at a smaller venue.

- It seems like fun to play at those places which "only" takes a few thousand people and has steep stands and balconies in at least two floors. Don't know why but I have seen images from such shows with for instance Queen and it has always felt like it would be fun to play like that.

The band has so far only played

once together and according to their own accounts it went decently well, it is not exactly the first time any of them play live Jonas points out. Still, he says like in the case with the recordings, that there are things to improve upon and that it will always be like that as it is not possible to reach perfection within the musical work.

Speaking of not the first time any of them plays in a band, their prior experiences from these ear-

lier band within different genres in the rock music may not have impacted the music of The Rockford Heroes but within other aspects it probably has had some importance, Jonas thinks.

- Don't know about the music, if it makes any difference. I have noticed though that everything flows much more smoothly than anything else I have been part of. Everyone is very relaxed and if we have been disagreeing on something we have been able to

talk through it in a simple and relaxed way.

The Future

With one EP finished and available for the general public and no live shows planned, the plans for the future are now on the next EP and also the EP after that one is underway.

- Right now we are halfway through recording of another four songs and we have already planned and started rehearsing the for more songs that we will record later in the spring.

The plan is to release four EPs during this year and the closest plan is tight releases in the early part of the year to accomplish this. This is because they are trying to "bargh their way into the market" as it is called and therefore reach some kind of more relaxed working atmosphere for the coming year.

- Or even better, to be able to spend more time on playing live. With that said it isn't like we are going to keep a low pace, the goal is to always release something like 2-3 EPs plus a single or two every year.

And even if these musical creation's primary channel of distribution will be the digital one, Jonas says that it is likely that they will release music in a more traditional format as well, especially if they find themselves more established or starts playing more live.

- It is easier to sell records than mp3s in the pubs. One possible way is to have the digital as a main distribution channel and then to release physical copies in limited editions, for instance in vinyl format or really high class CD-editions.

And with that I think he have found out something about this band and if you want more updated information you will have to visit the band's website where

you will be able to find records and so on, amongst others you can find said "Fire Walk With Me" by VII Gates there for free. But do support the band if you like their music, it is available to buy as well, or you could donate money for them.

And with that we leave Rockford for his destiny, maybe the television show will reawaken in the future but at least his heroes will soon have some new stuff available for us, and with that I leave one final word for Jonas who wants to leave you with an exhortation:

- Support you local live scene! Visit shows even if they are with bands you don't know, as it would be fantastic if the pubs realised that it is more fun with live music, rather than having DJs becoming our new "rockstars". Nothing wrong with DJs in principle and it is an art in itself but it feels like we would need a more even share between recorded music and live music.

Useful on the web:

Our review - <http://is.gd/tusIJZ>
<http://www.therockfortheheroes.com>
<http://www.lastfm.se/user/JJRockford>
<http://www.myspace.com/therockfortheheroes>
<http://www.youtube.com/user/JJRockford>

The Rockford Heroes:

Jonas Arvidsson - Guitars
Dan Hultstrand - Vocals
Marcus Johansson - Drums
Pekka Kiviaho - Bass

