



# The Dead And Living

Some weeks ago we took upon us the Swedish band The Dead and Living's second album *The Last Men Standing*, an album appreciated by our reviewer. Therefore we also took upon the task to speak to the band as well. Recently home from France Martin took the time to answer our questions and following is what we got to know.

BY DANIEL KÄLLMALM

PHOTO: ROBERT STÅLBRO, DANIEL KÄLLMALM, NASA, JPL

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The story begun in the past when said Martin, who goes under the alias Coroner, and bassist Grave-digger is said to have sat in a bar on what was supposed to be a resting day (a sunday) and formed the brilliant idea that led to the birth of *The Dead and Living*.

- 2007 I and the bassist Grave-digger started. We had played in punk bands before and were both without a band and wanted to make something new. I had long since wanted to do something heavier and more orchestral and presented the idea to him. He listens a lot to folk music, the more punky folk music and we got the crazy idea to combine it and make songs that were a bit darker with a bit more horror influenced theme.

In his head Martin had a theme, one that had the spirit of the past, from dark cobblestone streets and gothic architecture. Some things remaining from such a culture in London where Martin lived for a time.

- I was recently home from London where I had lived for half a year and taken in lots of inspi-

ration from the culture there, the one remaining, those 1800s vides from the streets and similar. That's where the idea comes from.

London is of course also an important historical place for culture like theatre and such things. In our review I mentioned that I thought they have a theatric character to their music which is something Martin agrees with. He describes it himself like being in a film in an 19th century setting or a book. It is like being transported to such time and such environment.

- With this we wanted to make something a lot broader maybe mostly visual. Something more deep than just the music, something challenging both for us and those listening. We have never wanted to be something that just falls into a genre like a punk band, or a thrash metal but one that is more challenging.

Let us borrow a bit of a quote from our review to end this chapter: "Done at its best I think this kind of music is quite theatrical, like a drama by the giant dramatic writers like Shakespeare, Strindberg, Ibsen and a few more. Musical sounds go into your ears and then inside the brain the music is transformed into optical

impulses showing you a drama on a small stage somewhere in a small, rather soggy, basement theatre venue. I think that is how I experience these guys and their "Last Men Standing", good name of a drama it is as well. I can already see it in front of me."

### *Parables and Inspirations*

The band has an interesting name, not just one in many words. It suits the style of the band well, but where does it come from? According to Martin it is something that just came up.

- It is about contrast between the dead and the living and the way we write it you are always somewhere in between.

To underline both band name and thematics the band's members us aliases rather than their own names, according to Martin it is partly due to the theatrical side of things they use it but also as he expresses it, to create their own monster.

That they are a band playing much on their theatrical concept with a horror theme is probably nothing that avoids anyone, but despite this they have to be inspired by something other than older parts of London. When it comes to the taste of mu-

sic and musical inspirations the members have different tastes in music but there is a common denominator.

- The common denominator from the beginning was that we all listened to punk before. But I have always been listening much to hardrock and death metal amongst others. Dimmu Borgir was such a moment where we felt that such things we wanted in our music with that bigger and orchestral side.

An idea for the band's direction was to take elements from black metal and make it into something not black Metal, says Martin. It is something fairly common within this kind of goth metal, to start from the extreme metal and tone it down a little, but *The Dead and Living* comes from the other direction in many ways. They are like a resurrected punk band (a parable Martin thought was good).

- One can think of us a little like a punk band that has died and came back, it is about what we wanted to do, a little like a punk band that died and rotted and then came back a bit more dirty

and less strained than the punk.

### *The Last Men Standing*

*The Dead and Living* has now released two album, the second one that was released recently is called "The Last Men Standing". The second album is often said to be the most difficult for a band but that is something Martin does not completely agree with.

- They say that the second album is the most difficult to make as well and took almost three years, to make each of them. But it felt more like we knew what we were this time and also knew what works and what doesn't work. And in difference to "Decadance" it is a bit heavier in parts and more riff based than it was before. The texts I think are more challenging and better thought out on this album than it was before.

It was both more easy and more difficult with this album according to Martin. more easy because it was easier to just get going now that they have already established an identity and a way to work. More difficult because they now had expectations to live up to after the first album.

Moreover, it is an album of contrasts, a dynamic album that

is a step forward compared to the debut.

- It is an album with contrasts, calm songs, piano song and we have thing were we peak and just go for some heavy stuff. Very varied and very dynamic, as in life.

But a favourite song is not something he likes to pick as it shifts back and forth between the songs on the album, maybe a bit of a typical musician's answer. But as Martin says, it is probably easy that it is like that when one has worked for a long time with an album and is so close to the songs for such a long time. Maybe it is something of a mood thing.

- It can be but it is probably also so that you put a lot of pressure on yourself and when working on an album for around three years it is easy to loose track of what you are doing. This is obvious when we get the reviews, how some like one song while others like another and so on, it is very different.

Martin says that they are pleased with the album and that it is a big step forwards for them, but that they also look at their work with critical eyes. Something that of course is a healthy way to look at it as it warrants progress.

- I think that it is a natural part in creating something. At the





same time you are proud of what you have done but to evolve all the time one has to look at what can be done better.

### *Reception*

And this time it seems like people has understand what it is all about, says Martin.

- The last album we felt that it was many that might not have understood the thing or saw something lacking in it. This time

we have gotten very fine feedback and become positively surprised over how many that has understood it, so that has felt very good. At the same time it is strange, that you can do something with your mates in a rehearsal room and then people are to sit and and judge wether it is good or not. But it is great when people like it and from the fans we've had a great response.

A good response is also im-

portant in todays musical business with decreasing record sales, a more and more flooded scene and labels in difficulties. It is not easy for a young up and coming band to get a break but that is nothing that deters Martin and his bandmates.

- It is the answer everyone gives to day, about how tough it is to be seen and so one but at the same time one has to find new ways to do it, if you are just sit-

ting down and being bitter about how record sales are down you will not get anywhere. If you are ready to challenge yourself a little there are actually bigger chances to reach out today than it was before, just look at our shows in France.

France is a nation where The Dead and Living has done very well thanks to good contacts but also to clever work on the web that has gotten something going

around the band and made them draw a decent crowd. But it is not only having the right contacts, you also have to be persistent and work enthusiastically to reach as far as possible.

- It is the band that really has something and that has the endurance that finally manages to reach out. I think that is an assurance of quality for the music business in itself, you cannot have an easy ride anymore.

Sure it can be assuring the quality that the bands that works the hardest becomes something in the longer run but I am not sure that my experience is the same as Martin's. I think it comes many more bands and albums today than for instance five years ago and I also think that the quality, especially that of the absolute best music has gone down noticeably as it comes much less really good albums that it did only a



pair of years ago. Just look at the Hallowed ratings for 2012 and 2013 for example where the average is around four for 2012 and just below it for 2013 (I think the labels were an assurance of quality before the album sales were falling, but that is a subject for a later time). Maybe this is only because the bands are easier to find today and more uses the channels that are there. One can wonder why so many are trying to release music today when it is so much harder to be successful today. Maybe it is like Martin somewhat suggests, that they might not be

fully aware of the work required to reach all the way.

- Yeah, but there are probably many that dreams of striking gold and become the next Guns'n'Roses and not being fully aware of what hard work is required today. The amount of music is really there but then you notice quite fast which ones that are ready to "go the extra mile", those who are willing to go one tour and really fight for it.

But for a young fighting band there isn't much money to make but Martin explains that his band isn't drawing nothing from their

musical adventure.

- One gets paid from STIM (Swedish Performing Rights Society) so you get something. And we have a company that makes money but we don't make any millions, but it works. We have other works on the side but the goal has always been to be able to work full time with the band and we are increasing every year so it points in the right direction. It is the albums, the rights and the shows you make money from but the records are decreasing so you have to play a hell of a lot to make it work.

Then it is also as Martin adds, required to invest some money of your own to get there as well.

### *The Dead and Live*

Earlier we were pointing out that the band was in France playing, and that they played for a decent crowd there but with a new album out they will not be sitting back and relax as they want to get out there and play in front of their fans. First in line of events is a show in Norway which will be passed already when this is published, then it is Sweden Rock Festival a month later, that is a

while so who knows something else may be next.

Shows and all of that is fine but is the band a good live band? Marting seems to think so.

- Absolutely, it has felt really good when we were in France last week. We are a live band and it feels like it is there we can live out the concept completely.

Note that the latest answer is a bit cut down because he points out that they are both a studio and a live band, but it didn't quite fit the flow of the text. But if I interpret Martin correctly, there is a bit for them to go before be-

ing able to really live out the concept to the extent that they really would like.

- It is less than we would want but it is in the future to develop the show even more. We have the makeup and the costumes with a backdrop and such, even lighting that is to fit the concept. I was technician for Deathstars during their tour with Rammstein and there I saw that 'it is like this it shall be, it shall be fires everywhere'. And like that, of course you should go into the crowd on a boat, that's a given.

Undeniably, who does not want



Första bandet på Månen?

to see a band that rides a boat on the waves of the crowd? Something along the lines of the classic ships that sailed the oceans in the latter parts of the 19th century would be nice, maybe a giant sailing ship? personally though, I have a hard time seeing that it would be fitting for this particular band to go by boat on the crowd. However, there is nothing wrong with having ambitions which Martin illustrates when I ask which is dream venue would be.

- The first band in space, or

maybe to play in the centre of the Earth.

Yes one has to have the visions as Martin says but since the centre of the Earth according to research is one massive Iron crystal that can be as big as 1500 km in diameter and outside that we have molten iron which has a temperature that according to the latest research is between 5500 and 6000° C which is hotter than on the surface of the sun, I think that the space would be much easier. And besides that, the pressure at the centre of the Earth is 3.5 milli-

on times the one at the surface so they might find themselves crushed if they managed to get down there and make a scene there in the giant iron crystal.

Science lesson over, it is not as much the place that matters to the band though, according to Martin.

- For us it doesn't matter that much were we play, of course it is great to play in front of a big audience like on Sweden Rock, so if we do Sweden Rock it would be cool to do Roskilde as well or do a similar show in Europe or USA.

But of course they are also working on booking shows at home in Sweden since that is something that is a lot easier than going to Europe as it requires less planning with logistics and all of that.

And with that I hope you have learnt something and that you take the chance to watch the band whenever the opportunity arises. You have to check their website for when and where they play next and clear your schedule. If you want to know more there is always out review and their website. And with that we thank Mar-

tin for taking his time to speak with us and wish The Dead and Living the best of luck with their upcoming shows and with a coming album of course.

*Mer The Dead and Living*

The Last Men Standing review  
[www.thedeadandliving.com](http://www.thedeadandliving.com)

På myspace

På youtube

*The Dead and Living are:*

Coroner - Vocals

Gravedigger - Bass

Janitor - Guitar & Vocals

Manny - Guitar & Vocals

Vincent - Drums