

Obscura Interview

Obscura's last two albums, *Cosmogogenesis* and *Omnivium*, have had some really badass covers. Who has done the artwork for your last two albums?

That was a guy called Orion Landau. He's over at Relapse Records. He does most of the covers for them. He did the covers for the band Origin and stuff like that. Actually Steffen gave him the ideas of the concept and he came up with ideas. So they kind of worked together on the concept of the artwork and Landau worked on the artwork itself.

Would you work with him again?

Totally. There were no communication problems, and he instantly picks up what we're looking for and always comes up with stuff that's exactly what he have in mind. So, I would like to keep working with him for the next two albums as well.

Speaking of album artwork, I feel like it has to deal more with "spacey" concepts, and your lyrics at time delve into the same kind of stuff. Is that a recurring theme for you guys?

Yeah it is. There's an ongoing theme between both records that we will continue for the next two as well. So it's like a four album concept. It's a little about space but it's more philosophic as well. More about the origin of existence, where it comes from, where our consciousness comes from and how it connects with the universe. Is it really there or is it simply in our heads? It's more of a philosophical point of view. But it kind of always deals with the space thing as well because space and existence and all that sort of goes together. Steffen knows more about that stuff because he writes all the lyrics.

What's it like touring with big-name bands like Devin Townsend Project or Children of Bodom? When you first started this band 9 years ago, did you ever think you'd get to be this big in the metal scene?

I'm not really sure. I mean, I always wished it, and wanted to make my living playing guitar, and tour across the whole world. At first, we wanted to do it for fun, just play music we like. Then we had to find a record label because we couldn't afford the production on our own. And then things started exploding pretty quickly. We've been lucky to go on tour with big bands like Cannibal Corpse, Black Dahlia Murder, Children of Bodom, and it's definitely a step further than I expected to go with this band, because there's definitely a hype right now for Technical Death Metal, it's a little bit of a trend even, but I've been playing that side of music for 12 years now, with other bands before, and back then no one liked that style of music, so you could never imagine to come this far with such complex music. So we're really stoked that we've gotten to where we are today.

While we're on the topic of touring, I heard that there's a possibility you might not come to the US after this tour?

At least for a while, yeah. The main thing is that touring itself costs so much money and we can't afford to lose money. Now, the country takes something like 30% of every fee for every show, since the country is in debt and such, and we need working visas which alone are about 5000 euros for everybody, so before you have to sell a lot of merchandise just to break even. We're all late 20s and early 30s, and it's different then when you're 19 or 20 and you still have to see how you can make a living as well, and if you have fixed costs of 10,000 – 15,000 dollars, it gets pretty difficult to be able

to keep doing this. The record labels can't really back you up anymore because record sales in general go lower and lower every year because of all the downloading stuff. So when you have no back up from your record label and you have to pay for it out of your own pocket, it becomes almost impossible to do it without losing money. So we definitely have to work out a way if we want to come back, which is our wish because the fans here are cool, but if there's no money, then there's no chance. So we'll probably focus on places that don't require a working visa or countries that don't take a percentage of your fee. So we'd rather do places like Canada and Asian countries because it's just not affordable for us anymore at this point to do it in the states.

Was it difficult for you guys when Thesseling left Obscura?

That's a good question. He has a very unique style of playing. He's one of those guys who you recognize after like 2 bars, and that added to the sound of Obscura. So he was a huge part of our recent sound, but on the other hand he told us that he can't tour with us for the next two years, and even if you have the best bass player in the world, if he's not available to you then it doesn't make any sense at all. So we pretty much agreed when he told us that it would be best to keep going without him instead of putting the band on hold after all this hard work we've put into it. But Linus is a very good replacement for him. I actually think the band now sounds better live, which is my honest opinion. I also think it's more like a real band because he was always kind of like a paid sideman, so the band chemistry is a lot better now. Linus definitely has all the chops to play his parts, and we have very high hopes for the next record to see what he comes up with and how he can add to our sound. So in the end, it was the best solution for us.

Speaking of departing members, Obscura has had an assload of former members since its inception. Does this make things like songwriting and touring more difficult? If so, how?

Not anymore. I mean when we got into this lineup for Cosmogenesis, the songwriting unity has been the three of us, Hannes, Steffen and me. The first record with all the other members involved sounds totally different, and it's a totally different band. As long as the songwriting unity stays the same as it is right now, it won't affect the songwriting process negatively because that's how we've written the last two records. So I really hope we can keep this lineup together the way it is.

Is it too early to start thinking about a new album, or are you already at work on it?

The thing is that we almost constantly write, and everyone writes, but right now we're still in still on the touring side for Omnivium which will still go on for a while, like a year or something, but everyone always writes and collects ideas, so we've started putting some riffs together here and there but nothing is really definite right now. I mean, we have many many riffs already, but we still haven't outlined the concept of the other record and how it's going to be compared to the other two. So we just kind of write into the blue, not really thinking about what happened then, and then when we start getting ready for the next record we see what kind of ideas we can use, and how they fit together and stuff, but I think it'll be at least two years or something before the new record is out.