



Sonata Arctica: Reckoning Nights

Interview **Posted:** Oct 9, 2004 - 08:43:20 PM

Hiya, how're you doing?

Good, thanks

To start of with an easy one, which fictional character would you want to be?

laughs I'd probably want to be Superman since he can see through walls and shit, and flying is cool as well.

And now, for the real interview...

Recently 'Don't Say A Word' made it to a nr. 1 position in the Finnish charts, what was the first thing that went through your mind when you got the news?

Well of course it was great and we were really glad for it, but it's not the first nr. 1 single we've had so we weren't so surprised. It's not the same thing now that you've had it once already, but it still feels really great. It's like the reward for a job that you've done.

Do you have any explanation for making it high into the Finnish charts several times and not even approaching them in most of Europe?

Well I guess that's just the Finnish market. Like, a lot of Finnish metal bands do really well in the Finnish market. It's not uncommon at all that a Finnish metal band goes to the charts here, even in the top of the charts. And I think that in Europe, and maybe the rest of the world in general, it's a whole different case.



This year you'll be touring Europe, mostly as a support act for Nightwish, why won't you be doing a headlining tour?

We were supposed to be doing a headlining tour, but then the opportunity to tour with Nightwish came about and off course that was way too good an opportunity to just pass since they're doing so well now. And they're also close friends of ours, have been for years, so if you get to tour with your friends and do that kind of tour, with huge arenas and shit, then of course you wanna do that! We can always do a headlining tour later.

So when you're on tour, what's absolutely essential to have with you, except for your guitar of course?

Telephone. So you can call home every once in a while, otherwise you'll lose your mind at some point. It's very important.

And when you get home, what's the first thing you do?

Just fall on the couch and relax for a while. Hug your girlfriend.



So what are your expectations for the upcoming year? Considering the release and the tour...

Well since we changed for Nuclear Blast, a bigger label and everything, a big tour with Nightwish, I hope all of that can elevate us to the next step on our career and maybe make us a bit of a bigger band as well. Nuclear Blast at least has all the qualities to make that happen for us. They're a very well established company with a lot of resources, lots of know-how and connections, everything.

So considering the new album, what's the biggest difference between Winterheart's Guild (2003) and Reckoning Night (2004)?

From what people have told me, Reckoning Night is our most intelligent album to date. It's much more surprising and versatile than Winterheart's Guild is. Also a bit more progressive and a lot heavier than anything we've done before.

How nervous are you when it's time to release a new album? Do you worry about the reactions from the media and fans?

I'd like to say that it doesn't concern me at all, but of course you're very anxious to see what people think about it. I'm not worried that no one's gonna like it. But so far we've always done what we think was the right thing to do, and people have liked it so we don't worry that much about it anymore. Just wait and see what happens.

So you've never released an album with mixed feelings? You were always sure this was as good as it would get?

Yeah, cause if you have very mixed feelings then something's wrong. Of course with this album, when I first heard it mixed and mastered I had sort of a mixed feeling, like 'What have we done?!' but then I listened to it again and I was like 'Yeah it's the best album we've ever done'. It's different but it's great.

Yeah I noticed that there's a huge difference between this album and your previous work

Yeah the overall feeling in the songs, the production, everything is a bit different. It's really gone in a more mature direction in my opinion and I really enjoy this new style of ours.

Was there anything in particular that triggered this change?

Well it's basically like natural evolution. We've done a lot of touring and learned, during shows, what works for us and what doesn't. And also we've grown as persons and as a band and this is where we stand now.



Can you give us some insights on how a Sonata Arctica song is written?

Well Tony does most of the writing and I do some. Nowadays usually one of us makes a sort of demo of a song basically and brings it to the rest of the guys, they study it and then we start working on it. We have a rather strange way of working, we only had like...three songs ready when we went to the studio and the rest of them were made while we were in the studio. That's always a bit risky 'cause you don't get all the input from the other guys on the songs, they just kinda have to play it, but of course they get to put their own personality in it as well.

So where there any problems during the writing and recording? Because if you don't have the songs ready yet you don't have a clue as to how long it's gonna take, right?

Yeah, well this one wrote surprisingly smooth, like Winterheart's Guild, the last album, wrote much, much harder, also to record, and there was a lot of tension in the studio, we were kinda stressed about it. This one really went well. Like all the three songs that we had ready when we entered the studio, we knew that we could pull this off, and we had two and half months to record the album so there was time enough.

Can you still hear the difference between the three songs that were written prior to the recording?

Not really, all of the songs on the album seem to belong together on this album, there's no very distinctive difference. I actually don't think anyone can tell which songs they are unless we tell them.

So will you tell us?

They were Blind No More, Don't Say A Word and Shamandalie

Is that also why Don't Say A Word became the first single?

Yeah, because we knew it for a really long time and we had a really strong feeling about it, even in the beginning like 'This is great and might make a great single track'. We did have some doubts at the end of the session but then we decided that, if it felt really good in the beginning, we should just trust our instinct, so that's what we did and apparently it was the right thing to do.

Can we expect any new video's with this album?

Yeah we've actually already shot the video for Don't Say A Word, it's in editing now.



Earlier this year you were on a DVD for a Japanese guitar magazine, right? I've been told that that's something that only happens to the greatest guitarists, how does it feel to be among those?

It feels stupid. Of course it's very flattering and it's great to be ranked very high on these readers polls, but basically that's just measurement of how big and popular your band is. It doesn't have that much to do with your own personal abilities. It was great and I was very honoured to do the DVD, actually I'm doing another one next week when we go to Japan for more promotion.

When a friend of mine heard I was gonna interview you he demanded I ask a few questions of his. First one is what type of Ibanez guitar you're using

It's a custom made Ibanez, so it's not any model at all.

And was it a conscious decision to change to a 7-string for the new album?

Yeah when we started working on this album, particularly Don't Say A Word and some other heavier stuff, I thought it'd be fun to explore with a 7-string guitar and make it even heavier. So then I contacted Ibanez, who I'm endorsed with, and told them "We're doing this kind of album now, and I'd need a 7-string guitar for it" so they sent me one. It was really nice to experiment with it in the studio.

so you just call them and say "I want that kind of guitar, gimme!!!"

laughs well it doesn't work exactly that way, but sometimes you get guitars for free so that's kind of useful.

So do you have any funny or interesting stories about things that happened during the writing and recording of the album?

Mmm, it was actually a rather boring process. Of course there were a lot of fun things happening in the studio but it happens all the time so you don't remember anything really special about it. There was nothing unbelievable special and different from our other sessions.

So does the job ever get boring? The whole recording, touring, promoting thing?

Yeah of course, when you do any of those for a long time then they get boring, but then you get switched to another thing. Like first you're in the studio recording the album, and you do that for about two months or more, and it gets kinda boring at some point. Then it's done and you do the promotion and then that gets boring too. So then you do touring. So basically when something gets boring you're near the end of it and you can move on to the next thing.

So how do you manage to still have some energy left at the end of a tour?

Touring is actually so much fun that it doesn't really wear you out that much. *laughs* it's kind of a holiday, at least for me. It's really nice. You get to spend time with friends and play shows for people who appreciate your music. This really is one of the best jobs in the world, if you up for it.

What would you be doing if, for some strange reason, you couldn't ever play guitar again?

I'd probably have to go back to school and start studying something. Try to get a real job.

And if I only couldn't play guitar then I'd just stick to composing and writing lyrics and all that stuff, even if I can't perform the songs myself.

If you could retract one song of any of the albums, which one would it be?

thinking mmm, I wouldn't take any song. Not that I'm completely happy about all of them, some are better and some are worse, but they're all an essential part of what we are and where we came from, they're all part of the journey so I wouldn't change anything.



There is this strange thing with the Finnish music scene, there are so many talented metal and metal related bands, probably one of the reasons it's possible for a metal band to get into the charts. Do you have any explanation for this?

People ask that a lot, but I really don't know why Finland has become such a big country for metal and this kind of music. One of the reasons is of course that Spinefarm (their previous label, also worked with other big names like Nightwish -hermelien) got really big there, signed a lot of good bands, and was a channel to distribute these bands, push them abroad. Finland also has a lot of good studios where you can make really good recordings for a reasonable price, which is important at the beginning stage when you want to make a demo and attract the attention of record companies. If you can make a really good sounding demo with your best songs, of course that helps, so it doesn't sound like you recorded it in your basement or something.

Do you have any words of wisdom for our young and naïve readers?

Eat your vegetables and don't drink 'n drive!

Thank you very much, and I'm looking forward to your performance here, this November (08-11-04, Paradiso, supporting Nightwish -soldout-)!

Thank you, and I'll see you there then!

- Sonata Arctica - <http://www.sonataarctica.info>
- Nuclear Blast - <http://www.nuclearblast.de>

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