

Questions to Ton Scherpenzeel (KAYAK)

Prepared by Naoyuki Takayama

1. You've just completed a KAYAK's new album, OUT OF THIS WORLD. Please tell us about the meaning and intention of the title. Is there any concept or theme of the album?

The album has no concept or theme. It's a collection of the best 15 songs since the previous album 'Seventeen' with a lot of variation. The title track is what you could call an 'escape' song. It's about the desire to flee from the world with its many problems that sometimes seem to difficult to solve. I feel that many people would like to find a better place, to live in peace and freedom. I know I would. Of course it's unrealistic but with everything that's going on today with wars, climate, pandemics, hunger, and all the technology it seems to get more and more complicated and people are becoming more anti-social. There is so much information that people don't know what and whom to believe anymore.

I've written about this theme before (Chance for a Lifetime, 1975) and there's a little quote from that song at the end of Out of This World. But that old song had some humor in it: it was about a modern day Noah who sold tickets for his spaceship. Out of This World is pretty serious. But the subject is basically the same.

2. KAYAK released ANYWHERE BUT HERE in '11. I feel something in common between these titles, but what do you think about it yourself?

Good question, not many people noticed that. Yes, there is a similarity between the two, but the lyrics to Anywhere But Here have a more personal and emotional background, while OOTW is about a general feeling of confusion and despair about the state the world is in,.

3. The new album is finished as an excellent album full of the KAYAK features while emphasizing diversity, including dramatic and dynamic symphonic tunes, short pop tracks and lyrical ballads. It is amazing that you have been able to create such creative and energetic works for nearly 50 years since the band's formation.

Thank you. I am not sure what your question is, but yes, I am surprised too. If someone had asked me 50 years ago whether I would still write this kind of songs and play with Kayak, I would probably have thought that highly unlikely. I only looked ahead as far as the next album. But here we are, half a century later and still going. That is pretty amazing.

My drive, my motivation is to create something that wasn't there before, build a personal and musical universe that people can relate to and find comfort, support and amusement in. As long as the drive is there, and my health is good (and people are interested), I hope to continue.

4. I think this is your first effort with the line-up of Bart Schwertmann (vo.), Marcel Singor (g.), Kristoffer Gildenlow (b.) and Hans Eijkenaar (dr.) How were songwriting and recording with them?

Not much different than the last couple of years Especially in Covid times a lot of work is done at everyone's home studio. It's a bit harder to organise but there are also good sides to it. Everyone can play and work on it in their own time, their own tempo. But yes, we Zoomed and phoned and mailed and sent over audio files.

I make the demo's and indicate what I would like to hear, the idea of the song. Everyone has a

certain freedom to bring their own ideas and personality with them, as long as it makes the song better. And these are all brilliant musicians, so what they send me back is so much better than I could have imagined. Only for drums and vocals we meet in person, because that's hard to do at a distance.

By the way, it is the same line up as with 'Seventeen', our previous album, only Hans Eijenaar has returned on drums. I have to tell you they are all fantastic musicians, and it's a privilege for me to work with these talented guys.

5. Many fans were greatly worried when a tour was cancelled as you had a stroke and were hospitalized. Is your health condition OK now?

I had a heart attack in October 2019. I have recovered since and I am feeling fine now. But I take more care of my body since it happened. I now walk daily, which I never did: I preferred to be in the studio. Now that I am getting a bit older, I see how important it is to stay fit and do a little exercise. I am glad my wife likes to walk so she is glad I have changed. Now she does not have to beg me to take a walk with her anymore.

6. Please tell us how you came to participate in BEYOND THE WARDROBE ('20) by THE SAMURAI OF PROG and THE KNIGHT AND THE GHOST ('20) by THE GUILDMASTER. Especially, the Medieval/Celtic taste of the latter album you fully participated in seems to be consistent with your own concept seen in your solo album, THE LION'S DREAM「('13) and KAKAK's MERLIN ('81) and MERLIN-BARD OF THE UNSEEN ('03) .

I was asked by Marco Bernard to write a piece for The Wardrobe, and then he asked if I could also contribute something to The Guildmaster. So I sent him four tracks that he liked, and that I had no direct plans with. After that they added other instruments, and it's turned out really good. We will probably continue to work like this together. The style of The Guildmaster is slightly reminiscent of my solo work in The Lion's Dream. My musical heart lies in music from the baroque and renaissance periods, and folk as well, so I really felt at home. It's funny because I live in Greece for many months every year and it turned out that Kimmo (who is from Finland) also lived there, which I did not know. So we met each other there. Then Marco is an Italian who lives in Finland. Then we of course have Rafael, who lives in Spain. A very nice international company!

By the way, I am working on a new solo album in the same style, which will be released in October. It's called 'Velvet Armour.'

7. How about the current situation about the COVID-19 pandemic? Is band members, people associated with the band and their families OK?

Yes, everyone is OK. Hopefully with the progress of vaccinations the music business will also slowly become better. This year we will not tour, that's too soon. It will possibly be spring 2022- if it all goes back to what we call 'normal'. In the meantime, time to create new music.

8. Please tell us about your plan, going forward. I think a tour as the band may be difficult, but how about session, guest appearances and other activities apart from KAYAK?

Well, there is Kayak, my solo work, and I do other projects in Holland for theatre. I am quite busy. Sometimes I get asked for projects abroad (like Guildmaster, or recently XII Alphonso

from France, to contribute some keyboards or music. That's great nowadays, to be able to communicate with your music with people all over the world and simply send it over.

9. Last but not the least, please give a message to your devoted fans in Japan.

Hi all! We want to thank you for your support for Kayak throughout the years. Japanese fans are known to be very loyal, and that is very important to bands like us. That's why we hope you also like the new Kayak album. Warm greetings from Holland and stay safe and healthy!

Thank you very much.