

10 rituals with Rotting Christ

One of the most important Latvian heavy music festivals this summer Zobens un Lemess is just around the corner. Alternative.lv had the opportunity to conduct an interview with one of the festivals guests Greek extreme metal titans Rotting Christ.

G: Congratulations on the new album! I was quite surprised when I opened my *Rituals* collector's edition to find an exclusive pin, a patch and a pair of stickers. Thank you a lot for that!

S: Yes, we do our best always to satisfy our fans around the world. It is very important for us, because we are also fans.

G: Speaking about the last album *Rituals*, it has been already few months since you released it, so what are people saying, what's the feedback from fans?

S: Ups and downs, good and bad. But in general I think it is quite positive, because the positive is more than negative. The *Rituals* is the bestselling album in 10 years. People like to talk in the beginning, for example, I like this better than that, but you can understand it only after the years, when the time is passing by. And now people are saying the best words for this album. That makes me very satisfied.

G: Am I right that your first show this year was on the *70 000 Tons of Metal* cruise? How was the vibe to play the new songs live? How was it to perform *Rituals* on a boat?

S: Actually, we played maybe one song, couldn't play more because didn't feel that well, because playing this kind of atmospheric album on a boat it is not that metal. It (the boat) didn't have the atmosphere. We played just the one song to warm up our fans, that's all.

G: Just to give a small preview of the album!

S: It wasn't the right place, of course it was a perfect place to be because it is one of the best things, you know, it was very fun. But fun and *Rituals* are two words that cannot combine.

G: You once said that the previous album had no special message, and you just wanted that the album would serve as an escape from everyday life, so what are *Rituals* about?

S: *Rituals* are rituals. It's a sublime portion of each person, for me ritual it is every day, I have rituals in my mind, I just made 10 different rituals from all around the world, this is the concept for this album. A ritual from a different place from around the world. I can send you, if you want, the concept behind each song.

G: Is there any connection with the previous album, because the artwork picture is the same with one from the video for the song *666*.

S: Yes, yes! It has the same atmosphere and style, that comes from previous album, it is quite close to last one. More or less the two albums are quite connected.

G: When I'm listening to albums, I try to find the song which could be the hardest one to play live, and I heard *Apaga Satana*, it is probably not the most complex or the most technical song from the album, but its ritual atmosphere could make it impossible for live action.

S: It is very hard to play it live! We tried to create a special atmosphere with our latest setlist, this is very difficult, and the conditions are not always the best, the stages, venues, open air festivals, don't have that material to create that atmosphere, like you said it before about this cruise. You cannot create atmosphere you want, but we tried, and we have created updates which are quite atmospheric.

G: The same for *Apaga Satana*, right?

S: Yes, it is quite risky song, but it sometime works!

G: You can read a lot of good reviews about the release, and some even say that this is your best music in your 30 year career.

S: That makes me an honor. Because I'm the only composer, and if someone is saying after so many years active, and you can still speak to someone, it is a big thing for me!

G: And I can't disagree with all the reviews, and mostly it is because of the enormous producing work. You feel really like in the middle of rituals, so how hard was it to create such atmosphere?

S: I was definitely isolated, I always get isolated when I start to compose an album, writing new stuff, at first I talk to myself, I try to find undiscovered place, I would say. It took almost one year being living in my own world, to create the idea. My goal is to keep on creating, and this believe me took me really one year doing rituals with myself in order to create *Rituals*.

G: There are lots of guest artists.

S: Yes, always! Friends, and not just guest artists, just for the gigs. We are friends with Nick from *Paradise Lost*, Vorph from *Samael*, with the other guys like Magus from *Necromantia* etc. When I always come up with a song I always think about my friends, who of my friends can lift the song, so when it is over, I just call and ask if they want to participate. Usually they say yes, so this is the result in the last album. We have plenty of guests.

G: And afterwards, when you play the songs live, isn't that hard to play the songs without your friends?

S: Yes, we don't play all the songs with guests, but we'll try to play for example the song with Nick Holmes, but we'll have him as a playback. It is kinda intro for the song, and I think it'll work.

G: As I said before, there are a lot of reviews about *Rituals*, you can see people naturally dividing in two groups, ones who really love the material and the other ones who think that with the last effort *Rotting Christ* drifted far away from its roots. So what's your opinion about that?

S: Yeah, we don't play what we used to play 25 years ago, but the atmosphere is the same. For me this album is quite more atmospheric and blacker than first albums. Maybe it sounds a little bit weird what I am saying, but the feeling is blacker sometimes what we used to do 25 years ago. Of course, we don't have enough riff parts, but for this album I paid all my attention to lyrics, to the concept. Things I didn't do in the past. So, in my opinion, despite the fact that the albums doesn't sound that much musically what we were doing back in the days, but still the atmosphere is there, and *Rotting Christ* have created a black, atmospheric

album. The proof is that this album is the bestselling so far that means that sometimes numbers speak for themselves.

Q: Now the album is out and you have to perform rituals live. Two of tour stops will be in South Africa, and because of some religious madness you have to change your bands name for those two shows. The internet is doing you a favor and giving you some ideas, for example, Rotting Crepe, Jesus Is My Pal, Fuckhammer etc.

S: Yes, but it is just for the authorities not for the show. We'll play the show with our own name. Authorities have some problems, so we changed it only for them! We also were offered to play in United Arabian Emirates, and maybe we'll play there. We don't give a shit, we'll play everywhere, and maybe we have to change the name. Difficult and weird territories, but we're in the frontline of the battlefield, and we never step back. Because our moto is NON SERVIAM.

Q: Are you gonna have a special setlist for the shows?

S: No, no! We gonna play songs, and not thinking what are other saying about that!

Q: As we can see in your tour schedule tour stops tend to move to the right side of the map, East Europe, Asia, Australia, Russia. I recently read that in this digital era, where touring is only profitable, this seems to be the future for the metalbands, to explore new places. So what's your opinion on this subject?

S: It is very nice to play different territories, weird territories, you have quite problems, for instance Russia now, our shows were supposed to go firm, but there is now some kind of religious madness, so they don't allow bands like *Rotting Christ* to play there. But you know, as a band our goal is not only to play in well-known countries, we play all around the world, we play in territories where are metalheads, because in my opinion metal unites, not divides. It is weird when you play, metalheads everywhere have the same dress rules, the same feelings, they look the same, so it is something special for this planet, very special for this civilization that there are people who have the same frequency all around the world. This is what only metal can do.

Q: And probably in the new territories the metalfans are eager to hear new music, right?

S: Yes, but not that many. For instance, we played in India, and it didn't pull that many people. But someone should start.

Q: For example, you played recently in Australia for the first time.

S: We played in Sri Lanka last year, we also played Panama, Guatemala, and San Salvador. Territories nobody played, no one played there before. We play for the hangout, we don't think to get the money there, people may be poorer there, we play just for the flight tickets, for something to eat and that's all.

Q: One of your stops will be in South America as well.

S: I love South America! The underground spirit is still alive there, I like to be there.

Q: This tour goes till the end of the year, what is after the tour?

S: If we are still alive, we gonna play some more shows, playing alive is the best thing for us! We write the music, to play the music, to meet the fans, we are fans, we go to the shows,

we buy the albums, and we are active members of this underground scene all around the world, so this for us is the best sublime, to play live, to meet the metalheads, especially after the show!

Q: I am starting to think that you like it here in Latvia, because I counted three times when *Rotting Christ* visited Latvia, and plus this year's visit in *Zobens un Lemess* open air festival, and few more shows in other Baltic countries, so what should we prepare for this year?

S: Prepare for a hell of an atmospheric show, we'll do our best on the stage. To have you on our trip with our last album, and not only of course, we gonna play songs from all of our discography, and try to create a really atmospheric night or day, I don't know. I remember playing in Latvia, you never get night in July, and it gets really late as I remember. So, we'll gonna have another hell of a night or a hell of a day.

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