



Final Virus

The following interview was conducted in January/February 2006 between Reno Schnell of Final Virus and Azchael of rockinchina.com for Rock in China.

Azchael: Can you please first introduce yourself and your bands' members and tell me since when they are playing with the band?

Final Virus: Extract from our info [written by Christian Riepert, Weberei Gütersloh]:

Bass-Guru Peter Sonntag, studied acoustic bass player and composer was already a highlight in the jazz- and rockscene at the end of the 70ies. Keen to experiment he composed such innovative pieces like "Tree of Life" a musical piece for 9 bassplayers and painters written in 1986.

Even musical specialist publications gave Peter Sonntag the title of a modern Leonardo da Vinci of the bass.

Even more remarkable that in 1997 jazzplayer Peter Sonntag founded one of the most innovative rockbands in Germany together with then 23 year old miracle guitarist Reno Schnell: FINAL VIRUS!

The two stringexperts made sure that the rest of the line-up was of even quality.

Exceptional singer Uwe Pröckl astounds with his range of styles and skillfully wanders around between aggression and shyness to release everything on stage.

Markus Plum will possibly be the first rhythm trombone player to enter the metal "hall of fame". The sound of his trombone is so essential to the Final Virus sound that one has to wonder how the rock genre has been working without it for decades.

Additionally to Bodo Stricker who, fittingly to the FINAL VIRUS sound wall, moves the doublepedal with warpspeed, the just 16 year old drummer Max Sonntag (who in the world is his teacher.. God? Keith Moon?) has been part of the band for years.

The powerful soulvoice of singer Julita Elmas and "Soundmachine" Hotty Melz enrich the band since summer 2005.

Eventhough seemingly contradicting elements of Metal, Wave, Jazz, Folk and contemporary classical music styles are combined in the bands compositions, the sound is always homogeneous and original rather than glued together.

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Their debut album "Break Out Now" as well as the following releases "Mirror", "A Chemical Lovestory" and their current cd "Superheroes & Phat Pink Elephants" all received excellent ratings in various reviews. Awards like "cd of the month" and "band of the month" were also given to the band by various publications.

The march 2004 edition of the music publication 'Soundcheck' includes a DVD that features the video that features the song 'Walk On' that was written during the China tour that took place in fall 2003.

The documentation of this tour as well as never before seen live footage, cartoon adventures and additional video clips will be released on DVD shortly.

Azrael: What kind of instruments are you using?

Final Virus: We're using instruments that every band uses (guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, etc..) but we're also trying to incorporate instruments that,are somewhat rare for this style, for example having a trombone.

Another unique feature is the use of 2 drumkits. There is a whole new sound dimension when adding a second kit because you can play grooves, loops and percussion without having to use samplers and drumcomputers.

Azrael: What kind of style are you playing and why are you playing in this genre? What do you want to express with your music?

Final Virus: Actually we don't limit ourselves to a certain genre or style. Our material ranges from jazz, via drum 'n bass and dance to rock and metal.

Whatever feels right for a song, we'll use. If you have a certain atmosphere in mind that you want to create you'll use whatever style suits it best.

First and foremost, we want people to enjoy what we do, make them have a good time at our concerts. On the other hand, our lyrics are not just common lovesongs. We try to get our message across and hopefully get people thinking about the world they are living in and whether they are making the right decisions.

Azrael: I saw on your website, that it is possible to download your latest record. What is your opinion to copy protection and mp3 downloads?

Final Virus: MP3 downloads are a great way for you band to be heard. People have the possibility to hear your music and if they really like what they hear, they will still go and buy the album. If you're a real fan of good, handmade music, you will want to have the coverart as well, read the lyrics, read the liner notes and all that. You want the complete experience. We think the real problems are not the free downloads or the fact that everyone with a computer can duplicate cds these days, it is rather the lack of quality music. Most acts that are hyped these days have one, maybe two singles. Why buy the entire album if you can just



download that one song? The rest of the songs on the album sound just the same, they lack individuality. Acts who have been in the business for decades, like David Bowie, Sting, Madonna, Depeche Mode, are still selling a lot of records because people know that they are going to get a high quality product, an entire album and not just one or two good songs.

About the China tour

Azrael: Let's start with the most obvious question: Why is a German rock band touring in China? What is the story behind?

Final Virus: The band was doing a tour with newcomer bands. We had the task of being the "coaching band", meaning, helping the newcomers with their stage performance, stage presence, giving advice on arranging songs, songwriting in general and so on. The "Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Rock" liked what we did so much that we got offered the opportunity to go to China as, let's say, "music ambassadors".

Azrael: What were the reactions in Germany after you announced your China tour plans?

Final Virus: People did not believe it was actually going to happen. Not a lot of bands ever get to play in China because it is not easy to get into the country when you are a rock band from the "capitalistic world". Regulations are still very strict. Of course everyone in the band was really excited but I guess no one believed it was actually going to happen until we started packing our suitcases and shipped over the equipment.

Azrael: What is your general impression of China and the local rock-/music scene? What have you liked here?

Final Virus: China in general was really impressive. When we first came to Shanghai, everyone was in awe. The size of the city, the amount of people, the advanced technology and so on. The local music scene is quite diverse from what we got to see and hear of it. They have their own music channel on TV, sort of like MTV over here. And they have boygroups, rappers, r n'b acts, pop bands that sound like the music that we're familiar with over here, only that the vocals are in chinese language.

On the other hand the traditional chinese music is still really popular, with large orchestras, a lot of drums & gongs, dancing, etc. The diversity in general was impressive. We were invited to the closing ceremony of a festival and got to see acts from all over china, I think that evening was really special for all of us.

Azrael: In which cities was the audience the most crazy one?

Final Virus: We played at a concert venue in Wuxi. The venue seated about 3000 people. Audiences in China have to be seated, nobody is allowed to stand up. That would be

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considered revolting. Nevertheless, we always got everyone to get out of their seats and dance and party with us. During that particular concert in Wuxi though, things got really crazy. We started playing a song and Uwe our frontman told the people to get up and dance. What happened then is something we will never forget. People started to come on stage and dance around the band! After a couple of minutes the entire stage was filled with people, it was insane!

Azrael: What has impressed you most? Which things happened to which you can say that you are positively surprised?

Final Virus: The overall friendliness of course. We were treated extremely well and everything was always taken care of. The reactions to our music and performance was astounding as well. As already mentioned earlier, people always got out of their seats and started dancing eventhough they weren't really allowed to. We always walked out into the crowd after we finished playing and people wanted to talk to us, have pictures taken, autographs..sometimes we were busy signing tickets, pictures and programs for 30 minutes! We totally did not expect that kind of reaction. Another really impressive experience were the two festivals we played.

Huge stages and 40.000 people each. Dimensions you would normally see at a Rolling Stones show.

Azrael: Did something unusual happen to you on the tour?

Final Virus: As mentioned earlier, the people on stage at the Wuxi show were very unusual. Seeing yourself on national TV the day after a festival because it was re-broadcasted was certainly a new experience as well. I guess you could also file all the different tasty foods we tried during the tour under "unusual".

Azrael: Had there been any bad impressions?

Final Virus: Everything was organized really well, the people were superb and we had a great time, so no, there were no bad impressions.

Azrael: Did you get to hear any Chinese bands? And if yes, which?

Final Virus: We did see chinese bands on music television and at the festivals we played. Unfortunately I cannot remember any names.

Azrael: Thanks for the interview!!!