

**We are very proud to have you on Greek Rebels, we believe that you are actually one of the 'hot' names out there in the European hard rock scene nowadays, so thank you very much for your time. We also have recently reviewed your new project, under the name Nordic Union, which is a really cool album. What is the reception so far, from the media, the fans? Are you satisfied with it?**

I would say, the reception has been fantastic, its phenomenal to be honest. The reviews are great, it's even getting airplay on the radio, it's getting on the charts, even the mainstream medias in Sweden are picking it up and writing about it. I never ever experienced that they write about something like this.

**Yes, I just saw that you posted that you are on nu. 4 or nu. 5 on the Swedish hard rock charts today, which is really good. You never had any prior success on the charts with your other bands or projects?**

Yes, with Eclipse and with W.E.T. we actually went to nu.1, a couple of years ago. If it wasn't, well I mean, that almost the same day Dream Theater released their album, just one week earlier Megadeth and Avantasia the same day, there are so many good bands and big names. If we would have released it a month later, maybe the competition would not have been so big, maybe we could have landed on nu. 1

**Yes, so I wanted to ask you, you have collaborated for Nordic Union with a very big singer, Ronnie Atkins. How was that collaboration established in the first place?**

Frontiers Records put us together and they asked if we were interested in doing something together. From me it was no brainer, I think Ronnie Atkins is a great singer, I love Pretty Maids. He has influenced a lot of stuff we do with Eclipse, since we were kids. So, I immediately wanted to do it. With Ronnie, we only met a couple of times before we did this album, on festivals. So, he checked the stuff I did with Eclipse before and he thought they were cool. I sent him two songs I have done, I sent him "Hypocrisy" and "When Death Is Calling". And those two nailed it, those two tracks were what I had in mind to do with this album. He really liked them, so he was 'go' from day one.

**Yeah, you mentioned those two songs, have you composed the songs for that specific purpose, the Nordic Union project, or did you dig up any old ideas or maybe both?**

I wrote everything as new, I don't have any ideas lying around anymore. You know, everything that has qualities, is already out on an album. And I always like to start from scratch, because it is better to write for Ronnie and to have this specific product in mind, so it's getting it's own identity, that is very important to me. I always write something as if it was for a band, I want it to have its own identity, while other projects, they have a lot of writers so every song is different. But I don't want my projects to be something like this, I want them to feel like a real band.

**That actually gives a follow up to my next question, I have noticed that you have tried to actually showcase the voice of Ronnie Atkins by choosing atmospheric arrangements on many occasions. Was that really what was behind your head when you were composing the songs?**

Yes, I wanted him to sing something very melodic. He has a softer voice, which I think is much better than it used to be. He sings much better now than in the 80s or 90s. He has this two-voice thing, the soft voice and the more like growl voice, like Blackie Lawless. Yes, I wanted to have the cleaner side vs the heavier side on the choruses. And I really like his voice, it is pretty rough, it is not an easy listening voice, you got to fight listening to him singing. His voice is kind of ruspy, not sweet, so this adds another dimension to the songs. The songs are really melodic, so he brings in

that extra little thing, that makes the special.

**So, how was it working with Ronnie Atkins and what was his input on the final result?**

He stayed pretty true to my original vocal ideas. I did the demos, but he brought his own voice and all the changes he did were for the better. Ronnie is a true professional, he is very nice to work with, he works really hard and he is a really nice guy as well. Everything went so smooth. A lot of people, as they get older, they tend to be more lazy, they would say "Ok, it's good enough, I "I just do my vocals and it's going to be good enough". But he gives 110%, he gives all, he does not leave anything that is not perfect. I am the same, so that worked really good.

**I have also seen that you decided to play almost all the instruments by yourself, instead of forming a full band that would take pressure of you?**

First of all, you know the demos sounded already great. There was no real point on bringing extra musicians. I brought on a lot of different guitarists, you know, for solos, to have some extra input on the record. There is a lot of me on that album. I play some of the guitar solos, but I have some other people playing some guitar solos as well.

**One thing that we have mentioned earlier, is that Nordic Union sounds completely different from your other bands / projects (Eclipse / WET eg). I stated that it is a mixture of HEAT and Pretty Maids at some points. Firstly, how do you come with such fresh ideas in such short notice and secondly how would you describe the sound of Nordic Union yourself?**

I would describe the sound of Nordic Union as...well as ways, everything I do is melodic. I think that this is what gives life to the songs. If its cool riffs or cool productions, you are bound to listen to it for a while, but you are going to get bored pretty quickly without good melodies. I think if you pick out this album in 10 years, maybe the production will not sound so fresh, but the melodies will be just as good as today. I wanted to have it a little bit moody, kind of dark. This was the vision I had. A little serious touch, not on every song, I don't have it on every song, but on songs like "When Death Is Calling", they have a special feel to them.

**So, how you come up with such fresh ideas In such short notice?**

I am a fast writer, actually. If I sit down, a day I will probably have a song finished at the end of the day. That is pretty good. I 've been writing so much these days, so I am pretty focused when I do it. And I don't spent time on ideas that I don't really like. If I work on something for 3 or 4 hours and I don't like it, then I will throw it away and start over with something new. I am not spending time on something that is not good enough. If you dont get a song that is working in a couple of hours, then there is something wrong with it, so you have to throw it away and start over again.

**You should know in about 20 or 30 minutes that you have something cool in your hands.**

Yes yes, absolutely. You know when I am fiddling with the guitar and trying to get something cool, when it is working then I put the melody in and then I usually do somekind of a demo. A very easy one. And then, after a couple of hours, if it doesn't work in a simple demo, it will not work in a full production. So, this is how I move along and I believe this has to do with the whole effectiveness issue.

**Will Nordic Union support the album by any concerts or any major festivals maybe in the summer or this will be a strictly studio project?**

We haven't decided yet, as it is now Ronnie is going on tour for 10 weeks with Avantasia. So, it is a pretty long tour and after that Pretty Maids will have a new album. So we will see. When we did this album, we did one thing at a time. First we did the album, secondly it was delivered and now we have the reviews and we see if people are interested and what the reactions are going to be. Now it seems that reviews are great, the reactions are great, it seems like it is selling. Selling, you know, it is the only thing that matters when it comes to interest. It seems like it is selling so it seems that there is interest. So, maybe we will take on the discussion about doing live gigs. We haven't said no to anything but we haven't discussed it yet.

**And as for the lyrical content of the album, who was responsible for it and what themes do you want to get across to the listener with the lyrics?**

I did most of the lyrics, Ronnie did 2 songs and I wrote some lyrics with a friend of mine. I always try to make the lyric to fit the song. I always do the music first and the melodies, before I do the lyrics. So, the mood of the songs decides what the song is going to be about. It's like it's telling me what it is going to be about.

**So for example “When Death Is Calling” calls for a more dark approach on the lyrics.**

Yeah, the whole feel of the song is kind of minor and has a moody vibe. That is how I wanted the lyrics to be as well. That is how I write, there are no special themes, but I wanted the album to be kind of moody and little dark, so the lyrics kind of reflects that as well.

**I can understand the name of the project being Nordic Union, but I don't fully understand the front cover. Can you please tell me what you want to get across to the people with that cover?**

If you hit a crow it will bleed on the nose (laughs).

**What's that? (laughing as well)**

If you are running on a train in winter, you may come across a crow that has blood on its nose... (continues laughing)

**Oh right...(with laughter of course)**

Well, there is no vision behind that at all. It looked cool and we had a guy called Kai from Germany who did the artwork. And I think he wanted to do something that felt...

**Cool actually**

Yes cool, and it would be in the wilderness and it should look cold. Cold and cool. But there is really no thought behind it. He might have had a thought behind it but we discussed different ideas, you know flags and Scandinavian maps. Then all of the sudden this album artwork came and we liked it.

**Yeah ok great. I mean ok, I can understand the Nordic Union name, you know the guys being from the Nordic side, but the train? (laughs)**

Oh well, there is a train that you can take from Denmark to Sweden, so that is what it is (laughs)

**I have congratulated you for the Nordic Union album, but I also want to congratulate you for your last effort with Eclipse, “Armageddonize”, that I have to tell you that was the second best**

**pick of the editors for 2015 on Greek Rebels, behind Amorphis' "Under The Red Cloud". So its been out a while, and the reception was great I guess. How are you feeling right now, after all this time has passed from the release of "Armageddonize"?**

The album turned out to be really good, you know we did it in less than three months, from when we started writing the first song of the album until I delivered the final masters. You know, it was done almost in panic and my father had passed away less than a month before. So, I was literally organizing funerals, fixing his house and his business that he left behind and doing this album at the same time. It was done in panic, everything. We had to get good ideas and do them fast, because we had a tour book already on the beginning of 2015, so you know if we haven't delivered an album in time we wouldn't have an album to go on tour with. Everything would have turned out to be a mess and the whole situation was a mess. We were lucky, it could have been a really bad album as well but it turned out to be a very good album. So, in 2015 we ended up playing in almost every European country, not Greece though.

**Unfortunately**

Yeah, and we are going to do a re-release of the album, cause we are going to be in the Eurovision, in the Swedish preliminary round.

**I am going to ask you later on about the Eurovision thing, but I am really sorry to hear about your father.**

It is life and of course it is very sad and it was really unexpected and he was only 67, so...

**To me, "Armageddonize" is probably the best album by Eclipse, but to hear that you had to go through all these things in just three months... I mean wow...**

Well, I feel the same way, thank you.

**I would say that "Armageddonize" is somewhere in between of "Are You Ready To Rock" and "Blood & Scream". I mean you have the rock texture from the first but also the power from the latter. Would you agree on that?**

Yeah absolutely. When we write, we don't think that much, we just write songs and it is a good song, its going to be on the album. We don't have any big plans, that this album is going to sound like this or that. With Nordic Union I had a goal, a plan but with Eclipse, we just write songs and if it sounds like Eclipse then we go for it. But, you know, you don't know the direction of an album until you are done 2/3 of the album. Then you start to see a pattern.

**Is it possible to hear anything more to the metal side, from Eclipse or Erik Martensson in one of his projects?**

A more metal?

**A more metal side, yes.**

I have been having this idea, that this next album should sound a bit more heavier.

**That would be totally awesome, I 'm telling you.**

We don't wanna get softer and there is no point in doing an album that is almost the same, that is

pointless. Let's see what happens. The main thing is that it has to have great songs and that is the main focus. If the songs turn out to be softer, then they are softer. You really can't decide, but if I choose now, if I could choose then I would go for a heavier album.

**For me, the best songs on the albums are the heavy ones, like “Blood Of The Enemies”.**

Yeah, its great playing it live as well.

**It has the vibe. You also had a line up change, by welcoming a new drummer...**

Yeah, we kind of lost him to another band, a Swedish band, called Mustache [e.n. Hope I got that right] and in Sweden they are really big. The fact is that he needed to earn more money for his family, he didn't want to quit the band, he was more or less forced to. So, there is no bad blood between us, we are still just as good friends. We found a really great guy, called Philip Crusner, he is a great drummer and a really nice guy.

**As you already mentioned, you have also announced that you will be among the contestants for the Eurovision song contest for Sweden. Can you tell us a little bit about this decision and if its going to be a new song or something that we have already listened to?**

No, you can't have songs that people have heard before. It gonna be a completely fresh song. It's a complete secret until we play it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February. The Swedish television actually called me and the people that are working there, they have been failing to have great rock bands for many years and they really liked Eclipse so they asked us if we were interested. We thought about it and we said that we can play Eclipse on prime time, Saturday night, with our own song, I wrote it myself. It was actually a song that I did for the Nordic Union album. It sounded like Eclipse so with a few changes in the riffs we turned it into an Eclipse song. And it would have easily have been one of the best songs on the “Armageddonize” album. So, I called them like a week after and I told them that I can't write anything new, because I am going on tour with Eclipse, but I have this song lying around. So, I sent them this and they really liked it. Its very different in different countries, how big the Eurovision is, but in Sweden it is very big, it is THE biggest TV event of the year, no doubt about it. Almost half of the Swedish population will watch it.

**So, it is prime time for Eclipse, so this is great I guess.**

Yes, you know all my childhood I have never seen hard rock on prime time TV. It is always really late or not at all. So, now at least we have the time to give, at least, 3 minutes of hard rock.

**That actually surprises me. You have many great Hard Rock band there and you tell me you have no prime time for hard rock in Sweden?**

No, not at all. It's a big movement of course, a lot of people are listening to it or playing, but it's not a part of the mainstream market.

**Avantasia are also nominated for the same reason, Lordi have won the competition...**

I have this other band, by the way, I don't know if you have heard it, called Ammunition. It's with the singer from the Norwegian band, Wig Wam [e.n Åge Sten Nilsen]. They won the contest for Norway and they were on the big Eurovision event.

**Oh Yes, I remember, the song “In My Dreams”, yes.**

Yeah you should check it out, at the moment we are working on the second album. If you like Eclipse and Nordic Union, you are going to love this one. This one is more classic rock, classic hard rock.

**Oh alright, excellent. Ammunition you said right?**

Yes, you are going to find it on Spotify or whatever kind of services.

**Well, ok, thanks for that. I wanted to ask you before, what is your view on Eurovision song Contest?**

Oh...well, I haven't actually been a part of it, I have never seen it because there is no hard rock in there. Of course, there are some good songs and artists that are participating, but the whole thing it's kind of childish and stupid. We have no plans or visions of actually winning or even go to the finals. I don't really care about it. It is just a chance for us to show to the whole Sweden, Eclipse. It's a great marketing thing and it's great to play hard rock in front of so many people. It was kind of stupid not to do it. You know, the main thing is that every artist and label are fighting tooth and nail to be a part of it, because it is so big.

**Ok, so I hope all the best for you guys with that. Ok, you told me about Ammunition. So, how do you manage to find the time to do all those different things. Really, you are composing for several bands, producing again for several bands?**

Oh well, I am mixing as well. For the moment I am mixing the new Jaded Heart album. I am actually doing it right now, took a break for the interview. I work a lot. This is actually what I do for a living. I do this everyday, I got a family and two kids as well...so... yeah, I don't sleep that much [e.d laughs]

**I was going to ask you that, if you sleep at all [e.d. laughing]**

It's like, I work around you know, in constant panic. [e.n. laughs again]

**Alright. Something completely different that I wanted to ask you now. Just a weeks days ago, your record label Frontiers, announced that will stop sending promos to the press long before they are released due to the leaking. What is your view on that? On the internet, torrents, youtube?**

That is a lot of questions in one. About the Frontiers and the promo, I can see the problem they are having. Because, always, ALWAYS, something leaks out. I got mails from people who are not journalists, the day after – the DAY AFTER – I have finalized my masters, because it was done in the last minute. So, the next day they have sent the album to the press for reviews etc. So, the same day, people that are not journalists have contacted me, having the album saying 'Oh this is great' etc. I am really happy that people are interested and people that are doing it, are doing it because they are big fans of the genre. Out of a business perspective, I don't know if it matters or not. I really have no comments about it, if Frontiers felt that they need to do it, I guess they have a reason for it. I am just happy that the people want to listen to the music and that they show interest. On the other side, the whole download and piracy copying, it's tending to be less of a problem, because – especially in Sweden - almost 90-95% music sales are Spotify now. The physical sales has almost disappeared in Sweden. You know, Spotify doesn't pay almost anything which I think is almost as a legal stealing. It is actually ridiculous. For writers and artists, they kind of skip the whole part of paying the artists or the writers. The people that are actually creating the content and gives meaning to the whole service. Everyone else gets paid, the labels get paid, the Spotify – they have the

fanciest offices in New York, in Los Angeles, in Stockholm, everywhere. Only a handful of artists have that kind of money. Small bands like Eclipse or Nordic Union, we are the big losers of this.

### **Ok, right**

Yes and one thing that always strikes me is that, you cannot see the album, who wrote the songs, you can't tell. It's impossible to find the information. Who did the artwork? You can't tell. Who mixed it, who mastered it? Who did the whole thing that you are listening to? It's impossible to find all that information if someone hasn't created a wikipedia page about that album. Back in the day, you had the CD and at least people were getting credit, if they weren't paid good enough, at least they would get the credit, for being a part of it. So now, no one gets paid and no one gets the credit. But if you turn it around and see it as a listener, it's great, I can hear new music as fast as I want. So, yes, it's a ... it's a ...

### **Two sided coin.**

Yeah, a double edge sword.

### **So, you told me about Ammunition. This is what Erik Martensson is going to do next? What are your next plans?**

That is the next album I am starting, then we are going to have a lot of festivals with Eclipse, we are going to go to America, to Japan, we have the Sweden Rock Festival and other festivals in Sweden as well. But, yes the next album I am working on is the Ammunition album, we have actually 5 or 6 songs ready for that. Along with that singer from Wig Wam, he is a fantastic singer and we are trying to create something there as well. We are going to play quite a lot of gigs with him as well. That album is going to go out this year.

### **This is going to be on Frontiers again?**

No, that one is not. The first one was self-released I think and its gotten distributions from different labels.

### **When do you think we should expect the new Eclipse album?**

On the February of 2017.

### **Oh, that is a definite answer [en. Laughs]**

Yes yes, in a year. After the Ammunition album, the main focus is going to be on there. So, we got to put more than three months I think. I don't want to have that panic again [en. Laughs]. Actually, we have already three songs for the new Eclipse album, they are really really good.

### **Oh that is really great. Can't wait actually. Well, as you said, we haven't seen you in Greece. Would you like to play here and have you ever heard about the warmness of the greek metal heads?**

We would love to play In Greece. We have been offered to come a couple of times, actually we had to turn down a summer festival. You know, the weekend was not good for us, it was too much work for just one gig. We must do something in the future, more than one gig, maybe a couple. It is definitely one of the countries we need to visit – a country we WANT to visit.

**All right. I hope we will see you in Greece in the future and you have to have a taste of the craziness and the warmness of the Greek fans. I think I am pretty much done here, I don't want to tire you, you have to go back to work. If I forgot to ask you something or if there is something you want to add, please do so now.**

Not actually, the only thing I want to add, is a big thank you, to everyone who are interested and are listening to us. It is not the most popular genre in the world, but it is the most rewarding, it has the best fans in the world. It is a privilege to write music for those fans.

**Ok, take care, all the best in the future, thank you for your time and good luck with the Eurovision thingy.**

Take care too and thank you very much.





