



## INTERVIEW TO INGO SCHWICHTENBERG AND MICHAEL WEIKATH BURRN! Magazine, issue # 1990.08

by Naomi Ohno

What a beautiful day! As such words came out of my mouth involuntarily, the deep blue sky is pouring glaring and warm sun shining lavishly. Before Halloween manager, Mr. Harry Shmitt came, the photographer and I got out to the main street with our equipments, as it was too fine to wait for him in a hotel room.

We were sitting on a guardrail and basking in the sun devouringly.

Since I arrived at Hamburg from Japan, going around Europe, till the day I left, the weather was almost fine like this. I could not help feeling the blessing of God.

We are going to the Halloween's management office which is also his residence by car.

We are going through the heart of Hamburg and going up a winding road. When I once visited Hamburg in January, I also went to the house soon after they moved there.

It was winter when the sun went down at 4 o'clock. So I could not see the prairie which was thought to spread in front of the house with my eyes. This time can be said a perfect situation.

On the way to the house, we dropped in Ingo Schwichtenberg's flat and picked him up.

"Good to see you again! After one year, isn't it?". While having a chat, we reached the luxurious "mansion" on the small hill.

Getting into the house, we wait for Michael Weikath. About 30 minutes passed, Michael finally came.

Well, let's start our interview mainly about their new album after one year.

Please tell me what happened from the time when the Japan tour was over on last May, and you came back to Germany until now?

I : We were going to start recording a brand new album from last October 4th depending on the schedule in those days. We prepared it very well and actually everything was ready in October.

But our recording was postponed to December and then to January, February neglectfully.

As it was put off such a long time, I did not mind to go to Japan once again during the time (laugh).

M : And with the record company, Noise, an unexpected happening occurred.

We knew that our demand would not be fulfilled even if we tried to do our best. And we discussed with Noise, broke off the contract, and made a brand new contract with EMI. Though the problem was taken to court, the band won the lawsuit. So in the future our albums will be released by EMI except for America and Japan (in Japan their albums are released from Victor as before).

As we had such troubles with us, reasonably no work proceeded during that time. All is cleared up now and we soon start recording.

I heard the producer for your new album is Chris Tsangarides. Why did you choose him?

M : Rod Smallwood (their main manager) made us listen to a Bruce Dickinson's solo album and we started thinking that it was not so bad to ask Chris to be our producer and Nigel Green to mix the album. It could not be said that there was no problem with Tommy Hansen whom we had worked together. Chris seemed to have the similar music direction than Tommy. Besides we had troubles with the record company and troubles in the band as well. We had too much stress and the relationship among members became bad for a while. So we had the feeling that we wanted to renovate everything. Anyway we wanted to focus on making music.

I : One of the reasons why we chose Chris is that we are now in the time to work with some professional people.

M : Even he said so, it is not that the relationship with Tommy became worse. I asked him to play keyboard in one of my song for the new album. We know very well from our past experience that Tommy immediately understands what we want to do without going down to details. But I think that it's a good decision to choose Chris. He has dealt with many big bands so far, but he is humble, gives himself no airs, and he's really skilled. He is particular about his own sound and he makes variety of sounds in every album. We have heard his past reputation. We thought he would lead the band to a new possibility. We have many things we want to do. It is the ideal producer who makes the idea go forward. I think he is suited to the job.

Do you have any special reason you are going to record at "PUK STUDIO" in Denmark?

I : To be honest, we were going to use a studio in England. But the schedule did not fit us. So we change to "PUK". That is a good place having good studio equipments and accommodations.

How many songs are you going to record?

I : Let me see. 14 songs.

M : We already recorded songs for the B-side of singles at a small studio in Hamburg. I can tell you about this. The songs which are going to be included in the album are still a secret. (laugh)

I : The titles are (laughing) "Heavy Metal Hamsters" and "I'm Doing Fine Crazy Man".

M : And "Blue Suede Shoes", too. When we covered this song during a show in Japan, we played it really good. So we decided to record it. With Michael's "let's play!", we played it really hot (laugh). The songs for B-side are all crazy, but they have such a great quality that we could put them into the album. These are the songs that you recognize as "typically Helloween sound" when you listen to them.

I : As we were able to make such good B-side songs, it's sure that the album will be great.

You have picked up incidents in our society and environment problems for your songs so far. Is there any song which you were inspired by the Berlin Wall's fall?

M : "Happy Song" is the song in which I wrote the present circumstances summarily. I did not write directly but vaguely. What is happening in Europe now is wonderful, but on the other hand there is something uncertain about what will be going on in the future. It means that whether we will be able to bear the problems which were arisen for democratization. It will take huge amount of money in order to make

the standard of living of Eastern people, and of course people say that West Germany has enough finances to correspond for thatâ€¦ I don't think so! (laugh)

Who is the main song writer this time?

M : All of us. I wrote 4 songs, Roland wrote 4, Michael also wrote 4 and Markus wrote 3 songs.

I : Two songs of Markus became B-sides. We are going to use them as extra tracks or maybe in other ways for fear that the songs which are not included in the album are useless.

Well, I think Helloween is one of the most internationally active German bands.

What do you think of recent German heavy metal scene?

I : There are too many bandsâ€¦When I read magazines, about ten new bands make their debut per two weeks. So I'm coming to be confused what is going on (bitter smile).â€¦It is just before of a marketable explosion so fans also seem to be confused.

M : Everyone should better to reconsider from the beginning. The number of clone bands and copy bands is increasing. We want to play really unique and good music having that typical originality that will survive in the future rather than reaching platinum.

I : You know our copy bands? As they like us, their music is like us. We don't feel so bad, but they should pursue their own music. We are very proud that we have established our own style from the beginning. We have changed but I also think we always had our own style. As we have not thought about band models or copies, we have done what we liked to do very hard. That is good, I think. M : I can say clearly now that the next album will never be that "KEEPER OF THE SEVEN KEYS PART II" was. As you know, songs of "KEEPER II" were written at the time of "KEEPER I". As those songs were not put into a double record, they became two different albums. So when we made "KEEPER II", we were not so able to make progress as we expected. In a meaning of new album, we made it for the first time in three years.

Considering the term of three years, it's not strange that we made a completely different album, is it? Our new album will be filled with variety of rock sounds rather than a heavy metal album. We will put two ballad songs, rock n' roll, hard rockâ€¦ It looks fresh for fans.

I : You can listen to it with fun and it will be the album that never bore you.

M : I can say this is what we have wanted to do. There was something we were not able to play before and it means that we have grown up and have come to be able to play.â€¦Talking about myself personally, I know what I want to do now from my heart. I have not been able to be satisfied 100% with what I did for my own thing. But now I feel I am enjoying from my heart.

As the Wall between East and West Germany fell down, is it easier for you to tour in the east side?

I : Yes, we are going to have more shows in East Germany.

M : And East Europe is a big rock market. It is good for us to have the chance to do many shows like here and our records will be released.â€¦At first now, using one single currency is necessary and we have to bring our economy on the same level. To take a balance is the first aim. It is said that it will take more than 10 years but it has no meaning. It is ideal to accomplish within 5 years.

European countries, especially those which were once under the German occupation are afraid of a sort of "Unification of Germany", aren't they? Not only people who experienced wars but also even some young people are thinking soâ€¦

I : Maybe. They are afraid that German Empire will be back again. I can understand their feelings. But they don't need to be afraid. The present Germany is a European and conscientious country.

M : Besides the most democratic country. They may be afraid that Germany will take shares too much in all European markets. So the idea of "European United States" like EC is taking shape.

It should have been taken earlier. Anyway it has no meaning for Germany to conquer Europe.

And now the final question. Please tell me your current hope or ambition.

I : Let me seeâ€¦ I think that fans will like and understand songs of our next album as we do. Actually we don't care about the American market at all. It is good for us that Japanese fans will be pleased with the album. Japanese people really understand us.

M : Yes, I don't hope anything other than that. I know the next album has the chance to attract much more audience. I think the next album will be the one that many people hope, "the next Helloween will be like this" record. It is the happiest thing that we are able to do what we really want, and we hope fans will be happy.

I : I am looking forward to play it live. Before recording, I imagine how the audience will react when we play it live. I think that the tour will start from Japan. The next February or March, I am sure.

Many fans are also looking forward to the next album and the tour.

I : Please say hello to all our Japanese fans. I will thank them for all letters and presents.

M : I think Japanese fans are true fans. I hope they won't forget their heart forever.

Their past, which became so popular since "KEEPERS ERA" is likely to be forgotten.

But they have sure existed from a long ago and they must have grown up during three years since they made "KEEPER I" and "KEEPER II".

Through the experience of the member change, their new album whom which they took a new step forward is sure to be an effort having a significant meaning for them who jumped up on the top of the vigorous German heavy metal scene.

The b-side songs I listened to were surely speedy songs just like Helloween. But I involuntarily asked who was singing. There was a song that had a fresh and impressive vocal mainly using middle-range voice of Michael Kiske.â€¦Their unpredictable "growth" is hidden in their "new album" in a true sense.

We went outdoors for their photo session. The sunlight which is not going down is shining on the green surrounding the house. And they face to the camera blinded by the dazzling light. The recording will start in 3 weeks.

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