

JOHAN LANGQUIST - THE CASTLE – TNT Radio Rock, by José Ant Marroqui

First, congratulations on this fantastic and magical album, and thank you for taking the time to answer our questions.

Johan, with more than a month to go until the release of "Johan Langquist - The Castle," and after listening to the album several times, what are your feelings about these songs and how they might be received by your audience?

A lot of people have told me that they want to hear my songs and I'm not growing younger. I have a lot of music in my drawer and when I met Erik and we did a couple of songs together I realized now is the time to do it. I'm proud of what we did and even more proud of that we did it all on our own. Music is a matter of taste, but I hope that we've made something that others will like too.

After decades of experience, what finally motivated you to release a project entirely your own, like Johan Langquist The Castle?

It's been my dream for a long time but I haven't had the money to involve professionals. I met Erik a couple of years ago and he wanted to be a part of this. We decided to give it a shot and do it all by ourselves. A lot of work but here we are.

I think you've been developing some of the songs on The Castle for a long time. When did you decide to get serious about them and finish them?

When I met Erik and the way he plays. I have a feeling for all the instruments but I'm not a very good electric guitar player. Together we picked the ones we thought could fit together and tried to make them as good as possible.

For the recording, you surrounded yourself with excellent musicians such as: Fredrik Isaksson (bass), Stafen Englin (drums), and Emelie Lindquist (soprano), as well as guitarist Erik Henriksson, who I think has been a strong supporter of yours. To what extent has Erik influenced the final result of the album, and what did each of them contribute to the final sound?

Erik worked a lot with the guitars and the mix. We both knew what we were looking for and I think he did a great job. Unfortunately, Fredrik didn't have the time to put his bass on all the songs this time because of a long tour but hopefully on the next album. Stafen went through all the programmed drums to put his touch to it. Emelie was there from the beginning being Eriks girlfriend.

The album was initially released digitally in 2024, without a record label. What was that independent process like, and what changed when I Hate Records joined the project?

In the beginning my ambition was just to get the songs out digitally, of course we wanted more but just as a start. Then fortunately I had a call from Peter (I hate records) and he said he was interested to make both vinyl and CDs.

Listening to the album, it's impossible not to notice echoes of Black Sabbath—both the Tony Martin era and the Dio era—and even in different Dio bands, and some nods to Candlemass. But beyond the inevitable comparisons, do you think there are any influences on this first album that have truly left their mark on you and shaped the overall tone of the album?

Being born in the 60's I grew up with Black Sabbath, Judas Priest etc. I've always been a huge fan of heavy guitars and cool vocals. I guess that's the main reason why the songs maybe have a touch of that.

"Raw Energy" has that classic edge that immediately evokes the Dio era of Black Sabbath—in fact, I couldn't help but think of 'Mob Rules'. What's the story behind this song? Was it a kind of conscious homage to those influences, or did it just come naturally?

The song is about the powers we hold and sometimes even without knowing it. You feel something but you don't what it is or why. Sometimes it hurts and makes you feel sad, lost, and you do stupid things just to drain all your energy. The day you learn how handle the energy in a good way nothing becomes impossible.

"Revolution" has a crushing intensity, with heavy riffs and an almost ceremonial atmosphere. At times, it reminded me of the greatness of Judas Priest and Sabbath, but with a very epic tone of your own. What were you trying to convey with this song, and how does it fit into The Castle's sonic universe?

I had a picture of an arena in my head when I wrote it. I wanted something powerful, a simple but cool riff to make the whole place listen. It's a story about a young man doing his best but no one is listening, no one sees him.

Nowadays, many doom and heavy metal albums sound too polished or, at the other extreme, brutally extreme. In contrast, The Castle sounds authentic, raw, with that classic atmosphere that's sometimes missed. What led you to embrace this more classic, stripped-down approach?

You have to reach a certain level of perfection but we're only humans and if that shines through and what's most important the spirit of the song is right, that's good enough for me..

The album's lyrics touch on themes like anxiety, inner power, and the fragility of time... They're lyrics that touch on very personal things. Where do these themes come from?

Are they your own experiences or reflections of the world around you? Most of the time I write from a personal view, from what I see, feel and experiences.

You've mentioned that The Castle isn't just a studio project. Will it be the same lineup that recorded the album, or do you have other ideas?

Are there any concrete plans for tours or live performances yet? We'll try to find some time for rehearsing hopefully this fall but since we're in other bands as well it depends on the schedules.

Your career began with Jonah Quizz, a band that many current metalheads don't even know about. What remains of that young Johan in the Johan of today?

My passion for music is still here and hopefully I'm a bit wiser..

"Epicus Doomicus Metallicus" is considered one of the most important doom metal albums. In retrospect, what was it like being part of an album that defined a genre, and how do you see it almost four decades later?

I have realized how much it has meant to so many people and I'm very proud of being a part of that.

After so many years in the scene, what still drives you to write songs? What excites you today as a musician?

You are free to write whatever you want, and you learn a lot along the way. To meet the audience.

Finally, what does "entering the castle of dreams" mean to you? Is it an imaginary place, a creative refuge... or a call for us all to awaken something within us?

It's actually the name of the place/state I'm in writing music. A place where you can fulfill a dream whatever it is.
