

## **Interview with $\pi$ from EMPEIRIA – TNT Radio Rock, by Brujo**

From Germany comes Empeiria's debut album, a black metal offering that makes a strong debut with the album *The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis*. Today, we try to delve into the universe of this enigmatic project to better understand their sound, their vision, and what they truly seek to convey with this work.

**1. To begin: how do you feel about the album's release? What emotions does it leave you with seeing this first manifestation of Empeiria finally released?**

$\pi$ : Relief and excitement. „*The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis*“ is a project that has been part of us for a long, long time, occupying our thoughts, consuming our attention. We're stoked that we finally managed to materialize our vision and that it's being perceived very well.

**2. Empeiria means "the negation of the limit." How does this philosophical idea translate into your approach to black metal?**

$\pi$ : As it reads out. We refuse to let our creation be confined by genre conventions or any such limitations. We follow what feels right and suits the music. No boundaries, no limits.

**3. Being a relatively recent project, how and when did this collaboration between  $\pi$  and  $\eta$  come about? What prompted the need to create Empeiria at this time?**

$\pi$ : I'm unable to settle on a specific date or even year. The lyrical concept behind „*The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis*“ has been part of me for years and I've always felt compelled to bring it to life. When I began developing the concept and sketching the first arrangements, I regularly exchanged ideas with  $\eta$ , whom I've known for a long time. We discussed riffs, progressions, drum patterns, and vocal arrangements, which eventually led to both of us contributing equally to what ultimately became our debut record.

**4. The decision to remain anonymous today could be perceived as a convention rather than a statement. What does anonymity mean to you? Is it a way of disappearing or amplifying the message?**

$\pi$ : The latter. Empeiria is an artistic project - focused on creation, not on the creators behind it. We want our music to speak for itself, to immerse listeners in the experience and offer an escape from the mundane. That being said, we don't consider using pseudonyms to be anything unique. It is, as you mentioned, a convention, particularly in Black Metal.

**5. The album is steeped in 90s Scandinavian influences, as we can hear in tracks like "II," but it also includes its own elements that shape its unique identity. What references influenced this sonic direction?**

$\pi$ : Musically, late 80s, 90s and early 2000s Black Metal along with early to mid 90s Melodic Death Metal are our intersection. Since our musical influence is vast and versatile beyond that, I always find it difficult to reference specific bands. In general, we enjoy challenging ourselves, striving for intense and engaging arrangements, with a strong focus on carving out our own path.

**6. How do you approach songwriting as a duo? Who's in charge of what?**

π: The conceptual and lyrical approach is solely under my control. As before mentioned, everything beyond that is a collaborative process. Each one of us has specific strengths that we've tried to refine and deploy in a way that benefits the music.

**7. The album is divided into three emotional phases: guilt, confidence, and realization. Why this narrative structure, and what does the protagonist's journey represent?**

π: The chapterlike structure allowed us to focus on the emotions we wanted to convey through the music, enhancing its narrative meaning with its sonic equivalent.

The concept behind „The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis“ is a multilayered lyrical narrative divided into three basic layers of meaning.

A literal one, an adventure story that follows a protagonist as they fight their way through a horrid and hostile environment, endure several life-threatening challenges, and ultimately reach their destination, their lair of fulfillment.

The second layer blends the literal level with its mundane counterparts, namely doubt and guilt-inducing lapses, sins, or moments of personal weakness leading directly into the third, interpretative and personal layer.

The mundane representation of the interpretive level is designed to connect with the personal experiences of the listener, it can therefore be whatever you make of it.

**8. One of the most striking aspects of The Ascent: Scenes of Katharsis is the emotional intensity that runs through the entire album, something that is strongly evident from the first track, "I." How important is this emotional charge as a common thread throughout the album? Was it deliberate from the start, or did it emerge more instinctively during the creative process?**

π: For me, experiencing and creating music is an act deeply tied to your emotional state. Music only has value to me personally when it can stir a specific feeling, sparking the flame that makes you eager to dive in. Therefore, the emotional charge of our music is a crucial element.

**9. I mentioned "II" earlier, which stands out for its intensity and almost epic quality, with a remarkable variety of speeds and tempo changes. What were you trying to convey with this particular song? Was it intended as a kind of early climax within the album's emotional journey?**

π: Conceptual „VII“ is meant to be the climax of the record, both lyrically and emotionally, but „II“ is undoubtedly the song designed to capture the protagonist's most fragile emotional state. Guilt and doubt clouding their vision, rage inducing fear as their sole companion. There is only one way out: forward. The song is meant to capture the feeling of the inevitable departure required to progress.

**10. The album, at certain moments, as in the track "III," takes on the dimension of a kind of ritualistic opera within the universe of Black Metal, with an almost theatrical drama. Was this intentional, or were they seeking to create an almost ceremonial experience for the listener?**

π: Both in a way, I feel. Being a conceptual record, „The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis“ is

meant to be experienced in its entirety rather than fragmented, in order to convey the full picture. We sought to create an eerie, haunting atmosphere, enveloping the listener completely.

**11. "IV" seems to be a turning point, with children's chants that sound very eerie and some haunting violins at the end that add even more drama. I think it's one of the best tracks on the album. Could you tell us more about the process behind that song in particular? What are you trying to convey with these resources?**

π: „IV“ was a very challenging song to make, undergoing several severe revisions, especially of the pre-chorus, chorus and middle section. At one point, we nearly discarded it, but in the end, we're glad we persevered, as we both agree that it turned out to be a very strong track.

The middle section marks a crucial turning point in the song and the entire record. Musically, it opens the door for more intricate arrangements and layered melodies, while lyrically, it symbolizes the shift from a state of „doubt“ to one of „growing confidence“.

**12. "VII" marks a very particular close for The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis; it's like the culmination of the album's entire emotional journey: more than 15 minutes where acoustic atmospheres, medieval airs, almost ethereal female voices, melancholic violins, and a final return to the abyss of the rawest black metal converge. All of this seems channeling that idea of "existential realization" that runs through the album. What was it like shaping such an ambitious piece?**

π: You are right, „VII“ is the culmination of the emotional journey and, as mentioned before, meant to be the climax of the record, both lyrically and emotionally.

The creative process was heavily driven by η, who is phenomenal in arranging complex acoustic pieces. The writing of „VII“ spanned not month, but years, with several phases of creative reorientation and refinement along the way. It was a challenging process, but we are very satisfied with the outcome.

**13. The album is marked by a balance between rawness and controlled intensity. What role did Markus Stock play in achieving that balance during the recording and mixing?**

π: Markus' experience in crafting unique sounding Extreme Metal records played a crucial role during the recording process. Markus doesn't rely on anything preconfigured. We talked through our expectations and he quickly devised a setup that truly captured the essence of our songs.

**14. What was it like working with guest musicians like Maria del Campanile and Caroline Salmona, among others? Were you given creative freedom, or was everything predetermined by you?**

π: We thoroughly discussed the arrangements in advance to ensure we were aligned on our vision and the atmosphere we wanted to create. Some parts were prearranged, like the violin section in „IV“, while others were entirely improvised in the studio, such as basically Caroline's full input on „VII“.

Maria was even involved beforehand and played a key role in envisioning the vocal arrangements in „IV“ and especially „VII“. Since she is a highly skilled guitarist and very versatile, we invited her to record some leads.

We are deeply grateful for the contributions of not only Caroline and Maria, but also λ, μM and Markus Stock. All of our contributors enhanced our songs with the musical expression inherent in their playing.

**15. Vendetta Records has been a key platform for black metal projects with a defined artistic vision. How did the connection with the label come about? Were there other proposals?**

π: Vendetta Records was our partner of choice even before the recording process, due to their grounded, supportive approach to the underground and their impressive roster of bands, many of which we personally like a lot. The connection initially came about by chance through a contact we made during the recording process.

We're beyond stoked that we were able to partner with Vendetta Records, who have been incredibly supportive and amazing to work with right from the start.

**16. What do you think about the future of black metal in terms of experimentation and authenticity? Are there any bands that have surprised you in recent years?**

π: I believe there will always be bands that keep the genre alive by evolving its core traits through experimentation, avoiding clichés, and pursuing their own agenda.

That said, I feel that it's harder for those bands to establish themselves permanently. People tend to be fearful of anything new and diverse these days, sticking to familiar territory.

**17. What comes after "catharsis"? Is there a next chapter, or is The Ascent a closure in itself?**

π: You never know. I already have a concept for a new record in mind, and we're working on new music, but it's too early to get into specifics. Since we craft our music thoughtfully and aren't aiming to replicate „The Ascent: Szenen der Katharsis“, it will most likely take a few years before we'll ascend again.

**18. What plans do you have for the future of Empeiria? Do you see the possibility of taking this work live, or do you prefer the project to reside exclusively in the studio?**

π: We're not ruling out playing live in the future, but at the moment, we don't have any concrete plans to do so. We're focusing our efforts on creative progression, closing this first chapter, and heading for new ground to explore.

**19. Finally, if you could leave us with just one image: Or the feeling the listener gets after listening to the entire album, what would it be?**

π: Realization. A deeper understanding of one's strengths and goals, the things that truly matter, and an appreciation for everything that lies behind, but more importantly, everything that lies ahead.

The illustration created by Misanthropic Art for our song „VII“ perfectly embodies that feeling for me.

**20. Thank you very much for your time, and congratulations on this excellent debut.**

$\pi$ : Thank you for the kind words and for having us.