

**COR SCORPII – Interview TNT Radio Rock / José Antonio Marroqui “Brujo”
Thomas Øvstedal**

Sognefjord Orange Fest celebrates the legacy of Windir, a band that lives on the memories of many of us. How does it feel for you to participate in a festival that pays tribute to such a significant legacy?

It feels great to be able to be part of such an event. It is no secret that Windir was an important element in our conception. We have spoken often of this in the past, and it is a heritage that we are proud to carry forth.

It's been over ten years since you last played outside Norway, and this will be your first visit to Spain. Why now? Do you feel it's the right time to return to the international scene through such a significant festival?

We have been looking forward to this for such a long time. It has been way too long since our last adventure abroad, and we have also never played in Spain. It feels like the right thing to do at this point.

Sognefjord Orange Fest isn't just any festival: it brings together bands deeply connected to Windir's legacy, and you perhaps have the most direct link to it. What's this experience like? Is it an emotional reunion with history?

If you have listened to our music and read our lyrics, you are well aware that emotions are the foundation of our artistic output. We were possibly the first band of those following Windir who continued with a similar musical style. Although musically we put an emphasis on classical elements rather than folk-tones, the philosophy in the song writing is probably pretty close.

You'll be playing an 80-minute set... which isn't exactly typical for festivals. What kind of set are you preparing for this occasion? Will it include unreleased material, rarities, collaborations... or something unexpected?

I'm really excited, but also nervous about such a long set. I give everything I have on the stage, and the way I sing is very exhausting. I think we will include a combination of song that we have played before, some we have not played in a long time, and the rest will be revealed from the stage.

It's been announced that many of the bands will be performing a Windir cover. Can we expect something special from you?

Maybe... we hold the cards close for now ☺

Tomas Myklebust shares lineup with Mistur (also included on the bill). What's that dynamic like between sister bands? Does sharing musicians unite you creatively, or is there also room for healthy sound competition?

The dynamic is great. We do not compete in that sense. But for my part I get really inspired when we have friends like that who are absolute stellar musicians and create fantastic music. It makes you want to deliver your best as well! I think maybe we push and inspire each other. We have such a close history with Mistur, both with the shared members and also just the way we used to hang out together in the beginning. I even did test vocals for their demo, not a well-known fact.

Let's talk about you, for those who don't know you yet. Cor Scorpium was born from the ashes of a scene that has left its mark on the history of Norwegian metal. What was the initial spark back in 2004? How did everything start? What vision did you have when you started, and how has it evolved over the years?

The spark was that Gaute wanted to try out some songs that he had written. This was before Windir came to an end. We started jamming on the songs, trying out different things, and having a lot of fun with it. When Windir came to such a devastating and tragic end, we spent some time before deciding to put a proper band together.

The vision was to do something honest, and true to what we wanted. We were inspired by the same bands that inspired Windir, but me and Gaute also shared a love of classical music. This became an element that was a natural part of our sound, and I think that we incorporated this in a way that was different from other bands.

Our vision has never changed. We stay true to that essence. The music comes to us in that way and this also explains why we spend so very long creating the album

The connection with Windir is evident and emotional, but Cor Scorpium isn't a tribute band. What was the motivation behind creating a project that takes that heritage and transforms it into something new?

I think the answer to the previous question answers this as well.

Many fans consider Cor Scorpium to be the purest bearers of "Sognametal," that characteristic sound of Sogndal. How do you define that label? Is it a musical style, a feeling, a philosophy... or all of the above? Having members who were in Windir inevitably places Cor Scorpium in the spotlight for those seeking that continuity. Is this an expectation that limits you, or is it territory you've already embraced as your own?

Thank you! I guess Sognametal has become a musical subgenre, much like black metal, death metal, funeral doom and all the other metal genres. It has certain musical elements that combined with a certain melancholia makes it what it is. In the beginning I think we, from the area, were the standard bearers of it. But now I think we can hear elements of it in bands from many places.

We have most definitely embraced the label and consider it an honour to be mentioned in the same breath as Windir. We create the music that we want to create, and we do not take that legacy into account in the creation of the music.

Musically, Cor Scorpii has a distinct identity, strongly marked by melancholy, epic scope, and the beauty of tragedy. How do you define your sound aesthetic and how do you develop it in the songwriting process?

I think you explained it pretty well right there. The melancholy and sadness, with a touch of anger and rage, is pretty much the foundation. I can not speak for the particulars in the songwriting, as it is very much a solitary process for us. The band is presented with an almost finished musical product and then we shape it with each of our particular skill set.

Your songs are imbued with emotional complexity and lyrical depth. What is your approach to writing lyrics?

I have different approaches to writing lyrics. Sometimes they start as something I have written independently, but most of the time I write from the emotion I get while listening to the demos of the music. I write from the heart. Either by bringing back emotions and experiences I have had, or by imagining a story that I want to tell. I usually set out to say something specific, but I always try to make it into something universal that the listener can fill with their own thoughts and ideas.

Monument was Cor Scorpii's first step, following the demo Attergangar, and for many fans it became an instant classic within melodic black metal. What memories do you have of that recording and release process? What did that album mean to you at the time?

I have mostly fond memories of that time. We spent a lot of time tweaking on things before recording it. And it was my first proper recording experience. We had great fun in the rehearsals and during recording. Staying at Toproom studios was really fun and Børge was great to work with.

The release process was a different matter entirely. Our first label collapsed during the first weeks of release and we lost all momentum. The orders kept coming, due to great reviews, but the label did not send out the copies to the stores. This was at a time when people still bought CDs. After a time we were lucky enough to get a licensing deal with our friends in Dark Essence, who helped us out in a difficult time. But we lost a lot of momentum and I honestly think this impacted the future of the band. We lost a lot of focus and drive, and in a way forced us to do things a bit differently going forward.

Some tracks from Monument continue to appear in your live shows, even after so many years. Are there any songs from that album that have become essential? If we compare Monument with Ruin, your second album, there's a clear evolution in both sound and atmosphere. Ruin sounds like a statement of intent: more somber, more introspective, and

less tied to the classic black metal mold. Looking back, what elements of that first album do you feel remain relevant in your current approach, and which have you consciously left behind?

It is really difficult for me to compare the albums. The process was completely different the second time around. We no longer lived in the same area, so rehearsals were sporadic and things took longer. But the time we spent on Ruin actually led to a more complex and complete album. The songs had time to mature and to evolve. We were also getting older and had formed families. So I guess the stakes in life were higher. It is easier to actually mean what we say as we get older.

Ruin was very well received by critics and fans, but it was also a demanding album. How did the public react? Were you surprised by anything about that reception?

We have never aimed to be a straight forward band. We have repeating structures and melodic layers. We have long compositions. We don't plan for it, it is just the way the songs turn out. We were very happy for the great reviews and for the patient fans. Although that album was done solely for ourselves. We just had to finish such a massive project. It was really a work of blood, sweat and tears...

After Ruin in 2018, there hasn't been a new release, and ten years passed between Ruin and the previous one. Where are you at with respect to the anticipated arrival of a third album? Can you give us a hint if there's new material on the way? Will we be lucky enough to hear something for the first time during the show in Spain?

Well. It is difficult to say. We have a few songs in the pipeline, but the band takes the backseat in our lives. It is what you would call a pleasure project, that we do when we have the time and energy for it. No timeline is set and I've been stupid enough to promise stuff in the past, so I won't do that again. We'll just all have to wait and see.

Black metal has mutated and expanded in many directions in the last decade. Where does Cor Scorpii fit in today within that evolution? Do you feel an affinity with any new trends, or do you defend your aesthetic without compromise?

The short answer is that we don't fit in with today's music and scene. Right now there is a lot of avantgarde and experimental stuff going on. I like a lot of those things personally, but we don't do that kind of thing. But I still think there is room for a band like us. We might fill a void? When I write and arrange vocals for Cor Scorpii, I know what vibe I am going for. And I think that is true for the rest of the guys as well.

What is life like for a band like Cor Scorpii today? With parallel careers, sister bands, and a scene that has changed so much, what motivates you to keep creating and playing?

Well, all of us now have day jobs and careers, some of us have families and children, so that naturally forces us to think differently about how we go about playing in a band as well. It affects our ambitions, but I do not think it affects how we think about the quality of the music. In a way we are not affected as much by the business side of things or the way the scene changes. We do our own thing with no regard as to what is popular and algorithmically "clever". I guess there are both an upside and a downside to that, but at least the music is 100% honest.

I don't want to speak for everyone, but I think a lot of our motivation lies in the love for music and the connection between us as a band. We really enjoy playing and creating things together.

Getting to play shows is a great thing, and something we have done little of the last few years. We would love to play more.

At this upcoming concert in Spain, is there anything you particularly want to convey to the audience, given the context of the festival? Will it be a more emotional, more introspective, or more ferocious set?

It will be great to be among fans of the same style of music. To share that will be a great experience. We are basically just fans of the music ourselves, so it is going to be a lot of fun. Considering this festival is built around that idea, I think it will be a very intense vibe, in a positive sense!

Considering that Cor Scorpii was born from a scene marked by the loss of Valfar and the dissolution of Windir, how does it feel to be so directly connected to that history on stage today?

I think we have all thought about that connection at some point, and still do, and I think it is a heritage that we are proud to carry forward. But as previously stated, we are something of a different animal altogether. But to go on stage with these bands, assembled under a common "banner", I think it will be a highlight of our career.

If this festival represents a new chapter for Cor Scorpii, what do you want people to remember from this moment? What message do you want to leave with those who see you for the first time?

I hope that the audience can see that this is something that we do because we love it. And that they let themselves be carried away by the melodies and join us in kicking ass that night in February!

One final question: if you could define Cor Scorpii in a single word, what would it be and why?

I usually hate these kinds of questions, because I don't really want to sink into such a narrow definition. We are way more than that. But to honour this particular event, let's just say that we are Sognametal!

Thank you so much for your time. See you in Valencia!