FERNDAL – Interview with TNT Radio Rock, by Brujo

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Answers by Sorathiel (Vocalist) and Lestaya (Violoncello)

First of all, welcome again to TNT Radio. It's a pleasure to have you back, especially with a new album like this one.

Pleasure!

1. The last time we spoke, you were preparing for your performance at the Sognefjord Orange Fest, an experience that seemed particularly appealing to a band like FERNDAL due to its musical connection with Norwegian black metal. Now that the festival is over, how do you remember those days, and what were your feelings about playing in that environment?

Sorathiel: Honestly, that was one of the most outstanding live experiences we have ever had. First show outside Germany, one of the first shows with our new lineup, performing a WINDIR cover song alongside former members of this legendary band, such a dedicated audience… I think a lot of people there noticed that it was something special. And we made some really good friends along that festival.

2. In that interview, Azares told us that you had already recorded a new album and assured us that it represented a new milestone for FERNDAL. Now that we've been able to listen to Asuras, I'd like to revisit his words. Why did you consider this album to represent such an important step forward for the band? What have you achieved with it that you hadn't reached on your previous albums?

Lestaya: I'm pretty sure Azares sees it that way, haha. It's our first album with him on drums... No, seriously, I see it exactly the same way. I think there are several aspects to it. For one thing, the songwriting is more mature. That just comes with personal growth and experience. It's not that I think any of the songs on either of the first two albums are bad; I'm absolutely convinced of the quality of those albums. But “Asuras” features all the compositional elements we've incorporated so far, but in a more interwoven way. I would go so far as to say that “Asuras” is the album on which the band found its identity.

I mean that both musically and personally. With Azares, we hit the jackpot, and even though Eskaton wasn't in the studio with us, it was already clear at the time of the recording that he would be our new guitarist. The lineup is just right in every way.

3. Seven years have passed since the release of your sophomore album Singularitäten, although we know that Asuras was recorded in 2024. That's a considerable delay between two albums. How did the new material develop during those years, and what circumstances explain the long gap between the two releases?

Sorathiel: That gap was not about a lack of musical inspiration at least. There were certainly a few things coming together: Changes in our lineup, changes in our lives, a certain pandemic that made it difficult during that time to run a band with members spread through different places… But we also took our time and were not in a rush. I think at the end, this slower period

was beneficial for the band to refocus and now we are back with full strength and commitment.

4. After listening to Asuras, I have the feeling that I'm listening to FERNDAL's most aggressive and extreme album to date. It's not just about speed, but also the power of the riffs, the density of certain passages, and particularly the harsh vocal performance. Was it your intention to take the band's sound into more extreme territory, or was it something that emerged naturally during the songwriting process?

Sorathiel: That was less an intentional choice of changing our style than a result of the things we wanted to express with our songs. I already spoke about the …let's say turbulent times the band went though in the years after Singularitäten – these times might have had a certain impact on our views and attitude. Also, I think that besides the songwriting and performance, also the dense sound of the production adds to the harder tone of this album.

5. The cello has always been an essential part of your identity, but in Asuras, I was particularly struck by its ability to bring darkness. The cello melodies don't just introduce classical or melancholic elements: they reinforce the somber character of the compositions, even in the most aggressive moments. Has your way of working with this instrument changed? Were you looking to give it a different prominence on this album?

Lestaya: It's interesting that you see it that way. I think the opposite was actually the case—we didn't worry nearly as much about what role the cello might play in this part; we just used it however it sounded right to us. That might be a result of experience; our goal has always been to simply integrate the cello as another instrument, with the full range of possibilities it offers. Here, too, I'd say: This time, we've found a natural way to deal with it without overthinking it.

6. Another aspect I liked is how you handle contrasts. We find fast, violent passages that lead into much denser developments, with marked rhythms and dark melodies, without the songs losing intensity. You also alternate extreme vocals with clean registers. How do you work these transitions to maintain the power of the compositions without constantly relying on speed?

Sorathiel: Most things in life do not have only one dimension and so does our music. Those contrasts and interchanging moods that you describe are something that you find in classical compositions. In metal or generally popular music, you find often a strong focus on one single aspect – raw, melodic, atmospheric, epic, cool, romantic, humoristic etc. Of course, we also concentrate on certain aspects but the development between them is also part of our expression.

7. "Dritte Vollkommenheit" is one of my favorite songs on the album. It begins with quite raw riffs and develops into fast, aggressive passages, but then slows down to introduce a much darker, almost melancholic atmosphere, where the cello takes center stage. I think it's a composition that encapsulates many of the characteristics of this new FERNDAL moment. How did this track come about, and what were you aiming for with such pronounced shifts between aggression and melancholy?

Lestaya: I'm glad to hear that! I like the song, too. It's the first song I've ever written without having any idea what it was about—purely from a musical perspective. Maybe that's why it's so musically diverse—because I didn't have a specific mood or theme in mind when I was writing

it. Just a certain attitude, a feeling. That's why it's hard for me to tell you what my goal was—the music itself was my goal. Incidentally, it's also the first song for which I handed off the lyric-writing to someone else for the reason mentioned above. I had nothing to say about the music. The same goes for "Interludium," by the way—there couldn't be any lyrics for it—there's nothing to say about the music in words. For "Dritte Volkommenheit," though, I was very glad that Azares took over the lyrics. I usually find it hard to let go of parts of my artistic work, but when the first draft of "Azares" came along, I realized that it had taken up—almost exactly—a theme I'd written about before, namely in "Weltenbrände". In terms of subject matter, these are essentially the same songs, put into words by different people.

8. I also want to focus on "Herr der Weisheit," another favorite of mine. Here I find a more evident presence of your classical influences, especially in the central piano passage, which leads to an almost epic ending, with deep choruses and melancholic vocals. How did you construct this composition, and what significance does this final development hold for you? Do you consider it to represent one of the most complete expressions of your combination of classical music and extreme metal?

Sorathiel: Not sure about that. There are many bands who combine (extreme) metal with classical, mostly symphonic influences. What you can say about our style – an this is something we may have in common with the style of some bands from Sognefjord – is that our classical influences are not necessarily symphonic. But about this song, you may be right to some extent. The piano part you mention actually was there first and the rest of the song was built around that. And the ending part of it was just like "forget about genres, now take all of this."

9. For the recording of Asuras, you worked with Markus Stock at Studio E. The album has a powerful sound, yet it allows you to distinguish the different instruments, something especially important when distorted guitars, cello, and other classical elements coexist. What were you aiming to achieve with the production, and what role did Markus play in defining the final result?

Lestaya: We'd actually decided to work with Markus quite a while ago. Abarus knows him from his recordings with Eis; we once played a show in Münster with Markus's band, Sun of the Sleepless, and at one point I filled in for three gigs on a project that was touring with one of Markus's other bands, The Vision Bleak. Markus is just an incredibly good producer, so it was a no-brainer that we'd do this. We talked at length with Markus about our vision—what kinds of productions we like, what kind of sound we had in mind—and then left it up to Markus to take all those ideas and craft something that came closest to what we envisioned and that actually worked. You can't just say, "Drum sound from this album, guitars from that album, and then this and that," and expect something good to come of it. After the first mix, we made a few more requests. Markus explained why he was reluctant to do that—and two weeks later, I had to call Markus and ask him to remove our requested changes because the result wasn't what we had envisioned. But he took it pretty well :-D What I've learned: If you have a good producer, just trust him.

10. Joris van Gelre, known for his work with Bezweering and Nodfyr, also participates on this album. How did this collaboration come about, and what led you to believe that his voice could bring something different to the compositions?

Lestaya: I knew Joris from our work with Horn; we've both performed there several times as guest musicians. Anyone familiar with Joris's voice knows it's unmistakable, epic, and sublime—and on top of that, he's just a great guy! There really wasn't anyone else who could have sung the part he sang. Another important factor for me was that I knew he could capture the song's underlying mood—that deep melancholy that runs through the entire song—and that it should be reflected in his voice.

11. FERNDAL combines musicians who are part of the band's history with more recent additions. How has the current lineup influenced the composition of Asuras? Have there been any significant changes in your working methods compared to the first two albums?

Sorathiel: Yes and no. The composition of our songs was pretty much ever done by Lestaya and me in advance. But the others of course contributed to the development the songs. Among other things, our drummer Azares contributed his dynamic percussion style as well as some lyrics and Abarus his legendary pinch harmonics and the great guitar solo in Asuras. Our new guitarist Eskaton did only join us after completion of the album, but he will of course have an influence on the live presentation of these songs and on the band's development since he is 100% FERNDAL.

12. The album addresses manipulation, the allure of power, ideologies, and the progressive loss of individual will. These are issues that directly affect human behavior and our relationship with certain authority figures. What led you to develop this concept, and to what extent does it stem from a reflection on contemporary society?

Lestaya: The theme of "humanity" has run through all our lyrics since our first album. On that first album, the focus was more on an internal perspective; now we're interested in the full range of motivations that people have. Since we deal intensively with what's going on socially and politically—let's be honest, withdrawing from society only really works if I'm living somewhere as a hermit in the woods; anything else is just a facade—we're right in the thick of it, whether we like it or not—so of course that has an impact.

Within the limits of their intellectual capacity, every person is fundamentally convinced that THEY are the ones who understand things, see through them, and hold a logical and/or moral standpoint—and any deviations from this can only be attributed to the lack of intelligence on the part of others. You'll most likely hardly find anyone who says to themselves, "I'm sorry, I can't wrap my head around this—it's too complex for me—so I'll leave this decision to others who are smarter than I am." If they do, they're probably smarter than you, haha. And, of course, this has absolutely nothing to do with a person's actual intelligence, education, or background knowledge. That's just how people are. This is not a plea to remain passive; on the contrary, we have every means at our disposal to counteract anything we find objectionable in an area of our choosing—but by "objectionable," I don't mean "I don't like it," but rather "This development is heading in a direction that, in the long run, will do more harm than good to humanity." Most people are still at the stage where they think, "This process feels bad because I'd have to change my habits, and that feels overwhelming to me."

As you can see, this topic interests me way beyond just music, haha. I need to stop at this point.

13. The term Asuras originates from the religious traditions of India, where it appears associated with different figures and meanings. Why did you choose this name in particular?

What do the asuras represent within the album's conceptual universe, and what relationship do you establish between these figures and the darker aspects of human nature?

Sorathiel: Well, we have borrowed some aspects from the religious, or, let's say mythological term but in our concept, we gave it an own meaning. We refer to them as sentient forces which impersonate the manipulative power and external influence on the human will you have mentioned before. We thought it was quite fitting to represent this album which has some kind of focus on these aspects. However, one reason we chose the term as a title is that the album contains both English and German lyrics and this term comes from neither of these languages and is therefore somehow neutral.

14. Reading the lyrics, I find a recurring idea: human beings can end up collaborating in their own destruction, surrendering their freedom to those who promise to offer them power, security, or answers. I'm particularly interested in this contradiction. Do you consider that the need to believe and to belong to something can become one of our greatest weaknesses?

Sorathiel: Definitely, that's one aspect of it. There are plenty of opportunities in life for people to fuck things up and remain trapped in their pathetic existence, or even make it worse. Each song on Asuras explores a different aspect of this. This is also reflected in the different forms of musical expression: there is anger at people's stupidity and their inability to recognise what is happening to them, euphoria and delusion in the face of opportunities for change, and melancholy over the failure to seize them. As pessimistic as this may sound, the outcome remains open. Ultimately, it is up to each individual how they deal with it.

15. In "Mitternachtssonnen," the final track, we find images of desolate landscapes, ice, fire, and mountains, but also a sense of serenity that contrasts with the oppressive nature of much of the album. Does this ending represent a liberation from the forces that dominate the concept of Asuras, or does it have a different interpretation?

Lestaya: I don't know if you've ever been to Iceland—or, more specifically, to the Icelandic highlands. It's a deeply hostile environment. Yet, surprisingly, I always feel extremely alive there—perhaps precisely because it's so hostile. There's an Icelandic song called "Á Sprengisandi"; give it a listen. Great song—"Mitternachtssonnen" is based a little on this song, not musically, just in terms of the mood. At the end of the day, it's about the feeling I get every time I have to leave the Icelandic highlands. Which is a bit of a contrast to the Icelandic song—if you'd like to read the lyrics sometime.

16. In your presentation, you speak of artistic independence, sincerity, and an aesthetic of cold elegance. After three albums, do you feel that FERNDAL has finally achieved the musical identity you were seeking from the beginning, or do you still see your sound as open to further transformations?

Sorathiel: That's what we also noticed when taking one step back and looking at the work once it was finished. I feel like the core identity of what FERNDAL is, has remained the same throughout the albums, but on Asuras, the sound has reached a mature level. Same, but different, but still same… I think that we now reached a point where the sound is where we wanted it to be from the beginning on, but of course you can never know what further developments will bring.

17. About the album artwork, it resembles to me a pack of downwalking spirits surrounding a fire: what does it mean exactly and who was the mind/artist behind it?

Lestaya: The artwork is by Mosaeye Art, a Russian artist. Originally, we wanted to have the same artist who painted the *Singularitäten” cover work on this, but unfortunately she wasn't available at the time. As for the meaning: we're more concerned with the overall atmosphere. But of course, you can also assign meaning to the spirits as driving forces and the flame as human reasoning—we just never intended it to be quite that specific.

18. Finally, Asuras will be released on December 4th. What are your plans for bringing these new compositions to the stage in 2027? Can we expect more live performances, and is there any chance of seeing you in Spain again?

Lestaya: We have a few gigs planned for the near future, yes. One the day after the release in Switzerland, then a few in Germany—and we’d be absolutely thrilled if our tour took us back to Spain, but there’s nothing planned in that direction at the moment.

19. Thank you very much for your time, and congratulations on Asuras. If there's anything you feel we haven't covered, now's the time…

Thank you very much for the thought-provoking questions! We're always happy when someone takes the time to really delve into our music and lyrics.