

METAL GHOST

“1“

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“It’s very different, of course, if you start a new band in your mid-forties or in your mid-twenties. You just know a lot more, have gone through a lot more, are handling things in a more serene way.

One thing is absolutely the same, though: this rush of euphoria and the desire to do something that is meaningful, that is valuable, and special. We felt this euphoria when we started Metal Ghost and just let things flow. During our first rehearsals, Heike and I were just as overwhelmed as two decades earlier when we started 18th Dye.”

Piet Breinholm Bendtsen, July 2013

That the **Berlin-based bass player Heike Marie Rädiker** and the **Copenhagen-based drummer Piet Breinholm Bendtsen** would ever be playing together again wasn’t necessarily in the cards. After all, it was over two decades ago that they founded **18th Dye**, together with guitarist Sebastian Büttrich. The indie and noise band were wantonly underestimated in their native land, eking out a living as a best-kept secret. Simultaneously, abroad, especially in the UK and the USA, they were hailed as the creative vanguards of a self-determined noise rock scene with a marked DIY touch. During their first incarnation between 1991 to 1999, they published two definitive trendsetting albums in the tradition of Sonic Youth and Velvet Underground; the second album **“Tribute To A Bus“** even became an indie hit not least thanks to the grandiose brute force production of noise guru Steve Albini. They toured with genre colleagues like Yo La Tengo, Stereolab, and The Notwist, and were invited thrice by the great John Peel to his BBC “Peel Sessions” only to break up eventually. And only to get back together again in 2005, and deliver another wonderfully archaic noise rocky album in 2008 called **“Amorine Queen”**, widely noted in that particular music scene.

The beginning of 2010 was also the definite end for **18th Dye**. On their homepage they wrote: “We are no longer able to write music together, be creative, and see ourselves as a band. Therefore, we have decided to stop at this point.” Another indie legend, which was continuously not given its due, seemed to be gone for good. “You couldn’t accuse us of not having tried hard enough”, **Piet Bendtsen** sums this up three years later. “Relations were always strained, but some of the tension was quite welcome because it pushed us creatively. Other feelings of tensions were self-destructive and we just had to get rid of that. It was way overdue.”

After taking a longer hiatus from music and from his former band mates, Piet visited Berlin and met up with Heike – after all, they’d been partners in music for over twenty years and a couple for a long time. Instead of reminiscing over old times while nursing a beer they simply went into a rehearsal room, started playing and “out of thin air just a few hours later we had written the first two songs. We were surprised ourselves by how much potential our collaboration had. We didn’t spend even one second talking about what we wanted to do – we just did it.” And before it had even registered with them, **Metal Ghost** was born.

You may assume that **Metal Ghost** is a continuation of **18th Dye**, sans the guitars. But that’s humbug: this band is something completely novel, for its two major players, and even more so for



the audience. “With **18th Dye**, almost all songs were penned by Sebastian”, explains Piet, “and we just elaborated on these basic ideas. Now with **Metal Ghost**, we are both writing the music, each in our style. Because the originators are different, the music is also.” In addition, they naturally developed the way they played and diversified over the years. Add to that fresh impulses and inspirations “plus the music landscape that has changed completely”, explains Piet. “Then, we didn’t have the mash-up of various styles and modules which now is completely natural. We are like magpies looking for the most diverse styles, creating something truly unique in the course.”

Because the songs of **Metal Ghost** are danceable as well as confrontational, loud as well as minimalist, intentionally dirty as well as precise and vigorously played, equally oppressive and melody-infatuated – and everything in between. There are moments that pull you over with their strong yet idiosyncratic harmonies only to snub your ears with a juicy noise whip one instant later. Add to that the vocals of both – with Heike’s voice in the foreground most of the time – and you get a sound that is at once totally in tune with the current minimal aesthetics of a bass-drums duo and yet totally individual. It had not been, says Piet, “our objective to mark us out from other successful duos like Death From Above 1979, The White Stripes, or The Black Keys. That was really more of a by-product. But it’s good, the way it is, because the further we move away from these bands, the more it becomes obvious that we only listen to our own instincts, doing just what comes intuitively to us.”

The same way they develop songs together, they also write lyrics together, which also, says Piet, is a process of two antipodes bumping into each other meeting in a homogenous middle eventually. “While Heike is an exceptional story-teller, I am more the type who uses words to paint sounds, not unlike abstract poetry. On principle, these approaches should be opposites but their combination creates something that is 100 percent us.” As with the Grooves, the extremely melody-driven bass lines - says Piet: “You can only have a duo like that if you have a bass-player who thinks and plays in harmonies, which is Heike’s forte” – and the inherently consistent compositions. And most of all the versatility of the album: while as a whole it is highly consistent, each of the ten songs has its own identity.

Parts of the album were recorded in 2010 with Kenneth Arndersen in Aarhus (Denmark), and the remaining songs of “**1**” were recorded in June 2011 with Thomas Maringer at the Clouds Hill Studio in Hamburg which is where the band ultimately found itself, says Piet who thinks this may have been down to the location as well. “The vibes here are like they used to be, in the heydays of the music industry. They treat musicians fantastically well, provide you with the best recording quality, and give you a team that is only about the music.” Now, the release of “**1**” is slated for October, followed by another hard slog through live clubs, exactly the kind of slog that eventually saw **18th Dye** wearing itself out twice.

How will they cope differently? “Well, for one Heike and I will keep our separate residences in Berlin and Copenhagen. This complicates things from an organizational perspective but it ensures we will only meet when it’s about music. We also hope that we have learned a bit in the past two decades. We should now be able to see conflicts before they happen – and deal with them differently. Also, now it’s just the two of us which means there is one opinion less for or against a decision,” adds Piet, laughingly. And at the end of the day, **Metal Ghost** embodies a completely new take, a fresh sound, a new baby. “Even if we’ve known each other for such a long time: This feels like a true fresh start for both of us”, explains Piet. Once you listen to “**1**”, you’ll believe this instantly.

