

# SKOPTICAL MINDS

## watch your back

Your I had the pleasure of reviewing Skeptical Minds newest album "Khârôn" and thought it was time to get to know the band.

Join me with my interview with Michel.

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

How are you and the rest of "Skeptical Minds"?

Hi ! We are full busy since the release but we are all very good and fine !

I am brand new to "Skeptical Minds", although you have been on the music scene for many years. Please can you introduce yourselves and your roles in the band for anyone who may also be discovering you for the first time?

Of course. Skeptical Minds is a Belgian band created in 2002. Our music combines 3 main ingredients which are : female melodic voice, electric guitars and electro. Our songs are mostly sad, dark or aggressive. Actually, we are 4 in the band :

Karolina Pacan : Vocals

Benjamin Lazzano : Drums

Adrien Josson : Bass

Michel Stiakakis : Guitars and electro

We performed more than 300 concerts since the beginning and I think that seeing Skeptical Minds on stage is always a good moment for the audience and for us. The contact we have with our fans is just incredible. Each concert is a great time. We'll be back on stage begin of may and we can't wait to be back !



I'll delve straight in to the new album "Khârôn", by going a little backwards. "Khârôn" is the second album in a trilogy series "Omega Thanatos" what inspired you to write the series?

Since more than 15 years, we had in mind to make an album with a comicbook. In 2015, we released the first part of the trilogy : OMEGA THANATOS indeed. The story came quite easily because our songs always speak about women who had some experiences in life... mostly sad, dark or aggressive, like I said above. In fact, we always wondered how are people behind the masks we see daily. And we started to imagine different destinies... but we also knew that those things happen in the real life... As Skeptical people, we try to see behind the appearances and when we see what people hide, it's always very special...

For this trilogy, we started from a girl who had a dream. A dream where she sees clearly that she will die very soon. This premonition will impact her life, decisions until she dies, at the end of the first episode. The question was : If we have such dream, are things already written or do we provoke that death by ourselves once we think we cannot escape? What if..... ? many questions can come after that.



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In the second episode, we wanted to give a sense to that premonition and that death. That's where KARON appears. Kharon is inspired by Greek mythology and he's the boatman who leads the dead souls to the underworld, where Thanatos is hidden. In fact Kharon planned all this. The protagonist who died in the first episode was chosen by Kharon to help him in his mission.

The rest, I'll let you discover on CD and in the comic book that will come soon.

Was the accompanying comic book always part of the album trilogy or did the idea come along after?

Yes, the idea was, from the beginning, to tell the same story in two different ways. Music and visual.

I felt that when I listened to "Khârôn" it was like a story. Was it intended to take the listener on a journey?

Yes, indeed, the album is written like the soundtrack of the comic book. We really tried, as you said, to take the listener on a journey. The 3 parts of the trilogy will find place in 3 different worlds. That's why the ambiances of the songs will be also different. OMEGA THANATOS happened on earth. KHARON is between our world and the realm of the dead. Where the souls travel to the other world. That's where KHARON lives (if I can say so). The songs are mostly mid tempo, heavy, dark. The vocals are very melodic, hypnotizing, like in a dream... We'll see after we die if we had a good guess or not haha. The third album will happen in the underworld. Then, for sure, the songs will be deadily, dark and aggressive.

What is your creative process like for writing music? Does one of you write lyrics, one music, do you do your own individual parts?

Before, it was like you say. Classic way. Since we work with a comic book on the side, the music has to fit with the visual. We first make a story board with Alain Poncelet (THE artist, our artwork man) and then, when we have the sketches, we have a good idea of what the visual will look like. Then, we compose around that. Usually, you try to find melodies, chords, etc...

Here, you have to translate emotions, ambiances, into music. It's bit different.

So, I usually start with the electros, then guitars, to give the main structure to the song, the tempo and the global ambiance. After that, each one puts his part. Then we check together if other suggestions are better or not and we fix the demo. In studio, we worked with a great producer : Fotis Benardo (SixForNine, ex-Septicflesh,...). He is multi instrumentalist and has a great experience. So, during the recordings, he suggested many arrangements, or variations. We tried and kept what sounded the best. He helped us to improve the final level of the songs.

You have over 300 gigs under your belt, has there been a favourite performance? If yes, why?

Most of our gigs are very good memories. The ones that pop up immediately and that we will never forget are the Metal Female Voices Festival, where we performed 5 times and where we were used to meet many people from all the world who came to attempt for a long week end of craziness ! 😊

The other that pops up and that stays in our memories like the craziest gig we had was in Athens in 2012, as support for EPICA. As support who played for the first time in Greece, we fronted a crowd that was completely crazy ! Since then, we got many fans with whom we kept contact and many of them became close friends too. We kept contacts and we hope to go back there for sure !!! Peta cheese must be the reason why but that was just magic for us. Check videos on Youtube and you'll feel the vibe.



Are there any rituals you have before you go on stage?

Not really but one thing that always happens (even if it's not a ritual), is Karolina who comes with her special tape to tape all our in-ears cables on the neck, then we are sure we can headbang without any risk to look an in ear during the show 😊 that must be the most important thing for us haha  
Beside that, no, nothing special. Just impatient to be on stage and give the best!

During your long career, have you had any moments you thought the band may not make it and if you did how did you overcome them?

Not really... The band it's like a train that runs since 22 years now. Of course, when some members left, we have that feeling that something has to restart from zero etc... but we never saw that like a blocking point. We used to say that it's like someone jumped from the train but the train keeps running and we'll find the answer on the way. It always happened like that and that's it. Keep it simple. Life is already complicated to add more shit into it 😊

Taking time for yourself is important, what do you guys do to unwind and relax?

Music of course !!! because we all have a work and music is our first thing to relax 😊 If we were 100% professionals, that would be different I guess 😊  
beside music, some do yoga, some like to cook, some like to party in clubs. Some just love to play music.

If there's any advice you can give to a new band starting out, what would it be?

Never give up and trust what you do ! When you start, you always want to make like the bands you like... so, what you do is very similar or very inspired by what you like and it's normal. After, try to find inside yourself what will make your music to be YOUR music. Nobody re-invents any style nowadays... We combine mostly existing things but who will re-create metal? Many opened the ways and we walk on them... So, try to make what you like and what defines you. That will define your music.

When I say never give up, it's because every band will have to face the critics, the reviews, the good comments, the bad comments. I will tell you something funny. Of course, everybody has to face one day jealous people. Some can be very hurt by words they will hear. To pass through, never forget that a jealous person is in a fact a fan of your music 😊 If those persons are jealous, that means that they recognize you achieved something they didn't or couldn't. It's like they say to you : I would like to be in your place. Tracudtion : Bravo for what you could do and I couldn't ! 😊

Of course, they say that in a very mysterious way that can hurt, maybe they are shy but ok 😊 thinking like that makes the thing being fun 😊

But never give up and always give all what you have inside : on stage and on albums !!

Going forward into 2024 is there a message you would like to give to your present and future fans?

Yes ! First of all, big thank you to all of them. Without fans, no band can go further. We hope to meet you in our gigs very soon!!!  
The ones who know us already, we'll be glad to see them again and the ones who never saw us, welcome to the show and WATCH YOUR BACK !!!

Thank you so much for taking your time to answer my questions. I wish "Skeptical Minds" the best of luck going into 2024.

Thank you too for this interview and your interest in Skeptical Minds !!

Keep on the good work and thanx for supporting the metal scene !

You'll find all the links for "Skeptical Minds" social media and more below. Also check out their album review.

