



MORGANA HAD THE LOVELY OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVIEW THE STAR OF IŠHTAR.

PLEASE INTRODUCE EACH MEMBER OF THE BAND, AND THEIR ROLE WITHIN 'THE STAR OF IŠHTAR'

ADA: THERE ARE TWO OF US IN THE BAND, ANDREI USHAKOV AND ADA SARGATIS. I AM THE SINGER AND SONGWRITER, AND I ALSO DO KEYBOARDS, SYNTHESIZERS, DRUM PROGRAMMING, FIELD RECORDING, AND SO ON.

ANDREI IS THE GUITARIST. HE ALSO DOES SOME PROGRAMMING AND OTHER STUFF HERE OR THERE. IN FACT, WE ARE OPEN TO ALMOST ANY SCENARIO. FOR INSTANCE, ANDREI SOMETIMES COMES UP WITH THE LINE FOR A VERSE, AND I SOMETIMES CREATE A MAIN THEME FOR THE GUITAR, LIKE THE ONE YOU CAN HEAR IN OUR SONG MADE OF THE FIRE.

WHERE ARE YOU BASED?

ANDREI: WE ARE CURRENTLY BASED IN SAINT PETERSBURG, RUSSIA. THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE AND RECORD OUR MUSIC. WE LOVE THE PLACE. SAINT PETERSBURG IS A MODERN VIBRANT MEGAPOLIS, BUT ITS HISTORICAL PART HAS A SPECIAL VIBE — ELEGANT, DARK AND VERY INSPIRING. BESIDES, THE CITY OFFERS VAST OPPORTUNITIES TO ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS OF ANY KIND AND IS FAMOUS FOR ITS ROCK AND UNDERGROUND SCENES. STILL, WE ACTUALLY SPEND MUCH OF OUR TIME IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. WE DON'T SEE OURSELVES AS CITY DWELLERS. CONNECTION WITH EARTH AND NATURE IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT AND INSPIRING FOR US.

IS THERE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE NAME 'THE STAR OF IŠHTAR'?

ANDREI: WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN FOND OF HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY. ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA, THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION, IS A SUBJECT OF OUR PARTICULAR INTEREST FOR MANY REASONS, BOTH INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL. WE WERE WORKING ON A DRAFT DEMO OF OUR VENUS INVICTA SONG BACK IN 2020, WHEN THE NAME JUST CAME INTO MY HEAD AS AN INSIGHT. WE BOTH LIKED IT VERY MUCH. THE NAME CAN BE VIEWED OR INTERPRETED IN SO MANY WAYS AND ALL OF THEM RESONATE WITH US.

FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER LISTENED, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR MUSIC?

ADA: STYLISTICALLY, IT'S A MIXTURE OF ROCK AND CINEMATIC ELECTRONICA THAT EMBRACES SOUND ART METHODS.

ANDREI: IT'S ALWAYS HARD FOR ME TO DESCRIBE MUSIC IN PLAIN WORDS. OUR MUSIC IS MUCH ABOUT FREEDOM, THAT'S HOW I SEE IT. OUR TRACKS MAY HAVE A NON-TYPICAL STRUCTURE OR INCLUDE FIELD RECORDINGS, WE MIX HOME AND STUDIO RECORDS, MAKE GUITARS SOUND LIKE SYNTHS (AND VICE VERSA), AND SO ON. WE DRAW INSPIRATION FROM A VARIETY OF GENRES, INCLUDING DESERT BLUES AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF MANY REGIONS.

WHAT ARE THE THEMES AND TOPICS THAT YOU TYPICALLY SING ABOUT?

ANDREI: LIFE, DEATH, TIME, DARK SEXUALITY, CONFLICTS, SUPERNATURAL BEINGS, SHADOW AND THE UNCONSCIOUS. SOME OF OUR SONGS ALSO CONTAIN SOCIAL MESSAGES.

ADA: I'D SAY LIFE, OBSERVATION OF LIFE, ACKNOWLEDGING ITS ASPECTS AND BEAUTY, WHETHER THEY'RE LIGHT OR DARK, OR EVEN UNWORTHY, UNACCEPTABLE, UNSEEN — I SEE IT AS A WHOLE. EVEN THE THINGS CONSIDERED BEING SUPERNATURAL, THEY'RE NATURAL IN MY WORLDVIEW, THEY ARE A PART OF THAT WHOLENESS. AS DEATH IS A PART OF LIFE. EVERYTHING YOU CANNOT CONTROL. THE MYSTERIES OF MEMORY AND THE THINGS THAT ARE YET TO BECOME REAL. THE FEAR OF IT BECOMING REAL, AND THE DESIRE.

YOU RECENTLY RELEASED YOUR SONG 'VENUS INVICTA'. WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE LYRICS AND THE SONG NAME?

ADA: WELL, IT'S TWOFOLD. IF WE LOOK AT IT ONE WAY, THERE WAS A VISION BEHIND THAT SONG. LET'S SAY IT'S A STORY OF INANNA/ISHTAR LEAVING HER LANDS AND 'TURNING INTO' APHRODITE AND VENUS. I WAS RUMINATING ON HOW INTERESTING IT IS THAT THE GODDESS OF SEXUAL LOVE, POWER AND WAR 'BECAME' A GENTLER GODDESS OF LOVE AND BEAUTY, AS IF MATCHING THE REPRESSION OF SO CALLED DARK ASPECTS IN THE HUMAN PSYCHE. HOWEVER, AS A ROMAN GODDESS, SHE ENCOMPASSED NOT ONLY LOVE, BEAUTY AND DESIRE BUT ALSO VICTORY, WHICH MAY REMIND US THAT NO MATTER HOW TIME AND EVENTS TRY TO ERASE THE FIERCE AND FEARSOME ASPECTS OF THE DEITY, TO BANISH THEM, THEY WILL STILL REMAIN. NOTHING ASSOCIATED WITH ISHTAR CAN BE SUPPRESSED, FOR IT IS BEYOND THE CONTROL OF HUMAN NATURE.

BUT IF WE LOOK AT IT ANOTHER WAY, THE SONG CAME TO ME WHILE I WAS DIGITAL NOMADING IN CYPRUS, RIGHT WHERE THE STORY MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED. RIGHT WHERE THE MILITARY AIRCRAFTS WERE PASSING OVERHEAD TOWARDS SYRIA BACK THEN. SO, IF WE LOOK AT IT ONE WAY, THE SONG INTERPRETS SOME DISASTROUS EVENTS, BOTH MODERN AND ANCIENT, AND THE CONTINUOUS DEVASTATION OF THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION.

WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE LYRICS OF 'QUEEN OF DUST'?

ADA: MY FEELINGS AND PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY, BUT IT ALSO HAS STRONG CONNOTATIONS WITH STORIES ABOUT SUCCUBI, FEMALE GENIES AND DARK FAERIES. WHILE WORKING ON IT, I WOULD IMAGINE MYSELF DRIVING ON THE HIGHWAY AT NIGHT, LIKE IN SOME EROTIC THRILLER MOVIES FROM THE 80S AND 90S.

'DROWNING' IS A SONG WITHIN YOUR EP ALBUM 'VENUS INVICTA', IS THERE A PARTICULAR EVENT THAT INSPIRED THE LYRICS OF THIS SONG?

ADA: NOT THE ONE YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT! THIS SONG IS NOT ABOUT ACCIDENTS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. IF DROWNING, THEN PROBABLY NOT IN WATER BUT IN SOME ETHEREAL SUBSTANCE, LIKE DEEP WATERS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS. IT'S ABOUT THE INABILITY TO BE TRUE TO YOURSELF AND THE WILLINGNESS TO EMBRACE WHO YOU REALLY ARE.

THE STAR OF IŠHTAR



VENUS INVICTA

WHAT IS YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS WHEN WRITING MUSIC?

ADA: I USUALLY WRITE SOME LYRICS OR JUST MUSIC WHICH I CALL A “SOUNDTRACK”. THOUGH, SOMETIMES LYRICS AND MUSIC COME TOGETHER AS A SONG. AT THIS STAGE, IT’S VITAL TO FOLLOW THAT PATH TO MAKE A SONIC IMPRINT OF FEELINGS AND STATES. IT’S VERY MUCH LIKE MATERIALIZING THINGS, LAYER BY LAYER, CREATING SOMETHING THAT HADN’T EXISTED BEFORE FOLLOWING A SOUND, OR A CHORD, OR EVEN SILENCE IN BETWEEN THE SOUNDS. TO ME, A CREATIVE PROCESS IS MAGIC. SO I LET IT FLOW. WHEREVER IT LEADS ME, I FOLLOW.

ANDREI: SOMETIMES NEW MUSIC JUST COMES OUT OF NOWHERE. SO, I GRAB THE NEAREST INSTRUMENT, OR GADGET, OR TEXTBOOK (IT DEPENDS ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES) AND START WRITING IT DOWN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE CREATIVE PROCESS MAY ALSO START WHILE I’M PRACTICING OR JUST EXPLORING ANYTHING SOUND RELATED. THE SOUND OF A PARTICULAR INSTRUMENT CAN BE A GREAT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION ITSELF.

ADA: OUR CREATIVE PROCESS MAY ALSO TAKE PLACE DIRECTLY IN A STUDIO, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER WITH SESSION MUSICIANS. WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO BRING WHATEVER THEY FEEL HERE AND NOW.

IN LIGHT OF YOUR RECENT EP ALBUM RELEASE 'VENUS INVICTA', DO YOU HAVE ANY SHOWS PLANNED?

ANDREI: WE ARE WORKING ON OUR LIVE SOUND CONCEPT AT THE PRESENT TIME. IT’S NOT A TRIVIAL TASK CONSIDERING OUR CURRENT SET, WHICH INCLUDES SONGS WITH VERY DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTATION. WE WOULD LIKE TO PLAY A FEW CONCERTS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR.

ARE THERE ANY PLANS FOR NEW MUSIC OVER THE COMING MONTHS?

ANDREI: WE HAVE PLENTY OF NEW AND UNRELEASED MATERIAL. MANAGEMENT TASKS AND PROMOTION OF OUR SELF-RELEASED EP “VENUS INVICTA” ARE TAKING MUCH OF THE BAND’S TIME AT THE MOMENT, DESPITE THAT, WE KEEP MOVING FORWARD. WE ARE WORKING ON A COLLABORATION WITH A LOCAL DARK SCENE ARTIST, THE SONG WILL BE RELEASED IN SPRING. BESIDES, WE WANT TO RELEASE A REMIX OF OUR SONG “DROWNING” LATER ON.



WHAT ARE THE BAND'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS CURRENTLY, AND DO YOU HAVE ANY GOALS FOR 2024?

ANDREI: MOST OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS ARE CURRENTLY AT THE DOMESTIC LEVEL. OUR DEBUT EP HAS BEEN WARMLY RECEIVED BY THE RUSSIAN ROCK, DARK AND GOTHIC COMMUNITIES. A WELL-ESTABLISHED RUSSIAN HEAVY AND UNDERGROUND MUSIC HUB ASTARTA INCLUDED VENUS INVICTA IN THEIR "TOP RELEASES OF 2023" LIST. OUR SONG VENUS INVICTA BECAME A PART OF "DARK TOXIC X-MAS 2023" INTERNATIONAL COMPILATION BY 'RDC MUSIC' NET-LABEL. WE HAVE ABOUT 2,000 LISTENERS IN VK MUSIC STREAMING SERVICE AT THE MOMENT AND OUR SONGS CAN BE FOUND IN LOCAL ROCK, GOTHIC AND DARK WAVE CURATED PLAYLISTS. IN OUR EYES, IT'S NOT TOO BAD FOR A START.

ADA: WE'RE AIMING AT GETTING BETTER COVERAGE AND LIVE SHOWS RIGHT NOW. AND TO BE HONEST, WE CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO THE STUDIO. THERE'S AT LEAST ONE NEW SINGLE PLUS SEVERAL COLLABORATIONS AND REMIXES IN OUR RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR 2024.

WHERE CAN NEW LISTENERS FIND YOUR MUSIC?

ANDREI: PRETTY MUCH EVERYWHERE: STREAMING PLATFORMS, BANDCAMP, FM AND WEB RADIO STATIONS, ET CETERA. WE WANT TO SPREAD OUR MUSIC TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE. NO PHYSICAL DISTRIBUTION YET, BUT WE ARE CONSIDERING IT FOR THE NEAR FUTURE.

LASTLY, WHAT DO YOU HOPE PEOPLE TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR MUSIC?

ADA: AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISCOVER NEW HORIZONS, PERHAPS. GO A LITTLE DEEPER, BEYOND THE ORDINARY. LOSE YOURSELF THERE, THEN FIND YOURSELF. A CURIOSITY TOWARDS CHANGES, AN OPENNESS TO THEM. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER THAN ONE CAN IMAGINE. SEE FURTHER, FEEL DEEPER.

ANDREI: INSPIRATION AND PLEASURE.



@ THE STAR OF IŠHTAR



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