

Attached you find the original Interview before the translation from English to German between Markus for Soundmagnet.eu and Erwin Suetens from Fireforce.

Markus (Soundmagnet): Hello and thanks for the interview. Your fourth album *Rage of War* is full of historical references and events, especially about wars. Why did you choose this approach and what do you want to transmit with it?

Erwin (Fireforce): Well, I'm a history nerd. Behind every corner I find something historical interesting. As a young kid, my late father always took me with him to all kind of musea, and he had a whole library with hundreds of books about history. You could find me over there all the time. If we don't learn from history, the same mistakes will be made over and over again. I think stories from individuals who single-handedly changed history are very interesting. Sometimes their great deeds changed the outcome of a battle, while others did something stupid and were forgotten. Stories like that intrigue me. Then there the ruthlessness and cruelty of how some leaders treat their people... A lot of people around the world today are still having to put up with tyranny.

Now, everywhere I go, even with the band, I always look up if there's something interesting to see in the neighborhood of our trip or the cities we're passing by. Might it be a fortress, some bunkers, a museum or an ancient battlefield. Sometimes I feel like General Patton staring over ancient battlefields, haha!

For example the song **108-118**, it's about the Kursk. 108 meters deep, 118 lives lost. It could have been less if the Soviets had allowed help from other countries, but they didn't... Or **A Price To Pay** - it refers to a tweet from a person (POTUS) we all know, in response to a so called chemical attack... The people guilty have to pay a price for that, and later *they* will be saying "they'll pay a price for that"... and so on... This way it will never stop. There will always be a price to pay for someone...

Running is about Zulu warriors that could run very long distances, and still have enough energy left to charge their enemies when they arrive. Incredible... If you're curious about the other songs: read the lyrics on the albums! Haha!

And no, not all my songs are about war and battle. On the first album **March On** was a song about child abuse. But even then it is about fear, cruelty and rage. That's also a kind of war...

Markus: When thinking of power/heavy metal bands with historical lyrics, *Sabaton* and *Civil War* immediately come to mind. However, your sound is more straight and heavy, in my opinion. What are your biggest influences and how would you describe your music?

Erwin: Combat metal... It's a combination of Thrash and Power Metal, and in the beginning we didn't call it that way. It was only after that a magazine wrote about our **March On** album: "*If there ever will be a genre that would be called Combat Metal, Fireforce would lead the way!*", that I had the idea to write a song "Combat Metal", and from that moment on our genre was created, haha!

Our influences come from a few directions. I'm an oldschool guy and love for example the NWOBHM a lot, but also thrash (e.g. *Testament*, *Exodus* ao) and as my main favorite: *Metal Church*. *Matt* is a young guy with an old soul. He's into a wide range of influences from *Michael Schenker* to *Arch Enemy*. *Christophe* is into a lot of old school bands, but also into the modern bands, and so is *Serge*.

We're all a piece of the puzzle of how **Fireforce** sounds.

Markus: The song **Firepanzer** is about the Polish cavalry attacking German panzers in World War 2. Can you give us more insight what happened and why you choose to sing about this event?

Erwin: The song is a cross-pollination between reality and fiction. It's about the first days in September 1939 in Poland. Polish lancers armed with lances attacked German tanks on horseback, and were decimated. At least, that's the story.

In reality, the lancers attacked German infantry, only armed with light weapons, and butchered those. The lancers did not only carry lances, but also machine guns, rifles, and even anti-tank rifles. After this attack, two German armoured reconnaissance vehicles came out of the bushes with blazing machine guns. That's when the Polish lancers were butchered.

Both sides used it as propaganda. The Germans said "*Look how stupid those Poles are, attacking tanks with lances!*". The Polish said: "*Look how brave our soldiers are, they attack tanks with lances!*". Both were talking bullshit... I used my imagination and made the German tanks into the mystical **Firepanzer**...

Markus: **Ram it** is about a fighter pilot who rams an enemy bomber and states "*We'll meet again in Valhalla!*". I never heard of that before. Which sources do you use to learn about such events and how do you decide which of those events you turn into songs?

Erwin: The song is about a German WW2 pilot in the last days of the war, who crashed his ME262 in an American bomber (A B26 with the name *Trouble In Mind*) because he was out of ammunition. His last cry was indeed "*We'll meet again in Valhalla!*". What was going through his mind? How can you really be so indoctrinated that you really throw your life away in such a hopeless situation. That's what intrigues me...

My sources are everything what I read, see and hear about history. Every day I read, everything that happens makes me looking for more. I'm really that guy that always sees the next hill, and wants desperately to know what's behind. What's the story behind the story so to speak. The decision to use something in a song can be a word, a to my own history related fact, or something from which I say: "*Wow – this is interesting*". I will give you some examples:

From Scout To Liberator is about the liberation of my hometown Antwerp in the second world war. A British armored division, that only made a reconnaissance trip on the road from Brussels to Antwerp, could take the important bridge over the biggest river between those cities.

And only because one man, a civil engineer, was brave enough to stop the armored column, and led them to a little undefended footbridge over the same river. He knew, the Germans didn't, that the unimportant bridge was just strong enough to carry the tanks one by one... Three tanks crossed the little bridge and took the main bridge from behind. One little person changed history...

Forever In Time is Belgian history. Ten Belgian blue berets (paratroopers from UNAMIR) were murdered, butchered, and slaughtered in Rwanda on April 7th 1994, while on a peace keeping mission. *"Their Achilles tendons were cut so they couldn't run. The Belgian soldiers were then castrated, and died choking on their own genitalia,"* said one of the murderers... They were sent on this mission with little ammunition and no backup, they were not allowed to bring heavy weapons – there was no danger to them and it would only be a couple of hours. That's what the Belgian government said, as well as the UN. When they were surrounded, they were not allowed to fight back. A few of them survived the first atrocities and could retake their weapons and make a last stand until they were all killed. Some of the main officers drove by the place where it happened, and they did NOTHING. They never apologized for this drama... On April 15th 1994, the last of the Belgian troops pulled out, soon to be followed by the other UN-contingents. When the paratroopers descend from the plane on the Belgian military airfield, some of them took out their knife, ritually cut their blue UN-caps to pieces, and vowed never to fight under the UN-flag again.

I personally feel very bad about this. How can a country (or at least its officers) betray their own men like this? They were there for peacekeeping, and they weren't even allowed to defend themselves? They were paratroopers - normally they would never turn in their weapons unless they were ordered by higher a ranking officer to do so... It's appalling

Army Of Ghosts is based on the movie *The Railway Man*. It's about the Japanese internment camps during the Second World War and their atrocities. You surrendered, so you're not worthy of humane treatment because you're a coward. And cowards only deserve to work and die... As soon as I saw the scene, where one of the prisoners uses the phrase *"We're only an army of ghosts"*, the song came alive in my head...

Markus: When it comes to wars and certain events in those wars, other bands have already been criticised that they use their music to relativize brutal events. How do you respond to such critics?

Erwin: I never relativize those events, I'm merely a *"story teller"*. I don't choose sides, nor am I in a position to judge. I just study the facts, and tell the story. If someone wants to learn from this, fine. It's important to show that both sides in a conflict (whatever they might be) have "normal" persons that were triggered by events to act in a special way. Take for example those guys who attacked the Capitol a few days ago, four people were killed. It's easy to say they are all idiots, but they were misled and indoctrinated for years by some people. Sounds familiar not? I don't think they are all bad people, but those who misbehaved should be punished of course.

Markus: 2021 will hopefully be a better year for festivals and club shows. When it's possible again, can we expect to see you live in Germany and/or Austria?

Erwin: The biggest trouble we're in now, is the fact that it is completely forbidden in Belgium for "non-professional" bands to rehearse. So when this pandemic is over, playing shows is the first thing I want to do, but without rehearsals, no shows... Our release show that was planned for 15th of January in Germany was cancelled yesterday (6th January) because of the new Covid-19 regulations. That sucks.

My deepest wish is that "Rage Of War" would not go under in this Covid-19 madness... When can we support this "live"? I don't have a clue now... But indeed, we want to show the world that Fireforce is alive and kicking, that all puzzle parts fell together, and that there are 4 dedicated musicians on stage – metal all the way!

And of course we would love to come over to Germany and Austria when it's possible!

Markus: We are always looking for new music to discover. Which bands from your home town can you recommend to us?

Erwin: It depends on what music you like of course. I'm more into the oldschool stuff. And from my hometown is pretty easy: none. So let's go to Belgium in total: *Hunter* is a real oldschool band that you should check out. They're good friends of mine and I really like what they are doing.

Objector is a thrash band that I really dig, nice riffing! If you like black/speedmetal, you should certainly check out *Bütcher*. Doom metal someone? *Cult Of Scarecrow* is worth of checking out! *Cuttermess* brings crossover/heavy/thrashmetal, and they're good! Progressive Power metal with a female voice? Try *Cygnus Atratus*. Or with a normal singer? *Iron Mask*.

Old school power/speedmetal is what *Drakkar* brings. *Elusion* brings gothic/symphonic metal with a female singer. More into heavy/thrash? Try *Guilty As Charged*! And black metal? *Ancient Rites* from my buddy Gunther, but I'm sure you all know them already, haha!

There are a lot of great bands in Belgium but I can't name them all, check them out and you will discover some great music!

Markus: Many thanks for the interview! The last words are yours.

Erwin: For starters, thanks for having me, thanks for the support for **Fireforce**. And then, when you have a dream, don't ever let somebody try to take that dream away from you! Stay safe, stay metal!