

Attached you can find the original Interview in English between Sascha for Soundmagnet.eu and *Nolan Lewis* for **Kryptos**

Congratulations to Force of Danger, it's a great new record you guys put together there! This is already your sixth album, how are the responses so far, and are you happy with how the record turned out?

Thank you very much. Yeah, the responses have been great so far. We're getting a lot of press coverage and most of the reviews have been excellent. We're very happy with the way the album turned out, especially since we wrote and recorded it in such a short timeframe earlier in the year when lockdown restrictions were partially lifted for a couple of months. We're really glad that a lot of people have been writing in to us telling us how much they enjoyed the album and how much it lifted their spirits, especially after dealing with all the trouble the pandemic caused. And that's pretty much what we wanted to achieve. We wanted to put out an album that would make people cut loose to and go FUCK YEAH! again. No frills, no gimmicks, no fancy studio trickery, nothing. Just good, old-fashioned, old-school heavy metal to shake your fist to.

The sound and songwriting is 80s as fuck, this time there's more midtempo and powerful riffing than speed as in the predecessor Afterburner. What were your main influences this time? Definitely Accept, am I right?

Yup, you're spot on. Accept and Judas Priest are our main influences on this album, as they've always been, but even more so on this record. We wanted to combine the simplicity and crunch of Accept's riffing and songwriting with the intricate soloing and heavy metal spirit of mid 80s Judas Priest. While we do have a couple of fast songs on this album like Raging Steel, Hot Wired and Nighthawk, overall it has a more midtempo crunch to it than Afterburner. The songs are very direct and they don't overstay their welcome. We just wanted to get straight to the point and put out one killer riff after another. I'm pretty sure anyone who listens to Force of Danger a few times will have a hard time getting some of the riffs and melodies out of their heads in the morning haha.

Could you tell us more about the songwriting, recording and production of the album? When did you start to work on it, when was it finished and how did the pandemic affect the overall process?

Actually, it's a bit of miracle that we managed to complete the album with everything going on. As you probably know, India was hit really hard by the pandemic and we were under heavy lockdown and restrictions when Covid hit. However, there was a small window between January and April 2021 when restrictions were partially lifted, so we used that as an opportunity to write, demo and record the album.

It was pretty intense because we were writing all throughout January, demoing almost every day in February and then recorded the entire album during the month of March. Luckily we managed to complete the album in time and funnily enough, while we were shooting the video for the title track, the government announced a sudden curfew/lockdown and we had to finish the video in double time and pack everything up and split before the cops got hold of us haha. It was pretty crazy but we're relieved we pulled through in the end.

I'd love to know more about the roles in your band: who are the main songwriters, who writes the lyrics, how does a new Kryptos song come to life?

All the music is written by me and Rohit (lead guitars) and all the lyrics are written by me and Ganesh (bass). Usually, me and Rohit come up with a whole bunch of riffs and then we sit down and try and fit them together. It's kind of like a puzzle and you have to find the right riffs that 'flow' together. The main thing, however, is that the riffs we write HAVE to be killer. After all, the riff is law. It's the Tony Iommi principle haha. Each song MUST have excellent riffs or they're no good. So we basically weed out all the weak ones and only keep the ones that we think are the absolute best and build on them.

Usually, the riffs we write tend to put images in our head, so we kind of get an idea of what the song should be about and how it needs to be fleshed out. Once we have a basic skeleton of a song, we then start arranging sections within the song, like for example, where the first verse comes in, where the chorus comes in, the bridges, the solos, etc. Our songwriting is very straightforward because we're of course very influenced by 80s metal and even our lyrical themes are very 80s inspired as well. There are a lot of references to the classic bands we grew up on in our lyrics, but we don't do it just to be some sort of nostalgia act. We genuinely believe in what we do and I think since we actually lived through those times, we still have some of the magic that that decade carried, and we try and infuse it into our music.

Metal has become such a varied and multi-faceted genre over the decades, with multiple sub-genres, a lot of innovation and bands mixing different styles.

I really love that diversity and open-mindedness about Metal, but I also cannot deny that I love bands like Kryptos for playing the old school classic sound of Metal's glorious times in the 80s with fresh energy and hunger. What do you love so much about that era of Heavy Metal and what fuels your creativity to write songs in that particular style?

That's a great question because we do get people asking us why we play this 'old-fashioned' style of heavy metal when we should be moving with the times and playing music that's more suited to the modern age. With us, this is the music we grew up on, and it is such an integral part of our lives that even if we didn't play this music, we would still be fervent fans 100%. We are fans first and musicians second. The 80s were a magical time, not just musically but there was something in the air during that time that I just can't explain. The only word I can possibly use is 'magic'. The world didn't seem so 'fearful' about so many things and there was genuine excitement in the air, no matter which country you were in.

The movies were great, the cartoons were great, the comics were great, video games were slowly capturing the imagination of everyone, there was no limit to creativity and no one took offense to anything. If you look at the way things are now, we as a collective human race are actually 'devolving' rather than evolving. We've lost that 'magic' along the way and for a band like us that's so steeped in everything 80s, I think it's important that we hold onto that flame and keep it burning for as long as possible because there are many, many people out there who are disillusioned with what the world has become and where its headed, so we hope that our music can be a 'time machine' of sorts that can take them back and remind them of simpler days when heavy metal was all about having a good time.

And that's how I feel when I listen to my favourite records as well. Every time I put on my Priest or Scorpions or Maiden or Dokken records, I'm immediately transported back to when I was a kid, rocking out with my tennis racket in front of a mirror without a care in the world. It was just the music and me and that's all that mattered back then, and now when I play those albums, for a brief moment, I'm reminded of how much joy this music gave me when I was growing up and how grateful I am that it STILL gives me so much joy. The 70s and the 80s in my opinion gave us some of the best music ever and I don't think those eras will ever be topped. There is a sense of 'freedom' and 'adventure' in the music from that age that I just don't feel the music of today has, and we hope to bring back some of those feelings with every album we release.

With now six albums in your discography and after having played big festivals like Wacken Open Air, you have become one of if not THE best known Metal act from India.

How would you describe the Indian Metal scene?

Well, at the moment, it's still in a very nascent stage, but it's almost like a cocoon waiting to pop. I'd say the Indian metal scene only really started finding it's legs maybe about 10 years ago, and only started gathering steam about 5 years ago. Sure, there were tons of metal bands in India ever since the 80s and 90s, but they never really amounted to anything. Now, more and more Indian metal bands are touring abroad and releasing albums on a regular basis.

On a local level, India doesn't have a touring circuit like the U.S., Europe and many other places do. There are very few venues that host metal gigs and only a handful of metal festivals that take place every now and then. India is a very haphazard country, where nothing goes according to plan haha. But in one way, I see that as a good thing, because it's forcing bands here to look abroad to make a mark in the metal world rather than just staying here and playing to the same people over and over again in the same cities.

Recently, bands like Amorphia, who play fantastic thrash in the vein of early Sodom, toured Japan, which was unprecedented for an Indian metal band, and Against Evil, who play more traditional heavy metal in the vein of Manowar and Priest, have been making a name for themselves in Europe.

Hopefully more bands will come up and stick around for a while and put India on the metal map the same way Sepultura or Loudness did it for Brazil and Japan respectively.

**How was it to grow up in India and to found an old school traditional Heavy Metal band there?
What were the hurdles and challenges to finally rise to the level you now have reached?**

It was a bit different for me than it was for the rest of the band. I grew up in Kuwait and spent most of my childhood there and was exposed to a lot of American TV and music, because it was pretty popular in the Middle East. My dad was a huge country music and 60s rock n' roll fan, so there was always a lot of Elvis or Beatles or Rolling Stones playing at our place. I then got into bands like Europe, Bon Jovi, Motley Crue and stuff like that and towards then gradually moved onto heavier music like AC/DC, Maiden, Priest etc. Rock/metal music was a bit hard to come by, but some stores managed to get cassettes from abroad, so that kept me satisfied. Although I had to return to India for a couple of years during the Gulf War, when I returned to Kuwait, MTV was in full swing and a lot of music from the U.S. started flooding the stores, so I managed to get my hands on a lot of thrash and even some death metal.

I finally left Kuwait in 1997 to join university in India and that's where I met our bass player Ganesh. In fact, he was the first person I met when I joined university, so you could say it was fate haha. Initially, I wasn't interested in being in a band even though I could play the guitar a bit. Ganesh asked if I wanted to join the band he was in and since we were all pretty crap at our instruments I said sure why not. Anyway, that didn't last long, so once that band broke up, Ganesh and I decided to start our own band and Kryptos was born in 1998.

When we started the band, we really didn't know what we wanted to play, which is why you'll hear a ton of different influences on our debut album, apart from our 80s influences. We kind of just threw the kitchen sink into that album. But over the years we started stripping away our sound and it was only around 15 years later that we decided we wanted to go in a completely traditional, 80s metal direction.

Starting and keeping a band together in India isn't easy, and when we started out in 98 there was literally nothing for us here. No studios, poor equipment, no internet, no mobile phones, no nothing. The only gigs that were happening were a bunch of college 'Battle of the Bands' type competitions where you get about 10 minutes to play on a shitty stage with shitty sound. In fact, we recorded our first album at a makeshift studio in someone's house and we recorded the drums in his bathroom hahaha. I'm still not sure how we fit it all in there.

But you know, we persevered. Our love for this music knows no bounds, which is why we're still around 23 years later still living our dream and I'm pretty sure we'll be around for a lot longer.

What were the biggest milestones so far for you?

There were a few. I think recording and releasing our first album in 2004 was a big deal for us because that's when we realized we can actually take this band places. Then opening for Iron Maiden in 2009 in our home city Bangalore is something we'll never forget....EVER. It was absolutely magical. Playing to thousands of our own people and then supporting our childhood heroes and then getting to hang out with them at their hotel after the gig — it was

phenomenal. They were such gentlemen and so polite and down to earth, that it just made us respect them even more.

I think our next biggest milestone was signing with AFM Records in 2012. That was a major breakthrough for us because I think we were the first or one of the first Indian metal bands to sign with a major label. That really opened the doors for us because we finally had a label that could get our music out to the world and we've been with them for almost 10 years now.

And last but not least, getting invited to play at Wacken Open Air not once but twice. Sure, we've played a lot of other gigs and festivals and toured across Europe, but playing at Wacken was pretty special because we used to read about metal festivals in Europe in magazines as teenagers and how huge Wacken was and we'd keep talking about how killer it would be if we could one day play there. And it finally happened and it was amazing.

Who would've imagined a small band from southern India would do all this. Not us for sure haha.

Your new album is available in many different formats. Which format do you prefer yourselves? Vinyl, CD or streaming?

I'm not really into digital music. None of us are actually. We all still buy physical. Although I have a ton of cds and my vinyl collection is growing slowly but surely, I'm more of a cassette guy. I grew up with them and there's a certain nostalgia attached to them and I just love how compact they are. Of course, they're a pain in the ass when the spool gets stuck, but hey, it's all part of the dance haha. The rest of the guys prefer vinyls or cds though.

What are your thoughts on the vinyl revival that's been happening for a couple of years now, and what do you think about streaming services like Spotify and the like?

I think it's fantastic. There's nothing like the crackle of a vinyl when you put it on and of course vinyl just sounds better than everything else, especially old/original presses of many of the 70s and 80s albums. It's great that it's making a comeback because more and more people will know what it's like to completely immerse themselves in the music they buy. Lying on your bed staring at the vinyl sleeve, reading the lyrics, looking at the photos, reading the liner notes and trying to discover newer things in the art.....that experience just can't be beat and its something digital music will never be able to replicate.

For the record, I'm not against digital music. It has it's place for sure. I'm just not a fan of it. I don't even have a Spotify account, although ironically, our music is doing really well on Spotify, so go figure haha. However, it would be great if bands were compensated better by streaming platforms. The current payout is a bit of a joke, and unless you're a Metallica or Maiden or someone of that global stature, most metal bands barely make a pittance out of it.

My final question for this interview is a question from metalhead to metalhead. I'd love to know your top three Metal albums, or if that's too hard, top three bands that influenced and shaped you.

Wow, that's tough, but if I had to narrow it down:

1. Judas Priest – Defenders of the Faith

To me, this is the THE greatest heavy metal album ever made. This IS heavy metal in its most purest form. The first time I heard it I was absolutely awestruck and even when I listen to it today, almost 32 years after I first heard it, I'm just utterly blown away. This is the album that made me a metalhead for life and if I ever had to be buried with one single album, this would be it. Halford, Downing and Tipton in prime form. That's heavy metal royalty right there.

2. Iron Maiden – Piece of Mind

This was the first metal album I ever heard and I still remember when the drums for Where Eagles Dare kicked in, every single hair on the back of my neck stood up. I can't even begin to describe the feeling that passed through me. It was absolutely electric. The songwriting, the lyrics and Bruce's incredible performance are just unparalleled. It even contains my all-time favourite Iron Maiden song – Still Life, which I think is a complete metal masterpiece.

3. Metallica – Ride the Lightning

If there was one band that wanted me to play the guitar, it was Metallica, and of course, Hetfield. I was totally floored when I heard RTL the first time. The riffs, the rage, the attitude, the power.....fucking hell, it just made me want to smash every bit of furniture in my room. I would say the first four Metallica records had a major influence on me as a guitarist, as I'm sure they did for millions of guitarists all over the world. RTL is a timeless record and even today, once that acoustic intro for Fight Fire With Fire slowly fades, you know you're in for an ass-kicking.

Thanks so much for the interview and see you on tour hopefully!

Thank you very much as well. It was a pleasure and we hope to see you soon someday. Take care!

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