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## Interviews: Interview with BELIEVE Guitarist Mirek Gil

Posted on Saturday, September 26 @ 17:22:55 EDT

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### Mirek Gil: The Vision is His by Tommy "Hashman" Hash



Right off the heels of one of the most darkest progressive rock albums, Warsaw, Poland's **Believe** are becoming one of the forerunners of a circle of bands that are re-inventing the way we look at melodic progressive rock. Putting the technical elements forward to compliment the more tuneful approach to the music, groups such as Darwin's Radio & Frost\* for example, are placing the sophisticated 'musician' element up front to compliment the pop sensibility involved, and vice versa. Most of these types of bands have been unfairly coined as 'neo' and 'symphonic' rock - but as in most cases of progressive rock, the music is hard to categorize in the first place, hence the whole definition of progressive - 'moving forward,' and that is what **Believe** does.

Coming from the mind of musician/producer/composer **Mirek Gil**, known for his work with Satellite, College, and Mr. Gil, **Believe** plays to the darkened vibe of Stream of Passion, but without the full-on heaviness (although there are crunch riddled moments), and to the more modernized attitude of Pendragon, where that band has grown beyond their 'neo' rooted sound. Complete with plectronic and heavy guitar textures, steady violin playing from Satomi, a powerful rhythm section, soundscapes provided by additional strings, the pall laden atmosphere, and the emotive vocals of Karol Wróblewski, all the elements are in the right place. With *This Bread is Mine* marking a new era for the band, **Mirek Gil** speaks about his musical endeavors and the roads that let him up to now.

"I think that the difference is mainly in the band's line-up" begins **Gil** on comparing and contrasting **Believe's** records, "Tomek (Rozycki), who was our previous vocalist, is now substituted by Karol Wróblewski, a young, 20 year-old vocalist with a different voice and musical sensitivity. That brought about some changes in music on the album. Karol implemented fresh approach to the music and other musical interpretations than Tomek. Thanks to that, the tracks seem to be more real, sincere and deeper to me. Also the replacement of keyboards by cello gave our music new opportunities. Now we have more space for the bass guitar and for the whole instrumentation whereas cello played by Paulina Druch has brought new musical appearance into our music." "From my point of view, the album is the most mature of the three **Believe** albums and I believe that it has developed and proved **Believe's** 'characteristic sound.' This is the thing that I find most important in music - your own 'characteristic sound.' Obviously, that one is formed by the instruments, compositions and also voice of the singer. Despite the changes in the line-up, the album fits the general style of the band very well. We always seek breathtaking melodies as well as melancholic and fiord climate."

When a band changes vocalists, it can have negative effects - however, new vocalist Karol Wróblewski has fit in like a glove, "Judging by the reviews of the album and fans' reactions that is a change for the better," explains **Gil**, "That is a coincidence which, allegedly, never occurs. Karol came to my studio once to record something for himself. I heard his voice and offered him cooperation. That was an ideal time as Tomek had left. Apart from his voice, Karol is very creative and has a lot of positive energy. I think that he has the feeling for vocals - I remember similar story with Robert Amirian when he came to Collage."

As dark as the album is, the inspirations for the music are diverse, and far from simply just being melancholic, "There are a number of inspirations, but most importantly life, problems, happiness, love and death. As far as music is concerned I very often listen to Jose Gonzales, Chris Cornell, Bob Dylan and the whole bunch of rock and progressive rock classics as well as jazz music, e.g. Marcus Miller. All of that is included in the album. This bread is ours, we baked it on our own and we want to share it with you

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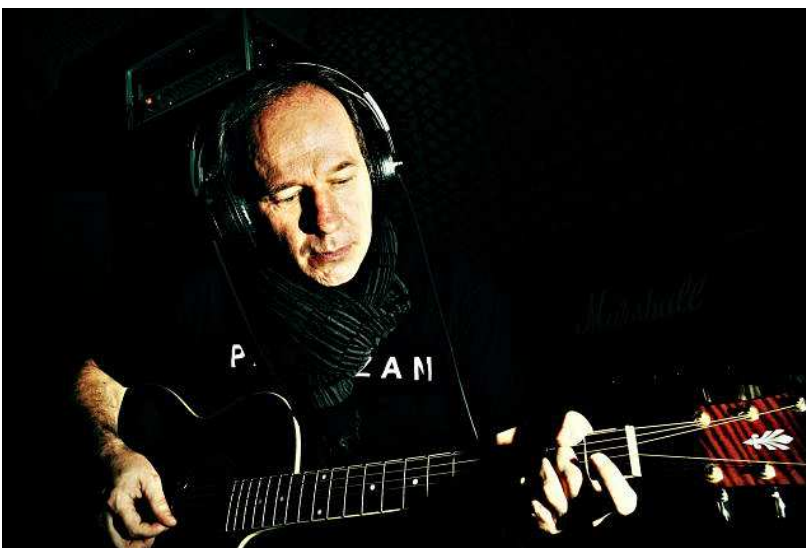
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Having played in the more neo rooted Satellite and Collage, two extremely important bands that helped shape neo-prog beyond the Marillion carbon-copying, **Gil** explains that it wasn't all easy starting **Believe** from the ground up as he elaborates, "It is always hard to start everything from the beginning. But I am full of energy and also have good organization skills. That, of course, is not enough when there is nobody you can form a new band with. I took my old friends, first and foremost Przemek Zawadzki playing the bass guitar who helped me to form Collage. Then Tomek Różycki who sang on *Baśnie* by Collage; and Włodek Tafel, drummer with whom I recorded my solo album Mr Gil - Alone in 1998. Why them? The answer is very simple: I don't have to explain anything to them; they know you, your artistic work, and they know very well what you are aiming at. Similarly looks the situation with me - I know what I think about the music and we understand each other without words. Someone told once that the whole artistic work is one big album and I agree with that. Names mean nothing to me. What I try to do is to play all the time, be myself and put as much heart into that as I can."

"That's obvious that **Believe's** music is different from Collage and Satellite. But let's leave broad discussions on that. We are in different time now, I am now on a different stage of my artistic life and work with other people. But there is something in common between those bands: my guitar. Its specific, characteristic sound and solos remain unchanged. Collage was a special group and that was a special time, the most important moment of which was *Moonshine* released in 1995. This album has become part of progressive rock classics which I fully recommend. As far as Satellite is concerned, that was just an episode, I wanted to help Wojtek Szadkowski (Collage drummer). That is why I played on the first album. Those both bands itself are different, whereas **Believe** is a completely new stage. There is not so much electronics; everything is more acoustic and based on other philosophy - my philosophy. In Collage, on the other hand, there were many of us, and Satellite belonged to Wojtek."

Besides being a five-piece band, there is someone that remains the unsung member of the band, Robert Sieradzki, who contributes lyrics to the band, "Robert is actually a hidden band member," hints **Gil**, "He is my friend and my peer. We have known each other for about 10 years and I have always dreamt of him writing songs for me. It finally worked out and I am pleased with that. His text perfectly fits to our sounds. We like each other very much and we see each other very often."

Mastering engineer Andy Jackson (Pink Floyd, David Gilmour) finalized the album's sonic vibe, making for an audiophile experience which it comes to listening to *This Bread is Mine*, although the band didn't meet him in person (the files were sent via Internet), the end result did not suffer - one person that they did work with in person was longtime recording engineer Włodek Kowalczyk (who mixed the album), and their relationship with Kowalczyk remains great, "This is **Believe's** third album all of which were made with Włodzio. Włodek is one of the most prominent sound producers in Poland. He supervised over 100 LPs. Włodek basically, likes our music and understands our concepts. Consequently, there is no need to discuss matters relating to music while mixing. We just chat together and play jokes. I believe that the next album will be produced with Włodzio too."

The relationship with their label, Metal Mind remains good, having always been a big help with each release. When it comes to releases, mapping out what the next record will sound like - its' he day-by-day approach, where at this time, nothing is in stone for the follow up as **Gil** explains, "As always, I do not have any assumptions and concepts for another album. Everything comes into being intuitively and spontaneously. Speaking of the frequency of releasing albums, I would not say this is something unusual. One album for a year seems to be normal for me."

Although **Believe** is his main focus, Mr Gil will be in full force as well, with some familiar faces, "this year shall also see the release of Mr Gil's second album," concludes **Gil**, "What is interesting is the fact that Wojtek Szadkowski will play on drums, Przemek Zawadzki on bass guitar (Believe), and Karol Wróblewski will sing (Believe). This album, for a change, will be in Polish - some kind of a comeback to the past."

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