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**Interviews: Interview/Update with PENDRAGON's Nick Barrett**

Posted on Wednesday, October 21 @ 10:36:10 EDT  
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**Nick Barrett:  
The Window of the Masquerade  
by Tommy "Hashman" Hash**



Pendragon are a band that have grown upon and even expanded their sound with release after release, taking the word 'progressive' to it's true meaning. Ever since their incarnation in 1978, this English quartet has given the masses an intricate offering of music, which unlike some bands in this genre, this band's music tends to be less predictable and more down to earth minded - you never really know what you are going to hear; only the patented **Pendragon** sound being prevalent with a collection of great songs complimented by the musical might of Clive Nolan, Peter Gee, new drummer Scott Higham, & frontman/guitarist **Nick Barrett**.

2008 saw the release of their most significantly sophisticated record yet, *Pure* (Toff/Inside Out) while 2009 brought forth another live DVD & CD, *Concerto Maximo* (Toff/Metal Mind/MVD) - in a [Ytsejam.com interview with Clive Nolan](#), a hint was given that another studio album was in the works for release in the future. Having been through the motions of many ends of the industry, being advocates against music piracy & illegal downloading, and even having formed their own label in the days before the Internet even existed (Toff Records), frontman **Nick Barrett** gives us an update on what is going on in the **Pendragon** camp - from their days of their debut *The Jewel*, through the mainstream minded *Kowtow*, through the inkage with a distribution deal with Inside Out, & multiple studio & live albums later, dealing with all ends of the business, the singer/songwriter/guitarist tells it to us straight up about where **Pendragon** currently stands and what my behold their future.

"Well it was the obvious development really," begins **Barrett** on *Pure* versus

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their vast catalog, "**Pendragon** has tended to do things in blocks, like everything we did in the 80's & everything we did in the 90's it was different from each other. *Pure* sort of heralds a new beginning again, but it's still got the **Pendragon** sound. The **Pendragon** trademarks and hallmarks, you can tell it's **Pendragon** when you hear it."

The theme of *Pure* is not some mystical fairy tale or something that sounds like it should be out of a sci-fi novel, it's centered about growing up - a practical & realistic approach to the thought oriented music, "Well, I think I've always had some deep seated anger somewhere about how I felt at school and it's never really come out properly in writing music," elaborates **Barrett**, "but with *Pure* I went back and visited those emotions and those emotions seem to just say that this was the subject matter for the new album. As for the inspiration behind the lyrics, It's Life! You know that the trouble with a lot of progressive rock is that a lot of lyrics are written in riddles so you can't really unravel what songs are about. I could name 5 progressive rock albums that I haven't got a clue what they're about, but look at *Dark Side of the Moon*, those songs are about things and they're away from all the swords and sorcery imagery, the weirdness and the cloaking of subjects, I like things that people can relate to."

**Barrett** and the band know the Wyspianski Theater in Poland very well, as the vocalist/guitarist himself has been involved with a total of four releases, leading up to the latest release, *Concerto Maximo* which was a performance that was executed off the heels of the *Pure* album, containing three tracks from that record - The theater itself is a big place for progressive rock bands, DeeExpus, Galahad, and bandmate Nolan's Shadowland among many others have recorded live offerings there, but's it's also a good relationship that **Barrett** has with the people involved that has helped make all this happen, "Tommy (Dziubiński) is a very good friend of mine," elaborates **Barrett**, "he runs Metal Mind productions and in Poland, after the wall came down there were a lot of people who were very skilled in stuff like radio stations and TV stations and editing suites, they could then take these skill to do different things, more interesting things than "state projects" they could use these skills for things like film making, or recording bands so there is this tremendous level of technical ability over there and really good work ethic. Tommy managed to find a theatre that he could make DVD's in cheaply and effectively with this kind of crew and it's been a very successful combination."

"(As for the Wyspianski Theater) It's a really nice place because it's a small theatre, so it feel like the audience are very close to you, it has two balconies as well as the seats downstairs so everyone is very close. It's a tiny bit quiet because it's a seated audience. If you play somewhere like Paris or Barcelona, you've got the audience right at the front so you can sense a lot more energy from a **Pendragon** gig at places like that. I would say at Katowice there is a slightly more mature, polite approach to the concerts which has got it's place and it's good and it's a nice thing to do."



It's known that the band are advocates against music piracy and any artists in their right minds are - as new technologies such as the Internet and CD burners caught the record industry off guard in the new millennium, many artists/bands have now begun to show their state of independence in an uncertain music industry so they can make money & keep on truckin' -

regardless of if a band is on a major or even an independent label, no one is immune. The band founded their own label in 1991 called Toff Records which was when the vinyl LP was going the way of the 8-track tape, now we are starting to say the same thing about CDs, "Well (the record industry) is going through some turmoil because of Illegal Downloading; obviously a record company that has sold records for 30 years and suddenly finds that people are downloading them instead of buying them is going to have a problem because their business is to sell records," says **Barrett**, "however if you are a band like **Pendragon** that has your own label you can incorporate concerts and merchandise into the whole equation so you are not just selling records, like with us now we are doing conventions, we're selling different kinds of merchandise, we're doing DVD's. It's hard to make a living out of doing concerts but if you do a concert it's a great way to then sell T-shirts, CD's and everything else so we have changed the way we work a little bit, but for a lot of record companies that's going to be very hard to do."

Most notably, the band's release of 2005's *Believe* marked a major turning point for the band - offering up a darker sound while shying away from the typical progressive rock stereotypes - most are aware that groups such as Frost\*, Gazpacho, Darwin's Radio, Tinyfish, & Lazuli are reinventing the genre into a more song-oriented melodic direction - **Pendragon** are one of the bands that have helped create this new wave of prog bands and the frontman himself does see this new movement happening, "It's like anything really, it's going to progress and change and more influences are going to come in. I do think that what I call "Standard Euro Prog" has become pretty staid and the basic regurgitation of Genesis has just become completely and utterly dull, using the same old sounds in the same old ways, with the same old phrasing, the same old things, there's nothing new. So with all these new bands there is a breath of fresh air coming in. I still think you can incorporate a Genesis or Pink Floyd kind of influence without sounding completely like them, I think some new bands have kicked some old bands up the butt a bit and that's a good step forward and it will continue to move forward if people are open minded."

There is a stronghold for progressive rock in Europe, many bands find themselves gracing the same pages alongside more commercial oriented artists, still though, it remains an underground entity - but at least it's not in obscurity, "There is a bit more mainstream press in places like France and Germany, or rock press at least, in Holland also there are more national things, Radio 3 in Poland has played us quite a lot. It's not mainstream as such, it's still a bit underground because most people in the general public just gravitate towards crappy pop music and stuff that is not really very demanding."

And finally, the new album that is on the horizon, not only do you have that, but some other endeavors that are in the thought process as well, "We're working on the new album and will continue to put in some tour dates," concludes **Barrett**, "but we have a lot of projects bubbling under we are thinking about bringing out some stuff on vinyl and maybe re-doing *Kowtow* as a DVD as the CD is out of print and we don't really want to re-press it we want to make something new of it so we might do that - concerts too as I said and we will really focus on a new album. When you write music it's not like as people say "album - tour, album - tour, album - tour" but it's not like that, every album is like starting again, for us because we run the label we have all the promotion, all the interviews, all the profile all the talking to people, all the promotion, the gamble, the excitement, the artwork, it's not just about writing some songs it's a whole thing and it's still incredibly exciting to do."

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