

NI ROCKS Interview with JAKE E from CYHRA

Written by NI ROCKS

Friday, 08 November 2019 02:57 - Last Updated Tuesday, 20 April 2021 22:52

Swedish band Cyhra release their second album, "No Halos In Hell", through Nuclear Blast Records on 15th November 2019. The band was formed by singer Jake E, following his departure from Amaranthe, when he teamed up with former In Flames guitarist Jesper Strömblad. The debut album "Letters to Myself" was released in October 2017 and the other members of the band are guitarist Euge Valovirta and drummer Alex Landenburg.

Cyhra will be joining label-mates Battle Beast on tour for four weeks commencing mid November and this includes a show in Dublin on 27th November as well as four UK dates. I had the opportunity to chat with Jake via Skype on 31st October and you can hear almost thirty minutes of that interview on the Friday NI Rocks Show this week. We actually chatted for about 45 minutes about everything from kids to records to NewYork, but I've edited down to focus on the band, the new album and future plans.

The Show is available from the NI Rocks MixCloud Page - <https://www.mixcloud.com/NIROcks/interview-with-jake-e-from-cyhra-on-the-friday-ni-rocks-show-8th-nov-2019/> - and can be read below.



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SCREAMING EAGLES – Save Me

PRETTY MAIDS – Undress Your Madness

TYGERS OF PAN TANG – Damn You!

DIRTY SHIRLEY – Here Comes The King

CYHRA – Karma

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Interview with JAKE E from CYHRA Pt1 (9 min)

CYHRA – Out of My Life

Interview with JAKE E from CYHRA Pt2 (13 min)

CYHRA – Battle From Within

Interview with JAKE E from CYHRA Pt3 (8 min)

CYHRA – Dreams Gone Wrong

KICKIN VALENTINA – Sweat

ABLAZE – Where's My Drink?

WILD HEAT – Wild Heat

WHITESNAKE – Heart of Stone

FOREIGNER – Juke Box Hero

EUROPE – Walk The Earth

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NIKKI STRINGFIELD – When the Devil Comes Down

REXORIA – Roaring

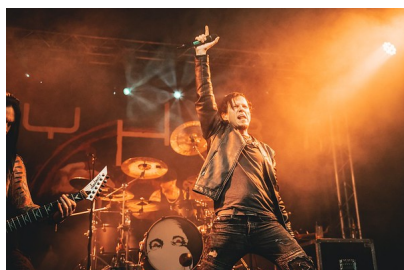
SAFIRE – Heartbreaker

REVOLUTION SAINTS – When the Heartache Has Gone

DANGER ZONE – Demon or Saint

SANGUINE – 5 Seconds to Midnight

BLUE OYSTER CULT – Don't Fear the Reaper



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NI ROCKS – Hi Jake, thanks for taking some time to talk to Rock Radio NI.

JAKE – Hello, thanks for having me.

NI ROCKS - Your band Cyhra release their second album, called “No Halos In Hell”, through Nuclear Blast Records on 15th November. You’ve worked once again with producer Jacob Hansen. Was there ever any consideration of working with somebody else?

JAKE – At one point in time I had the idea of what would happen if I did work with someone else, but I pretty quickly came to the conclusion (laughs) that it wouldn’t work. I’ve been working with Jacob for, I think, ten years now, for my former band and also other artists that I have co-produced and stuff like that. I’ve always went to Jacob. We’re so god friends, and we know exactly how to work with each other. Something very extraordinary would have to happen for me to change the producer to be honest.

NI ROCKS – On the first album “Letters to Myself” the album credits list yourself and Jesper as the song-writers. This time around were Euge and Alex more involved in the song-writing process?

JAKE – Yes, both. Euge actually wrote a couple of songs himself, that we later on worked on together. It was a really beneficial way to work, because Euge came in with his songs just as my inspirations started to come to the point where I hadn’t any left! When he came in with his songs, all of a sudden I didn’t have to start with a blank piece of paper. All of a sudden I had ideas in front of me that I could work with and that was really, really nice. Then in the studio, Alex did a really good job arranging his drum parts around our riffs and our songs. That was fantastic.

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NI ROCKS – I've watched your album trailers on YouTube; for the making of the album. The general vibe seems to be that the four members are more involved in the whole recording process this time and that there is very much a shared ownership? Would that be fair to say?

JAKE – Yeah absolutely. We are a great fucking team in Cyhra. When we first started the band the most important thing for us was to find members that had the same vision and the same heart in the music as me and Jesper had. We didn't really care if someone was the best drummer or best guitar player; what meant the most to us was that we really wanted to have a team of people that we could call our brothers. And that was exactly what happened. The only reason for Peter leaving us was that he didn't have time enough, because he had started a brewery at the same time. Luckily for him it went really well, but he couldn't be in two places at the same time. With the song writing on this album there have been no arguments, there has been no fights, there has been nothing like ' *yeah, but I want to have more pieces of my music in or whatever* '. We were working as a team and that is the only way and only formula I think to make something successful.

NI ROCKS – Do you think then that musically, "No Halos In Hell" will be more reflective of Cyhra moving forward than the first album?

JAKE – I think that "No Halos In Hell" is a natural progression to what we did on the first album. My main focus on this one was to.....I dissected the first one a lot, after a lot of touring on the first album and I realised that what we were missing on the first album was that not all the songs were suited to be played in a live environment. And by that I don't mean that the songs were bad in any way, it was just the fact that we had a lot of album songs – those songs that it is great to listen to in your car or just to have your headphones on sitting on your couch. For us as a band it felt weird to play too many songs that were mid tempo where we couldn't really control the live set in such a way that we couldn't work with the tempo of the show. At a show you want to start out with a bang and then take it down and then go up and end with a bang. We couldn't really do that with the first album, so my main focus for this one was to make an album that was more live friendly and also where the audience could interact more.

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NI ROCKS – How soon after the release of “Letters to Myself” in 2017 did you start working on the second album?

JAKE – We went on tour with Sabaton and Kreator in the States and that tour was just amazing for us. We got so much positive energy in so many ways. When we got home from that we had a couple of weeks, or maybe two months, where we didn't have any shows planned. So we started to write straight after that and that was just because we were so inspired, and as I said before, about the live feel, so that gave me a lot of energy. We never really talked about, that we needed to write new songs for an upcoming album; we were just in the mood....fuck, I have the inspiration so lets do it. You need some kind of special feeling in your body to create music and sometimes you just don't have it. You can sit with the guitar for days, months, weeks and nothing comes out of there. But these songs came out, I think it took us about two months to finish up the ground work of the album. Then of course it took months to finish them up. We did a lot on them in the studio, but you still need the skeleton so to speak.

NI ROCKS – The digipak CD version of “No Halos In Hell” features an extra disc with 6 additional tracks. Are those alternative versions of the album tracks or what is on the bonus disc?

JAKE – I think there are three versions of existing songs and I also think there are three songs that are original tracks. That came out of the fact that I was used to it being only me and Jesper writing the songs. I think I wrote about 12 songs and then Euge came in with songs. All of a sudden we had more songs that we had planned in the beginning. So instead of just picking the best twelve we decided to record the best fifteen. It's always good to have bonus material for different versions of the album – Japanese bonuses, digipaks whatever. Give something back to the fans that are dedicated and want to buy everything and give them something extra.

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NI ROCKS – The first track to be released from the new album was “Out of My Life” which we’ll play now. What can you tell us about that track?

JAKE – It’s a pretty funny story, because it was the first single, but us in the band, we were completely sure that we were going to release another song. I don’t really remember which song we thought was going to be the main single or the first single, but one thing was clear. We did not pick that ourselves, and that was the label. They said its “Out of My Life” and we were like, Ok! From my experience in the music business, I always pick the wrong song! So, I just said I trust you guys – do your job! And it turned out to be a really good choice.

{youtube}5IMNEIvE_hA{/youtube}

NI ROCKS – On the same day that the new album is released you head out on tour with label-mates Battle Beast. That includes some UK dates and a gig in Dublin on 27th November. Is the focus for that tour on growing the fanbase as much as promoting the new album?

JAKE – Yeah absolutely for us. We need to grow our fanbase right now. Obviously we have a lot of fans around the world already, but Battle Beast are way bigger than us and it’s a great opportunity for us to show what we’re capable of in a live setting. It’s pretty amazing that a new band like us who have just released one album, I think we’ve already done 80 shows on the first album. Not that many debut bands does that and that has been really good for us. Having the opportunity now to do a full blown European tour with such a great band as Battle Beast is fantastic. We never covered Europe on a real tour on the first album. We only did a full tour in the US and then we did all the festivals, so it’s going to be really good. There are a lot of countries where we are playing for the first time, especially the UK. I think we have like 8 shows over there, so that is really, really nice. It’s going to be very interesting to see how the response is coming from the UK audience.

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NI ROCKS – Have you played in Dublin before?

JAKE – I played Dublin with Amaranthe once and that was really good.

NI ROCKS - You'll get a great reception. We always appreciate bands that come across from England to play either Dublin or Belfast. A lot of bands don't make that journey over, so it's always appreciated when they do.

JAKE – Yeah absolutely. It is a little bit of an off-route, but I'm really happy to go there.

NI ROCKS – Presumably you'll be bringing copies of the new album on tour. Will you be doing any meet and greet opportunities for fans and giving them a chance to get some merchandise signed or whatever?

NI ROCKS – We always try to go out to the merchandise. I am one of those few people in this business I think that don't believe in this VIP thing. I hate the whole VIP treatment of fans, because for me it sorts out the rich fans from the regular fans and I have never, never liked that. When I was still in Amaranthe I made sure to instead make a fan club which cost close to nothing and all the money that you paid for the fan club went back to you in special gifts. So the fan club is run with no revenue at all – if you pay 20 Euros, you will have 20 Euros back in valuables from the band that no one else has; and you also get free meet and greet whenever we played, so I think that is a way better situation. I've seen bands take like 150 Euros for meet and greet and I think that is so fucking scary.

NI ROCKS – Yeah, I'm with you there! I hate those paid meet and greets.

JAKE – I understand bands like Kiss; they are only in this for the money. They don't do this because they think it's fun to be 70 years old and

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touring. They do it just to refill their bank accounts. I can understand that they charge like \$1,500 for a meet and greet. But for upcoming bands to charge ridiculous sums – I think that sucks.

NI ROCKS – What are the band's tour plans for next year? Obviously you've got the European dates coming up. Are there plans for any festival appearances or headline tours?

JAKE – I just hope that this album will become as much of a success as our debut album was and that our fan base increases. That we create some kind of demand for us to come round and play. If I could choose myself, I'd like to go on another European tour in the fall or in the spring, and then all the festivals in the summer and head over to the States and maybe Japan and Australia. Cover those grounds for the fall! Try to play as much as we possibly can until my kid says no! (laughs)

NI ROCKS – You mentioned the previous US tour. I take it that the band is getting a good reaction internationally and not just in Europe? You're getting good feedback everywhere?

JAKE – The States with Sabaton and Kreator was fantastic. The response was amazing. Sabaton is big in the States, as they are everywhere else, but usually when you open up for a bigger band you start to play two or two and a half hours before the headline act goes on stage. Usually the floor is like half full when you start to play and it starts to fill up during your set. With Sabaton, it started like that, maybe on the first show, then it was full. The rumours spread about the Sabaton fans that we were something to check out, so we had a full house and the audience were really into us. I'm really thankful to Sabaton for bringing us along on that one.

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NI ROCKS – Your first album was released by Spinefarm Records, but you've now moved to Nuclear Blast for the new album. What attracted you to Nuclear Blast?

JAKE – We got an offer from Nuclear Blast and we had the opportunity to actually switch labels. I've been on Universal and Spinefarm Records for eight or nine years and they've always done a really great job and everything. But you know how it is – you have your day job and you think it's fun and you like your friends at work and stuff like that, but your job turns into this thing that you just do! That's the same thing with being on the same record label for too long. I think you need fresh blood that comes in with fresh ideas and stuff like that behind your back rather than walking in the same footsteps album after album. I've nothing but good words to say about Universal and Spinefarm and all the time we had there. There's no bad blood whatsoever between us; we just realised that when this offer came from the world's biggest metal label; it was something that I always wanted to do, work with Nuclear Blast, since I was a kid. We decided to take it and so far the work that they have done has just been fantastic.

NI ROCKS – I noticed that your previous band Amaranthe have actually just changed label as well and moved to the same label. Do you think there is any chance that the two bands might work together at some stage?

JAKE – I think that door has closed to be honest. I wish them all the luck in their career and hope that they are successful in what they are doing.

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NI ROCKS – The second track to be released from the new album was “Battle From Within” which we’ll play next. Again, could you tell us something about that track?

JAKE – Yeah, “Battle From Within” is a really emotional song for me. It’s about my brother who passed away ten years ago in a tragic accident that he decided himself so to say. It was really, really hard for me and instead of coping with my emotions, I locked the door and threw away the key, so to say. I thought that that was the best way to cope with this thing. You know the stupid thing that you say – ‘man up’ – that’s what I thought was the obvious thing to do, but apparently it was a stupid fucking decision because the truth will come bite you in your fucking ass. And that’s what it did. I was writing songs for this album and when I started to do “Battle From Within” I was sitting at a piano playing and singing, recording everything that I did. I was singing some jibberish bullshit words – just things that come out of my mouth – to make a vocal line; an audible. When I listened back to it and what I’d sung I thought what the fuck is this – I’m singing about my brother. That was crazy and it hit me like a fucking fist in my chest. Like what the fuck am I doing – am I really doing this now! I had this, and it sounds weird to say; I had this therapy talk with myself. Debating this back and forth – like what the fuck are you doing, but I think it’s a good idea, but no you can’t do it! (Laughs)

I also spoke about it with the rest of the guys in the band and they said ‘you should totally do this’. For me, writing stuff like this turned out to become almost to be the same thing as when you go to a psychiatrist, but instead I used my musical skills and my vocals and my song-writing skills to process my own feelings in a way. When that was done I felt lighter so it was really, really good for me. I guess that I would never have been able to do this if this had been a year or two after his passing. It took a couple of years to do it. The songs means a lot to me.

When we were supposed to do the video for the track, the label asked me to do a lyric video. But, me personally, I don’t like lyric videos. I think that its something you maybe look at once and then the album is out and it just falls into that black hole where no one will ever come back to it. I actually had a talk to my girlfriend...my fiancée it is...and she said why don’t you involve the fans in it. This is a matter that so many people around the world could relate to. Suicide is a big thing and mental illness is a big thing. Make something for them and together with them, where you could spread the message and maybe change the outcome for someone. So I asked our fans through our social media channels to see if anyone would like to participate. The response that we got was fucking crazy. More than 400 e-mails came in from people wanting to help us out. People were sending me video files with pieces of the lyrics and I cut them together. I was fucking crying when I saw the final result, even though I had cut the whole thing together. I did that myself. When it was done and you’re digging into it so much. When you’re doing it you’re not really focusing. Then when I pressed play and check the final version I was like, holy fuck, this is emotional. Obviously for me as well.

A long take on what I feel about the track, but it means a lot.

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{youtube} NPruk6hRlc{/youtube}

NI ROCKS – We've talked about the two tracks released so far ("*Out of My Life*" and "*Battle From Within*"). There are ten other tracks on the album. Which of those would you describe as the most challenging in terms of writing and production and why?

JAKE – This is the funny thing with this band. From the start, music-wise, nothing has been hard. If I'd been sitting in my studio making demos or pre-productions of songs and felt that I don't really feel the vibe, I'd just throw that thing away and start on a new thing. That's what I usually do when I write music. If you don't have the feeling that this is going to be a great song, more or less directly, then the song is probably not good enough to work on. But one thing that was funny on this album was that we had the opposite thing! When we were recording the album in the studio, in the final process, we were done more or less with all the songs. But I just felt that we were missing a song. So I went in and started to write a new one and it took me twenty minutes. I was done with what I used to call the skeleton of the song. I shared it with the other guys and they filled in their ideas and their melodies and so on. An hour later Alex had recorded his drums and the song was already in production for the guitars and bass. That is going to be our third single for this album! You always try and find those holes in the story, where the artists were struggling or having problems or whatever; but in our case it was the opposite. We had things that went too good instead. (laughs).

NI ROCKS – One of the album trailers released on YouTube was about how the four band members got into music in the first place. In your video, you mentioned that you got into singing after your hopeful career in ice hockey was dashed. What were your musical influences at that point and how have those developed over the years?

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JAKE – I was a pretty good hockey player and when that career ended I looked at myself in the mirror and said what else can you do that is not a real job! And I thought, yeah, rock star sounds fun (laughs). That was my take on it. I've always been one of those people that I never see the impossible – I always see the possible in things. And I also believe that if you strive enough for something it will come out like you pictured it in the end. I don't know what I would have been. My next step in life now is to become an actor and I recently just filmed my first movie which is going to come out next year. So now I'm into acting as well. I don't know what I'm going to be after this! Maybe an astronaut or pilot or something like that! That's next on my list.

NI ROCKS – What were your influences when you first started singing then? Who did you look up to as a singer?

JAKE – I've been a metal-head my whole life, so music was nothing new for me. I started to work in a record store when I was fifteen years old. Music has always been close to my heart, but I never really sang. Michael Kiske was my role model and my god when I grew up. When I was trying to learn how to sing...first of all I lied to people that said they needed a singer and told them, yeah I'm as good as Michael Kiske. But apparently I wasn't, but apparently they also sucked on their instruments and we were bad. We climbed that ladder together! Unfortunately none of the other guys from that band managed to make a living out of music; but it's thanks to them that gave me the chance to sing in the first place and get to where I am today.

NI ROCKS – The new album is of course being released on vinyl as well as CD and download, although I think it's just on black vinyl and there are no colour versions. Have you got caught up in the growing appeal for vinyl or are you more of a Spotify and digital person?

JAKE – This is really, really funny. Since I started to work in music professionally, like twenty years ago, I've stopped listening to music. I don't even own a Spotify account. That might seem strange but whenever there is music at home – it's my kids or girlfriend playing music, not me. I'm more of a physical guy and I really, really like that vinyl has come back into the scene again. I don't even own a vinyl player, but they look really good on the shelf (laughs). The format is so much better than CD. If you dropped a CD on the floor it was trashed!

NI ROCKS – I've really got into vinyl again. I don't play it that much, but it looks great.

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JAKE – If I buy a vinyl, which I do sometimes, I use them as art because they look so great. What I was going to say was that I probably had about 3,500 CDs stacked around my warehouse, but I don't even know where they are. They'll be under all the kids stuff. When I move to a house I'm going to try to have them somewhere in my man-cave (laughs). I don't even have a guitar in my apartment because I can't fit it there and even if I would fit it there my kids would be there and bump it down on the floor. My guitars are \$4,000 guitars – I don't want them to go like ..Oops!

NI ROCKS – We'll get back to the new album again. If we were to play one more track from the album now, which would it be and why?

JAKE – I would have liked to play, it's fucking hard, but I think you should play "Dreams Gone Wrong". That was actually the song that I was talking about before – the song that took an hour to complete, which is going to be a single. It's a really catchy song with great melodies. I call it the Hymn song because I tried to make the verses as simple as I possibly could. The whole verse is one chord over different structures. I let the structures work out the whole vibe instead of switching around tons of different chord progressions, I let the scales determine what I'm singing over it and that's really cool.

NI ROCKS – That's all the questions that I have for you. Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us.

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JAKE – Thank you so much for having me. It was great.

{youtube}Dcy7wN1pDsA{/youtube}