

AFSKY – STORIES ABOUT THE LITTLE MAN WHO HAS TO WORK FOR THE HIGHER CLASS UNTIL HE DIES

On May 12, Danish one-man black metal band Afsky will see its second album *“Ofte jeg drømmer mig død”* released through Vendetta Records. I had a chat with composer and mastermind Ole Pedersen Luk about the lyrical content of his new record, love poems and his view on the current state of the world. (JOKKE)



Hi Ole, how are you doing in these crazy times of Covid 19-madness? Are Afsky activities affected in one way or another by this epidemic outbreak?

It sure are crazy times, but thanks I'm fine...but like the meme said: *“I wish it were zombies!”* The release is planned for May 12, so it's not sure to say if there will be a negative effect, many things could happen, but I'm afraid this thing will not be over soon.

***“Ofte jeg drømmer mig død”* (*“Often I dream myself dead”*) is a very good successor for 2018's *“Sorg”* album. Besides maybe a little bit less real folk influences, the mixture of atmospheric traditional black metal with more doomy parts is still intact. Do you think there is a difference in general feeling between the two records?**

Thank you first of all! I haven't thought about it, but maybe I was in a sadder state of mind when I wrote *“Sorg”* compared to this album. But the overall feeling when I write, and especially when I record the vocals is almost like this trance feeling sometimes. Also, therefore, many of the vocal recordings on the albums are first takes that I kept because of their almost surprisingly immediate rawness.

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Without labelling your music as DSBM, your music evokes emotions such as grief, sadness, loneliness and despair. Is this a reflection of your everyday feelings and state of mind or is it only a mirror of the soul when writing music?

I'm quite a happy person in general. I enjoy being outside and exploring stuff. I am happy that I can sell records and play shows. I don't complain at all. Of course, like every other sane person, I feel worried about the state of the earth, the environment and governments around the world. A lot of my anger comes with the frustration of watching nature being destroyed and wealth of the few that is being put over human lives. The usual stuff that makes you angry to watch, but is hard to change or do something about.

In the outro of the new record, we hear sad acoustic guitars accompanied by a sample of pouring rain, but also a bird chirping. Could this be a sign that you are confident that there is light at the end of the tunnel? Or are you very pessimistic about the general state of the world?

You are not far off! I actually did put the bird sounds in and made the rain stop at the end, as a sign that there is hope in the end. In the lyrics by H.C. Andersen, used in the last song, he sings about the place he wants to be buried when he dies. A beautiful place near the ocean, where children will play on his grave. Actually, the phrase with the children playing on the grave is left out, because I used the first take and this line didn't fit in when I tried the first time.

It also goes well with the ending of the lyrics in "*Tyende sang*". The song is about the uprising of the farmers and servants who finally got some rights in 1917. It's written as a hymn to them, to stand together and fight and take back what is theirs. The last phrases go something like: "*Then finally, happy we can plow our land, when we are freed from our poorly lives, the thousand years night of enslavement.*"

So actually, many of the songs have a "happy ending", even though it's also about the struggle against suppression and dying. But I'm quite pessimistic. The people capable of changing all the wrongs, don't seem to care. The losers are the 3rd world countries, nature and its wildlife. It's sad to watch.



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Can you also enjoy party music or happy tunes when being in the right mood?

Sure, I listen to a lot of different styles. I can listen to all kinds of music when it's in the right setting. I'm not picky about styles or genres, only about bad music and poorly written songs. I mostly get inspiration for new songs from other styles than metal.

Lyrical inspiration was found in old Danish poems and texts by artists such as H.C. Andersen, Jeppe Aakjær and Emil Aarestrup. Did you literally use full texts and poems or only parts that were adapted and/or complemented with own writings?

I did for the most part. The verse for the first and the fourth song on the album were between 3 and 5 times longer in the original version, so I had to cut these down. "*Imperia*" was cut short only a couple of lines, as well as "*Tyende sang*", the last two shorter ones, are sung as they are.



What attracts you in poetry?

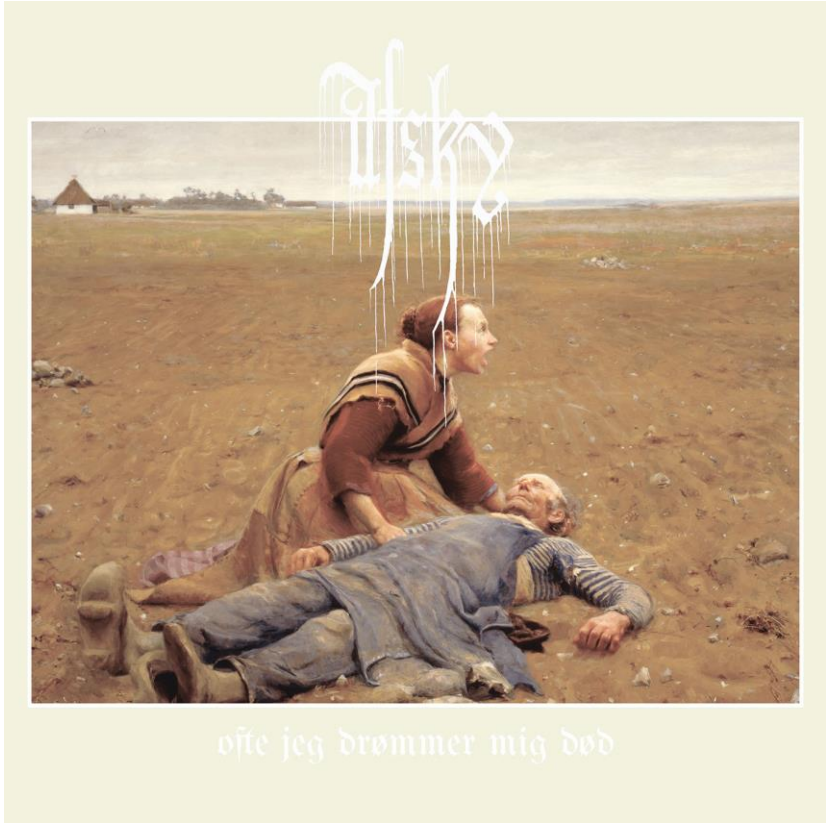
The old words that are not used anymore and the grammar. The way they formed the sentences was so much more beautiful back then. So basically, the inspiration I get from that, is what attracts me.

The lyrics of the album closing track "*Angst*" ('fear') are based on the work of Emil Aarestrup who is considered as one of the most genuine Danish love poets. His style is easing, ironic, witty and elegant but sometimes with a hidden fear of death and vanity, what is also noticeable in Afsky's music. Have you ever written a love poem for a lady?

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Not that I recall, but I have written a song for a girl once when I started playing guitar. I guess the song was pretty simple and kinda corny, but ok for the effort and the shaking hands when performing.

Just as on the debut, the cover artwork depicts a painting of a dead or dying man. This time, you chose for H.A. Bredekilde's painting "Udslidt" ('Worn out'). The motif of this painting fits well with several of the texts for the record, which tell about the little man, who must work for the higher classes in society until he dies. Is this concept in one way or another also a reaction to today's society? I mean, still many farmers work very hard for their everyday meal but are being squeezed by the big retailers of this world who are only focused on short term profits instead of worrying who will provide meat, butter and milk to future generations.



Sure, there are politics in at least two of the songs. A critique of the way things still are, even though the lyrics are of older date. It's still the poor guy who has to work his ass off, but still gets squeezed in the end. I mean things are better than then, at least where I live, but I also consider myself being pretty lucky growing up where I did.

Jeppe Aakjær – whose poems you also used - was known for writings that reflected his concern for the impoverished and for describing rural existence. He was a literary figure of transition between old rural culture and modern socialist agitation, and a castigator of society. Are you socially committed and is this something that is fed by your own personal experience and life?

That's true, but I'm not committed to this in any other way than when I read the song he wrote, when searching for it online. It fitted perfectly into the concept I was working on, and that's how I ended up using it.

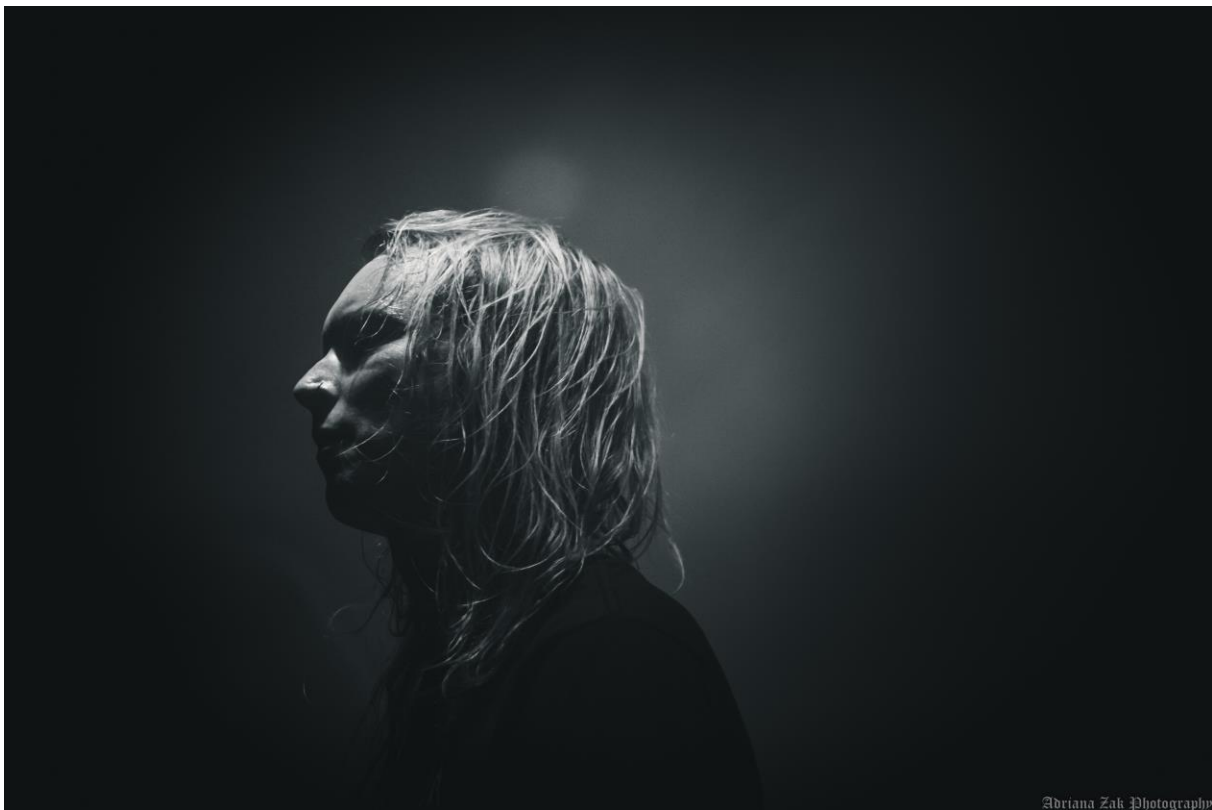
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Afsky is merely known as your solo-project but for live concerts, you extended the line-up with session members. Is there a point in the song writing process where you involve other people into it to get some feedback?

I'm going all solo in this project. That is what gives me the drive. That I don't have to respond to any feedback, but can follow my own ideas. I'm happy about people caring about my work, but basically, I write the music to make myself happy so to say. To get the songs and the feeling out of my system and put it together into something I can enjoy listening to.

You are also a member of Solbrud where you are in charge of vocals and guitars. Is there anything about to happen in terms of new music in the Solbrud-camp?

We played two gigs in an old water tower in Copenhagen, which is becoming a live album. Beside that we are also working on new material for our next album. Can't say much yet, but we hope we are ready to record at the end of the year.



(c) Adriana Zak

I have seen you play two times with Solbrud and one time with Afsky in Antwerp's Music City. Do you remember this underground venue and what do you think of the general response that you received each time when playing in Belgium?

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I remember the place very well. I also remember this strange feeling I had being back again, but with a different band. The running order from the night we played with Solbrud and Wildernessking is still on the wall in the back room. Nice place though it could use a backstage room haha. The shows have always been killer. Good crowded place, super warm, no stage, I love it! And the people have always been super friendly. I remember trading a record for a good bag of weed the first time we went there.

How did the Afsky tour with Spectral Wound go in general?

It was a very present tour. Spectral Wound were super fun to hang with, nice guys. The tour also went well. We met a lot of nice people around Europe and played a lot of cool venues with other bands also. All in all, a pretty good tour. I was looking forward for the next one with Solbrud together with Uada, Grift and velnias, but sadly it got cancelled.



(c) Void Revelations

Will a tour be planned for the new album once everyday life will return to a normal state?

Let's see what happens. I have nothing planned for now besides the release (hopefully) and a couple of Danish festivals. But of course, me and my crew hope for another Europe tour soon.

Denmark has always been in the shadows of the other Scandinavian countries when talking about black metal. It was the same for Iceland, but this scene has been really prolific the past few years. In recent times, I also noticed a lot of movement in the Danish scene with Afsky, Solbrud, Serpents Lair and the very productive Korpsånd Circle. Do you think Danish black metal can or will be the next "big thing" in black metal?

I don't know. It's hard to say. The Canadian guys we toured with already knew a bunch of the Danish bands. And I know Vendetta is also starting to take interest in a lot of the Danish bands, so maybe it's time for an uprising. I mean, there really are a lot of good bands at the moment, whose music deserves to be heard. Let's hope so!

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