



GEGENWIND

PORTAL DLA FANÓW NIEMIECKIEJ MUZYKI

Beginning of April we had the opportunity to visit Jena along with our friends from [Feuerräder](#). Jena as a city was not our main target though, as we were heading towards the gig of Rammstein Tribute Band – Völkerball. As soon as we reached our destination, we saw how big the venue is – Sparkassen Arena is in fact just a bit smaller than Spodek in Katowice (Silesian venue has more sitting places). The scene itself is massive and makes quite an impression: at least two levels, lots of steel and many fire-producing machines. The whole construction is strongly inspired by Rammsteins “Reise Reise” Tour. René Anlauff – Völkerballs vocalist and Heldmaschine band frontman has greeted us. According to the plan he and Dirk Oechsle will be answering our questions in the arranged interview, but right now let’s focus on the show.

During our presence in Sparkassen Arena, stage and pyro technicians were checking the effects and making sure all works properly. After our interview René gave us a little tour around the backstage. He told us that some of the steel constructions on stage were made by himself. For example the counting screens for “Ramm 4” song. Also – bands logo is his creation. The vocalist has shown us where band members enter the stage and also what tricks lay behind some of the special effects. For example – in order to have blood during “Mein Teil” they use capsules with some sort of red paint inside. During our small tour some stage technicians came to René with shahid belt and new coat used for „Zerstören” song. When asked how many people does he expect to appear tonight, René replied that around 1200 will be in Jena that night – and that is not even the sold out show. Two next events however – two concerts in Braunschweig performed day after day – were in fact sold out. 1000 people per show came to see the band.

When it comes to relationship between tribute bands and original bands the best way to describe it will be “mutual benefit”. And here is why. Rammstein Tribute Bands in Germany are very popular – especially the biggest of them: Völkerball, Stahlzeit and Feuerengel. Tickets for their shows are selling very well, bands announce their live dates 1 year ahead and they are booking venues even 3 years ahead. Every tribute band has between 30 (Feuerengel) and more than 100 (Stahlzeit) gigs per year, so if you do your math with crowd size and ticket prices the result will be very satisfying. Also for members of Rammstein because for every show of every tribute band (and there is more of them) the special fee needs to be paid. We will not share any details though - gentlemen do not speak about money.

Apart from tribute bands activity, their band members have their own bands. Half of Völkerballs members is in Heldmaschine, members of Stahlzeit are Märzfeld after hours and boys from Feuerengel are working as session and studio musicians for various projects.



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The concert in Jena lasted for more than 2 hours. We can say that it was longer and more “overall” version of Rammsteins last summer shows. Setlist is below:

1. Ramm 4
2. Der Meister
3. Feuer Frei!
4. Spiel Mit Mir
5. Stein Um Stein
6. Zerstören
7. Herzeleid
8. Halleluja
9. Wiener Blut
10. Waidmanns Heil
11. Haifisch
12. Rammstein
13. Du Riechst So Gut
14. Mein Herz Brennt
15. Asche zu Asche
16. Spieluhr
17. Mein Teil
18. Ich Will
19. Amerika
20. Du Hast
21. Ich tu dir weh
22. Ohne Dich
23. Bück Dich
24. Sonne
25. Engel

Show itself was maybe not as spectacular as Rammstein one, but lots of fire and light effects were balanced very well in more than 2 hour show. Völkerball – as we mentioned previously – had their scene show inspired by “Reise Reise” tour – especially gigs in Nimes that were released on DVD. Even during „Du Hast” René compliments the crowd by saying „Très bien, Très bien” – these words are found on abovementioned Rammstein DVD.

If you want to know more details about performing as tribute band, about the favorite Rammstein songs and about what is forbidden to perform, then René and Dirk will tell you in the interview below. Please also see our gallery – we have covered shows from Jena and Braunschweig.



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1. How is that you have become a tribute band? Were you Rammstein fans?

René: I never wanted to cover bands, because I like to make my own music. But seven years after I finished playing in my first band, the drummer called me again and ask if I wanted to be rich and famous (laughs). He said that he has a cover band and I should take a look before I make any decision, even if I don't want to sing covers and I am skeptical. The band had a name – Vampire - and made special show (vampire's teeth, blood, black clothes etc), but they played Top 40 starting from Robbie Williams and finishing with Rammstein. I was actually interested only in this show, but I agreed to cooperate with them. The band survived for about 9 years, but I already used to get money by doing music, so I decided to make it further with other band and then I sang only Rammstein. People were really astonished how similar my voice is to Lindemann's and that was also a turning point for me, because I realized how these two voices fit to themselves. That's how it all happened.

Dirk: Mainly as a side project, because in the Vampire band they played about 120 shows a year and part of the band decided to make less gigs because of the family and things like this. And to maintain this, we decided to make a side project - to fill up this gap.

René: There were people who had a full-time jobs and it was just too much for them, to play 120 shows and the other half of the band lived from the money earned with gigs and that's how the Völkerball was born.

Dirk: So we started as a side project but it grows so fast...

2. Rammstein is well known for their stage show – have you ever got any problems with controlling all of these elements? Were there any dangerous situations with pyrotechnics?

René: Let's say when it's burning - it burns (laughs). But, seriously we had like 3 accidents, but they were little. We learned a lot from our masters - Rammstein - also how to handle a fire.

Dirk: We also have a good pyro-company which takes care of all these stuff and safety issues, so it doesn't happen often, but sometimes, of course, things goes wrong, but we were never really hurt.

René: Once during soundcheck, I had in my hands the bucket with pyro effect inside and this effect was supposed to be on the other side. So when I was lifted up and start pouring from the bucket it all went on my hand, but I couldn't throw it away, because Andi was already on the bathtub under



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my elevator. So the pyro burned my hand and I had really big bubbles on my fingers. I still have the scar.

3. You have mentioned, that before the shows you prepare yourselves in mirror-rooms – just like ballerinas do and that learning how to act like Rammstein members took you 4-5 years. Do you still need to prepare so intensely or you just got used to it?

René: No, not really. Currently, we mostly check the snippets on Youtube and check our moves, effects and so on. But we don't have to prepare so much anymore.

Dirk: We prepared at the beginning really intensely, we had one year of pretty intense rehearsals with the mirror etc, but now it feels natural. So we don't have to prepare that much.

4. René, do you catch yourself on making Tills movements during Heldmaschine gig? Do you sometimes forget, what stage persona are you?

René: Well, there are some people saying that I am like Lindemann also in Heldmaschine, but I don't really agree with that. People knowing me from Völkerball sometimes don't realize that during Völkerball shows I use also my own moves, not only Lindemann's and they are connecting my moves with Rammstein and then later see Rammstein in Heldmaschine. I never did this typical Lindemann's movements (Till hammer) during Heldmaschine gig. So if people see something you said - they want to see it.

5. Performing which Rammstein song is the most fun for you? Is there a song you don't like?

René: Well, the song "Rammstein" for example - it's very static. When it comes to songs giving us fun, there is for example "Der Meister" for which we stole the move from Oliver Riedel, but we are doing it all together (moving left and right with his toes as seen for example on "Der Meister" performance during Bizarre Festival in 1996).

6. Which song was the most difficult to perform? Didn't you need to throw something out of the show, because it was impossible or too difficult to perform?

René: Some songs we cannot perform, because of the show connected to them. For example, in some locations, the ceiling is too low and we cannot use the elevator ("Ich tu dir weh") and then we are exchanging the songs in setlist.

Dirk: Exactly, sometimes the possibilities in the venue are limited. So you can't do all you want.

René: It also doesn't make sense to perform such songs without a show.



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Dirk: So when it comes to difficulty with performance - there are only venue connected reasons, not our skills etc.

René: I think we are all enough professional to perform all the Rammstein songs, the only question is always - can we recreate a show.

7. There are lots of Rammstein songs, that are performed during every show for many years ("Feuer Frei", "Links 234", "Keine Lust"). Coverbands are more flexible here. Do you have any favorite song from those rarely or never played live by Rammstein?

Dirk: We try to show the whole Rammstein picture, their history with our shows, so we are playing songs from the very first album to the latest one. So we have a big range of songs and it's also I think good mixture of it. That's what the tribute band is for in my opinion.

René: We also play longer than Rammstein - I mean show is longer. Our has about 2.5h

Dirk: We also play some songs other tribute band don't and I have my favorite rarely played song even by Rammstein - it's "Bück dich", because of the show. When it comes to other songs then good example can be "Spieluhr"

René: "Spiel mit mir", "Der Meister", "Herzeleid"

Dirk: We also did "Spring" for a long time, but today we don't have it on our setlist.

René: Anyway we always have to play all the hits. The audience just wants it all the time.

Dirk: There are songs you can't just throw out like "Sonne" or "Du hast". Those are songs you have to have on the setlist otherwise they'll kill you (laughs). But we often do changes in the first block of songs. Here we don't have so many hits, so we can easily make some changes and we do it really with pleasure because we are also trying to keep things fresh for ourselves. Just to not play every night the same... But there are two songs I would love to play and it's "Donaukinder" and "Dalai Lama". We even rehearsed them but we found out it's hard to transport all the dynamics in those songs. It doesn't come out like on the record. On the record, it's huge, ass-kicking but performed live it loses all the dynamics. Maybe the reason why Rammstein is not performing them live might be exactly the same.

René: It might be also an additional answer to the previous question - what is too difficult to perform. It's really hard to make it like on the record.



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Dirk: It just doesn't slap you in the face like CD record does and as you like to do it. Somehow it doesn't work.

8. Do you also perform your own versions of Rammstein demos? What I mean are songs like Jeder Lacht, Eisenmann or Schwarzes Glas.

René: Well we are allowed, I think to play them, but I don't think the audience wants to hear it.

9. Is there any other song that you cannot perform as tribute band?

Dirk: There are some songs we can't perform like "Stripped" or "Tier". Rammstein asked us not to, because of copyrights.

René: It's a really difficult business you know?

Dirk: Because Rammstein does the copyrights for themselves...

René: But only for live shows.

Dirk: They don't do it with the GEMA, they have an office in Berlin and do it for themselves. We cannot also play "Das Modell". It is also a problem for the local promoter because once you perform such song which is in GEMA, he has to pay twice. Once to Rammstein directly, once to GEMA and it works like lumpsum and you don't pay for one song, you pay for the whole gig during which you performed at least one song in GEMA.

10. Do you want to perform with a show focused only on songs from just one album? "Sehnsucht" anniversary for example?

Dirk: That's how we started - the name is Völkerball, and we wanted to capture the Völkerball show. Because for us that was the best show Rammstein ever did.

René: But here we are talking about the whole concerts, with different songs in it. But playing a gig focused only on one CD wouldn't be a good idea - now our shows have about 2.5h and with one album it would be like 1h?

Dirk: It also doesn't show the whole picture of Rammstein, so I would say no. If Rammstein would do that - it's a different cup of tea, but the role of a tribute band is different in my opinion.

11. How Rammstein reacts to cover bands? Do you have any contact with them?



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Dirk: Yes we have, they invited us actually to the stadium tour.

René: Well, we don't have a direct contact to the members, we are contacting their management

Dirk: Exactly, René and Tilmann (bassist) were once in Berlin, but that was a nice meeting.

René: You know they have a good and a bad cop (laughs), but it was a good meeting and mostly about copyrights.

Dirk: But they know about us, Flake even mentioned us in his last book ("Heute hat die Welt Geburtstag"). So they know of course about the tribute bands.

René: They even said we are like prophets of Rammstein - we're playing in areas they will never play again, because they are too big now. So we actually generate Rammstein fans every time when we're playing.

12. So you plan to see Rammstein's summer's stadium tour?

Dirk: We are going to be in Hannover.

René: And they invited us.

13. Have you seen "Deutschland"? What do you think about it?

Dirk: We saw the video and it is a killer, about the song - well I have to listen to it a few times more I guess.

René: I think also lyrics are very good. It's a good idea, but for me the song itself is a slow grower, it's not catching me. I also don't know why they're singing out of tune (backing vocals) - I think they liked it, but I just don't know why. When it comes to video - for me it is a whole new level, you know? To reach this level is like impossible for anyone else.

14. Do you think they crossed the line with the topics shown in the video?

Dirk: No... it's just part of the promo. Now every newspaper writes about them...

René: You know... if there is one German, who can't see those pictures then I would say he/she is the



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one who wants to forget what happened. So I think it is good to show it. For me it doesn't matter if someone says "they only wanted to make money with that". C'mon they make money with everything (laughs), so making such video was good idea - just to show all these pictures to others. To show the history of Germany. To answer the whole world, why we can't love Germany, we would like to, but we can't. It's a really good message. This is also why in my opinion the lyrics are good.

Dirk: For me it's a little bit too much Anne Clarke. That was my first thought when I heard that song.

15. Is there Rammstein song you wish they made video to?

Dirk: Donaukinder, because it's my favorite *laughs*

René: I think it doesn't matter which song, they always make very good videos so I would celebrate every video.

16. What do you think about Rammstein's members side-projects? (Lindemann, Emigrate)

René: I think they exist because every member has his own wishes about the music they make. This is a sign that they don't fully agree with direction for Rammstein, they want to make more. Rammstein just doesn't fulfill them. This is also a reason why we are doing Heldmaschine, playing as tribute band is not enough.

Dirk: They want probably to express themselves and show their own ideas. I think that's the main reason for doing side projects. Expressing the things, they cannot incorporate in Rammstein. I think it's a good thing.

René: Yes, I think for everybody it's a good thing to go own way, to realize where we are standing alone. Lindemann did it, Kruspe did it, but they are both not so successful as Rammstein, so they know where they come from and where their place is. But maybe it doesn't matter for them...

Dirk: Maybe they just wanted to realize their own ideas, which doesn't fit to Rammstein.

Thank you very much 😊