



# GEGENWIND

PORTAL DLA FANÓW NIEMIECKIEJ MUZYKI

## Interview with Hämatom

*During our stay at Sommer am Kiez Festival in Augsburg we had the chance to see the Hämatom concert. We've also taken some pictures of this event, but before it happened, we managed to speak with Ost – guitarist and text-author with Polish roots. Interview itself was planned to take just 20 minutes, but in the end it expanded nearly three times and it showed us that behind the mask you can find a friendly and chatty person named Jacek. We were talking about bands 15-year anniversary, Poland (where he wants to perform) and upcoming "Maskenball" album, which is promised to have lots of surprises. Enjoy your read.*

***GWP: Political commentary is almost always present in your lyrics. As their author do you observe what is going on in Poland as well?***

Ost: Of course I am. I am a very political person, so I pay attention to the situation everywhere, in Europe, in Poland – because it's where I come from. I have always enjoyed my visits in Poland – I do feel half Polish actually. I have to admit though, that for 2 years my visits are not that pleasant. I have to argue with almost entire family about our political views and explain – for example to my favorite uncle – why I don't like Kaczyński and his opinion about gay people, freedom or refugees – it's terrible for me. I was 10 when I moved to Germany and for 30 years I have always gladly visited Poland. However, since maybe 2017 I don't want to visit it that much. I wish it would change – and I think it will – but I cannot understand how it is possible that so many people votes for such person.

***GWP: Do you see similar problems for both nations – Polish and German?***

Ost: I think we have different problems than these 10-15 years ago (unemployment etc.). It's not the economy, but refugees are the main problem – to be precise: the matter on how West is supposed to handle them. There are 99% or 99,99% Catholics in Poland and despite that they would allow other people to drown in the sea. I am glad that there are not so many people against refugees in Germany, however I think parties like AFD have too high ratings.

***GWP: Are there any topics you consider too controversial or too "swampy" and you don't sing about them?***

Ost: No. It's like with jokes. I know, that lots of people think differently, but I think, that you can joke about everything. That is the reason I think, that you also can write songs about everything. Of course – you need to be careful with it – for example we would not want to polarize people with the Nazi/SS themes. I personally like Rammstein very much, but I think they play with these motifs too much – like in "Stripped" video. I think they are going too far in that direction (Nazi symbolism – GWP). It's like theater – they do not say if it's good or bad – they just describe it. In my opinion however, that there are too many people who will think like "they play with such theme, they have to be nazi".



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Also – when it comes to “Deutschland” song – there are lots of people in Germany who should not sing “Deutschland, Deutschland...”. Of course Rammstein can do such things – it’s their business afterall – but we have this credo, that we do not describe such motifs.

***GWP: Were you ever misunderstood and in the end it backslashed against you?***

Ost: I cannot give you the exact example now, but we were playing with Frei.Wild band for a long time and there was an opinion, that they are nazi. We know them very well and can assure you – they are not nazis. They are simply conservative, but media and politicians talk about them as “Rechte Band” (“Right-Wing Band”). We have recorded a song together (“Totgesagt Doch Neugeboren Teil 2”) and later had to explain in interviews that we do not share their point of view.

***GWP: You play for 15 years now – that is really impressive. Surely you have many stories to tell and lot of experience. If you had the chance to meet with younger version of yourself – what would you advise?***

Ost: To find the producer faster and work with him. Every major band – I know most fans and musicians won’t listen to this – has the producer that actually helps them. It is a different profession – I am for example writing songs, lyrics, and the producer carries it to the point where songs “wraps up” nicely. Another advice: not to be so naïve like during our first 5-6 years. We did everything for playing and made many mistakes.

***GWP: You are widely recognized because of your scene outfits – we mean the masks. Are they still playing their roles and protect your privacy?***

Ost: Of course. We were struggling with those masks for a very long time – when we began our career we discussed whether to use them or not every week. I would not change it today. There is 30000 new songs uploaded to Spotify every day and despite everything you want to be recognized. People know, that Hämatom are „those guys in masks” – that is a good step in my opinion. We know that we are not the first band to do so – there was Kiss, and surely there was someone before them too. There is Slipknot, there is Sido (German Hip-Hop). I am aware it is not super exclusive or original, but there is surely like a million artists performing in jeans and Motorhead T-shirts. And how many artists in masks are there? Hundred? Maybe even less.

***GWP: You can say, that mask is somewhat symbolical...***

Ost: ... but for example Marilyn Manson is the mask as well – artificial figure, something made-up. Do you know Ghost? They don’t need to have masks, but somehow they have it.



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There is also one big advantage of having masks: we can go out without them after the show and say to people that the band was terrible or how guitarist misplayed (laughs). We did such things during festivals.

**GWP: And people have fallen for that?**

**Ost:** It was easier in the past (laughs).

**GWP: This question was inspired by the movie „Dark Knight”. Do you feel more like yourselves when you wear your masks?**

**Ost:** I would say, that I do feel different, stronger, braver... I am usually hmm...shy, but when I wear my mask I just don't care. And you know – that mask makes that people who see me feel more respect. It helps to feel better in front of the audience.

**GWP: We have seen fragments from your concert in Czechia (Forum Karlin), where during “Ikarus Erben” your drummer was carried on the people’s hands. What is the idea behind that?**

**Ost:** Here is the story: we have visited our producer during making of “Maskenball” album. We have been rating songs of various artists in order to decide whether to cover it or not. Thanks to this process we have one song from 21 Pilots band called “Ride”. We have seen how it is performed live and what caught our attention was that the drummer was placed on small platform but was still playing only in the first rows of audience (held by people's hands). We thought it is cool, but it's a shame he is not carried away further. And we told our drummer: “would you be brave enough to be carried by our audience?”. He replied “Sure, I would do that”. Two weeks later our platform was ready, all steadily crafted so that Süd (drummer) would not fall from it. We have tried this out and now it is constant part of our show. We talk about that often during interviews and it is going to be funny now, because big festivals with tens of thousands of people start now, RockHarz for example. Crowd needs around 15 minutes to bring us our drummer back – I am really curious on how it will turn out during Wacken (laughs). I will have plenty of time to sit, drink – he will return someday (laughs).

**GWP: You have already the opportunity to perform in front of the Slavic audience. How did you like it? Do you have any anecdotes and were you nervous before the first gigs in eastern side of Europe?**

**Ost:** Everywhere you go the audience is different. I will say it this way: in Germany there is plenty of concerts – Germans are actually spoiled with these. All the bands that want to make money come here. In Czechia it's not that many gigs, and even less in Russia. We were in Moscow and St. Petersburg and people went crazy after hearing only few tones. They did not understand our lyrics, but sang them anyway – I could even say that they knew them better than Nord (vocalist).



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Euphoria is totally different there – in Czechia it is not as extreme as in Russia, but in Bulgaria for example, where we played before Rammstein, I had the feeling that every Taxi driver knows us. We didn't know how – they have not seen us without masks. It was surreal. When it comes to Czechia – it is not as extreme as in Russia or Bulgaria, but they do value musicians in a different way. Czech metal scene is really big – by percentage it is bigger than the one in Germany. Band Dymytry plays 100 concert per year there and Czechia equals essentially two times Berlin – it's unbelievable to have so many concerts on such small area. And every time you have 2-5 thousand people. Every weekend – sometimes they play on Friday, two concerts Saturday and one on Sunday. Very big scene, but in Slovakia for example you see crowds two times smaller. A bit weird, but that's how it is.

***GWP: When you greeted us you have mentioned that you performed in Bielsko-Biala, in Rude Boy club. Were you trying to perform in Poland later as well?***

**Ost:** Two years I think – but that was the only concert we succeed with. Gig in Poland is still on my “to do list”. But this time we would really need to talk with the promoter, find a good group – singing in polish for example – that musically fits our style. And then we can switch. We did that with Dymytry – we played gigs with them for 3 months – 12 concerts with them in Czechia and later they played 12 concerts with us in Germany. Thanks to this you do not start from the scratch, but for example perform in front of 1000 people every evening. And have chance to convince them – not everyone, but maybe 100, 200, 300, 400 – and then you can return, play festivals etc.

***GWP: Are your polish roots helpful in your Rockstar style?***

**Ost:** You surely remember the times, when you looked into refrigerator and there was nothing there. Or when you visit butcher – with meat cards – and no meat was available. Or going to shoe store with 3 ladies behind the counter and no shoes in the stock. I knew these times and surely they have helped me, but it is not about being musician or not. Thanks to this I know that you can live well without some items. I didn't had this feeling that I was missing something – I could even say that I have the best possible childhood. If something was unavailable, it was unavailable – and it might helped me. That knowledge, that without consumption, without Pewex (shops with abroad wares, active in Poland till late 80's), without adverts – you still can live. My kids don't know that – I pity them sometimes for that (laughs).

***GWP: You have performed before Rammstein, Nightwish, Manowar or Knorkator. You have played and will be playing at Wacken and other festivals – you actually have your own as well. What other plans and dreams lie ahead of you?***

**Ost:** I don't know for sure. We are growing more or less for 6-7 years: every year between 10% and 20% - both tickets and CDs are growing numbers. Let it grow for couple more years and it is enough. It's not that I have said “goodbye” to the dream of stadium performances – you actually need only one hit to do that.



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It's like lottery – sometimes you succeed, sometimes you don't. Overall – we would like to play for the biggest number of people possible.

***GWP: So far you have published 3 songs from the upcoming album and they are all covers or remastered works and they all contain guests. Will other tracks from "Maskenball" also include featuring artists?***

**Ost:** No. We have Hansi Kürsch from Blind Guardian, Alex from Eisbrecher and i Micha from In Extremo – these are our three guests. We have also wanted to involve woman, but we have not found proper candidate. We thought about Doro Pesch, but it didn't happen. Later we have considered the appearance of Jenifer Haben from Beyond the Black, but in the end we have moved for some point in the future.

***GWP: As for covers – you pick the song and then the proper guest for it or the other way around – you have your friends and then select a song for them?***

**Ost:** Both ways. Alex and Micha are our good friends and they have agreed to play with us already year ago. We know that we will have our 15-year anniversary in 2019 and that we will release the album because of it. We asked them if they wanted to play duet with us. As it turned out pretty fast "Da da da" will feature Alex, because it is typical NDH song – it fits like ass to bucket (laughs). Micha from In Extremo picked his own song ("Alte Liebe Rostet Nicht" in acoustic version) and when it comes to Hansi I have phoned him and said that we are making the new album and have song from Queen ("I want it all") and asked if he has time to record it. He replied, that he lost already, because Queen is his favorite band and he will surely find time to make the record. And yes – in one week everything was done. It was very spontaneous.

***GWP: Song „Anti Alles” is described by you as probably one of your most important ones. Do you think, that in today's time – the age of the internet and overwhelming chase after acceptance in social media – young people can be still against anything?***

**Ost:** No. We are also not like that, but I don't know if it is our duty to be against everything. We are artists, we create songs, we show that sometimes it is worth to be against something, that "swimming with stream" is not always okay. There are lot of bad things on this world or things that we do not like, but we can be against. I believe everyone will find something for him/herself in these lyrics. Of course it is impossible to be against the internet and everything else at the same time, but as artist we would like to point out what is wrong. We don't want however to offer any solutions. In reality everything has its fans and opponents – for example some people are against usage of plastic, because it harms our planet. Others might not want to eat meat, because so many animals die every hour. People divide themselves in the end. And I might be wrong, but it will be even more visible in the future.



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**GWP:** *“Wir sind kein Band, Wir sind Familie” – is it your recipe for good cooperation?*

**Ost:** Yes, but this title has two meanings. When I came here as a child, I went to school and Torsten sit in the desk next to mine. He is Nord now (vocalist) – I know his family very well, his mother was in a way my second mom. I can say that I have better contact with him than with some members of my own family. On the other hand: family is us and our fans.

**GWP:** *For some time now on 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month you are releasing something new. Do you plan to do this in August as well?*

**Ost:** Yes, it will be our last single – very big surprise. I don't want to spoil anything – it is connected to Wacken (festival Hämatom is going to perform at in August; Ost will go there by foot – the whole 666 km). I think German music scene will talk about that later.

**GWP:** *Are there any artists you would like to perform with?*

**Ost:** Yes, Alligatoah – German hip-hop. I have broad horizons and I am open for such music experiments. I like when you mix styles, despite people not liking this so-called crossover. It was popular in the 90s, when H-Bloxx was playing. Now Prophets of Rage are active (joint line-ups from Rage Against the Machine and Cypress Hill). For me it is much more interesting than playing with someone who plays music that is similar to our style.

**GWP:** *Do you plan any surprises for fans during Gelsenkirchen concert?*

**Ost:** Yes, music surprises will be biggest ones there. There will be lots of old songs, two days of concerts and two different setlists. We will play 40-50 songs in total, maybe some pyrotechnics as well. But yes – the biggest surprises will be connected with the music.

**GWP:** *Thank you very much for the interview.*