



GEGENWIND

PORTAL DLA FANÓW NIEMIECKIEJ MUZYKI

On one Friday in May, a few members of the Gegenwind Poland team met online with Ost - the guitarist of Hämatom. The conversation was supposed to be a friendly and short chat on current matters like “What have you been up to during these crazy days” but it turned into an almost one-hour-long talk during which he told us how the band deals with the isolation, what their humble plans for the future are and .. well, you need to check it out for yourselves - in the text below:

Gegenwind: *The decision to suspend all cultural events was taken while you were in the middle of the concert tour and hence you were forced to postpone it until the upcoming autumn. Have you ever experienced anything like that before?*

Ost: That's right, all that situation happened when we were in the middle of our tour. Moreover, it was the largest tour ever in our career, so we were pretty angry at the beginning, like most people affected, I guess. I think nobody could believe, and most likely - didn't want to believe - that it was really over. All we knew was the fact that something extraordinary was happening. For instance, my grandma decided to return to Poland asap, when everything got so serious. She came back by car, and on the [radio] all one could hear was the info about corona. When I came back home, I finally realized that the tour was off, even though it seemed unbelievable. It was difficult to take it in. I have never experienced anything like that before, just like the whole generations born and brought up after WW2, I guess.

Gegenwind: *Do you feel disappointed or do you treat it all with understanding?*

Ost: At the beginning, and to be more precise - during the first week - it was terrible. We kept on asking ourselves the questions like: Why me? Why have we been affected by that? Why here and why now? Now it's slightly better, however, I have to admit that everything in Germany has been a complete 180, because a damn virus has appeared and we've had to give everything up. Let it be. Now, at the beginning we postponed our shows till May, nevertheless, after a few days we decided to put them off till September, and I came to terms with it a moment after that. Of course, I don't mean that I don't care. What I mean is the fact that the situation is beyond our strengths and we're just little part of the world affected by the pandemics.

Gegenwind: *How do you spend time in lockdown? Have you been forced to change some of your habits?*

Ost: I didn't have to change anything *shows his beer to the camera*. I am so lucky to have a garden. I think that I have never really appreciated it before. Secondly, I live not far away from the studio which I visit every day. Then - nothing has really changed in my case. As our tour was cancelled, I've had more time for my family. However the isolation from my friends has been difficult and painful. Of course, it's not like when I was a teenager, but I still like to

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go out from time to time, to hang out with others. And even though I don't mind spending time at home, I don't enjoy being there all the time. In order to while the time away, we organize Havana Online Club every Friday - we meet our crew, friends (and also other bands we're friends with).

Gegenwind: *How do you think will the rock & metal, or even music, scene change after the pandemics? Will the world we've been familiar with alter?*

Ost: Here we have to be more careful, but I believe that each crisis brings some changes in the end. This time encourages people to tighten bonds between each other, to create new things. It teaches creativity and giving up on old schemes and trying out the new ones. But it's a long-term effect. When one considers the near future, a lot will change and it will affect many of us. Not only bands are involved in concert tours, but also the technical staff, helpers, merch specialists etc. A lot of those guys make a living basing only on that activity. They've lost all sources of their income and can't be sure when it's going to get back to normal. So, the differences are to be felt even now, but in the long term some things are bound to change, too. Whether it's going to be something negative or positive - it's hard to say, but the changes are inevitable. When it comes to the music scene, have a look at how quickly the ideas of online or automobile concerts have appeared. Who knows - maybe this year they're going to be the only options available. And this is exactly what strengthens creativity. We're curious what the results of this situation are going to be.

Gegenwind: *The crisis has affected to a great extent both the artists and club owners - do you think that some of them may not return in summer or autumn?*

Ost: The bands are rather safe, but the clubs (at least some of them) may not reopen again. Not all of them have enough savings or can survive basing on pre-sale only. The artists usually do something more apart from performing - if you want to make a living basing only on music, you have to be a really big band and earn a lot.

Gegenwind: *We've listened to your #FCKCRN EP and we really liked it. Have you written all the new songs inspired by the current pandemic situation, or were some of them already planned beforehand (apart from #FCKCRN of course)?*

Ost: Hammer, isn't it? Yeah, just like you've just said - #FCKCRN has been inspired by corona. This song was recorded as the first one during our first meeting at the studio. Next we recorded "Ich weiss", and then - the following ones. Of course, the EP was partially inspired by corona, but it's more about "freedom" and having it.

Gegenwind: *Yeah... And when we finally have it, we don't appreciate it!*

Ost: Exactly.

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Gegenwind: *Releasing an EP in such conditions also poses new challenges - what limitations have you encountered while recording it? For instance those connected to the access to the recording studio or the number of people allowed to meet in one place at the same time?*

Ost: Yeah, indeed it was unusual. We started with calling the producer. We informed him that we'd been writing new songs and he asked when we wanted to release them. When we answered that we'd like to do it in a few days' time, he said he had to talk about it with his family. It was understandable - in such difficult times one should take decisions on their own. Eventually, he agreed and we had to plan the recording sessions in such a way that we didn't meet in the studio as the whole group - we had to enter it individually. So, when I came to record something and finished my task, Süd arrived an hour later to record his part and so on. That way we recorded everything in one week only even though we didn't meet even once in the studio. It's been a really unusual experience.

Gegenwind: *You're planning to perform in a show in Düsseldorf on 28th May - and certainly it's going to be one of the most extraordinary concerts in your whole career - can you tell us something more about that automobile gig you're about to do?*

Ost: Well... It'll be the first time we've performed in such a show. Instead of crowding just by the stage, our fans will be in their own cars and the only reactions we'll be able to see will be the blinking headlights. We can imagine that the guys over there will find the way to show us how they like our performance - by using the indicators or headlights, or whatever they're gonna have there. But the question is: how will they show us that something sucks? Will they drive away? It's still an open question... It was one of the members of our technical staff that got that idea of an automobile concert - in the second week of the isolation or so, when we were thinking what we could do. The problem was that the place we'd chosen was in North Rhine-Westphalia and it was forbidden to gather there. We wanted to be the first metal band to perform like that. Only Alligatoah managed to do it before us, I guess.

Gegenwind: *Yeah, one could see that concert by Alligatoah at Arte. And, generally speaking, how do you envisage such a concert from the organizational side? It will be much more difficult to see anything from the last row compared to an ordinary concert...*

Ost: It's pretty easy - our stage is going to be centrally located, just below the screen, and even though it's going to consist of three parts, we'd like to use only the middle one. Of course, only if the weather is good. However, I'm still not sure what it's going to be like... It has to be really weird to perform for cars...

Gegenwind: *Can you imagine a car moshpit? :D*

Ost: Haha, that's what our drummer does, right? What it would look like...

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Gegenwind: *What is the reason for choosing Düsseldorf instead of Bavaria where you're from?*

Ost: First of all, it is forbidden in Bavaria. We were considering a few other locations (all of them in North Rhine-Westphalia), but the one in Düsseldorf is the most professional and has the best equipment.

Gegenwind: *Are you planning more surprises for your fans and/or some following stream performances?*

Ost: Yeah, certainly. Generally speaking, I think that recently we've been doing quite a lot for our fans. Actually, we release some special materials every few days. Just a few days ago we played "City-Country-River-Corona" and there were such categories as "Quarantine venue", "The best sexual position during the quarantine" etc, and each player who lost had to drink a shot. It was a kind of a live alco-game. Nord was so drunk that he could barely speak! We organize such special meetings once a week, sometimes once in two weeks. Next we're gonna play alco-battleship! We have so many plans... We'd like to release also a very nice set of T-shirts with motifs connected with the pandemics: #FCKCRN chronology. The first limited T-shirt will be called "Shock", then maybe "Anger", "Hope", "Freedom" etc. Generally speaking, we'd like to use those words that reflect the society's mood in a particular moment of the pandemics. Summing up, we've been trying to give our fans a little bit of ourselves in every area possible - concerts, live streams, merch etc.

Gegenwind: *Do you feel that your fans support you? If so, in what way? Have you noticed higher sales of CDs and merch in your shop?*

Ost: Yeah, certainly we do. Maybe not really in the sales of CDs, because in such times the sales will be decreasing in a few upcoming years, but we notice it on Spotify or in a simple fact that our fans do not return their tickets. It's really great, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that we've postponed our concert tour twice so far, and that we've sold about 20k tickets and a very little number of them has been returned.

Gegenwind: *Nowadays the re-sale of the tickets among fans is really popular. People exchange their tickets instead of returning them. Thanks to that they don't need to give up on their plans and at the same time they support their favourite bands and the whole concert business.*

Ost: Well, I think that metalheads are amazing. They hold on together, frequently organize various actions and events... It's incredible!

To be continued

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