

## NI ROCKS Interview with MAGNUS KARLSSON

Written by NI ROCKS

Thursday, 10 October 2019 19:39 - Last Updated Saturday, 27 June 2020 23:56

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Magnus Karlsson is a musician whose name has appeared in many of the album recommendations that I've posted on the Rock Radio NI website over the past six years. Often as member of a band such as Primal Fear, Starbreaker or The Ferrymen and quite frequently as a songwriter, guitarist or producer in other projects. This Friday (11th October), "A New Evil", the second album from The Ferrymen is released by Frontiers Music and again it features Karlsson along with drummer Mike Terrana and outstanding vocalist Ronnie Romero.

I was able to have a chat with Magnus via Skype on 7th October to talk about The Ferrymen and the latest album. We also discussed Primal Fear, Kiske Somerville, Magnus Karlsson's Free Fall, Starbreaker and his recent involvement on the new Sinner album. You can find that interview on the Friday NI Rocks Show from 11th October which is available from our MixCloud page - <https://www.mixcloud.com/NIROcks/interview-with-magnus-karlsson-on-the-friday-ni-rocks-show-11th-october-2019/>



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The interview has been transcribed and posted below.

Playlist

PRETTY MAIDS – Serpentine

THE FERRYMEN – No Matter How Hard We Fall

Interview with MAGNUS KARLSSON Part 1 (5 min)

THE FERRYMEN – A New Evil

Interview with MAGNUS KARLSSON Part 2 (7 min)

THE FERRYMEN – Bring Me Home

Interview with MAGNUS KARLSSON Part 1 (6 min)

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THE FERRYMEN – Don't Stand In My Way

MEGADETH – The Threat Is Real

Interview with DAVID ELLEFSON Part 1 (10 min)

ELLEFSON – Hammer (Comes Down)

Interview with DAVID ELLEFSON Part 2 (8 min)

METAL ALLEGIANCE – Power Drunk Majesty Pt1

Interview with DAVID ELLEFSON Part 3 (6 min)

ELLEFSON – If You Were God

ALTITUDES & ATTITUDE – Leviathan

CONJURING FATE – No Escape

SIFTING – Enough

SONS OF APOLLO – Diary of a Madman

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A LITTLE BITTER – Further I Crawl

KISKE / SOMERVILLE – City of Heroes

MAGNUS KARLSSON'S FREE FALL – When The Sky Falls

AGE OF REFLECTION – A New Dawn

PAT MCMANUS – Runaway Dreams



{youtube}1jOTL2URFx4{/youtube}

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**NI ROCKS** – Hi Magnus. Thanks for taking some time to talk to Rock Radio NI. The Ferrymen release their second album “A New Evil” through Frontiers on 11th October – this Friday. The first album was released just over two years ago. When did you start working on the latest album and where was it recorded.

**MAGNUS** – I started to work on it...I think it was a year ago. It has been done for a while, because the record label need some time for promotion and stuff. I recorded my stuff here in Sweden and Ronnie lives in Spain; so he recorded in Madrid. And Mike Terrana lives in Italy and he recorded somewhere in Italy; so we didn't meet during the recording. Then it was mixed by Jacob Hansen in Denmark. So it is everywhere.

**NI ROCKS** – The band features Ronnie Romero, who you just mentioned, on vocals. Was The Ferrymen created around Ronnie when you wrote the songs or did you have the tracks first and then go looking for a singer?

**MAGNUS** – No, I wrote it for him. When I write the songs I hear his voice in my head. Especially now with the second album it was easy, because the range that he has and everything. He's a great singer so there are really no limits when I write. And the same goes for Mike too. He's such a great drummer. I'm pretty much free when I write, but I write for Ronnie's voice. That's why, maybe this project is a bit harder than I do with Allen-Lande because Ronnie's voice really suits the hard melodic metal style.

**NI ROCKS** – You mentioned drummer Mike Terrana, who is probably best known as the drummer for the Axel Rudi Pell band. Had you worked with him prior to the first Ferrymen album and how did you get involved with him?

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**MAGNUS** – No, I hadn't worked with him before. It started with Ronnie and me and we didn't have a drummer. I asked Ronnie if he could choose any drummer who would it be and he said that it would be great for Mike. I said let's ask him, and we did, and he said yes. That was easy!

**NI ROCKS** - Both albums have of course been released by Frontiers Music. How much influence have they had, both on the formation of the band and in the musical direction?

**MAGNUS** – They were the ones that put me in contact with Ronnie. Serafino at Frontiers Records asked me if I wanted to do something with Ronnie. With the musical direction, I have worked so long for them that they don't tell me anymore how to write (laughs); because they know my style. If I was to do a death metal album, I think they would be very disappointed. They know what I like and they like it too. I'm not the kind of AOR guy that some of the guys writing for them are; I'm more in the metal direction, but they like that too – the melodic metal.

**NI ROCKS** – I don't recall the band touring after the first album, but maybe I missed out on that. Are there any plans to go on tour or play some gigs to support of the release of "A New Evil"?

**MAGNUS** – Yeah, we didn't tour on the first one. We talked about it and we got some great offers. We are discussing it right now if we can squeeze something in; because Mike is touring all the time and Ronnie is touring a lot too. I know they both want to do it, so hopefully we can do some festivals and maybe a short tour of Europe too.

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**NI ROCKS** – Yeah, scheduling I suppose is always the problem.

**MAGNUS** – Yes, it's tricky when you're working with great guys. They are booked a lot.

**NI ROCKS** – The first track released from the new album was the title track "A New Evil" which we'll play now. What can you tell us about that track?

**MAGNUS** – That was one of Ronnie's favourites. I like it too, but it was his idea to make it a video for it. It shows the harder side of the new album. Compared to the first one, this one is a bit more darker and a bit harder; and there is also some progressive stuff and you can hear it in that song "A New Evil".

{youtube}543KrTQQidQ{/youtube}

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**NI ROCKS** – We just played “A New Evil” and we’ll play “Bring Me Home”, the second single, later. There are eleven tracks on the new album. Other than the two singles, is there one which is particularly special to you or which took longer to get finished the way that you wanted.

**MAGNUS** – My personal favourite is “No Matter How Hard We Fall”. I’m not sure when you’re going to air this, but I think it is going to be released tomorrow. And that’s my favourite video too. It’ll be out this Tuesday

**NI ROCKS** – We’ll get that one played as well when we’re putting the Show out.

**MAGNUS** – It’s my favourite. As I said before, when I write the songs I can hear Ronnie’s voice in my head. This one was really what I hoped for – the chorus and everything worked really nice and it has some progressive elements in there too that I really like.

**NI ROCKS** - I wanted to talk about some of the other work that you’ve done recently as well. One project that you worked on very recently was with your Primal Fear bandmate Mat Sinner. You perform on Sinner’s cover of the track “Death Letter” on their new album released last month. How did you come to be involved in that track?

**MAGNUS** – I wrote a lot of songs with Mat for that album, but that track I played too because he wanted to have some acoustic stuff; and I played banjo as well. He wanted to have that sound and almost a full blues vibe over it. I played Hammond and some different stuff on and it came out great; and it has a great singer too.



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**NI ROCKS** – You've been a member of Primal Fear since 2008. The band's last album was "Apocalypse" which was released in August last year. What's happening with Primal Fear at the moment and when might we expect a new album?

**MAGNUS** – We're working on the next album right now. That's a bit different to the other stuff that I do because the whole band is involved in the song writing. I just record a lot of riffs in the style that I really like and I send them over to Mat and he sends it over to Ralph and we all work on it. Then I get it back again with the vocals and we can do some changes and stuff. So it is really fun. People often ask if it is better to be in the same room and write, but I really like to work in this style where I can do it without the rush and I can wake up in the middle of the night and go down into my studio and do something. That's really cool. So for me, it suits to work like this.

**NI ROCKS** – When do you think the new album will come out? Sometime next year then?

**MAGNUS** – Yeah, I think we'll be done with it early next year and then they'll need some time before they release it.

*(Note – the new Primal Fear album "Metal Commando" is being released on 24th July 2020.)*

**NI ROCKS** – When it comes to scheduling your own projects I presume you have to work around the timelines in place for Primal Fear or how does that work?

**MAGNUS** – I don't tour anymore with Primal Fear and that's not because of my song writing, it's more because of my family. I have kids. Primal Fear tour a lot and it is too much for me to be away that long. When I don't tour I have time. I have my studio in my home and there's a lot of stuff that I can do here. I spend a lot of time here and write a lot of songs. Normally I work as a guitar teacher too, but last year I had so many albums and projects that I had to take some time off work to just sit here.

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**NI ROCKS** – You also worked with Mat on the Kiske Somerville albums in 2010 and 2015 – as a guitarist, keyboard player and as one of the main song-writers. We'll play a track from one of those albums later in the Show. Do you have a particular favourite – and why?

**MAGNUS** – Oh, that's hard (laughs). Now I have to check what the names of the songs! I can easily say that I like the second album most. The first one was a bit of a trial and that was ok. The second one was really good and I'm an old Helloween fan and I wanted to make it a bit....not really like Helloween, but more in the power metal style. So "City of Heroes", I think that was the title track; that could be on a Helloween album. Kiske really sings it in that style and that's great.

**NI ROCKS** – We'll play that one later. There was five years between those (Kiske Somerville) albums. I actually interviewed Mat back in 2016 and he felt that a similar gap would be needed again before a third album was done - to bring a fresh approach he said. What are the chances that we might see a third album?

**MAGNUS** – That I really don't know, because as you maybe know Kiske is touring a lot with Helloween and I don't think he is doing any projects outside Helloween now. Maybe when that is over we can discuss it again.

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**NI ROCKS** – Getting back to “A New Evil” album again. The second track released was “Bring Me Home” which we’ll play now. What can you tell us about that track?

**MAGNUS** – That’s a bit slower and also it was Ronnie’s favourite and he wanted to do something with it. I also like it a lot. I think that’s a good song if you can do it at a slow tempo, but still have it very dark and heavy. That’s always very melodic when we do it. I’ve seen it said in many reviews that they think in that song that you can hear his influences from Dio, and maybe so!

{youtube}mhhW0PkH33M{/youtube}

**NI ROCKS** – You’ve released two solo albums as Magnus Karlsson’s Free Fall. The first in 2013 and then “Kingdom of Rock” in 2015. The albums featured numerous well-known singers. When you were writing those tracks did you have the specific singers in mind or how did you determine which tracks each would sing?

**MAGNUS** – I wrote them for the singers. The same way as when I write for The Ferrymen I hear Ronnie’s voice; and I can hear all the singers. I remember when Joe Lynn Turner said he could do it, because I’d asked him to do the first Free Fall album, but he couldn’t do it because he was touring and stuff; but on the second one he said Ok, I can do it, if I like the song of course. I remember that night, I didn’t sleep, because I had maybe fifty different melodies in my head that I was thinking about, and what would suit him best. I was listening to all the releases that he had done over the last twenty years. Where does he sound the best and to make sure he had the right key and everything. I focus a lot on how the singer sounds and try to write something really good for them.

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**NI ROCKS** – Are we likely to see another Free Fall album sometime in the near future?

**MAGNUS** – Yeah actually, just now when you called me, I was recording the last solo on the third Free Fall album. This will be, maybe a bit different. I will have many guest singers, but some new names maybe that not everybody will have heard of. But really, really good and maybe a bit more progressive and a bit more orchestra, epic stuff in it too. I think it will be out next summer.

*(Note – “We Are The Night” was released on 12th June 2020)*

**NI ROCKS** – We’ll play a track from one of the Free Fall albums now. Do you want to pick one and tell us something about it?

**MAGNUS** – I like them all, but there is a special song; that I didn’t write on my own, I had some help from the singer. That’s the one with Tony Martin and it’s from the “Kingdom of Rock” album and is called “When the Sky Falls”. It’s special to write with one of your old idols.

**NI ROCKS** – The final band that I wanted to chat about is Starbreaker with whom you released a new album earlier this year. It had been around ten years since the previous album, what led you to work with singer Tony Harnell again?

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**MAGNUS** – Yeah, that was also Frontiers. They asked me. Was it ten years ago? (laughs) It was a long time ago. It worked really well and I really liked the first album we did together. We did a second one and he came over to Sweden and we wrote together. He was busy with TNT and he was also in Skid Row for a while, then he was back in TNT. When he quit TNT he asked me if I wanted to do another Starbreaker and we did the third one. It is a bit different than the first two, but really nice in its own way.

**NI ROCKS** – It's very like the old-style TNT stuff.

**MAGNUS** – Yeah maybe. He can really sing the old TNT stuff, so that's great.

**NI ROCKS** – You're obviously involved with a lot of projects as a musician, a writer and a producer. What are your main priorities for the next few months and moving into next year?

**MAGNUS** – The main thing right now is Free Fall, and also Primal Fear. I think I'm going to work on that for the rest of the year maybe. I also have a new project with Russell Allen, but it's not with Jorn this time. That's all I can say at this time. I think the news will be out in a few weeks.

*(The album "Worlds Apart" featuring Russell Allen and Anette Olzon was released on 6th March 2020)*

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**NI ROCKS** – We'll get back now to the new album from The Ferrymen. We've talked about the tracks "A New Evil", "Bring Me Home" and "No Matter How Hard We Fall". If you had to pick just one more track to recommend to our listeners which would it be and why?

**MAGNUS** – I think it would be the first one, "Don't Stand In My Way". That's my favourite. I like that riff stuff and it has this epic intro. I like the soundtrack kind of intros. I don't know what else to say other than Ronnie sings really good, but he does that on all the songs (laughs). But if I was to chose something to play live, I would chose that song.

**NI ROCKS** – If you do some live shows, I take it that you'll play track from both albums?

**MAGNUS** – Yeah absolutely. Take the favourites from both.

**NI ROCKS** – That's all the questions that I have. Thanks very much for taking the time to talk to Rock Radio NI.

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**MAGNUS** – Thanks very much. It was nice talking to you.