



# **Fleeing apathy**

## **DARK STATE: A band portrait**

Everyone is familiar with moments of inner darkness; they are part of the emotional spectrum that accompanies us throughout our lives. Scott Mick, the lead singer of Dark State, notes that at the moment of writing he finds himself in a dark state – feeling pain, for example – and that he wants to bring something positive into the world. The band's name was chosen so that everyone can identify with and recognise themselves in these thoughts.

Per-Anders also explains that, for him too, writing melodies can sometimes have a therapeutic effect. This can involve processing a wide variety of experiences. However, when personal experience holds value for society, art is created.

Per-Anders Kurenbach, who has been involved in numerous musical projects since the late 1980s, explains that Dark State cannot simply be categorised as electro or dark wave, but is in fact much more diverse. Some of the tracks are catchy and lean towards synth-pop, whilst others create a more sombre atmosphere. The debut album 'Hovering between Empathy and Apathy' even features a solo piano piece in which Per-Anders plays the melodica.

One way of defining their style is through the concept of hybrid electro-rock. Guitars form an essential part of the sound: René Wessely shapes it with his playing. The musical elements are complemented by Scott's powerful lyrics and his unique voice, resulting in a seamless whole that defines the band's sound.

It is interesting to note that the soundscape does not follow a uniform concept, but rather the narrative of each song. This means that synthesizers, guitars or piano sounds may well come to the fore – depending entirely on what the track requires. The debut album contains a total of 13 songs.

### **'Hovering between Empathy and Apathy'**

1. Another lifetime
2. As she walks
3. In my sleep (a diary)
4. Heretic
5. Shut it of
6. No soul
7. The scent of lust
8. Prologue
9. War
10. Wake Up

11. Falling in real time

12. Reincarnation

13. Alright

In our society, elements of both attitudes can be found: it is often the case that we feel somewhat lost within our community; in many places, social cohesion is weak. Everyone is too preoccupied with their own lives to notice a chance encounter. At the same time, we are drifting further apart; social media makes everyone feel entitled to pass judgement on other people. Listening has become a rare gift.

Scott explains: 'The world is in a state of chaos, somewhere between empathy and apathy. If we can see that chaos, then we can tame it.' Although it must be clear that everyone sees the world slightly differently and also perceives the chaos in and around them differently, we are too quick to judge, Per-Anders is certain of that.

Even the gothic scene is not immune to this kind of judgement; there is the 'right' music, and people are part of the scene for the 'right' reasons – a development that Per-Anders regrets. 'As a subculture that has always celebrated individuality, we should welcome it in all its various forms. For me, good music has never been dependent on a particular scene.' One track that particularly highlights this idea is 'Heretic'.

Scott adds his thoughts on 'Heretic': "We've become a sea of black clothing, and it really takes a bit of glitter scattered over the crowd to bring back the sparkle. Change is necessary in order to evolve." Per-Anders even goes so far as to say that he is, in part, disappointed by the black scene: Judging others and even excluding them is not what he wants; rather, he seeks acceptance and solidarity – across generational boundaries.

## **Taking Directions**

Dreams take centre stage in the piece 'A Diary (In my Sleep)'. Scott explains: "Dreams cannot come true if we only live in a dream. We need reality for things to happen." The challenge, then, lies in transforming an abstract idea – such as that which forms the basis of a track – into something concrete. Per-Anders also highlights the value of dreams, however, as they can point the way forward. Reality, then, consists of writing, recording and finalising the tracks.

A song usually starts with Scott: he writes the lyrics, as observations, emotions and everyday situations inspire him. Building on this initial spark, Per-Anders develops the musical worlds around the lyrics. Occasionally it's the other way round, but overall there is a clear sense of mutual inspiration.

René Wessely has been a permanent member of the band since 2024 and has a strong

influence on the sound of their music. Even though many of the tracks had already been written, the guitar sound added new ideas and often even took them in a completely different direction. This meant that the band had to go back and rework the arrangements on more than one occasion. The aim was to give the guitars more space and prominence. The guitar is a new voice in its own right – and so René complements the band not merely as a guitarist, but as a creative member.

In future, they want to take the songwriting process to an even more collaborative level and nurture the tracks together so that they can develop. Music is at its strongest when it is honest and authentic, says Per-Anders. Music is a universal language that has brought about social change in the past.

## **Messages**

Lyrics can influence listeners' thoughts and feelings to some extent: so how one interacts with others is sometimes influenced by music. Scott's powerful lyrics certainly make you reflect on what might be. Music is also capable of preserving memories: Per-Anders mentions

Jens Plöger (RUN:), who wrote 'In Sheol' – a very personal and moving piece about his mother: this demonstrates that grief cannot be erased by music, but that it can sustain memories and offer some comfort.

Another example can be found in their own body of work: in 2023, Scott and Per-Anders wrote a piece for their friend Frank Merkel. Although it did not deal with death itself, it spoke of what remains when a person is lost: memories of a voice, of conversations, and of the people who have left a visible mark on our lives.

The artists hope that music can accompany us along all these different paths and in the most varied of situations: Per-Anders notes that his aim is not necessarily for everyone to be able to dance to every song, but for each piece to have its own unique effect. Looking at the bigger picture, Dark State hope that people will show a little more empathy and curiosity – and that they will stop trying to judge everything.