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Metal Royalty Sonata Arctica to Hit Moscow

By Ingrid Burke

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“Our Russian fans are really passionate and they really make the shows over there great, so I’m really looking forward to our show next weekend,” keyboardist Henrik Klingenberg told The Moscow Times in an interview ahead of the show.

If you're a Muscovite with a penchant for epic guitar solos, operatic vocals and wolves, you're in for a treat this weekend.

It's a universally accepted truth that Finland is heavy metal's promised land, having spawned the likes of Nightwish and Finntroll. Sonata Arctica, one of the more internationally celebrated of the country's power-metal offspring, is set to light up the Russian capital this Sunday at Volta Club, and they're thrilled to be here.

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2014 has been a big year for the band, with the release of "Pariah's Child" this spring and a world tour to support the album.

Fans were also pleasantly shocked by the recent announcement that the band will re-release their first full-length album, "Ecliptica." The band had produced music prior to that album, but under the name Tricky Beans.

In the 15 years since "Ecliptica's" release, the band has run the gamut from melodic ballads of epic heartbreak to adrenaline-pumping metal anthems.

"Ecliptica" launched off with "Blank File," an ahead-of-its-time anthem about Internet security. Another hit — "Tallulah," from 2001's "Silence" — reflected on unrequited love and loss: "I see you walking hand in hand with long-haired drummer of the band." In their formative years, the band was known for its idiosyncratic language.

In 2003's "Winterheart's Guild," the band crafted the ultimate power-metal ballad in the form of "Gravenimage," an epic exploration of the meaning and limitations of love, set to lyrics that took listeners back to the Scandinavia of yore.

Many years and several releases later, Sonata Arctica has decided to return to their earlier style. "'Pariah's Child' turned out to be a bit more toward our roots than some of the previous albums," Klingenberg said, adding, "After making our 'rock album,' 'Stones Grow Her Name' (2012), we realized that maybe it wasn't really what this band is about."

But the return to power metal doesn't necessarily reflect dissatisfaction with the band's many detours since the initial release of "Ecliptica." "I really do like most of our stuff. Of course, there are things that we'd do differently these days," Klingenberg said, "but at any given time we've always did our best within the possibilities we've had, so ... no regrets, no remorse!"

Sonata Arctica opted for a wolf in selecting album art for "Pariah's Child." "I think wolves are very interesting animals and they carry a certain mystique as well, so it's fitting for our band," he said.

The band will continue its current tour until fall next year, but expects to be back in the studio shortly thereafter. "Before the end of 2016, I'm sure we'll have another album out," Klingenberg said.

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