

---

## IN FLAMES - SIREN CHARMS



What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Perhaps one of the big clichés, but unusually evident when it comes to In Flames and their new album "Siren Charms".

To lose one of the musical engines of a band usually means a ticket to the graveyard of bands for an eternal rest among abandoned careers and reasonably forgotten last albums. Sure, history has proven the opposite once or twice - but one could question if anyone has risen from the ashes with such strength and power as In Flames? When guitarist Jesper Strömblad left the band following 2008's "A Sense of Purpose", the harbingers of doom were very vocal on the imminent collapse of the Gothenburg band.

That never happened. In what must be described as a pure backlash, the band delivered it's strongest album to date – "Sounds of a Playground Fading" - which was both awarded for gold-level sales and topped charts in both Sweden and Germany. "Siren Charms", the first album with Niclas Engelin as permanent guitarist in the band, cements the greatness hinted at with the previous album; this is a band taking it's game several steps forward, leaving both imitators and nay-sayers far behind.

The first sign that the band have taken a different route is the choice of studio. Where they previously have recorded at home in Gothenburg, the whole operation was now moved to Berlin and the legendary Hansa Ton Studios. At the Köthener Strasse-location, artists like Iggy Pop, David Bowie, U2 and Killing Joke have all recorded some of rock history's most spoken of classics, and it is no

exaggeration to say that history can be felt in the walls. Here, the band settled in with producer Roberto Laghi and vocal producer Daniel Bergstrand. Based at Hansa since a few years is also Swedish mix-engineer Michael Ilbert, who was appointed to mix the album after keyboard-wizard Örjan Örnkloo once again contributed with his characteristic programming and synthesizers. Both guitars Björn Gelotte and vocalist Anders Fridén are convinced that the choice of environment has had an influence on the final results. All details, big and small, interconnect and have given the eleven new songs a darker sound and tone. A darkness and sadness in the music's atmosphere that anyone who has wandered home drunk through a rainy Kreuzberg at four in the morning can recognize.

If "Sounds of a Playground fading" took more than three months to complete, the band gave themselves six weeks to record "Siren Charms". They brought "a bag of riffs" and a hand full of song structures to start off. The method meant a self-inflicted pressure to feed creativity and was a daring move. It also meant that Anders Fridén and Björn Gelotte got to collaborate in a new way as song-writers. Previously, Björns love of classic rock and Fridéns wish to experiment resulted in clashes with both parties claiming "You ought to think like this... No, YOU ought to think like THIS!". With the limited time in the studio, they instead had to embrace each others different approaches and turn them to strengths.

Daniel Svensson, drummer of In Flames, got demos of the songs with simple programmed drums, and could then add his personal touch to the sessions. Given the intricate and highly intense drumming on the album, one would easily guess that he'd been playing the songs for months, but it is often first-take recordings delivered with laser-sharp precision. Fridén and Gelotte can't give him enough praise, claiming him to be one of the world's best drummers who doesn't make too much fuss around his drumming ("He doesn't go around doing drum-glove endorsements really"), but always delivers flawless takes in the studio and on stage. Together with bass player Peter Iwers, they create a foundation for the music so solid you could build Burj Khalifa on it.

Fridén had to pay a high price for the heavy time pressure and creative stress. On his return to Sweden, his body caved in and he found himself physically and mentally exhausted. Straight after the album sessions were finished, work at his own label Razzia Notes started without any chance of recuperation and recharging of the batteries. His attitude of "I've always done this - toured and recorded" finally took its toll and he found himself knocked out at home. When Anders talks about the crash today with some distance, he can see the experience as healthy; the insight that one has to listen to the bodies signals and shut down for a while. Above all, he's content with the knowledge that he's taken the new recordings as far as is physically possible. The result being an album showcasing exactly where In Flames are 2014.

One of the biggest differences from previous albums comes from Fridén as well. Where he used to mix his vocals with both screaming and growls, "Siren Charms" is more or less completely fragile and delicate when it comes to the vocal delivery. It is the result of a vocalist with no holds barred, bearing his throat and letting the listener come closer than ever before. It's intimate, emotional and powerful.

The album title refers to the female creatures from the Greek mythology who lured sailors with their singing, only to watch their ships crush against the cliffs and sink. A story that is told in different ways over the albums lyrics and is applicable to the many aspects of the human need to intoxicate ourselves, and submit to seduction. They are fascinating tales of what we are prepared to sacrifice to achieve those states of mind.

“Siren Charms” secures In Flames position as a metal band that never stands still, and it is doubtlessly a band that continues to take risks, push boundaries and challenge themselves as much as their audience. That the adversities haven’t killed the band is quite obvious - but the question is if In Flames have ever been this strong?