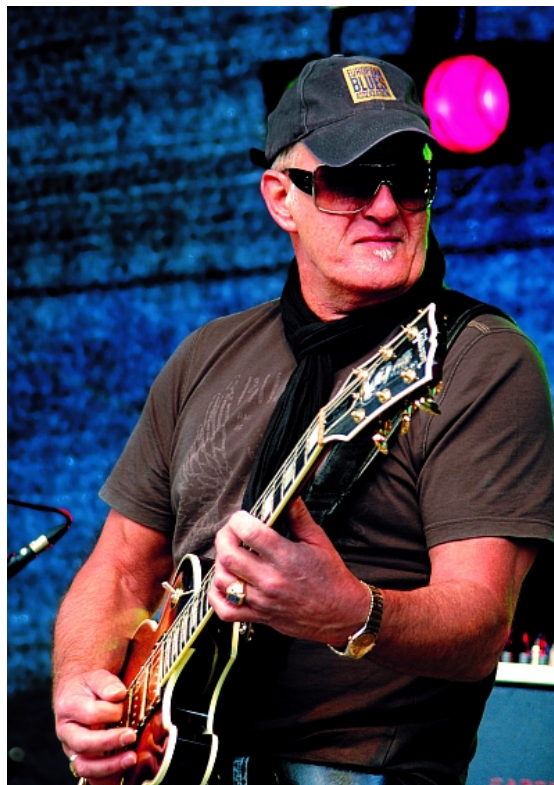


The Jan Akkerman interview, proudly presented by Tonny Larsen / Caerllysi Music.



INTRO:

First of all, let me take a moment to praise Jan, for many exciting moments of excellent guitaring both via Focus (magic moments) but also via his solo albums!

It is with proud and humble sentiments I open this interview, with one of my absolute guitar heroes and a master of his trade, making me and many others (I guess) in a situation, juxtaposition if you will?!

When at his best....you wanna burn your guitar, but on the other hand you really want to play (learn) that six stringed thing!!

1. If I say FOCUS! What 's your immediate thought?

To me, it brought Dutch progmusic on the worldwide map.. big time! yes I realise that Earth & Fire, Golden Earring etc. were there...but you as FOCUS made a difference!! Why is that...in your opinion?!

Well, I thought we weren,t good enough to do the Led Zep thing and certainly not in copying it, but I also had a maybe even stronger feel or love for Jazz&Soulmusic&Gospel&Black Rock like Chuck Berry, Otis Redding, Mahalia Jackson & Ray Charles etc. It had beauty and taste and it swings like a barndoor in the wind. At the same time I was interested in Classical Music, Marching bands like music from Da Sousa etc actually I was interested into in any kind of music[still]

In a sense that it culminated in a club called *Focus*, where I could combine all these things in a way that I hoped people would appreciate and it did, even now ;-). Later on, I realised I owed a lot to the British, specially in their appreciation for my efforts to give Rock-Gtarplaying another twist, so I'm not complaining.

2. Does it matter to you as an artist (Focus days) to be labelled a progband? or you couldn't care less, the music is always the most important thing of course, but labelling is that a good thing?

Depends, If the thing is genuine and authentic, why not. But genuine or not after 40 yrs de dato and start yodeling again you can't say..... that's a progressive Rockband. It feels a bit like this Belgium child molester *Dutroux* who they released on parole just for a weekend, under 1 condition. He was only allowed : "to rape women over 50 yrs old" Some handy business guy had it filmed and the called the video "Dutroux goes Classic"! So sometimes labeling is not a good thing, in my opinion. That's why I have a problem with the expression :*Classic Rock* It's a matter of ethic's, which is hard to find in the music industry. All in all in reality it is a balance btween playing a 200 chords for 100 people or 2 & 200 chords for 5000 people :-)

3. Do you find cover art important, if so why?

Sometimes it's hard to understand but cover art has always been of interest to me.

It shows what group or niche they're aiming at, so that's very important people can identify with the beliefs or music of the artist whoever that may be.
The only danger is that the cover can be misleading, i.o.w. you can't judge a book or record by looking at the cover.

I find the art ones the most interesting and sometimes of rare beauty. Music and picture has always gone hand in hand especially the old blue note or verve covers.

4. I guess you were very young, when you realised music was your life!?

How did that come about? Was it always (initially) the guitar you wanted to express your music through?

Yes, I believe so. I once asked my mum when it started and she said since I could crawl the first thing was grabbing an old Zither [an Austrian instrument] and started banging with spoon on it until my grandmother gave me a baby piano.

I found out it was corresponding with the church bells just around the corner of our house on one of those Amsterdam canals. Every Sunday morning the carillon played the same tune called "Frere Jacques, dormez vous" and I found out that they were all the white keys on that little baby piano tuned in the noble key of C. The black ones were painted on them they didn't have any function. I was 2 yrs old. Later, when I was 5 or 6 I picked up accordion playing and that was a tremendous joy like playing bass&chords and melody at the same time. It sort of triggered my interest more into harmony and counterpoint and later Jazz and how to get around the chords and melody.

My mum always said, while I was "studying" :Your not playing what's in the book"! And I misused the situation by saying "Oh, what does it say then"?

She couldn't read notes so I had her thereend of the conversation, and I could go on "Improvising". Still do,

I must have been 6, when I picked up the Guitar. The blacksmith on the corner had one and thought me my first chords and as soon I heard a record by Django, I was sold.

Later I did the conservatory for Guitar but I'm still a bad reader in fact I was spoiled already by playing R&B with the blacksmith on his doorstep.

5. Who was (and is) your inspiration sources, musicstyle and instrument wise?

Practically any type of music as I explained before.

6. Van Leer, has re-created Focus, with younger musicians.

Any thoughts on that?

I don't know.

7. Would you comment on the split of the original Focus?

Well, I got a phonecall from van Leer on New Year's Day, 75, that he didn't want to make use of my "services" anymore.

8. Before moving on to your solo career, what is your favourite Focus album?

Please feel free to name several and why! My fave is "Focus III" !

Personally, I don't like none of them. There's some footage on YouTube I like, but, that's it.

9. I guess instrumental music is close to your heart, since most of your work

is that chosen genre! Is that a fair assessment?

Yes of course.

10. I've lost count of the number of solo releases you have made.

Do you know yourself? Or you don't you really care, as long as you can keep on playing, getting your music out to people?!

Yes, it keeps me off the streets and the good thing about it is that none of them is the same.

11. Talking live performances, what is your proudest moment? Please elaborate!

My proudest moment was, that I received a golden harp in Holland for all my solo works. The Jury of the year 2005 stated that the world's best Guitarist in the 70's, couldn't stand in the shadow of the Guitarist Mr Akkerman is now.

12. Many have asked me to put this question to you: Which is your favourite

Guitar these days? Pro's and amateurs (like myself) I'm sure will want to know what the great maestro uses, were of course talking make and brand and if you don't mind also mentioning your fave gear (Amps, Pedals, etc.) !?

I still love my Les Paul personal, I had it reverbed a couple of yrs ago. I also love my black LP and a few other models like the rebuild Jan Akkerman Framus without the name Framus. they're all on Facebook or www.janakkerman.nl

As an Amp I use a *Marble* 50 watts Class A Amp, designed by myself and build by *FNS Tube technologies* in Holland. As an effect I use the *POD XT live* with pedal in a rack together with a *Sequis motherload speakersim*, which I consider the best around.

13. If you could stop the clock/time, who would be in your favourite line up

In a given live concert? Bands and/or artist!!

That's not a realistic question

14. What are your thoughts on piracy and /or downloading music for free?

I really think it's all a matter of taste and upbringing. Rabble for the rabble and exclusivity for people who like exclusive things and like to pay for that and really enjoy the purchase. These are not the people who put that on the net for grabs and enrich themselves over the backs of others.

There's a name for that which escapes at the moment, but in my country there's a law that states that if you sell things purchased from a thief, you get punished harder than the thief. Somehow nobody in the official world of the law seem to remember that overhere.

15. Since you always had a jazz-feel to your playing, now more than ever, you have become an icon in both the rock, prog and jazz world!!

How does that make you feel?

Oh fine, but there are a lot of good players nowadays but I'm glad that I'm appreciated.

16. I've seen the "Night of the guitars" on dvd many times, with friends (and cold beers), all these young kids plays brilliantly...shredding, burning the frets with scales and runs, but everytime (when you and Robin Trower) comes on...people go: "Yeah..thats real playing, that is what guitaring is all about!!" And I agree!!

The question is: Feeling over speed, which is most important to you? I realise that question is double sided..of course if a tune requires speed, you add it!

But an album full of speed scales, does nothin' for me, how about you?

I have nothing with Thrower but he's a icon in his own field.

Speed is great, can't get enough of it but the art is in a musical technical way, that's what's really lacking in most rockplayers, because rock doesn't have too many extended harmonies involved, which invites you to explore a chord and start building around that....like bebop. The problem is also that if you only start doing scales etc.in the berkley tradition it's starting to sound all the same.

There's so much more to music then just going in one direction and become a professor at that. So sometimes it's good not to practise too hard otherwise you might not be able to forget all that stuff.

17. What new plans do you have for 2010 ? New album? Tour (Scandinavia, he said hopefully ?) please tell ?!

I'm working on a new CD called *Minor details* and the compositions are ready but my playing is not good enough yet in my opinion [fetalmatique?]

And love touring scandinavia but so far I can see they're heavy into Focus so it's better to stay put. I don't want to be in the same league.

18. If you were to name one living guitarplayer here, that you think are great on all accounts, that you really like, who would it be?

Sure, I know...you can name several if you like!!

I like Sylvain Luc and Birelli Lagrene, I do admire both. And Rockplayers ? I don,t know, they're all good :-)

19. Here's your chance to tell your friends, fans and our readers, whats on your mind right now....this moment! Please feel free!

Actually I'm getting a dry throat by answering all this stuff, so, a Belguim beer and a nice piece of music will do the trick.

20. Thanx so very much Jan Akkerman, for doing and taking the time for this interview!

Im so proud to present it!! All the best to you!!

Same to you Tonny & Take care

Regards

Jan A

Tonny : Caerlysi Music.