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Review: Sonata Arctica – Pariah's Child

February 7, 2014

If you are into metal music—and, more concretely, into power metal—then chances are that you have heard about Sonata Arctica, the Finnish formation that has helped shape and enrich the genre with their ever-experimenting and very personal style. The themes “Fullmoon”, “San Sebastian” and “Wolf and Raven” have become anthems of all that’s metal; if you haven’t had a chance to listen to them yet, I highly recommend you do now. Their melodious tunes and Tony Kakko’s amazing voice make for such an amazing experience that even people who don’t love the genre

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can enjoy them.

However, if you ask a hardcore fan about the band, they will tell you they are not metal anymore. It has been a long time since they released *Unia* (2007), an album that sent them into the road of obscurity due to its very experimental nature. It is, after all, an album where choruses are scarce, melodies change without warning and lyrics are as obscure as James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*—all of it for the sake of recreating the atmosphere of dreams (“*Unia*” means “dreams” in Finnish), the main theme of this concept album. After this, the power metal fans that had supported the band ever since *Ecliptica* (1999) was released up until *Reckoning Night* (2004) decided to march on to new grounds, since the abstraction of the new album was too much for them to handle. This is why this album has received the lowest mark in [Encyclopaedia Metallum's ranking](#)—a mere 68% that doesn't do justice to the very artistic yet difficult to understand effort that was *Unia*. And things only got worse from there.

The next two albums, *The Days of Grays* (2009) and *Stones Grow Her Name* (2012), while highly enjoyable and full of memorable themes that deserve to shine on the spotlight (right off the top of my head I can think of the tragic “Juliet” and the incredibly amusing “Cinderblox”), were just not classic Sonata. It didn't sound at all like power metal—in fact, some reviews [insisted on calling *Stones Grow Her Name* “hard rock” instead](#), and it got the same mark as *Unia* in *Encyclopaedia Metallum*—a meagre 68%. Was Sonata Arctica finished, after so many years of delivering great metal songs? Far from it.

It's 2014 now, and Sonata Arctica has been hard at work in their 8th album. It was only recently that they released the information

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on it [on their official webpage](#), and it looks promising, to say the least. Their totem animal, the wolf, had been a constant all throughout their albums, appearing on multiple album covers and having at least one song devoted to wolves on all of them (“Fullmoon”, “Wolf & Raven”, “The Cage”, “Ain’t Your Fairytale”, “Under Your Tree” and “The Last Amazing Grays”, in chronological order), until they dropped it on their last album—a doubtless mark of their estrangement from their original music. And so, Tony decided that their new album would be called Pariah’s Child, as it announces the return of the wolf, the son that they had left behind and is now coming home. In fact, it is the central element of the new cover art, whose colours and elements can’t help but remind us of their first album, Ecliptica.

But that is not everything that Sonata Arctica fans should be celebrating, for Tony promised they were going back to their power metal roots. And, if you have listened to their first single, “The Wolves Die Young” (released on the 11th of February), you can certainly see he’s not just boasting. This melodic yet characteristically power metal song carries all the strength of the original Sonata songs, along with all the symphonic elements they have acquired along their career while experimenting with other genres. And to make things even better, they have announced a new world tour to promote their album, which will go from Finland to Russia, visiting France, Spain, Germany and many other countries as well. Sadly enough, they won’t be coming to the UK.

If you already are a big fan of Sonata Arctica, look forward to the 28th of March for their European release of Pariah’s Child (31st of March for the UK), and get your tickets before they sell out to see them in what promises to be the best performance

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they have ever done ever since 2004. If you hadn't heard about them before, or hadn't found the time to listen to them, this is the best time to start—this new album is sure not to disappoint even the most hardcore of the fans, for, if “The Wolves Die Young” has to serve as any indication of what we can expect from it, this may very well be their best album yet.

-Miguel Bernardo Olmedo Morell

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