



TRACK RECORD | Wolf Mail - The Wolf is at our door

Text: Jan Blaauw

After "Above the influence," Canadian guitarist Wolf Mail has released another studio album titled "The Wolf is at our door". Although a live album came out in between (Live in Norway - Oseana Auditorium 2015) and an album with Australian singer Milena Barrett (Lazy Bone 2018), after all the Covid-19 woes, this album is one that came about after hard work.

NEW ALBUM

Used to annual touring, all the lock downs meant an end to traveling the world. After doing laundry from the tour case, all time for reflection and finding new ways to still be involved with music full-time, Wolf got his papers to teach guitar and music professionally and take exams. Meanwhile, writing a new album, the songs on "The Wolf is at our door" have been worked out into full-fledged recordings over the past few months. By the way, this piece is not a review of this album, but the creation of one of the tracks is a special story in itself.

ROMAN GRINEV

In late September 2015, Wolf toured Europe with French drummer Niko Sarran and Moscow-based bassist Roman Grinev. Through southern France to Lausanne (Switzerland), on to the Netherlands and Germany. For Roman Grinev, it was his first tour outside of Russia. The bassist, with roots in Roma culture, was certainly no stranger to Moscow and its surroundings. The eager musician consumed just about every musical style that came his way. Funk, Jazz, Fusion, Rock, Blues, Soul. Roman laid down the bass notes and formed the solid foundation of the music being played.

Bass guitar carried high, Roman seemed to disappear behind the instrument. But as a musician, his energy always contributed to the dynamics on stage. Indispensable, especially when sharing the stage with only three musicians. His facial expressions, body language. He meandered through the music. Eye contact with Niko Sarran, going along with the energy of Wolf Mail. Hat on and Roman was ready.



Four years earlier, while touring in Moscow 2011, Wolf receives an invitation to jam with High School, a local band. Arriving at an "underground" club called Tunnel Point, he ends up on stage with, as it turned out, Roman Grinev. Wolf on that encounter: 'Except for a few covers, we were basically improvising the whole jam. After the gig I got into a conversation with Roman and was deeply impressed by his ability to anticipate improvised intros that he immediately turned into grooves that the band could build on. He seemed to be able to be one step ahead in the music, even before it was played. And he did that completely with a certain ease. For me the reason to invite him later to go on tour with me.'

FOCKIN' COOL

That tour came several years later. In 2015, Roman Grinev flew over from Moscow to France, along with his old Fender bass guitar. An instrument he had totally fused with. His attitude of "I'm fucking cool" could not disguise the fact that he still toured Europe with amazement, visiting countries he had never been to before. Only to end up at the River Studio in Alkmaar, Netherlands, after a gig in Germany.

Rein Wijnja, owner of the River Studio, and his wife Frederique Bakker had met Wolf Mail a year earlier and spontaneously offered their studio and house as a rehearsal space and place to stay. This hospitable couple offered Wolf to use their place as a base again, this tour. Together with Niko Sarran and Roman Grinev, Wolf moved into the house for several days and were able to enjoy the, as Wolf described it, relaxed atmosphere that prevails in this provincial town in the province North Holland.



Back from Germany, after a performance at the "Herzog Ernst" in Celle, the band moved into the River Studio to jam on the night of October 2 and 3, 2015. In the company of Jan Blaauw and technician Frank van Yperen, two songs were recorded. 'Made me a beggar,' a song written a year earlier by Wolf Mail and Jan Blaauw during a tour of Scandinavia in Norway and 'Change in the air.' A song that would eventually end up on Wolf Mail's new album "The Wolf is at our door" under the title "Don't fall down." Both songs were immediately recorded live in the studio. To which technician and versatile musician Frank van Yperen added a rhythmic keyboard part in the dead of night in 'Don't fall down'. Humming and grunting like an old Hohner Clavinet, this part is the glue in the song.

TRIBUTE

But above all, "Don't fall down" is a posthumous tribute to Roman Grinev. Some time after the tour, the bassist survived, narrowly, a brutal robbery in Moscow. While coming out of a club he was mugged, beaten up and robbed of his beloved and ancient Fender bass. Recovery was difficult but the loss of his beloved instrument was more than a heavy blow for this musician, beloved and appreciated in the Moscow music scene.

One thing was certain for Wolf Mail. If another tour of Europe were to be planned, he would certainly try again to arrange the necessary visas to take Roman Grinev with him on tour. Unfortunately, that plan was rudely disrupted. On November 3, 2018, Roman's life came to a tragic end. According to the information that reached us, a fall from the window of his apartment in Moscow, from the seventeenth floor, became fatal to him. Roman Grinev lived to be only 41 years old.



GRINVEST

He is certainly not forgotten. Since his death, his friends have organized "Grinfest" every year. A music festival with numerous bands, in memory of Roman, to keep his musical influence alive and the inspiration he passed on to others. But also as a fund raiser to be able to give Roman's young son the care and education the child deserves now that his father is sadly no longer able to do so. **Rest in peace Roman...**

