

Comeback of the year

In a huge rehearsal building in Stockholm's Hammarbyhamn there is activity. Three known faces are playing through the breakthrough single "Riot in everyone", like they have done hundreds of times before. But behind the microphone, focused on himself in the mirror, a blonde styled younger does his best to live up his three predecessors Dave Lepard, H Olliver Twisted and Simon Cruz, plus his own idol Sebastian Bach's scene language. The old songs sits, but it is in the new single "We are the legion" that the fresh singer Gabriel Keyes really gets to show what he is good for. It is therefore that we are located where we are, as guitarist Martin Sweet tells us quickly when we sit down in a black leather couch to talk about Crashdïet's future. "It is time to get his circus called Crashdïet going again, and we want Sweden Rock Magazines readers to be the first ones to know. On new years eve we will release the single "We are the legion" digitally to show everyone that we're back. We've had some quiet years behind us, but since we got a new manager who helped us reconsider (think about) most about the band, the quiet time is over now." "But if you had asked us a year ago, I wouldn't pictured all of us sitting together on this couch", says drummer Eric Young. "I would have thought it was over, I was tired and so fuckin done with everything. Our first rehearsal with Gabriel in June was as much for me if I wanted to continue to do music as it was to test Gabriel as a singer. But when we felt it was right, I could let down my shoulders. It was so liberating to feel that Crashdïet still was fun, cause I was so sure I was gonna feel the opposite."

Gabriel Keyes, or Gabriel Kallander as his real name is, comes from the band Perfect Crime, and has just turned 24 years. His musical interest, and the music he grew up with, is bands like Crashdïet. Something that's embarrassingly obvious when looking at his old band ad at the internet page Bandfinder, where he sells himself as a "guy with a cool voice, lots of power, can do high pitch and thinks style is important". "Oh shit, I can't remember this at all", Gabriel says. "Cool to be embarrassed in my first interview. But I've always liked this musical style (PS: I'm a bit unsure about this one – the sentence in the magazine is "alltid gillat det här musikalska stuket") and wanted to play in a touring band. I've got no doubts in what I do, this is what I want to do. I do everything to do it good". The band, who did not now about the ad till now, laughs out loud until Martin calls it a new Cinderella story, where the fan becomes the new singer.

*Based on your history and singers, how does it feel to take in a wild card like Gabriel?* "We've tried everything, and it is best to stop worrying", says Martin. "We do it on the gut feeling now". "It is something new for us", says basist Peter London. "I don't know how we've done it before, things have just happened around us". "We were too good at worrying about details before", Martin continues. "Now it just feels like a waste to worry, because it feels so good. We can't sit here and worry about how Gabriel will be in six years. Neither we or he knows that, so why made it a problem?". "What I liked about Gabriel was that he was direct when he got into the rehearsal place the first time, he seemed to be sure of himself", says Eric. "Humble but sure. I can think how one as a 23 year old would have treated a situation like this. As I said before, after the rehearsal I would make my "make or break"-choice, and thanks to Gabriel, it was make.

While Martin, Eric and Peter speaks, Gabriel sits curled up in the coach listening, interested and humble. When he gets praise, he smiles embarrassed. The sureness Eric talked about gets a shy edge. "He made a good balance, and after the rehearsal we had a party to test

that part as well", says Peter with a laugh. "After that, there was no doubt," says Eric. He was a grown person.

*As opposed to Simon Cruz, front man in Crashdiet 2009-2015, who came in more like a star?* "It wasn't like that with Simon," Martin says. "He didn't come in as anyone else than himself, but left the band as someone else than himself". For the first time this day, Martin looks a bit uncomfortable. The words don't come as easily anymore, and he thinks before he speaks. "The difference between now and earlier is that this time it's been more time between meeting and rehearsal", Martin explains. "We've built it up long term, which Gabriel wasn't too happy about, as he wanted to get going at once. I can understand that. But while we and the new manager has fixed all the loose ends Gabriel has waited. I think that shows us that he wants this, and takes it seriously." "He has shown that he is not just a singer, he's a fourth member of the band", Eric says. *When did you start to feel like a member?* "That was after the first rehearsal in Tanto in June, when we drank beer afterwards and just talked", Gabriel says. "It just felt so natural. We matched in a good way, and that is what I see as the start". "It is mighty (PS: not so sure about this word. The original is "mäktig", maybe huge is more right?)", Peter says, "to feel like that after the first meeting". "It's almost a bit strange", Martin continues. "Or no, it is a bit weird/disgusting (PS: I have NO idea how to translate "läskig". Swedes, please help me out here!), when it feels so right and so strong so quick. It is a little like following our destiny, as I see it now. The same day as we had the rehearsal, we met the record company guy Anders Johanson at Universal, the first who signed us. We hadn't seen him in years, and then it happens the same day as something new starts. He's always been there and been like a father, so it felt a little like "wow, what the fuck is happening?"

*What made you choose Gabriel?* "Gabriel was our managers suggestion", Martin says. "He had taken up the task of finding us a new singer. My first meeting with the manager was to talk about my solo project Sweet Creature, but to do all that felt so much more impossible than starting up Crashdiet again. So he talked to Gabriel and sent me some recordings. It was a Skid Row-song, a Journey-ballad and something by his old band Perfect Crime. I have pretty good hearing and know what I'm looking for, and even in those low budget recordings it felt so right. And he had the ballad voice as well. Journey and their ballads, I love them!" "But everyone loves Journey, so that is not an impressive answer", Peter jumps in. The whole band laughs. Gabriel laughs most, while hitting his knees. It is apparent that he's like a fish in water (in the right place). "You're right", Martin says between the laughter. "But we had the same kind of favorite singers, and we both liked power ballads. His voice.. I don't know, I like it. It is very grateful to write songs to. Plus he writes songs himself, and what he writes matches what I write. That makes everything new and fresh. If that part hadn't clicked, we wouldn't be sitting here. "

*How many times have you met for rehearsal?* "Three times", Eric says. "But we've hung out more. That part is almost more important. Play together, we can do that. We knew that at once. But playing is a small part of being in a band. You can make that work, but it is impossible to make the social part work if it's not there. During a day you are on stage for one hour, and hang around the rest of the 23 hours. You see what's important."

*The fact that you are much younger and more unexperienced than the others, do you see that as a good thing or a bad?* "It is a good thing", Gabriel says quick. "Me coming in and lifting these oldies (PS: the word was "gubbarna") a little. "It goes without saying", Eric

points out. "Young energy inspires. We can sit still, while Gabriel can't wait till we're going out to play."

*Where do your voice come from, are you a natural talent?* "Naah, both", Gabriel says. "There is many lessons behind it, cause I wanted to learn. I've wanted it for a long time, and want to make it. That's why I'm prepared." A comment about the movie "Rock Star" (2001), where Mark Wahlberg's character Chris "Izzy" Cole answers dryly is thrown in, but passes. What doesn't pass, is the questions about the many problems Crashdiet had with the tours while Simon was in the band. Several gigs were cancelled because of his voice. The question if they are going to book calmer tours in the future is met with bewilderment. "I take it very serious all over, and no concert is gonna be cancelled because of me", Gabriel says firmly. "I don't drink a couple of beers, to go out on the stage and scream my voice of, because I know it doesn't work. It takes more, and maybe Simon didn't care. Look at Jocke Berg from Hardcore Superstar. He starts warming up two hours before the gig, and they have never, as far as I know, cancelled because of a voice problem. That is what it takes to deliver, and that is what I'm gonna do". Peter, who sits there listening, says almost to himself that it sounds safe. Something that is taken ironically, and laughter erupts.

*What do you think about the tour in 2018, since you have gotten jobs and such since last time?* "Job?" Martin wonders. "Do you mean a day-job? (PS: a bit unsure about this – the word was "kneg".) Of course one has to work. It's been great. I've never lived an A4-life before, and its been unexpectedly good." "One has lived a life in denial before, and always been behind," Erik says. "One has never had anything but minus on the bank account". "Now it's suddenly money for that little work", Martin begins. "It is dangerous. It is so easy to have it pretty good? That's a thought that's struck me a couple of times."

*What do you mean with pretty good?* "To have cheese in the fridge", Martin says. "A cheese that is not stolen from some venue. It is nice. To not feel the stress about having to DJ at a rock club for a couple hundred crowns to pay for that cheese. Its been a luxury". "And then to buy a bag-in-box for 200 crowns without problems is another thing", Peter follows up. "Then, the job-part has made us grow up a bit", Erik continues. "Grown as individuals and could put something else into the band than easier. That is also pretty nice." "But as soon as the touring starts again, you'll see that the reptile brain takes over again", Peter says.

Martin points out that he also has become a dad. "You get a new perspective on everything", he says. "It is like you've always heard, that life changes. It's a good thing. I can't chance with anything now, I have to see that it works." "I remember when you told us about it, and it is a thing that I've thought later is absurd", Eric says. "It was like you thought it was hard for you to talk about becoming a dad. Just that says a lot of how the band was – that you couldn't live your own life, as a matter of course."

*Has the band been a monster that kept you back?* "It's always been with everything that it must happen now at once", Eric says. "When Dave (1980-2006) passed away in 2006, it wasn't long until we were on the road again. We didn't draw back into ourselves, it was more about saving the band. Find a solution, a quick one, who should work." "And didn't", Peter sigh. "Right, after H Olliver Twisted's (2007-2008, Reckless Love) short time in the band it was Simon and then out again," Martin continues. "This time it's taken more time. To do the same again wouldn't have worked. Now we have even fixed some practical issues in the band, that will benefit everyone." "We had a meeting where we spoke of our roles in the band - something we've never done before. It should be democratic", Eric says. "Before, that

is how we thought it should be. Everyone should do everything all the time. Now, the other guys know that I hate the merchandise part, and don't want to do that at all. Then, I know that Peter and Martin doesn't like the planning of a tour, which I think is fun. This division is perfect". "I almost think the merchandise is best of all", Peter says. "Even better than playing." "This is exactly the things we hadn't talked about", Peter continues. ""Do you hate this? Good, I hate that. Then we switch, cause I just want to play!"" "It was a "heureka"-moment", Martin says. Now we just have to find Gabriel a job as well, but I guess it ends with him packing all the merchandise and working his way to the top.

*What visions do you have for Crashdiets future? Release the new record on your own label and be a free band, or go on like before?* "We are such messy individs that I'm not sure if it would work to release it ourselves", Martin thinks. "I think you bury yourself if you skip the record company", Eric says. "It's not my thing, and I'm not good at it. You have released records on your own company." (PS: in the article, it looks like Eric is saying the last sentence, but I think it's a question from the reporter?) "Exactly", Peter says.

*Sweet Creature's album "The Devil knows my name" (2006) came out, but there is not much more than that?* "We've got time to think of it all", Martin says. "We can release the single ourselves, and then there is gigs. After that, we'll have to look at it. It's cool to do everything ourselves. You see the sales and everything, but there's a lot of work. Now I'm talking about Sweet Creature. Crashdiät is a bigger thing, and it takes more".

*More of what?* "More self-confidence", Martin says low. "We don't have enough of that. That's the thing. We need to strengthen it before we can let Crashdiät be or not believe in ourselves. To sign away everything is nice, then we get out of a lot of the work that I don't want to do. Deal with money.. I'm not comfortable with that." The question why meets a long and uncomfortable silence. The answer linger in the air, but no one wants to say it. At last, Martin says it. "Its that we've been gone for a while", Martin says silently. "It takes an organisatory skill to be your own record company", Peter says. "Me, I don't know if I have that anymore. You have to find some sort of routine in this work. That's it. We have lots of songs. But the problem is the discipline, I'm not sure I'm ready to commit".

*Anymore?* "Yeah, I've had it", Peter says. "I'll say that. We've done our own merchandise all the time, and it's been great. And I know how much work that it. We've been extremely rigorous about our designs, and taken our merchandise to a high level. In theory, it should work the same way in music, but I'm not so sure it is as easy." "Printing records, anyone can do that", Martin says. "But it's everything else. But Crashdiät's spirit is still to our own thing, so maybe it's the future. A problem has maybe been that we've jumped on the first offer – no matter what. Never thought about it. Now, we have time on our side."