

Once Upon a
Nightwish

THE OFFICIAL
BIOGRAPHY

1996 - 2006

—♦—
MAPE OLLILA



SAMPLE CHAPTER FROM
WWW.BAZILLIONPOINTS.COM

Once Upon a *Nightwish* THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY 1996 - 2006

—♦—
M A P E O L L I L A

5.

The Upward Spiral

—♦—

AT THE END OF summer 1999, Nightwish heard rumblings from Germany about better-than-expected sales. To up the ante further, Drakkar Records boss Bogdan Kopec came up with the idea of a special release exclusively for the German market. “There was a total eclipse of the sun in parts of Europe on August 11,” Kopec says. “I asked Tuomas to write a song to commemorate the event. He wasn’t too happy, but he composed ‘Sleeping Sun’ anyway. We were very lucky to have him do that.”

Tuomas was definitely not thrilled about doing made-to-order work. “I was very much against the idea,” he says. “They said that the song should be no longer than four minutes, it must follow a hit formula, it had to have a catchy chorus, and it must be a ballad. I think they also said it shouldn’t have a solo in it. Those were Boggi’s guidelines. But we did manage to squeeze in a solo after all!”

The song was released in Germany as a single called *Sleeping Sun* (4 *Ballads of the Eclipse*), also containing “Walking in the Air,” “Swanheart,” and the title track of *Angels Fall First*. “We spent a lot of money to promote that single,” Kopec says. “The limited edition of two thousand copies included special cardboard sunglasses that you could use to watch the eclipse. Of course it turned out that the glasses didn’t fit in the CD case—so we had to cut the glasses ourselves at the office, all two thousand of them!”

According to Kopec, the single was not a tremendous success, but it opened new doors for the band. “A metal band releasing a single in Germany is a special

Once Upon a Nightwish

thing in itself,” he says. “For a newcomer, it’s practically unheard of. The single made it to the charts and stayed there for three or four weeks—I think it peaked at number sixty. This naturally gave a new push to *Oceanborn*, which then sold about thirty thousand copies. The single wasn’t a huge hit, but it gave them a lot of exposure, and since it included four great ballads, we reached a wider audience outside the metal genre. One of the things I did with *Sleeping Sun* was advertise it on the German news channel NTV, which is like the German CNN. Nobody had thought of that before—a metal label advertising on a mainstream TV news channel. Even though it was a risk, I still think it was a good idea. It was all about reaching different kinds of people, like, say, fans of Andrea Bocelli. And I think it worked: we really did reach a wider audience.

“We also put ‘Sleeping Sun’ on a bunch of package compilations, like *Mysteria*, *Fantasia*, and so on. Big, major compilations. I don’t know the exact figures, but I’d say ‘Sleeping Sun’ has sold at least half a million on different compilations. Maybe even more.”

Despite the single’s success, Tuomas stood by his initial reservations. “I remember when the song was presented to BMG and the German subsidiary of Island Records,” Kopec says. “The night was a success in every respect, but as we were taking a ride organized as a part of the event, Tuomas leaned over and told me never to ask him for one single song like that ever again. And I never have. I got the message!”

A video was also shot for “Sleeping Sun,” and it was the most expensive clip in the history of Spinefarm Records at the time. The video was again written and directed by Sami Käyhkö, and featured scenes of Tarja in the autumnal landscape of Lapland. Once again, the rest of the band were nowhere to be seen. In the concept video, the events were set to happen over the course of one night, ending with the eclipse.

“‘Sleeping Sun’ was a proper video at last,” Tarja says. “We traveled to Lapland and drove jeeps all the way up to freakin’ Lake Inari. The production crew had scouted for locations and found a small lake in the middle of a forest. I was supposed to dive into Lake Inari. It was autumn, the time of year when the sun still rises and sets up there, but it was already really cold.”

Shooting in the chilly glory of Lapland was far from glamorous. “I was wearing a red dress three sizes too big—it had to be stitched up from the back to make it look like it fit me,” Tarja says, rolling her eyes. “They styled my hair in this ‘Finnish tango queen’ look which I absolutely hated, but obviously I couldn’t say anything. I had the makeup and hairstylist person with me at all times.”

In addition, Tarja was pestered by swarms of bloodthirsty insects. “Oh, those mosquitoes! I had that blood red dress, and there were like a million of those

insects—unbelievable! My forehead was all bloody, and my neck had a thousand bite marks. Those mosquitoes were everywhere. We slept in a cabin, and if you opened the door even for one second, there'd be a thousand of them inside the cottage. We spent most of the night chasing them.”

“Of course, the shooting took place at night, too, in the forest by a pond that attracted all the mosquitoes within a mile radius. I tried to look as relaxed as I could on camera, even though there were hundreds of these fuckers sucking blood out of my ear the whole time. It hurt like hell! And there I was, singing, ‘I wish for this nighttime to last for a lifetime!’ Oh God! At some point I just had to jump up, call it quits, and run away from the mosquitoes. I was in such pain—they bit my ear canal, and it became so swollen I couldn’t even hear anything. Oh, it was disgusting, standing there barefoot in the middle of the mosquito forest!”

There was no end in sight to Tarja’s trials. “The video shoot lasted four days, after which I told the guys I was never going up there again. It was such an awful experience. One night at sunset we were trying to get beautiful shots of me sleeping on a mound of rocks, and man, those stones were sharp! It was hard to look pretty with my sides all bruised and sore, with mosquitoes sucking the living blood out of me! It was pure torture. We ran through so many bottles of insecticide. In the end, the cameramen and their assistants were so swollen they could barely be recognized as humans! Despite everything, I was still better off than they were!” In fact, while editing the video at the MTV3 studio, director Käyhkö tried to digitally remove the mosquitoes, but some of the bugs remain visible in the final cut.

Because of the theme of the single, there obviously needed to be an eclipse in the video, too. On close inspection, however, the eclipse bears a strange similarity to the sun in “The Carpenter” video. Actually, it was created out of the same footage—due to lack of time, the preexisting solar images were transformed into a rather awkward-looking eclipse.

“Sleeping Sun” was chosen as the metal video of the year by *Jyrki*, the most popular Finnish teen show on Finnish TV in the 1990s. Regardless, Emppu never liked the final result. “It’s shit,” he deadpans. “It was expensive to make, but I still think it was shit. I don’t know what’s wrong with Finnish people—why do even the most expensive videos look like student projects? How can they waste so much money on them?”

The money was not wasted, however—the video boosted record sales. The “Sleeping Sun” single sold thirteen thousand copies during its first week in Germany, and went to number sixty-nine on the German chart. Even though it was only available as an import from Germany, the single went gold in Finland—peaking at number two, and staying on the chart for nine weeks. The song was

Once Upon a Nightwish

later added to a reissue of *Oceanborn*, and was eventually rerecorded in 2005.

By the end of 1999, Nightwish had well and truly arrived. Tarja's abilities were being acknowledged outside the metal scene, too. She was asked to sing in the metal symphony *Evangelicum*, an ambitious project by Waltari frontman Kari "Kärtsy" Hatakka, combining brutal and primitive black/death metal with classical music, modern dance, drama, and a bombastic light show complete with pyrotechnics. Situated in the Middle Ages, *Evangelicum* was a fantasy piece about the eternal battle between good and evil. The choreography was designed by the director of the Finnish National Ballet, the internationally renowned dancer Jorma Uotinen. Premiered on October 15, 1999, *Evangelicum* was performed eleven times to sold-out house, at the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki.

The show was received with mixed feelings by the rock and metal fans, and Tarja herself was not totally convinced by the final outcome. "*Evangelicum* was, eh, an interesting project," she says. "How should I describe it nicely? First of all, the whole Uotinen-Hatakka symbiosis was very interesting in itself, and when I was invited to take part in the project, I really wanted to see what that was all about. But once I heard the music, I was like, 'Okay, the Finnish National Opera really accepts this stuff?' What a great country we are—probably no other opera house in Europe would have touched it!"

"But the audience actually liked the performances, and they certainly were visually impressive. It was quite exhausting to prepare for the performance, though, because I had to do everything alone. I had no correpetitor to teach me the parts or help me during rehearsals like singers usually do in opera. The music was quite atonal, so I just had to pick a note and try to determine the right key for my vocals. I guess there was some sort of death metal in the background, the violins began in a completely different key, and you had to sing something on top of it and make it sound sensible. I was pretty lost!"

The performances of *Evangelicum* ended before the singers and other performers had completely gotten into the swing of things. "During the last show, I actually felt that I could continue for a while," Tarja says. "I hadn't felt very confident before that, unfortunately. I think it was pretty much the same with everybody—the choir, the musicians, and the band. Furthermore, Kapu Kärtsy's computer containing all the scores was stolen, so the orchestra got the score only a week and a half before the premiere. Everyone was basically banging their heads against a brick wall. I stayed up nights, practicing everywhere I could, just singing while walking on the street. But in the end, *Helsingin Sanomat*, the big newspaper in Finland, called me *opera singer* Tarja Turunen, so I was pretty flattered! That was about the only positive thing the paper had to say about the entire project."

The *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper also praised Kärtsy's strong stage presence and Uotinen's choreography, which was heavily inspired by the martial art aikido. The biggest complaints had to do with the death metal racket churned out by Waltari, described as monotonous and a far cry from the band's own, more soulful brand of music.

Tarja remembers also being a bit traumatized by her costume. "That dress! It was such unbelievably beautiful red silk. I went to see the costume designer, and he said I would also wear an accoutrement that was decorated with butterflies and birds. Jorma Uotinen actually called me 'songbird.' Anyway, the accoutrement didn't weigh too much, it was easy on the neck, and it wasn't even too difficult to sing with it on. And the dress really was beautiful, tight-fitting, and very long on purpose—floor-touching long. While the costume designer was fitting the fabric on me, I was like, 'Oh my, this is gonna be gorgeous, I'm *so* gonna like wearing this!' But then she said: 'Yeah, Tarja, this is quite all right like this, but when Jorma gets here, he's going to want to cut off half of what it is now.' She didn't explain any further. So Jorma Uotinen came in and asked me to spin around a little. 'We're gonna take this much off,' he said, and sure enough he ripped the fabric in half. I really hated my legs back then, but I had to go onstage in a short dress like that."

While Tarja was spending her nights at the National Opera, things started happening for Nightwish in Germany. Thanks to wide distribution of "Sleeping Sun" and the success of *Oceanborn*, the band was growing bigger and bigger in that country. Drakkar seized the chance to book Nightwish as openers for German heavy metal stalwarts Rage on a European tour consisting of twenty-five shows starting in November 1999, which would bring Nightwish its first taste of foreign audiences.

"That was a revolutionary experience," Jukka recalls. "We had once written about our hopes and dreams on our web page, and everybody's biggest wish had been to be able to play a festival somewhere, maybe at the Finnish metal festival Nummirock, or in some distant European city. And there we were, playing with this well-known band in big venues! It was a great learning curve and it had a big influence on our playing and how we viewed the band. As we realized how much people liked us, we gained confidence and our shows got better and better. We also had a little competition with the headliner, Rage. When we played in Holland, the place was almost packed, but when Rage went on and started their two-hour set, about two-thirds of the audience was gone."

The consensus was that Nightwish walloped Rage on that tour. "I sort of felt sorry for them, but deep down I was like, 'Wow, Finland vs. Germany, 6-o!'" Tuomas grins.

Once Upon a Nightwish

Jukka did not envy the Rage guys either. “Suppose we were ten years older and touring with some teen band from, say, Sweden, opening for us, and we noticed that half of the audience had left the building when we started playing. We’d definitely feel bad about it!”

Comprised of an American, a Belorussian, and a German, the multinational Rage is certainly not an ordinary metal trio. “It’s such a combination that I can’t imagine how they get along,” Tarja smiles. “Such different sets of values and cultures. But they were very polite, a bit older than us, and very professional. It was really interesting to watch them work. They were great, you know, even their drum solo was different at every gig. We watched their show almost every night. Unbelievable. And Viktor Smolski on guitar—he’s a really good guitarist. The man’s also a classical composer.”

For the Rage tour, Nightwish got their first ever drum technician, the German Ulrich “Ulsch” Weitz. “It was pretty unbelievable to learn that a drummer can actually have his own drum tech on tour!” Jukka laughs. “Like, ‘What, you mean I didn’t have to start clearing and packing my kit straight after the last hit, all sweaty and tired? Really?’ On top of all this bliss, Ulsch turned out to be an incredibly nice guy. From then on, I’ve had him with me whenever he has been available. Later on, at some gigs in Finland and abroad, Tommi Pesonen, Lassi Hinkkanen, and Risto Järvelin have also been my drum techs. Everything’s always worked out fine and we’ve all had a lot of fun.”

Nightwish were not promised the moon at the beginning of the German tour. “When we first met Rage, they didn’t know anything about us,” Jukka recalls. “We were absolute beginners. We were told that we were probably not going to have too much time for soundcheck, but that the situation might get better after Rage got their touring routine down.”

On a personal level, Nightwish had no difficulties with Rage, and the headliners offered their help when the Nightwish bus slid off the road in bad weather. No one got hurt, but the Finns had to leave the bus on the side of the road and hop onto the same bus with Rage.

The Rage technicians, however, seemed to have had a hard time stomaching the popularity of the support band. “When it turned out that people had come to see not only Rage but Nightwish, everything got worse and worse,” Jukka says. “Sometimes we weren’t given any time at all for soundcheck. We had only time to load our gear in, do a line check, and get the hell out of there.”

Tarja was initially nervous about how their shows would be received abroad. “The album had sold well, so I could imagine that there would be *some* people to see us,” she says, “but I never expected the kind of welcome we got. In some places, the people would walk out once we’d played, and that really bugged the

Rage guys. But the tour made it clear that we had what it took to be the headliner on our next tour.”

Audiences welcomed the Finns warmly, but life on the road could be cold, especially for Tarja. “It was a tough tour, all right,” Tarja begins. “The guys were drinking and running wild on the bus. I couldn’t get one single good night’s sleep, and yet I had to be able to sing the next day. The bus had air-conditioning, and I got sick after only five days. I had to go to the doctor to get a shot to get my throat working again.”

Nightwish bass player Sami noticed that the atmosphere was a bit strained, but he didn’t find it alarming. “Every once in a while, you could sense a little tension, but I guess that’s completely understandable when you haven’t had enough sleep, and you’re staring at the same faces for weeks on end.”

All in all, the whole band gained a good deal of confidence from the tour. “It was a very enlightening, and especially self-assuring,” Tuomas says. “All of us were still a little lost at that point—like, what were we, a bunch of clowns and a girl who thought she was an opera singer? We were definitely still searching for our identity at that point, and the European tour showed us where we were at that point, and where we were heading. It gave us the feeling that we were actually halfway decent at what we do, so we just kept moving in the same direction.”

“It was sort of a personal victory,” adds Tarja. “I finally understood there was meaning to what we do, that these people were actually here to see *us*.”

“I don’t believe any of us expected that kind of a welcome,” Sami agrees. “It felt really weird that so many people knew our band outside of Finland. And we didn’t have to live on just peanuts, chocolate, and beer anymore—there was actual catering now. To be sure, there still was a lot of beer available, and as Finnish tradition demands, we felt it was a matter of national honor to drink it all!”

Better things continued to come their way. “One of the greatest moments was when the Drakkar people told us that next time we would headline our own tour,” Jukka recalls. “It felt so unbelievable that we’d have our own European tour, that we were going to play gigs under our own name! It just felt impossible. Why would some guys in Austria pay to hear our Carelian brand of metal?”

As the stakes got higher, the band almost got cold feet. “I was terrified when I heard Sinergy was going to open for us,” Tuomas recalls. “I mean, Sinergy had Alexi Laiho and Roope Latvala on guitars, and Marco Hietala on bass. Wow!”

Assembled by singer Kimberly Goss, Sinergy was a metal supergroup, at least on a Finnish scale. The five-piece featured Hietala, one of the most respected metal figures in Finland, Roope Latvala, who established himself as the guitar pioneer of Finland’s first internationally acclaimed speed metal band Stone in the 1980s, and Alexi Laiho, an exceptional talent in his own band Children of

Once Upon a Nightwish

Bodom. Today, both Laiho and Latvala play in Children of Bodom, who are at the forefront of European metal and on the verge of breaking in America, where they are winning territory through relentless touring.

“I realized Nightwish had hit the big time after we made the single ‘Sleeping Sun,’” Tuomas says. “We were on our way to play a gig in Kuopio, Finland, and we got the call that *Oceanborn* had just gone gold. That was the moment when I realized that we were in a whole new ballpark. We sat on the grass at the Untorock festival in Utajärvi, and everyone was going like, ‘Fuckin’ hell, *Oceanborn* has sold twenty thousand copies!’ Songwriter Maki Kolehmainen from the extremely popular Finnish pop band Aikakone was there too, and I just had to brag about our accomplishment. Maki just congratulated us and told us that at least we had our own thing going. He reminded us never to let go of it.”

“The crew had their moment of reckoning about how big Nightwish had become when we landed a gig on the second stage at Ilosaarirock,” Tapio Wilksa says. “The stage was in a tent that had a capacity of three thousand, and there were people crowded in a forty-meter radius outside the tent. Sumi, our sound engineer, said he sometimes couldn’t hear Tarja at all because the people around the mixing desk were singing so loudly! We laughed our asses off backstage when we saw the well-known Finnish studio musician Anssi Nykänen moshing like a madman behind the monitor desk. He was going like, ‘Fuckin’-A, great band! Goddammit, they’re good!”

Oceanborn paved Nightwish’s way into the heavyweight ranks of metal. According to the Finnish IFPI (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) statistics, the album went platinum in Finland in 1999, and by the end of 2005, it had sold fifty-eight thousand copies. It peaked at number five and stayed on the Finnish charts for a total of thirty-five weeks. The album also reached number forty-seven in Greece, and peaked at seventy-four on the German charts. The second single from the album, “Walking in the Air,” was a number one hit in Finland, going gold and staying in the Top 40 for eighteen weeks. *Oceanborn* was also a critics’ favorite that opened the eyes and ears of Finnish, German, and South American fans.

“I’ve heard that *Oceanborn* has become sort of classic in the Finnish metal scene,” Tuomas says. “There are an awful lot of people who think it’s our best album, actually the only real Nightwish album. It wasn’t number one on the charts at any time, only number five at its best, but it used to be the album with the most reentries ever. If I remember right, it dropped off the chart six times but always bounced back. It was on the chart for something like thirty-five to forty weeks. After that album, I felt like I would never be able to write another song. I was all empty inside—all the energy and creativity had gone into making *Oceanborn*. It

defined Nightwish for the rest of its life. And it sure is a fine album.”

The Nightwish musicians later started to view *Oceanborn* as a marker of their lost innocence. “While recording *Oceanborn*, everything came about easy and natural,” Jukka says. “Although since then we have tried not to think about the fans or the record company while making an album, it’s been very different on an unconscious level. Obviously there’s still much to be discovered, and we still have plenty to give, but every band has that one, overpowering album, the likes of which they can never achieve again.”

“You can hear that genuine enthusiasm and innocence on *Angels Fall First* and *Oceanborn*,” Tuomas sighs. “The touching naïveté that was lost somewhere along the way. After the success of *Oceanborn*, that innocence was lost forever.”

When the *Oceanborn* tour ended, the band had no time to sit back and enjoy their newfound success. The support and enthusiasm of fans they had witnessed during the summer inspired new music, so the recording of the third Nightwish album commenced late in the winter of 2000.

“After coming home from the Rage tour we practiced all through November and December and entered the studio in January,” Jukka says. “*Wishmaster* was the first Nightwish album with drums and vocals recorded at Finnvox.”

The legendary Finnvox was the first studio in Finland built especially for recording music. Upon its completion in 1965, the complex housed a music facility totally unseen and unheard of in the country. One of its novelties was the floating floor structure, a design element that later became the norm in every state-of-the-art studio around the world. The studio’s spanking new Studer four-track was also a subject of great wonder and confusion among the professionals of the time, because it was still common to record music live. Today, not even a sound-conscious demo band would limit themselves to a four-track recorder, but back in the day, Finnvox practically started a new era in music recording. Originally consisting of just one studio with four tracks, Finnvox gradually grew into a grandiose music factory with four studios for recording and three for mastering.

In preparation, Tuomas was pushing himself to the limit. “I almost ran out of time writing the songs. It was Christmas already, and I only had two or three weeks to make four more songs. ‘The Kinslayer’ and ‘Deep Silent Complete’ were finished only a week before going into the studio.”

This time, the new album featured more than just Tuomas’ ideas. “The chorus for ‘Come Cover Me’ has Emppu’s stamp all over it, for example,” Tuomas says. “When the others contribute ideas that fit the songs, they will be used. Before recording *Wishmaster*, Emppu gave me a cassette with riffs and melodies, and about half of them worked damn well. The chorus for ‘Come Cover Me’ is really great. Some riffs for ‘Bare Grace Misery’ worked well too, though a couple

Once Upon a Nightwish

of others reminded me a bit too much of Steve Vai.”

The labor pains of *Oceanborn* were already forgotten. For a change, the band actually enjoyed working in the studio. “The recording of *Wishmaster* was surprisingly easy compared to our previous album,” Tuomas says. “We had guest musicians on the album, too. I informed Ewo and Spinefarm that I wanted a majestic male choir in the studio—and they rounded up five eighteen-year-old boys from the Sibelius high school. Surprisingly, they did a really good job.”

For Tarja, the *Wishmaster* session meant realizing the band’s potential to the fullest, as it seems she only then truly understood the majesty of their music. “It dawned on me that our music had so many elements to it,” she says, “that one song is made up of a million little things. It still amazes me to this day. I actually listened to *Wishmaster* quite a lot, because the songs were so inspiring that they made me think of how I wanted to interpret the music. By *Wishmaster*, my voice had begun to function in a totally different way, and it made everything so much more interesting. I discovered I could sing with much more ease.”

Finnvox Studios seemed to make all the difference. “Recording at Finnvox was something new and a pleasant change, even though we had already done the *Sleeping Sun* single there,” Tarja recalls. “Mikko Karmila didn’t talk too much, but the vibe was positive and we all worked very hard. Karmila was serious about the project as well, and it was funny how he completely told everyone off, like, ‘What is this bass line, it’s not tight at all! You could have done this so much better, but there’s no helping it now!’ Nevertheless, the album came out great sound-wise. It sounds really massive.”

Expanding his role, mixing engineer Mikko Karmila was now present in the recording phase, too. “On *Wishmaster*, they attempted to create a more symphonic sound—you can hear it in the desperate choir parts!” he quips.

After slowly finding her place, perhaps for the first time Tarja felt like a full-fledged member of Nightwish. “I experienced some labor pains with *Wishmaster*,” she says. “It was the first time that I gave a hundred percent and strived to make a great album. There was obviously a lot of pressure. The previous album had gone gold, so this one had to be a success too. I knew the songs were good. I knew if they just found the right shape, and came out good in the studio, the album would be good as well. But I also realized my singing on *Oceanborn* was not right. After coming to that conclusion, I just couldn’t listen to the album anymore.”

In an interview with *Rumba*, Tarja described the *Wishmaster* sessions as extremely rewarding. “With these songs, I’m using the potential of my voice to its fullest. There’s less high-pitched stuff on this album. And it certainly would be alarming if nobody noticed the fact that I’ve been practicing for several hours a day! I didn’t have to stress too much at the *Wishmaster* sessions, and everything

was a lot easier than before—even though these songs aren't exactly the easiest in the world. A singer with a bad technique might not be able to sing these songs, let alone those on *Oceanborn*."

Besides a choir, the album featured some other guest artists. Singer Ike Vil of death rockers Babylon Whores contributed some deranged self-inspection for "The Kinslayer," and a troubling child's voice appears during "Dead Boy's Poem." "I had an idea of a song with a young boy reciting a poem," Tuomas says. "The trouble was that no Finnish twelve-year-old could pronounce English right, so I had to find a native speaker. My mother's sister, actress Miitta Sorvali, knew the English-Finnish director and writer Neil Hardwick well, and my mom remembered that Neil had a son called Sam. I called him and asked him to do the poem, and Sam agreed right away. It was just funny that when I talked to this fifteen-year-old boy, he seemed like such a citizen of the world, and was actually familiar with our band. Sam said he'd be free to record the poem anytime, I just had to give him a call. He even knew where Finnvox was, and promised to meet us there."

The professionalism of young Sam Hardwick made a deep impression on Tuomas. "When he arrived at the studio, I had to ask him to wait for ten minutes or so. He just pulled a book from his pocket and sat down to read," Tuomas says. "I gave him the poem, and he read it through a few times. We did some editing, and Sam just sat down on the studio floor and read his book, after which I asked him to read the poem a couple more times."

"When I started talking about his reward, he wouldn't hear anything about it. He just said, 'That's okay, it was fun.' I insisted on giving him at least a couple of hundred Finnish marks, and then he left. A very puzzling young man, but a real pro and a very nice person. He later did the beginning of 'Bless the Child,' too, and once again everything worked like a charm. 'Dead Boy's Poem' continues to be a sort of a signature song for Nightwish. After *Wishmaster* came out, the song was voted on our web site as the best Nightwish song ever. There's certainly something about it that defines us, and—for me at least—the poem is the absolute high point of the song. So Sam Hardwick made a big contribution to our music."

For Tuomas, "Dead Boy's Poem" is a deeply personal song. "The idea for that song came when I was thinking that if I died tomorrow, what kind of a message did I want to leave behind," he explains. "That song is all about apologizing, about saying thank you to those who deserve it—and likewise telling those who deserve it to fuck off. It's a kind of a testament. I had to make a song like that, just in case I did happen to die the next day. A Finnish man rarely thanks anyone, or says he's sorry, but for me at least, it was possible through music."

Once Upon a Nightwish

“I still live at my mom and dad’s, who are the best people in the world, but I’ve never been able to tell them what I think about them. Maybe if they listen to the song and read the lyrics, they’ll understand that it’s partly about them, too. It’s also about my best friends and Nightwish, the band that has come to be a significant—if not *the* most significant—part of myself in the course of the years. My bandmates are really important to me, but it’s hard for me as a Finnish man to show my feelings. I’d rather write a song like ‘Dead Boy’s Poem’ and ask them to listen to the words, because I just can’t say it out loud. It’s such a personal song, and I think it has the best lyrics I’ve ever been able to write. Musically, it’s really good, too, definitely the best song on *Wishmaster*—maybe the best Nightwish song ever.”

Tarja had already come to notice how Tuomas expressed his feelings through music. “The melodic power of music—and the fact that music can be beautiful even at its heaviest—has always meant an awful lot to Tuomas,” she says. “He’s able to show all his feelings in his music. I think Tuomas is very brave, because not many people can do the same. He may not look like a macho man, but when it comes to music, it’s all or nothing for him.”

The album was completed in record time, but problems arose prior to release. “Before *Wishmaster* was released in the spring, there was this big hassle with pirate copies,” Tuomas explains. “The album was supposed to be out on May 22, and Spinefarm had a big campaign going—there were big posters at the bus stops, the whole deal. But at the beginning of May, we were informed that our new album was already available on the Internet and in the outdoor markets of Vyborg, Russia, and Tallinn, Estonia. As a result, the department store Anttila in Lappeenranta, a Finnish town near the Russian border, ordered only ten copies of *Wishmaster* in advance—everyone had told them that they weren’t gonna buy the album as they’d already bought it from Vyborg! That sure as hell alarmed us. I mean, I didn’t even have a promotional copy myself, and there were already people selling the album! How was that even possible?”

The incident marked the first time that black-market Russian music pirates and online file-sharing aficionados got the better of the Finnish music industry by managing to get their hands on an album before its official release. Spinefarm’s Riku Pääkkönen was naturally not happy with the development. “Pirated copies of the album were already flowing in from Russia and Tallinn,” Pääkkönen stated in a press release at the time. “In addition, there were almost twenty web sites, even on the servers of Finland’s biggest service provider, where complete copies of *Wishmaster* could be downloaded for no charge. The promotional copies had been in distribution for quite some time, and some of them had apparently ended up in the hands of those involved in piracy and the illegal distribution of music

on the Internet.”

Some of the sites were subsequently closed, but the official album release needed to be rescheduled to an earlier date. At the time, Pääkkönen figured that piracy cost the label about twenty percent of the sales of *Wishmaster*. Tuomas was understandably upset too. “That’s obviously just an estimate,” he says, “but I was really pissed off about the incident. Luckily, we turned the issue around and at least got some positive publicity out of it. The poster campaign sort of backfired, but in the end, the whole shebang brought us a lot of publicity, and the people at Spinefarm managed to handle it quite well.”

With time, label chief Pääkkönen’s anger has mellowed. “Thinking back on it, it probably had no impact on the sales whatsoever—we’re talking about only a few hundred copies,” he says. “But there’s always a certain charming novelty and mysticism involved in releasing an album, and if that’s gone, it takes a lot away from the experience. Even a couple of hundred pirated copies is enough to ruin it for everybody.”

The fact that Nightwish was even considered worth pirating was an obvious sign of the band’s growing success. The whole nation of Finland seemed to hold its breath in anticipation of the new album, and upon its release on May 8, 2000, *Wishmaster* entered the charts at number one. In June, *Soundi* awarded the new album four stars out of five.

Nightwish have come of age. In the beginning of their career, the band attracted attention because of their sheer eccentricity and shocking combination of musical styles: never before had a melodic power metal band boasted an opera singer as their permanent vocalist, and the novelty helped launch Angels Fall First and Oceanborn toward success. As fine an album as Oceanborn was, the songs were still not free of awkward arrangements, and the overwhelming bombast of the vocal department did not seamlessly fit into the whole. On Wishmaster, the arrangements are at a completely new level. Tarja’s voice no longer stands out from the rest of the music, as she has cut down on the high register and her singing now exclusively serves the purposes of the songs themselves. The vocals bear more of a traditional rock sound than before—one can listen to Wishmaster for quite a while before the word “opera” even crosses one’s mind. Because of this change, the need for using lower male vocals has also diminished considerably—Ike Vil appears on “The Kinslayer” not to growl but to offer some spoken-word sickness. For these adjustments in the vocal department alone, Wishmaster should be called Nightwish’s most mature album to date.

On Wishmaster, the band has set aside their familiar themes. Lyrics about unicorns, pharaohs, angels, and wolves have given way to sin, love, honor, and

Once Upon a Nightwish

religion. In addition to the new subject matter, the album is adorned with delicious metaphors like “November dressed in May on your face” (“Come Cover Me”), or “There’s no such priest that can pray me to heaven” (“Bare Grace Misery”). There are even erotic overtones evident as Tarja sings “She Is My Sin”: “In the meadow of sinful thoughts every flower’s a perfect one.” Needless to say, the new style fits the band—and especially Tarja’s voice—much better, and the band gains credibility in giving up the comical “sword, steel, and brotherhood” imagery already too familiar from hundreds of other power metal albums (although the title song of the album and “FantasMic” still hint toward the fantasy themes).

At this point in the band’s career, it would be ridiculous if Nightwish reduced their third album to a simple double bass drum attack. Luckily, the band’s sense of style has developed in every aspect imaginable. There is simply no need to emphasize the band’s metal status, although the album does include some good old heavy metal bashing as well. The sumptuous choruses and verses are sewn together with small, secure stitches, and avoiding excessive notation has paid off—the humble beginning of “Two for Tragedy,” for example, grows into a breathtakingly beautiful romance. Emppu Vuorinen deserves a special mention, too, as his sense of timing and style produce a sound that is strong and wild, soft and caressing, all in just the right proportions. “Bare Grace Misery” stands as evidence of the band’s courage: no one expected Nightwish to ever produce a poppy song like this.

Wishmaster distinguishes itself as a rational, ambitious album. The band has realized their possibilities for reaching wider audiences and dedicated themselves to this goal without losing their identity. I would raise my hat to Nightwish—if I had a hat.

—ANTTI MATTILA, *SOUNDI* 6/2000

The *Soundi* review draws an accurate picture of *Wishmaster*’s merits, which were anything but self-evident for the band members themselves. While Tarja thinks *Wishmaster* is considerably more mature than *Oceanborn*, the others didn’t seem to consider it a masterpiece. Sound- and production-wise, the album is definitely more massive than its predecessor, but in Tuomas’ view, the third Nightwish full-length “mostly just corrects *Oceanborn*’s mistakes.”

Tarja’s positive assessment of *Wishmaster* might have a lot to do with her beginning to realize her goals as a singer while working on the album. She was slowly discovering her identity as a vocalist, and moving from Finland to Karlsruhe, Germany, soon liberated her in many ways. “In Germany, I was respected as much as a classical singer as for being the vocalist of Nightwish,” Tarja says. “The difference in attitude was considerable. Obviously the scene in

Finland is much smaller than in Germany—all kinds of singers fit under the definition ‘classical’ in Germany, whereas in Finland I was basically the odd girl out. But I’ve come to know what kind of a singer I am, and that’s all that matters. I no longer have to fight against anything—I’m over that crisis now.”

While studying in Germany, Tarja was conveniently located for doing Nightwish interviews. “I had my office at home,” recalls Boggi Kopec of Nightwish’s German label Drakkar Records. “It was a big old house surrounded by a little garden that I had to take care of. One time Tarja was at the office for interviews, and she told me that she really needed to practice for school. I said that if she wanted to, she could sing in the office on Saturday when we were closed. I was usually around taking care of the garden, anyway. So there I was, crouched in the garden, and she was singing in my house. It sounded absolutely fantastic—I was so proud, because she was loud as hell! For a person like me who comes from the thrash metal scene, bands like Kreator and Sodom, it was something very special and unforgettable.”

One of the funniest episodes in the band’s career took place around that time. “We recorded ‘Sleepwalker’ for the Eurovision Song Contest,” Tuomas says. “I was watching the 1998 contest on TV at home with my mom, and the group Edea was on. I told my mom, ‘My band’s gonna be there in two years. You want me to write it down and seal it in an envelope for you to keep?’ Mom said she’d remember it anyway. In two years, Nightwish was in the Finnish Eurovision finals. I can’t remember where I got the idea in the first place, but I just had this feeling that we were such a strange band that we could pull off anything—including the Eurovision Song Contest!”

The idea stuck with Tuomas. “I know it was a contradictory move, but I felt in my heart that it was a good thing. Jukka was the only one who was with me from the start. Tarja was against it, Emppu was against it, Sami was against it—and all with good reason. In the end, Emppu agreed to do it, but on the condition that under no circumstances should we use the name Nightwish. It was pretty difficult. In the end, a war almost broke out. Tarja said her credibility as a classical singer would suffer if she took part in the Eurovision thing, which is totally understandable, and Emppu and Sami worried about their rock ‘n’ roll credibility. But Jukka and I wouldn’t give up.”

Tarja was dead set against attending the Eurovision Song Contest. “It was because of my classical studies,” she says, “and the fact that Edea—who had been in the contest before us—had flopped completely. I didn’t want to end up like the Finnish singer Marika Krook. It took many years for her to become taken seriously as a classical singer after doing the Eurovision thing.”

“Plus I was involved with the *Evangelicum* project at the same time,” Tarja

Once Upon a Nightwish

continues. “I had my own place just across from the opera house, and Tuomas called me there to tell me we got into the Eurovision semifinals. I just burst into tears! I yelled into the phone, ‘Hell no, I never wanted this!’ Tuomas kind of panicked and said, ‘Well, we got in anyway.’ Then he hung up on me.”

Jukka did not trouble himself about what other people might think of their move. “I just felt like if someone doesn’t buy our next, awesome metal album because of the fact that we attended the Eurovision contest, then so what, I don’t care. At that point I already had enough self-esteem and confidence to do exactly what I wanted and stand by my decisions.”

Tarja, Emppu, and Sami ultimately withdrew their resistance, and made the most of the situation. “Okay, there we were on our way to London to record the Eurovision song,” Tarja recalls. “It was actually quite fun. The producer Merv de Peyer was smoking something all the time. At first he seemed like a pretty stiff guy. I had to sing in the same room where he was smoking whatever he was smoking. It was this really small and dingy studio on the outskirts of London. But the more he smoked, the better everything started to sound—not just in his ears, but ours as well! We arranged the song so I would be able to sing with my resources at the time. Oh man, it was such a horrible song—and people even had the nerve to vote for it! But it was a new experience, I guess, and it didn’t ruin our reputation, not mine or anyone else’s. Actually, the whole thing went pretty well because we won the viewers’ votes, and that was great. But in the end, we didn’t have to go perform at the finals at Globen Arena in Sweden—thank God!”

“Sleepwalker” made it as far as the Eurovision semifinals. In an interview for the newspaper *Karjalainen*, Tuomas said that even if it had many familiar elements, the song was not your typical Nightwish track. Written by Tuomas, “Sleepwalker” was arranged by the whole band, and some of the more unfamiliar elements included a soft drum loop playing in the background. Getting Merv de Peyer to produce the song was the record company’s idea. “Merv brought some of his own ideas into the song, like the drum loops and other computer stuff,” Tuomas said. “It was a whole new approach for us. Merv’s a good guy who worked with the likes of Geri Halliwell and Primal Scream.”

According to Tuomas, even though the Eurovision contest used to be a curse word for metalheads all over the country, Nightwish got very little negative feedback for participating. Yet once again, he shows himself to be his own worst critic. “The undeniable fact is that the song is one of our worst,” he laughs. “The rule was that the song could be no more than three minutes long, and I just couldn’t write a good song to fit that limitation.”

The public thought differently, voting “Sleepwalker” into the Finnish finals. Before it could proceed any further, however, the band would suffer grave

injustice. After the first round, the Finnish News Agency STT reported:

Almost two hundred songs were entered to represent Finland in the first Eurovision Song Contest of the new millennium, out of which a professional jury chose twelve songs to compete in the Finnish semifinals.

The performers and songs in the semifinals are Arcadio ("Rauhan saan"), TNP ("From the Heart"), Sisterhood ("Ordinary Life"), Sanna Kurki-Suonio ("Laulaja"), Nina Åström ("A Little Bit"), Nylon Beat ("Viha ja rakkaus"), Kitee band Nightwish ("Sleepwalker"), The Reseptors ("Flower Child"), Anna Eriksson ("Syliisi sun"), and Ultra Bra ("Kaikki on hetken"). The performers of the songs "You Can't Have Everything (But You Got Me)" and "Taivas aukeaa" are not yet known.

From the twelve semifinalists played on the radio, the listeners chose six artists for the televised finals. After their performances, a professional jury awarded points to each song. The girl duo Nylon Beat won the jury's vote. Then came time for the public vote.

"Before our performance in the finals, one member of the jury, a Finnish orchestral conductor named Olli Ahvenlahti, came to tell us that he really liked our song and hoped for us to win," Tuomas says. "Obviously, we'd intended to be in the finals, so the jury defeat was a bit of a disappointment—but only for an hour, because when the public votes came in, it totally made up for it."

The public votes declared Nightwish the indisputable winners—the difference between them and the runner-up was an astounding 7,687 votes. The Finnish Eurovision candidate was to be decided by adding up the votes, so that the public votes were supposed to make up sixty-five percent of the final outcome and the jury votes the rest. Yet when the points were totaled up—to everyone's surprise, Nina Åström's song "A Little Bit" was named the winner. Neither the jury nor the home viewers were happy with the result, and in 2002, the scoring system was modified to make sure a similar mess could be avoided in the future. At the Eurovision Song Contest in Sweden, Nina Åström kept up with the tradition of glorious Finnish failures: scoring eighteen points, she placed twelfth among the twenty-four contestants.

"Those judges were totally embarrassed after the results were disclosed," Tarja laughs. "After all, people take the contest so seriously—if you don't win, you'll be choking with tears and refrain from any commentary. It was unbelievable to witness the whole circus, being as we were there just to have fun and check out the Finnish cream of the crop."

Nightwish could rightly be called the popular winner of the finals. "Out of

Once Upon a Nightwish

the six participants, we got the least points from the jury and the most votes from the public—by a landslide,” Tuomas says. “We got almost twice as many votes in the public vote as the runner-up. Then they kept counting the votes for a long while—and we ended up third. As we were hanging out in the lobby, the singer Anna Eriksson’s manager/boyfriend came down there ranting about how we’d somehow manipulated the televoting, that there was no way anyone could get that many votes. Anna Eriksson came second, and they’d had her whole record company calling in the votes! The manager/boyfriend was going all crazy and reporters from the tabloid *7 Päivää* were immediately on the spot. Sweet!”

The whole Eurovision episode was soon forgotten as just a curious detour in the band’s career. “None of us expected to be making our big breakthrough with the contest or anything like that,” Tuomas says. “We were pretty much just fucking with the conservative Finnish music scene. I trusted that people would understand that, and if the public vote is anything to go by, they sure did. I take my hat off to them for that. They understood we were in there with honest intentions, but we weren’t taking ourselves so damn seriously. I mean, the Eurovision Song Contest is probably the most boring, conservative, and corrupt institution in the world of music. We wanted to make a little statement and totally succeeded in doing so.”

In the end, Nightwish attracted an enormous amount of attention from their audacious move. “We got so much publicity it was ridiculous,” says Jukka. “Thinking back on it, I’m really glad it all turned out the way it did.”

Tarja agrees. “It was a small victory for us—a metal band brilliantly winning the votes. I’m pleased it went that way.”

According to Riku Pääkkönen, taking part in the Eurovision contest was a decisive turn in the band’s career. “We hesitated about it for a long time because the whole thing seemed a bit too wild, but it turned out to have an unbelievable impact on their career. They started attracting audiences from outside the metal scene, and it probably created the favorable conditions for the success of *Wishmaster*. Obviously we also invested a lot in the new album’s production, marketing, production, and everything else.”

Musically, *Wishmaster* was a logical sequel to *Oceanborn* despite the pop elements evident in songs like “Come Cover Me” and “Bare Grace Misery.” The double bass drum attack favored by orthodox “true” German metal bands had given way to a more sophisticated approach. Only the arrangements of “Crownless” and “Wanderlust” can be compared to songs from *Oceanborn*. On *Wishmaster*, Tarja continued to sing with a classical technique. Though arguably her vocals still sound somewhat limited compared to the two albums to come, in 2000, no one could predict the pop nuances her voice was still holding in check.

The bigger sound on *Wishmaster* was not achieved by improvements in production alone. Tracks like “She Is My Sin,” “Wishmaster,” and “FantasMic”—a song dedicated to Disney—proved that the band’s understanding of musical dramatics and dynamics had grown significantly. On *Wishmaster*, the genre of symphonic metal found its new benchmark.

Yet Tuomas remained unimpressed. “Of all our albums, *Wishmaster* is sort of an in-between,” he says. “Unlike *Oceanborn*, it offers nothing new. It’s a bit better produced and the songs are as good as on *Oceanborn*, but at the end of the day, it’s just a sequel for *Oceanborn* that sounds more massive.”

Though several of the songs on *Wishmaster* dealt with personal issues, Tuomas told interviewers that the album’s imagery of little match girls, dragon slayers, and phoenix birds was a tribute to the world of fantasy.

A more confident and mature band posed for new promotional photos, even flirting with gothic aesthetics. Tarja’s image now embodied the drama that Tuomas had longed for at the beginning of the band’s career. The young woman’s stylish makeup and diva’s appearance, achieved with high heels, hairdo, lace sleeves, and a fur boa, created a mystical aura. It was indeed a major improvement—and a staggering contrast to the milkmaid from hell in the *Oceanborn* photos.

“With *Wishmaster*, things switched into higher gear,” says Ewo. “What an album it was! Circumstances surprised us once again. Nightwish headlined a tour with Sinergy, and Tuomas was softhearted enough to pay the support band from their own purse. No one from the Sinergy clan has ever remembered to mention that.”

“It was *Wishmaster* that made Nightwish big in Germany, and for a good reason,” Drakkar Records’ Boggi Kopec enthuses. “It’s a fantastic album. *Oceanborn* is fantastic as well, of course, but *Wishmaster* was so successful because, first of all, the band was able to do their second tour as a headliner, with audiences averaging about eight hundred each night, and it earned them lots of positive feedback. Furthermore, the first album had already sold over twenty thousand copies, which gave us a strong footing in Europe. Those are some of the reasons why *Wishmaster* rose to the Top 40 in Germany. All of that, together with a little bit of luck, made it more successful than the previous album.”

The biggest metal magazine in Europe, *Rock Hard*, chose *Wishmaster* as the album of the month in May, eclipsing new albums by Bon Jovi and Iron Maiden. At the beginning of June, *Wishmaster* went gold in Finland, and only two weeks later it was number twenty-two on the German charts. The album release show took place in Kitee on May 20, 2000, and on that evening, the band received their first four Finnish gold awards. The framed discs were handed out for the sales of

Once Upon a Nightwish

the album *Oceanborn* and the singles “Sacrament of Wilderness,” “Walking in the Air,” and “Sleeping Sun.”

At the Kitee Ice Hall concert, Nightwish used bombs and pyros for the first time in their career. Lighting technician Tommi Stolt had introduced the band to pyrotechnician Markku “Pommi” Aalto of the company PyroMan, who still designs and executes all their special effects—fire, water, and smoke. The idea to add these new elements came from Tuomas, a big fan of fireworks all his life.

The special effects worked like a charm that night in Kitee, but the other crew members didn’t have it so easy. Tommi Stolt and main sound engineer Ari Suomi were tearing their hair out. “After twisting, shouting, crying, and wrestling, I finally managed to get some equipment from a disco rental service in Kuopio,” Stolt says. “In the end, I naturally realized that I still didn’t have all the stuff I wanted. I was supposed to have like a billion spotlights. I had jackshit. Jukka came to oversee the situation, and noticed that we didn’t have nearly as much stuff as had been agreed. So we made more angry phone calls, and finally this disco rental guy/lighting expert carried more gear in. I think Sumi had even more problems than we did.”

Somebody definitely screwed up, and the band’s main sound engineer Sumi suffered the consequences. “The Kitee municipal electrician hadn’t finished his job,” Tommi Stolt laughs. “Before the gig, I asked Sumi why the smoke machine was on. Sumi didn’t understand what I was talking about. I just wondered why his main amp was smoking back there! Poor Sumi started bouncing around the place like a Ping-Pong ball! Luckily, I happened to check my own voltage meter, because the cables had four hundred amperes running through them—and that’s a bit more than the doctor ordered!”

“Half of my PA, the monitor desk, the MiniDisc, and the monitor equalizers all got busted,” Sumi fumes. “Then the first bomb went off. I was so tired I didn’t even remember the pyros had been added, so when I heard the first bang, I just thought that there went the rest of the equipment—good riddance! Nice party we were having.”

“The whole stage jumped in the air,” guitar tech Kimi Tuunainen chuckles. “It was like some kind of pressure bomb. The guys freaked out and stopped playing for a little while.”

For the audience and the critics unaware of the technical difficulties, the show was a roaring success. Journalist Suonna Kononen commented on the festivities in the newspaper *Karjalainen* on May 22:

Let us give a big round of applause to Nightwish, a band that has accomplished more in four years than most have in forty. Who would have guessed

a few years back that in spring 2000, these young heavy rockers from Central Carelia would already have their third album out, and would be soon embarking on a South American tour? What started as a side project is now a real band—a huge band—with its vocalist’s face on posters all around Finland, its new album at number one on the Finnish charts, and its music praised in Germany.

The concept of Nightwish is brilliant, but it has nothing to do with calculation: the combination of melodic metal, fantasy lyrics, and opera vocals just happened to appeal to a diverse audience, from young metalheads to music academy students, from Tolkien fans and bookworms to rock veterans who know their Uriah Heeps and Rainbows inside out. Add to them the mainstream teenagers, whose hearts and car radios always have a direct connection to the music charts, and the adults, who consider Nightwish more artistic than your ordinary rock music, and you’ve got quite an unusual fan base.

You could clearly see the fact at the Wishmaster release show on Saturday. The Kitee Ice Hall was not completely packed, but as the first song, “She Is My Sin” began, the audience’s love and worship was evident. Not many bands receive such an enthusiastic welcome.

The audience was even more fueled by the older material like “Elvenpath.” During the ballad “Walking in the Air,” lighters lit up in the audience while paper snow fell on singer Tarja Turunen. This was a nice touch to the show, which otherwise relied on smoke effects, pyrotechnics, and lights. In Turunen, the band has a figurehead who looks like she was born in leather jeans and a top—it is with such ease that she dominates the stage. She is like a female Ilkka Alanko of the Finnish band Neljä Ruusua, whose charisma makes it possible for Snow White’s dwarves to safely concentrate on their playing.

The Kitee show kicked off Nightwish’s summer tour 2000 in Finland. This time out, their new, massive sound called for more technical sophistication than before. After *Oceanborn*, Tero had simply played any audio effects from a hard disc containing only the needed parts and nothing else. If either he or the band screwed up the timing—which, according to Jukka, did happen quite often—the end result would not quite match the album version of the song. There was an LED light blinking to the beat of the song attached to Jukka’s bass drum so he could check the tempo of each song from the gadget. At the beginning of their career, the band had used playback mostly for backing vocals, but with *Wishmaster*, the need for additional backing tracks increased significantly.

The new songs had massive choirs and orchestra parts, so arranging them for a mere rock group lineup to play live would have changed the character of the music and considerably lessened its dramatic impact. Digital backing tracks made

Once Upon a Nightwish

it possible for Nightwish to put together a more dramatic show, but at the same time, forced them to play their shows with a more rigid, prescribed formula.

While uniform quality of shows was preferable, using playback can be quite restricting for musicians. When the preprogrammed orchestra hits blasted out of the speakers, there was less room for improvisation or goofy frills. This might have been why Nightwish was sometimes blamed for stiff performances during the *Wishmaster* tour. Some wags even questioned spitefully whether parts of Tarja's vocals came from the backing tape. The band does not remember much about those six summer weeks they toured Finnish clubs and festivals, but their first visit to a major European festival, Wave Gotik Treffen in Germany, was unforgettable—albeit not for musical reasons.

"That must have been our first festival gig in Europe," Tero Kinnunen reflects. "We'd been drinking all day on the plane, and after landing, we bought more booze from the airport, because we still had an hour's drive to the hotel. We kept drinking the whole time, and once we got to the hotel, we were so completely plastered that we just went to our rooms—except for Sumi, who got separated from us and ended up staggering around the hotel on his own. He was supposed to go to his room on the twelfth floor, but he accidentally took the maintenance elevator. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't find the button for the twelfth floor. He studied the buttons for a long while, and finally decided to go ask for help from the reception desk."

"He slurred, 'There is no floor in my elevator!'" Jukka laughs. "That's what he cried to them, 'I can't find my floor!' The kind reception lady finally led Sumi to the guest elevators, and suddenly it all made sense for him."

Tero continues: "I took Sumi to his room and put him to bed. He said he wouldn't come to dinner because he was too wasted. At some point, however, he woke up alone in his room and started fiddling with the television. Apparently he couldn't figure out how to switch it on, so he called reception and demanded a TV technician. Yeah, our sound engineer didn't know how to operate a TV! Eventually someone came up from reception, pushed the on/off button, and handed Sumi the remote control."

The German festival was just a warm-up for the band. Just a few weeks later Nightwish headed off on their first South American tour—a trip that would have fateful consequences for the band's future.