



Interview by Martin Harris

**“...we wanted no emo or metalcore  
radio chorus voice, more a dirty  
version of James Hetfield...”**

# WOLFPACK UNLEASHED

With thrash metal making a welcome comeback in many quarters, Austria's Wolfpack Unleashed has stormed into the field with their blinding debut album "Anthems Of Resistance". Powerplay caught up with guitarist Wolfgang 'Wops' Koch as the band prepares for world thrash domination.

Thrash metal is certainly making its presence known in metal today, and none more so than our own scene in the UK. However if you were asked to name a thrash band from Austria that could match, say, the heavyweights of Testament or Megadeth, then I suspect you would be scratching your head even if you ventured further a field. Well look no further as Wolfpack Unleashed have just completed their full length debut and a cracking slab of melodic thrash metal it is too. With the band signing to Napalm Records I firstly ask how this came about.

"I knew the guys from Napalm very well since I joined another band on the roster in 2005 to help them out," Wops explained. "So having my foot in the door, I was trying to use my connection, but WPU was refused. 'Thrash doesn't sell' they said, so we finished the tracks for the demo and sent them to the magazines. After we got really great reviews in Italy and Germany (and I sent all those reviews to the Napalm boss), suddenly WPU became a bit more interesting and we quite quickly got an offer when we got the great review from Germany's Metal Hammer."

Even though WPU is a new band, their roots in thrash go back to 1995, as Wops explained the main events in the bands history.

"WPU history is quite short. We formed in January 2005, released our first demo mid 2006 and finally got signed in the beginning of 2007. And here we are now, but forming in 2005 doesn't mean we weren't playing for a longer time. I had formed my first thrash band back in 1995, and drummer Daniel joined this one in, I guess 2003 or so. When we saw the lack of professionalism of the band members there, we decided to leave them, and form WPU with people who both have the abilities and the will to create something professional."

His enthusiasm for thrash is unquestioned but I have to ask why they have adopted this style rather than the black and death metal styles that tend to come out of Austria.

"Because we love thrash more than every other music," Wops quickly stated before adding, "You know, Austrian bands look up to our most popular bands like Pungent Stench, Summoning, Abigor or Belphegor, or all the death metal bands that emerged in the mid 90s, but we never felt close to them. We preferred playing old Metallica or

Testament albums to any black or death band, and did not care about these bands having success. So basically, we were the only thrashers around back in 1995 in Austria. When WPU formed in 2005, there were only like two thrash bands in the region, while the rest still was death metal oriented or copying some other trend like metalcore."

The album has some killer songs such as the stomping "Killing Fields" or the riff extravaganza that is "Next Victim", and I ask why the band has favoured the Bay Area style of thrash and what makes them that bit different from the rest. Wops points to the obvious in terms of production but expands further.

"I think that our excessive use of minor scales and harmonies separates us from them, because back then only Megadeth had this melodic vibe and the minor scales used in a very few songs in the 80s (like "In My Darkest Hour"), and obviously also Metallica, such as in their "Master Of Puppets" or "Ride The Lightning" era."

"Anthems Of Resistance" contains many re-recorded songs from "The Art Of Resistance" so I enquired as to the motivation behind this decision rather than recording an album full of new songs.

"It was a combination of a lack of time, material and money," replied Wops honestly. "After the signing, we entered the studio pretty fast and didn't have enough new material. Also, since the original songs were only released as a demo by ourselves, distribution was very low and the songs never got the exposure we would have liked. The label then told us to add at least one new song, which we did, but the rest remained close to the demo. And for everybody who had bought the demo already, we made a very special campaign on our homepage and myspace site, so everybody who got the demo and wanted "Anthems Of Resistance" got it for about four and a half British pounds. We think that's pretty fair and if anybody says 'well, I don't need it again', that of course is understandable too."

I continued to probe about the re-recorded versions and how they compare to the originals and what, if anything, has changed?

"The vocals, drums and bass were re-recorded, and some lyrics have changed too," said Wops. "What we kept from the demo were all guitars, because

they sounded all right and were just EQ-ed a bit to fit better to the sound of the other instruments. Plus, I recorded six rhythm guitar tracks on the demo, and to re-record them all was not possible with our budget."

It is obvious when you listen to the album that production is excellent so I asked if they had a particular sound in mind when entering the studio.

"Yes, we were using Testament's "The Gathering" when we entered the studio and told the engineer that that is the sound we wanted," he declared. "Of course, Testament back then had Andy Sneap, more time and better instruments, but I think for the budget we had, the sound is pretty nice. We also did not want to have this too modern metal sound like all the metalcore bands have right now, with way too loud drums and vocals. Thrash needs riffs, and that is why I insisted on also having loud guitars."

With riffs and guitar in mind, I took the opportunity to ask about the lead work, which is highly prominent and adventurous. I asked how much time was spent on this aspect and if they differ from the original recording.

"No, it's all the originals, just some reverb was added," was Wops answer to my latter question. "As for the solo writing, we spend a lot of time trying to fit the solos to the riffs as well as possible and to write solos that are singable and memorable in a way, instead of just wanking up and down the fret board. Looking back, I should have re-recorded some parts, because I'm missing a bit of emotion on some parts and there are also some bendings where I was a bit flat, but there wasn't enough time since I had to lay down the six new tracks and the solo for "Disgrace Erased"."

Strangely the album comes with the track "Religion Of Control" in a radio edit form, but is only marginally shorter than the full length song, which prompted me to ask why, and whether this indicates a promo video is in the making.

"Unfortunately no," Wops says disappointingly but explains, "There won't be any videos for WPU. We're too small, too new and there isn't a single TV station in middle Europe that would air them. The short version is just a radio and cover mount CD edit. Since the original version has an intro that is about one minute long, we wanted people not to fast forward the intro and then maybe miss the first riffs. The promo is a

combined promo for radio and magazines, which saves us making two different promo CD versions."

I changed the topic to the vocals: whilst Gunther's approach is typical thrash, I did feel that the gruff sections didn't fit some of the songs, to which Wops doesn't agree but explains what the band was looking for in the vocals.

"We were looking for a singer with a harsh voice as I think it suits the music very well," he stated. "No grunter or screamer, but somebody with a natural, harsh 'macho' voice, that could use this voice also when singing melodic, which is damn hard to do and one thing that a lot of thrash bands fail. And when recording the vocals, we wanted no emo or metalcore radio chorus voice, more a dirty version of James Hetfield anno '89 after having too much drink."

With this being the band's debut full length, I wondered about their future plans, touring commitments and whether they've played any gigs at all.

"To be absolutely honest, we've only had one show so far, where we had a really good response," Wops replies openly. "The crowd was mixed, because we played with two melodic death bands, so we were not playing to a crossed arms and looking grim crowd." Wops continued with some interesting speculation, "As for touring plans, we need a suitable headliner. I've read between the lines in a Chuck Billy interview that Testament might go on tour with Exodus and Death Angel in 2008. What a killer package that would be to join as support band. But I know it's also a business matter, especially when all three bands are on Nuclear Blast and they probably want to send another, even if not fitting at all, Nuclear Blast band with them." Whether that rumour is true, I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Finally I asked if Wops had any other thoughts or anything to add.

"Thanks for taking the time to ask these questions, thanks also to the guy who wrote the cool review and thanks to Powerplay in general for being the only British magazine that supports more melodic, power metal bands and smaller bands like us... and isn't an unofficial Roadrunner magazine!"

Wolfpack Unleashed's album is out now and if thrash is your business then I guarantee that this band's brand of melodic thrash shows that business is definitely good.