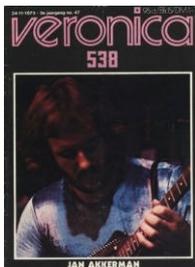


Interview with Jan Akkerman - from "Radio 538 magazine", 24-11-1973

Text and interview by Hans Beckes, 197

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"The eldest familiar string-instrument is in fact the lyre, or lira, which is some kind of little harp that was used a couple of thousand years ago. That instrument originated from the "bow and arrow", by the trembling of the tendon people could hear a tone....kranggggg..... Musical souls continued experimenting on it and a wide variety arose. Through the harp, the lute came to attention during the Middle Ages. It originates from the Middle East and was played a lot in Arabia and Perzia. In Greece they were playing the Githarra and during the crusades, lots of things were transported 'over here'. A traditional lute didn't have any frets, which caused the well-known jingling. Since then, the instrument became more and more adjusted to ears in the Western world and around the year 1500, the lute was most popular. After that period, the virginals were introduced and people discovered that playing the lute was much more complicated than playing the virginals. My own lute has 13 strings and in those days they had 32 strings. Tuning such a 'bitch' costs me at least half an hour and by then I can play it for ten minutes, after that I can start all over again. So you can imagine that musicians in the past had difficulties with that aspect. That's the reason for its disappearance, because the use of a keyboard is much easier. That caused the end of the multi-stringed lute. Music written after that period is no longer that important to me, with the exception of Bach and some of those other big guys. I feel myself a bit stranded in modern guitar music, that does not move me anymore. But the real medieval lute music, that is what I find extraordinary. It attracts me, especially the melodic aspect. Composers like John Dowland, Anthony Holborne and Thomas Morley are one of a kind in this type of music. They composed and performed a lot at the House of Queen Elisabeth I."

"Well, I recorded some of my favourite pieces from that time for my album "Tabernakel". There are some Gailliards on it, which are dances from the Renaissance, at a time of 3/4, played in a very joyful way. There's also a Pavin, a piece at a time of 4/4, done slowly and calmly. "Courant for Mrs. Murcott" is a piece from the 15th century, which was written by order of such a dame. A noble lady, paid a composer lots of money to write a piece especially for her."

"In return for a possible extra payment, composers gave such compositions titles like "To the most honourable Earl of Derby", "His Gailliard", or "The most perfect musician, Thomas Morley, to the Queen's Sacret Service, her Pavin".

On the album, the well-known "House of the King" is also found. Why ?

"I thought that there were many possibilities in this song, so I revised it for this new album, in a completely different arrangement. In the States, I discovered the electric sitar, which I rented immediately to use it in "House of the King". It's a Coral and I was so moved by it that I took one home with me. People who attended our (Focus, WB) recent gigs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, could have seen me playing it. But during the recording sessions of Tabernakel, I used a genuine sitar as well, which can be heard on the song "Lammy".

How did you come up with that title ?

“Lammy is my wife (Jan divorced her in the early nineties and left Friesland, WB) and I dedicated this to her. It consists of several parts in different moods and the concluding part is called “Last Will and Testament”. With that, I try to express how I want things to be. I’m playing the lute on that part and was accompanied by two flutes, a harpsichord and a string-quartet. It ends with “Amen”, in other words, ‘I have said’”.

BOGERT & APPICE

“On some parts of Tabernakel, Bogert and Appice assisted me. It’s absolutely wonderful what those two men are capable of and we worked very nicely with them. They will also perform on my next album, that’s what we planned immediately after the sessions”.

So I assume, that you already made plans to do another album ?

“No, I don’t know a bloody thing about that yet. There probably will be some lute playing on it, but I think I will do some heavier stuff as well next time. Maybe I will do a double album, one record full of one experimental piece, in which I can go completely out of my head and the other one featuring the lute playing”.

Why is Meditations subtitled Javeh ?

“Well, that is the biblical name for our Lord. When I wrote it, and that happens to me very often, I had the feeling I wasn’t actually writing it myself. It was on my farm in Friesland, among the animals and flowers, in full spring. The song starts in very frustrated way, because when you look around you, you realise you are in trouble after all, that’s why it’s called Javeh”.

A couple of hours before this interview, I sat in the rehearsal room when Bert Ruiter was playing Jan’s electrical sitar. Bert allowed me to play it as well for some time, which was quite a nice experience. I told that to Jan and I asked him where the strange sound comes from.

“You can compare it with a sound coming from a badly built guitar. As a result of a bad position of the neck, the strings hit the frets, which give a shrilling sound. I have tuned it like the normal sitar, in D-mol, because I want to use it as a normal sitar as well, however with less possibilities. You can slide much more on an ordinary sitar, you can pull the strings much easier which gives the whining sound. This is caused by the bridges on the neck. With an electric sitar, the other strings are disturbing the space to do that”.

For the guitar addicts among the readers, the above means enough, however Jan keeps on talking about that subject. Jan’s lute is made by Theorbe, it has additional bass-strings. A chord in between a line or at the end can be sounded along with a bass-string as a confirmation. The instrument has a deeper, warmer sound compared to an ordinary guitar. Enough about the technical aspects. To my question why the album is titled “Tabernakel (Tabernacle)”, he answers that by using the word “Tabernakel” he means the music, as it appears on that record. The Covenant Ark plays an important part in that, he says, while the lager arrives on the table and we are smoking our umpteenth roll-your-owns he adds:

“During the studio sessions I’ve tried to create such an alliance among the musicians, the big orchestra and the choir.... anybody that came in and who was capable to contribute something, everything was pretty cool out there. It was in the Atlantic Studios in New York. Gene Les Paul, son of

the famous Les Paul, was behind the mixing desk and my producer happened to be Geoffrey Haslam from England, who was directed to me by Ahmet Ertegun, the big boss of Atlantic. I was waiting on New York airport soon after my arrival and suddenly someone behind me said, Hello I'm Geoffrey Haslam, your producer..... All of a sudden I saw this very small character with extra small glasses on....I wouldn't give him a penny actually. Even shabby is not the right word for his looks, haha ! Well, when we had finished recording the album, I wasn't very satisfied with it and then did some controls at the mixing desk, and said 'this is how I want it to be'. By then, Geoffrey looked at me a bit drowsy and stammered something. There had to be done some cutting in the tapes. Some pieces were cut out and some others were placed instead. I am really used to a lot of things and am able to do something in that field as well, but how he treated those tapes, man, I was shocked ! They almost flew over our heads and I thought: There goes your LP, Jan. Well, he made a mess in there for a couple of hours while I did some sweating. Afterwards, we played the tapes.

Well, I can tell you that Haslam is a genius, I couldn't believe what I heard.

Then there was this drop-out from Columbia University. His name is George Flynn. We were planning almost everything in the studio and this so-called electronic composer walked in, someone who was specialised in producing electronic music, a friend of Ahmet's, also a Turk. He heard my music and said: You must ask George if he wants to do something with you, he is a teacher, but recently took a degree in medieval music.

OK, said this character and then took all the demo tapes with him and rushed into a taxi to meet him. Well, George heard the first tape and soon afterwards he joined us in the studio. He saw me working with the New York Philharmonic, because I already started recording the first track. He added a lot of beautiful items to it, he went completely wild. We did the arrangements together, but working on the solo lute-pieces took me almost a year. I owe George a whole lot, we have become friends ever since.

That Ahmet Ertegun is a nice fellow. Thanks to him, I recorded the LP. I didn't feel like making another solo album at all, but happened to have some time for it and also some materials, so I did it after all. I can't incorporate the lute-music into Focus. I don't think that a single should be drawn from Tabernakel . Some people suggested that, but I don't feel like doing it. (House of the King was released in most parts of the world as a single, backed with Javeh and was a small hit in Holland and the UK, WB)

Jan Akkerman is doing very well these days. His former solo-album Profile entered the American charts quite recently. But times have been different in the past. His father made a simple living as a metal trader in Amsterdam and Jan had a very sober youth. The fact that he was very musically talented, was clear ever since he was a toddler. Underneath the table, Jan played all kinds of nursery rhymes on a toy piano.

At the age of 6, he started playing the accordion and took some lessons as well. But when Jan picked up a guitar soon afterwards, the fat was in the fire. After four years of intensive training at a grammar school, after having missed a scholarship for the Academy of Music because he failed in the theoretical part, Jan was completely taken by rock 'n' roll music, like so many others in those days. He formed his own group called Johnny and His Cellar Rockers, with it he played in many dance halls that went out of their heads completely, when he was 12 years old. A couple of years later, he joined The Hunters and had his first major hit with The Russian Spy and I. (That song was written by Jan, but some guy at the record company took copyrights on that song first.....never mind, Jan's talent for guitar playing was growing with this song, WB)

BRAINBOX

Towards the end of the sixties, Brainbox was born. To many people, the name of this formation still has a very magical sound. After Jan's mother, John B. van Setten became the manager of Brainbox. Despite the hits and seven gigs a week, for a compensation of 200 'til 250 Guilders (around 70 'til 80 UK Pounds, WB), the band did not make a penny out of it at all. Where all the money went to, I didn't ask John B. van Setten about this. How does Jan look back upon the Brainbox period ?

“Very good, I had a great time. But at a certain moment, we got stuck in the same vein, so to speak. Musically speaking, there wasn’t any progress in it anymore, at least not towards the direction I had in mind when we started it. But the group was fantastic, much better than any other Dutch band in those days. Maybe, if we hadn’t split up, we could have competed abroad. Maybe then Focus wouldn’t have been on the international charts, but Brainbox instead.....who knows ?

Together with Thijs, I formed Focus. Hans Cleuver joined us as a drummer and Martijn Dresden became our bass-player. But after some time, I wasn’t very pleased with it, nor was Thijs. We had the impression that those two guys couldn’t find their identity in our music. I thought that Martijn was a brilliant musician, but he went a bit nuts because of the shots and he was also very much yoked by his parents. He comes from a rather serious family, musically speaking. His father is a director of an Academy of Music and didn’t like at all what his son was doing. That was the biggest handicap for Martijn and caused his ‘freaking out’.

As far as Hans Cleuver is concerned, he's a very kind guy and he sure had an excellent ear for music, but was never able to show that in his drumming. As a businessman he was great. Hans looked after our interests very well, keeping an eye on the financial side of Focus. He made new contacts as well.”

But why did you earn so little money in those days ?

“Simply because we couldn’t make that much money yet and if did make some, it was immediately spent. The first thing we did get paid for was playing in the Dutch version of the musical Hair (released on LP in Holland in 1970, WB) and some loose gigs in between. But most people didn’t understand our music very well. When we made about 400 Guilders on the Hair-thing, we thought we were in Utopia. And I still think about it that way. Really, 400 Guilders a week, is not bad at all, but we didn’t know the value of it, we immediately spent it. Those loads of money don’t impress me very much actually. It’s not that important. I have discovered that being modest, activates your spirit more. When you have nothing, you’ve got nothing to loose. You create space inside your mind for more creativity.”

SHOOTING...

“That caused the success of Focus. We concentrated ourselves on something so different, that people had to notice us. We wanted to kick everyone, right into their asses, so they would jump up like crazy ones ! In our music, it’s only a matter of working out some nice chord schemes.....unexpected turns, that will move you.

Did that ever happen to you ?

“Yes, but one musician writes very sad piece of music when that happens while another composes something very uplifting. To me this happened a lot. I have been through lots of things personally. Marriages have contributed, drugs, smoking, drinking.....money, booze and lovely women! But all these things contributed to my inspiration. They dragged me up, especially the dope led to dramas, then I was confronted with similar misery that other users brought upon themselves, so I quit from one day to another. There are lots of things in the popmusic business that I don’t seem to understand, things like jealousy or just call it envy. Most of that has to do with very simple things, like money and success. I don’t give a damn if one person earns more money than another. That’s when they sabotage you behind your back, cut wires and things like that. I think that is so banal.....no, there really are terrible things happening in the music business these days, that one really should worry about.....hard drugs play an important part in that. I find that so very sad.....but there are many fine things and I will give them as much space as possible and push them into the positive direction as far as I can go.”

Jan's dark eyes are fierce at this moment and I have the feeling that they cut right through me. Suddenly he starts smiling and says:

"But, where were we...oh I remember, Cleuver and Dresden left and I met Pierre van der Linden and introduced him to Focus.....and now, Pierre himself is out of the band again.....he wasn't feeling very happy for the last year or so. Very often, he is swept from his feet too easily.....but it's no fun at all when the names of your colleagues are mentioned in the polls and your name isn't in them at all. He's a very serious guy and the disadvantage of serious people is that they think that their opinion is the only one that matters."

"Pierre wasn't not much interested in our music anymore. We didn't get along too well and could no longer handle our own creativity. The spirit was gone and Pierre just said: Hey you guys, I quit."

"Today, he is around for the last time (Pierre van der Linden left Focus just before the American Tour in the Autumn of 1973 and Colin Allen did his first gig with Focus in Toronto on the 29th of October 1973 /WB). The other day our manager Yde called some people and one day later, we had a successor for Pierre. His name is Colin Allen, from England. He used to play with John Mayall and lately with Stone the Crows. Well, I have to say that his drumming is outstanding. He fits in the band perfectly. He leaves more freedom to his fellow band mates in the way he expresses himself musically. More space, so to speak."

In past times, when Focus was splitting up more or less, you and Thijs didn't get along with one another very well, right ?

"Outside the music thing, yes. But inside the music, we always find each other and it keeps us together. Our musical tastes differ very much, but I like that. Because of the pressure that occurs, we probably work that well together. I don't hope that we will come closer in that other specific field. The big understanding between Thijs and myself is only explainable on a musical level."

"In the past, Thijs had often been kicking at the image of the band in several interviews, and things like that. The fact that I tolerate that and that I kicked his ass a lot, has only gained respect from both sides. These are social-aspects, but they became less important over the years."

"We have to teach each other so many things, regarding the music. I don't understand a single fact from the so-called settled aspect of the music and he doesn't give a shit about free-form music. But that's something that is fine."

CLASSICAL POP

"Just before Pierre joined us, we got Cyriel Havermans as our new bassplayer. A very talented musician, very critical as well, but he wanted to sing a lot and he couldn't do that enough in Focus. He partially contributed to the "Focus II" and "Moving Waves" album, and wanted to do something else after that. (Cyriel played a lot of bass during the sessions for that album, but, apart from Tommy, Jan Akkerman dubbed them all, WB) Now, Cyriel made a solo-record in the US. Yes, a real surprise that was !"

It is often said that pop groups steal a lot from classical works. I thought that bands like Procol Harum and Focus in particular did that. What's your opinion on that ?

"I don't think it's a sin, on the contrary, it's the sign of a bigger cultural conscience. A pop musician is being influenced all the time. I started to play rock 'n' roll and if one is confronted with classical music and it moves you, then you'll be influenced by that. That will be recognizable in the music and that is very much a topic in the music of Focus. We don't go back to, let's say, Bach and stuff like that, no, we even go back a little further....and I like that. By the way, the whole point of bringing classical pieces into popmusic is what I really like. Popmusic will be enriched by that. Talking about Bach, this composer tried to create the earthly aspect in his music, but got very heavenly music instead. Maybe

his subconscious desire for death has to do with that. He is constantly happy in his music, you'll never hear any dissonance. His Fuga for instance, it's very well built, very major. And when he does something in minor, it still sounds happy, but it has a depth, which is almost frightening. A composer like Bartók, is the opposite. He tried to create heavenly music, but it became very earthly. In his music I hear waterfalls, I see beautiful trees and butterflies, alternated with weirdness, strange dissonants, and so on."

It's clear that Jan found one of his favourite subjects and it is really difficult for me to switch to another. But when I start talking about the Melody Maker polls, he starts to radiate. Answering my question on how he reacted upon his first place in that poll, he says:

"Yde told me. Oh, get lost, I said to him ! A poor joke, I thought. But he seemed a bit too serious when he said: Yeah boy, you're are the best..... But even now, it has not fully reached me, can you believe it ? Hahahaha, number 1, gee, yeah....number 1...."

During the month of November, Focus will be doing their third American Tour. A rush tour, so to speak, in a period of 33 days, 27 gigs will be done. And that's not an easy job in a wide country like the USA:

"Yeah, it will be a very tiring tour, but we will be looked after very well. Everything is planned brilliantly. It's always a delight when we arrive at a US airport....then those big limousines will be waiting for us, sometimes even a Rolls and we will be surrounded by comfort and luxury. It's a very strange sensation when you discover how the Americans deal with such luxury. They don't seem to realise how blessed they are. We stayed in those Holiday Inn hotels a lot. I find them to be one of the best hotel-concerns in the world, but the Americans seem to look at it, as if it were a piggies farm....The food is devastating there indeed, but the rest of it is super luxurious. TV in your bedroom, you can choose from 12 channels, whatever you like. Swimming pool, solarium, tennis courts, you name it. But the Americans don't think that's enough, just like some of the band members. They visit super luxurious hotels, because they love it. To me that's not important at all, I don't see any joy in that. No, I want to live like the working class does, a couple of solid shoes on my feet, an overall around my butt and nothing else.... I swear, when I hadn't been in the music, I would have become a fisherman. Then you are in an American city, like San Antonio in Texas for instance. There are lots of rivers running through that city, a bit like Amsterdam. Only much more tropical and beautiful white villa's as well. And in the middle of this there's this old ford, The Alamo it was called I think. That's what I pissed on at 6 o'clock in the morning just for fun.....and I was thinking to myself, guys, suit yourself and your Alamo...."

ELVIS

"I didn't like Nashville at all. Memphis was more fun. That's where Elvis lives, by the way, he's a nice asshole. I like him, as an artist. As a human being, I'm not quite sure. On a certain moment, he showed the belt of his pants. About 20 centimetres wide and in pure gold.... Just as if that has got something to do with it, but Americans like that. A kind of a status symbol. But he sings very simple songs and he makes it sound so complicated..... The whole performance long, over two hours, he's standing on the top of his own dick..... During the slow ones even more than during the swinging ones.....he does that so easily, but during the ballads he is sweating like a fool. A very hard worker. But so shy in front of cameras and things like that, that make him almost paranoid. It's no image, he really is shy".

"Then there's the audience. Rock 'n' roll is the only thing they want to hear, and we, as louts are standing among them....."

"Especially in New York and on the West coast they love it, but when we're in Texas, they're very surprised. After a whole night of whining of a drooling popgroup.....there's Focus. Nicely topped desert for them !"

Did you meet any other bands there, or did you get in contact with them ?

“Scarcely. Once with Yes and Chick Corea we got along and with Joe Walsh as well.”

Good guitarist, right ?

“Well, technically he’s more or less ok, but he has this wonderful sound. There is some feeling in it.”

Now we’re talking about Joe Walsh, where did he get that gargling from ?

“Oh, that’s something new. He has a tube in his mouth, which leads to the elements of his guitar. When he talks or fumbles through it, you’ll get that strange sound (Jan was going to use this on the Mother Focus album and also Peter Frampton used it in several songs he performed, WB).

Which guitarists do you consider your favourites ?

“I like Clapton and BB King, but my biggest admiration goes out to another field. Julian Beam is the best one that’s around at the moment. He plays the lute and the guitar, acoustic, that is.”

“And I like Zappa very much, but I admire him more as a composer. He’s a genius and he makes very human, awakening music. Very pure so to speak.

Several Focus members are considering moving abroad.

“I have been to a lot of countries, but England seems to me the best place to live and work. I like the climate there. If I wouldn’t be living in Friesland, I would have moved over there. Friesland is so beautiful and the people living there are still so quiet. They don’t get angry. When there is a motorway planned which would take about 2 years to be constructed, that would take at least 25 years before it’s finished ! They don’t give a damn. There are lots of authorities and societies that are concerned about the conservation of nature. That’s a good thing, otherwise Holland, and Friesland in particular, would have turned into one chaos of concrete.”

But it seems to me that England isn’t that different from Holland.

“In the first place, I like the climate, which isn’t very different in both countries. I do love the Dutch climate. On the other hand I can stand the heat, but it doesn’t encourage me to work. You’ll become paralysed from it. Secondly, the English people are more to my heart. There is something positive in their attitude. When I’m driving a car and I make a mistake, people here in Holland will put their finger towards their forehead immediately. Such things do not occur in England.”

I also can’t get along with the Dutch press very well. “Like in spring during the Focus concerts in The Hague, Veenendaal and Groningen. Yes, I did arrive much too late in The Hague (actually in Voorburg, WB).”

“Other performances were screwed up. I arrived too late, because I overslept, but we were frightened a bit by how the press might react to that. That morning, I came back from Montreux. At eight o’clock I was already at Schiphol Airport and was exhausted. We had just returned from the States, which had been very tiring as well. When I arrived at my house in Friesland, my cat was giving birth to several

kitties. I helped her and cleaned up the whole mess and I thought, not realising it was Queens' Day, that I might catch several hours of sleep. So I set the alarm at 1 o'clock. The alarm rang, I got dressed and I left about half an hour later. Then I got stuck in the middle of those queen celebrations with my car. So I arrived far too late at the Vliegermolen. That was the occasion for the press to write very negatively about me. I mean, it could have happened to anybody. Over the last few years, I've done more than 600 gigs, on maybe 5 of them I arrived a little too late. But....this was Akkerman, right ?"

"I think the press in England is much better. They'll hold back their comments twice, before they run somebody down and when they do tell the truth, it's never done in a dirty way."

"I'm living in the middle of the Frisian lakes, near Akkrum (between Leeuwarden and Heerenveen, WB), which is near Sneek. Nice town Sneek is....you can have a lot of laughs over there, but you have to be drunk.....Frisians aren't the obstinate persons that many people think. Maybe they're a bit reserved in the beginning, but they're taking it very calmly and they have a character. They have a great logic as well, they don't talk shit to mind the shit.....they're a bit like Scottish people. A Scotsman and a Frisian can understand each other very well, which is a remnant of ages ago.....when they were doing business with each other and they mingled as well."

Do you feel accepted there in Friesland ?

"Well, what is there to accept ? You settle down there and automatically you'll get in contact with other people there. My wife is a real Frisian woman, with generations back into Frisian history....with raiders in the family and all that.....Lamkje Bijlsma....doesn't that sound Frisian enough ??!!"

"Akkerman is Frisian as well..."

AKKERMAN NOW

We were surprised by the unexpected arrival of Jan's record 'Tabernakel'. But, as if that isn't enough, he also did some brilliant session work in the so called solo-LP of Peter Banks, formerly known from Yes and now a member of a band called Flash.

"Yes, I was in England at the time, we finished a three-week tour and I met Peter Banks. He told me that he wanted to do a record with me. I kinda liked that, because I like to play with anyone, no matter who they are.....After finishing a gig, I usually go to the bar, buy everyone a drink so I make friends easily and I can play quickly with any musician who happens to wander around.....just like in Peter Banks' case. I was a bit concerned about the boy, he almost begged me, but I believed in his sincerity. He's a fine musician, but I don't like his band Flash. It's a very bad 'second version' of Yes, in which he used to play some time ago. Peter still got that in the back of his head and I wanted him to leave that out.....One evening after a gig, being a little drunk and a bit stoned, I kinda jumped into a studio with him ,We did some musical doodling all night long and he made an album out of that."

Did you write some songs together in that studio ?

"No, haha ! The songs on the album to which I am credited, are the songs in which I happen to play in the most. I just wanted to play and Peter recognised that, so he put 'Jan Akkerman' under those songs. Most ideas happen to come from me..."

You and the other members of Focus also contributed to the solo album of Cyriel Havermans, right ?

"Yes, we happened to be in Los Angeles when he arrived and asked us to join him. Of course, boy, we said, we always want you to reach the top, if we could contribute to that. I don't want to implicate, that Cyriel is less capable than we are, but he needed us. As a matter of fact, we went on very well with

one another and we knew our musical qualities. But I find it a pity, that they screwed up the cover so badly here in Holland....there is this note saying 'Inside cover design by Pieter L. Mol', but there isn't one inside at all. In the US, it had a wonderful gatefold cover. A lovely painting of Cyriel near the waterfalls. And again the silly sticker "Featuring Jan Akkerman, Thijs van Leer and Pierre van der Linden of Focus". It pushes Cyriel to the background completely..... Not financially, but artistically. Those weren't our intentions. All compositions are made by Cyriel and we only played some pieces on it. Very cool, because a lot of things are very good on the album. A very unique style this guy has and a fine voice as well."

Rehearsals in the castle are very relaxing for Focus. Producer Mike Vernon is walking around the amplifiers, but doesn't speak a word. A guy called Willem is bringing in crates of lager and taking care of something to smoke. In the room next door, manager Yde de Jong and I are talking. One of the subjects is the difference between American and Dutch record companies.

Yde: "When people in the States are working with an artist or a band, they'll almost never start recording an album first....certainly not if it's a completely unknown act. They tell an artist to try to gain success and a reputation in a certain region first. Doing it this way, the companies are very sure about their chances for success. In Holland, they turn it the other way around. They invest a lot in a band or solo artist by releasing a single and producing an album first, while they hardly did any performances or are unknown to most people. Let them start with the last aspects first."

What do you think, is the reason that Pierre van der Linden left the band ?

Yde: "He quit the band out of his own free will and I respect that decision. The difficulties were on the personal level. He had some problems to adapt himself, moreover were his band mates far more in the spotlights. Making contacts with journalists, even in the States, he refused that completely."

"He's replaced by a guy called Colin Allen, with whom we've been working the last few days. We choose an English drummer, because there are some very capable guys out there, who know exactly what they're working on. He's not that young anymore, 35 years old, so he has lots of experience. I'm impressed by his drumming." "I'm also busy trying to find another job for Pierre. Wisse Scheper is lining up a band around himself, so Pierre might fit into that one."

I was also able to ask Pierre himself, why he left Focus. Visibly very emotional, he says:

Pierre: "At the moment, I'm into a kind of depression. I have had it. It's possible that the busy schedule of Focus gave me a mental shock. For most of it, I am to blame to myself of course. I'm a very introvert person, and that has some influence on my environment. After all, I'm sorry that I made to this decision. I hope to return to Focus some day, but that won't happen I'm afraid. That Colin Allen is very good. Possibly, he will stay. Maybe I'll get over these hard times and then the others might want me back into the band."

All 'n all, very sad events, even more as Pierre was involved in the run of Focus almost from the beginning and also made considerable contributions to the success of the band.

How does Colin Allen feel, now that he found a place in a world class band by means of all these difficulties ?

Colin: "Yes, such things happen, and there is something of a risk being in a band. I wasn't involved at all in the difficulties with Pierre, but I do regret them. It's simply not very nice and I sincerely hope for Pierre that he will find his own way. He's really one of the finest drummers I know...."

