



BETTER DAYS

On May 22nd Tim Vantol will release his new album „Better Days“. It's a record that sounds like you've known the songs all your life. However, if you want to visit the Dutchman in person, you will run into far more difficult territory. As he lives at the foot of the Alps in the German town of Berchtesgaden, some 800 meters above sea level and quite a world away from hectic city life. It's „next level Bavaria“, as the singer calls it. Last winter he was welcomed by three meters of snow outside his front door, but Tim Vantol nonetheless feels right at home. You can hear it in his music, and perhaps his friendly Bavarian neighbours may have had something to do with that.

The music on „Better Days“ is „next level“ as well. The latest in a string of pearls the Dutchman has been threading for his dedicated fans over the last eleven years. Even so, the new record is sure to be the musician's most personal work yet. „My songs are always written from my own perspective, but at the same time I want them to be as open as possible“, he says. And surely enough, opener „No More“ features one of those typical Tim-Vantol-lines right away. „Brand new directions are waiting for you,“ he sings in that distinctive voice that sounds like it's tattooing your soul.

Tim Vantol's voice, make no mistake, always sounds like it's *'all in'*. It sounds like the arm that pulls you back inside from the window you just fell out of. Like the benevolent ringleader of a benign street gang or the last responsible man in this crazy world. It sounds like socialism would work with guys like him. It's raw, but raw like the wool in your favourite sweater rather than sandpaper-raw. And it's exciting – tailor-made for his music with its unstoppable energy. „Be thankful for your friends and family, and make sure to let them know“, is the way „Tell Them“ likes to put it. Nothing in this life can be taken for granted, so it's all the more important to voice every positive thought you can muster.



„I never had what you would call a *bucket list*“, Tim Vantol confesses. „But I feel like I have ticked a lot of boxes anyway. From here on out, everything's a bonus.“ In his case this isn't some vaguely esoteric insight you get from overdosing on fortune cookies, but a hard-won philosophy. „I have been fighting my demons for years now“, the singer says. „For a long time I thought that was just the way I was, but I kept having thoughts people shouldn't be having. It went so far that at one point I even thought about quitting music altogether. On stage I still was the outgoing happy-go-lucky guy, and in those moments I wasn't faking it either. But off stage it felt like I was being swallowed by a hole.“



One abandoned EP full of miserable songs later, the singer began to realise that „there are only three ways out of this mess. You can stay the way you are, you can try to fight your way out of it, or you can keep sinking deeper – whatever the consequences.“ Luckily, Tim succeeded in creating beauty out of ugliness and eventually found himself in the ironic position of being the consoler with the wounded core. For, as you will find out, „Better Days“ is not a morose record at all. „Listening to this no-one’s going to go: Oh, fuck my life“, Tim Vantol anticipates. „I want to motivate people. Sometimes you find yourself at rock bottom, but there is always a reason to keep going. There are people who need a bit of encouragement, and I’m here to give it.“

On the new album Tim Vantol all but explodes from a new-found zest for life. He raises his fist, howls at the moon, rolls up his sleeves and lets out a triumphant cry nobody will ever be too old for. This is definitively proven by the title track, with its crashing guitars and galloping drums ringing in the optimistic motto: „I want to wake up next to you and feel unbroken.“ „A River Full Of Reasons“ points the same way and smuggles a disarming minor chord into a life-affirming melody that unbuttons your shirt and touches your heart.

There are also solemn moments. „I’m going to make it, but not today“, Tim sings on “Not Today”, but just a few songs later the feeling subsides. “It’s Gonna Hurt”, possibly the wisest song he’s ever written, has the singer regaining control of his own fate, pledging: “Promises are made to be kept.” And it’s true. “This song is an ode to pain”, he says. “We tend to look at pain as a bad thing, but it truly can also make us stronger. Of course I wish a lot of things hadn’t happened to me, but in the end it has made me the person I am now, and I believe I’m stronger for it.”

Which brings us to „You Will Never“– a drinking song, a football song, a Christmas song, a love song and a protest song all rolled into one. The type of song you can sing at a bar, in the bathtub or on the barricades, until your voice gives out and the chorus starts to scare fate itself. It’s pretty simple, too: „You are never gonna get me down!“

What is it Tim Vantol likes to say? „I was messed up and suddenly I start telling people how to be alright. Is that hypocritical?“

Spoiler: It’s not!