

NEW DAY RISING

Visionary Swedish label Burning Heart Records rises from the ashes

Four years after its final breath in 2010 Peter Ahlqvist's genre defining Punk(rock) and Metal/Hard(core) label Burning Heart Records appears on the scene again. With a new business model, a new artist roster and a new passion on the side of its navigator.

Sometimes, when times get rough and you start to bleed, you lose your enthusiasm and – to use an obvious metaphor – your burning heart starts dying out. Such was the case with Peter Ahlqvist whose label Burning Heart Records, which had spawned and featured legendary bands like Refused, The Hives, Millencolin or Boysetsfire, suffered badly from the decline in music sales in the mid-2000s due to illegal downloads – as all music labels and companies did in one way or another. However, Burning Heart was struck twice as hard because the visionary sound factory had just expanded big time in 2004 when the music industry started falling apart abruptly, and Sweden was one of the first countries to bleed hard. Suddenly, people had to be dismissed, savings melted away, offices had to be closed. In 2006 Epitaph Records, majority-owner since 1998, imbibed Burning Heart completely and relocated the label to Amsterdam while Peter worked as an A&R from Sweden, signing bands like Parkway Drive, Gallows (for US) or The Ghost Of A Thousand for Epitaph and Burning Heart – label that wasn't his anymore. After four more years of massive sales decline, the heart stopped beating.

However, this is not an obituary – this is a birth announcement! A rebirth announcement to be precise. After talks with Brett Gurewitz in 2014, Peter was able to get back the name and trademark Burning Heart Records from Epitaph, albeit without its impressive back catalogue.

“I've had some time to think it over. This really is the time now to restart the label because it is now really the right time to go for it again. I had a few tough years but now its' all coming back. Sweden was hit hard early, but it's all there again now, thanks to Spotify”.

Peter enthuses about his newfound inspiration and vision. A vision which goes far beyond just running a rehashed record label as he explains.

“The new Burning Heart is more than just a label, it's a hybrid company that also provides management for the bands. We're doing a different financial model with the bands, and joint ventures on the record side. We and the band spend money together, but the bands also gets bigger shares of the income. A new model for working in the future being closer and more transparent with the bands. In these digital age you can be very easily due to techonogoly'. There will be two sides to this company, one is releasing records, the other is managing the bands. It's not a record label as it used to be, it's a brand, and a music company that is starting to

climb with new found ambitions on new roads'.

You've got to keep up with the times. Peter realized that after he had left (Epitaph's) Burning Heart in 2009 and started working Panic & Action Management, together with producer and Kid Down fronter Eric Höjdén (who has pursued other occupational paths) by now. Panic & Action bands include Adept, Her Bright Skies, Walking With Strangers, Bombshell Rocks and legendary Swedish punk band Asta Kask. With Panic & Action Peter established the 360 degree model Peter Ahlqvist is now about to push to the next level with the renaissance of Burning Heart Records. Starting with the existing Panic & Action bands, who will be "transferred" to Burning Heart, this new and enhanced incarnation of Sweden's groundbreaking trademark label for exciting hard music is going to set out into the digital future of music.

"Basically it is Burning Heart returning to form, in these new times, with much more of a digital approach. On the other hand, we're also going back even more to the roots with vinyl." In fact it's the magic word "digital sales" that accounts for Peter's optimism about this restart. When he sold CDs ten years ago with Burning Heart there was income from around 25 countries, now with the digital sales money comes from over 100 countries and counting. Multiple income streams and less organisational issues – what has once been a curse held accountable for the death of the CD is now the great white hope for an economically successful future of the music industry. "If you look at Spotify or YouTube starting to pay, Vevo or any of the other services getting more and more plays the timing is right as long as you continue to release good music, and accept the new times. We've been through the worst period and 'the now' with newfound energy makes me very excited to be back with my 'baby'".

Economical success is one side of the coin, the other is finding good artists and developing them properly. "Looking forward to getting out there and releasing different kinds of music, be it metal or metalcore or punk rock or whatever. Burning Heart has always been very varied, we had everything from Refused to more standard hardcore to skate punk to garage or whatever rock. We even had hip-hop acts or someone like Moneybrother who was more soul-rock-punk. So it's gonna be a diverse alternative label but the main focus is of course punk, hardcore and metal in various sorts. That music will always be close to me. "

Good to have it back, the rekindled Burning Heart of intense hard music.

The new Burning Heart will to start with work with:

ADEPT whose new album is coming spring 2015, a band who will tour worldwide and are already on their way through three great albums and lots of touring.

BOMBSHELL ROCKS -great punkband that used to be on Burning Heart (whose album "Street art Gallery" is total punkclassic), now back to life with original singer Mårten Cedergran with new album "Generation Tranquilized" out late November - taking a bigger aim.

HER BRIGHT SKIES - a rock/punk band originating from the emo-scene, a band with a

big young following, are also making plans for new stuff in 2015.

WALKING WITH STRANGERS - a younger promising band in the metalcore genre, back after a hiatus and just recorded an album for release early part of 2015.

Then there is also the legendary ASTA KASK that started in 1978, (reformed in 2005/2006 and did an album for Burning Heart). Still around, touring and being better than ever live. The Swedish DIE TOTEN HOSEN, but on a smaller scale. A band whose energy and spirit influenced the whole scene, directly or indirectly bands as *Refused*, *Millencolin*, *Nasum*, *The Hives* etc.

Peter Ahlqvist entered the musical world at the beginning of the eighties when he founded the Oi!/punk fanzine Ayatollah Fanzine with a couple of friends before doing some other fanzines of his own. In 1983 he started his own record company Uproar Records & Tapes which was also a mail order, a shop (run from his closet) and a magazine focussing on US and international hardcore. The paragon of punk DIY ethos.

A few more years down the line that he ran the Rockborgen venue and started the Bergslagsrocken festival in his small old hometown Fagersta ("Punkrock City Sweden" which would later bring forth The Hives, No Fun At All and 59 Times The Pain), a renowned punk/hardcore/metal/indie festival which saw the first ever Swedish appearances of Green Day and Radiohead and was also visited by legends such as Rancid, Sick Of It All, No Fx, Earth Crisis, Madball, The Exploited, Carcass, Lagwagon, Dog Eat Dog, New Model Army, Levellers, Ride or Morbid Angel, whom Peter flew in for their first ever European show.

In 1991 Peter started the fanzine magazine "The Burning Heart" and worked as a music manager with a local metal/crossover act, besides continuing as a show promoter, and also booking and managing Entombed's first ever tour through their home country Sweden.

In 1993, without much of a plan or a vision, Peter founded the music label Burning Heart with the sole aim to find and release up and coming bands. Coinciding with the breakthrough of punk rock giants like The Offspring and Green Day, he released No Fun At All's and Refused's first single EPs, followed by the debut full length albums of Swedish punk rock legends Millencolin and No Fun At All. While the CD market was exploding Burning Heart grew bigger and bigger, leading to a joint structure with Hollywood based Epitaph Records run by Bad Religion guitarist Brett Gurewitz. The rest is history, summed up in Ahlqvist's own words: "Then some rough years, sold the butter, lost the money, Epitaph ended up owning it all!

And now 2014 - new day rising...or as the cooky puts it - here we go again!