



## YOU WIN. WHO CARES?

### The official Shadowplay e. V. interview

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#### You win. Who cares? - The interview

**[Shadowplay e. V. / SP]** Thank you very much for taking the time again for providing an interview to our pretty extensive review of "You

win. Who cares?". First of all: An album production like this is extremely complex and creativity isn't necessarily available on demand. Surely you're glad that the work has been done and "You win. Who cares?" has been completed now?

**[Sven Friedrich / SF]** Definitely. I've devoted myself to this album 24/7 during the past weeks and months and at least my mind has been pre-occupied with it all the time ... it is indeed good that it has been completed now, most of all for my fellows. :-)

**[SP]** Well, "album" might be – or better most probably is – a vast understatement. "Broken Grid", "Frontiers", and "Reasons to Kill" were simple CDs with eleven to twelve songs each (cover







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versions included), then "Another Manic Episode" was much more extensive with overall ten songs, two cover versions and seven remixes as well as the additional acoustic bonus CD "Sedated" containing another seven songs. "You win. Who cares?" offers even more with eleven new songs and again two cover versions and also seven remixes, as well as the acoustic bonus CD "Tranquilised" containing seven songs and on top of this a vinyl version. Surely, this is a fantastic package for your fans! Is this development owed to your intention to be able to or feeling the need to provide to fans ever more attractive compilations in today's music market or is your creativity simply so vast that not everything fits on one album? **[SF]** I think it's just nice if fans have the possibility to get a variety. There is also the regular album or the possibility of downloading or streaming. However, we created these different versions precisely for those who like to have something valuable in their hands. Actually, this was the idea of our record label Out Of Line, to whom we'd switched before the AME album and who are known for always compiling awesome and fancy fan packages. As an artist, you can't tell your record company to do such things as it costs a lot of money, but fortunately, OOL do it by their own choice. :-) Yes, and the vinyl stuff is special in itself. There is a completely different master, i.e. the songs actually sound a bit different. Highly audiophile people will definitely hear the difference.

**[SP]** For how long have you been working on "You win. Who cares?"? It's been three years sin-

ce the last release. When did you have the first ideas which led you to start the process for your new opus? **[SF]** This time it really took long, which was not least due to the fact that we played so many concerts. I just had to consult my computer, the first ideas are from October 2016. It would have been a good interval to start with the new songs 1 year after the last album and then release it another year later ... But then the America tour and of course the acoustic project came up and due to that everything got somewhat delayed. I started to work on the songs really intensively appr. in May / June 2017.

**[SP]** Do you often make changes to your songs during the process before your final submission of an album, such as lyrics, titles or compositions? Even once they've reached the state of "finished" in your head? For example, you already presented some of the songs at this year's fan club event – did this influence the final production? **[SF]** At the time of the fan club event most of the songs had been mixed already. However, during the mixing phase, which is practically the next-to-last production step, I've completely rewritten the chorus of one song. That was really a stupid thing to do, because In Strict Confidence had already finished their remix with the old chorus and also Dirk Riegner had already arranged the acoustic version, but during the mixing step I was so annoyed by the old chorus that I could either rewrite it or dump the song which would have been a shame on the other hand ... I was lucky to come up with a new chorus and the colleagues of ISC and Dirk were able to quickly

react ... This time, I've changed song titles at the last second, but this is practically only "cosmetic" and doesn't change anything about the song itself.

**[SP]** When is the right time for you to decide on the title of an album? And how did you come up with "You win. Who cares?"? I suppose this is a question you'll have to answer in many interviews currently ... **[SF]** Yeah, unfortunately the album title always has to be chosen sooner than I'd prefer ... But without this pressure, probably every album would be called "Untitled #", so this would be album "Untitled 5", haha ... I find it extremely difficult. In the end, I came up with it when that meeting between Kim and Trump was planned and actually all this posturing before their meeting represents exactly what I bring up in many of my songs. And I thought, well, it doesn't really matter who is going to win in the end, it'll just be the same. It's only about them playing their infantile power games. Yeah, and then you have this thought and you have to put it into concise words ... not easy at all ... However, in relation to the album title I don't really mean political issues, you'll find this behaviour everywhere in everyday life, at supermarket checkouts, at red traffic lights, on motorways ... people always want to win at all costs ... Although it doesn't matter at all who's ahead ...

**[SP]** When listening to the new album you quickly get the impression that the idea of the previous CD might have been continued. That is, from "Another Manic Episode" up to a point where someone else has won, but no one cares, "You win. Who cares?"? From the problems of a minor group of individuals to what, in the meantime, seemingly has become mass "symptoms" of our society? From "Sedated" to "Tranquilised"? Both the artwork, on the previous album still showing you alone and in complete internal and external destruction to the new cover radiating an almost dystopic-surreal apocalyptic mood by showing a





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destructured world with a blindfolded you, representing a society who closes their eyes when faced with ruins? **[SF]** Boy oh boy, I cannot put this into words any better ... this is exactly what it is supposed to mean ...

**[SP]** When listening to the songs we felt that it is one of the hardest, most aggressive Solar Fake CDs with the most vicious and ambitious lyrics, even though it doesn't lack ballads and quieter songs and elements, of course, and the typical character of Solar Fake is clearly recognisable. Would you share this opinion and was it your intention to accelerate and kick it up to the next level? **[SF]** I definitely see it the same way, but it wasn't planned. However, it was important to me not to become softer or too soft, because I don't feel like that at all. Even the quieter songs are no romantic love songs, but really get to the point. Many colleagues are getting more and more pleasing with age and somehow I don't want this to happen to me as well. If I ever listen to one of my albums and I think it could easily be played at a 5-star hotel bar, I urgently need to look for something else to do ... :-)

**[SP]** "You win. Who cares?" is no "light fare" when it comes to the lyrics. Many of the songs such as "Wrong Direction" or "Too late" are extremely danceable and will surely become indispensable on the dance floors. However, if you have a closer look at the lyrics and their musical interpretation, you cannot but notice how mature and sophisticated this new album is. What inspired you to the lyrics? **[SF]** Oh, people, as always. I

have the feeling everybody gets worse and more and more superficial. What counts most is e.g. how you look on a selfie. What I don't understand about it is that those people taking selfies look so dumb while they're taking this picture ... And it doesn't even bother them at all ... So you practically make a fool of yourself in real life in front of quite a lot of real people in order to look cool on Instagram with the help of photoshop? Does nobody see all the things that are wrong even in this completely trivial example?

And then there are all those people who always know everything and have an opinion about everything and use every occasion to tell everybody. Who won't let you finish speaking because they believe to know what you want to say... Either I've become much more sensitive about this or people have taken a very rapid turn into an extremely weird direction ... Definitely a lot of material for songs ...

**[SP]** We get the impression that nothing is random on this album, that there are small subtleties, nuances, interrupters built in to support the lyrics, which in many cases you don't really notice until you get to listen to the songs more often. How do you develop a song? How do you combine lyrics and composition? **[SF]** I always do the music first. I have a pretty complex arrangement in my head most of the time. Then I do a rough outline and then I write the lyrics and then in most cases there are many changes to the song until I am reasonably satisfied and then there are the final touches and the subtleties you

mentioned. These are very important to me and often these are the parts that I'm happy about for ages. :-)

**[SP]** During the first listening of the album the audience might ask themselves, "with whom does Sven settle a score here?". But if you have a closer look at the lyrics, you'll ask yourself time and again, if the protagonist isn't actually fighting with or against himself. In our opinion, this becomes particularly clear in "Wrong Direction", where you sometimes get the impression in the chorus that there are two protagonists in an internal dialogue with each other. Is it this possibility of interpretation that constitute the lyrics of this album? Or do you have a certain direction in mind? **[SF]** Yeah, precisely in "Wrong Direction" it is indeed as you've described it, in some other songs it can surely be a good variant of interpretation, which I tried to keep open on purpose. Other songs are directed against certain types of people, usually those who never question themselves and therefore couldn't have a dialogue with themselves.

**[SP]** Rage, sorrow, despair and above all resignation and hopelessness seem to be predominant in every song advancing through the album like a common theme. In this, you're not very subtle in your wording on this album which is somehow unusual for you – directly and by no means euphemistically you're talking e.g. about the bullet left for somebody or about kissing the most relevant ass. Other songs, such as "The pain that kills you too", are highly complex in itself, profound and furnished with a vast space for interpretation – is this an intentional mixture or does it arise during the song writing? **[SF]** Yes, it arises like that. I think that when I've written one or two songs like "The pain that kills you too", I feel the need to get very direct again. In the past, I've almost never done this, but it goes well with SF and I think, if both styles are present, then





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you have reached a certain extent of balance. For me it's fun to write both types of lyrics.

**[SP]** Let's talk about one song that has fascinated us in a special way. In our opinion, "Invisible" might be one of the most powerful songs you've ever written and composed. A song that grabs you and won't let you go, growing with every listening. Performed live, "Invisible" has already become a favourite song of the audience. What does this song mean to you? For you as an artist who stands in the public, the thought of becoming invisible and disappearing from society can be seen from a very different perspective ... **[SF]** Yes, I also find "Invisible" is very special. But it's less about me as an artist in the public, but about the feeling that everything is possible if no-one can see you. As long as everything is normal you have to permanently fight against all the bad stuff that is wearing you out day by day. But then you withdraw into yourself, become invisible, and everything is possible ... This is the "warmest" song on the album, I think, even though it isn't easy at all ...

**[SP]** "I don't fight back" is one of the hardest songs on the album, where you probably had to go to your limits as regards the vocals. You often play with shifts of clean parts, shouted passages, distorted elements, but a song that is almost constantly sung so deeply by you and makes us almost feel the rage, the pain and the suffering of the protagonist hasn't existed in Solar Fake's portfolio so far. Where did you get this idea? Is it just an experiment or can we see this side of you

more often in the future? **[SF]** Well, I have no clue. I think this track is different also from the musical perspective and it was big fun to work on it, to put all these short samples together to make it whole. I think we had something similar before when it comes to potential for aggression. Maybe it seems even harder due to the music ...

**[SP]** "What if there's nothing" releases us, the audience, with four beautiful lines as a farewell bringing back a spark of hope. Intention or coincidence? **[SF]** Well, a very tiny spark of hope, haha ... But in the end the song closes with the line "the first thing dead was trust" ... The mood curve is not really pointing upwards there, but you certainly mean the last verse which can be seen positively, although I'm adding a considerable amount of resignation at the end with "No looking back to the days we never had" ... I really don't know, I cannot help it ... :-)

**[SP]** What importance does the album have for you within the band's history? How do you see the development from album to album and what can we expect in the future? **[SF]** The last album is always the most important, it's like that with every musician, because it reflects exactly what you feel at the present time. For me it's actually the only possible evolution after AME. We'll see how it's going to progress, I don't think about that at the moment, because I have to free my mind before I can work on new material. At the moment I'm still too close to "You win. Who cares?".

**[SP]** How much influence did André and Jeans have on the new album? **[SF]** André and Jeans give me useful feedback, most of all during the mixing phase. Both are experienced musicians who can say if something works or not or rather if it sounds okay or not. In the end this album, as well as all previous ones, is completely my responsibility from the first idea to the finished CD.

**[SP]** As mentioned before, there will be an acoustic CD to this album as well. In your opinion, how does this go with the actual album, which is extremely progressive-aggressive, carried by hard, gloomy sounds? A parallel view, another emotional dimension? **[SF]** Yes, exactly. The "Sedated" as bonus CD of the last album was received so well and I liked the concept so much that I really wanted it this time as well. It's awesome how different the songs sound, but they work nonetheless and they do transport their message, but in a very different way.

**[SP]** In this acoustic version you've been supported by Dirk Riegner again, who has been accompanying you at the piano from the very first acoustic show onwards. What was Dirk's part in the acoustic production? Does he play the tracks according to your composition or do you work together in some way or another, does Dirk participate in the arrangements or the realisation? **[SF]** Yes, definitely. Dirk gets the electronic versions of the songs from me and translates them to piano and other instruments. So he rearranges my compositions and I sing them once more. Somehow Dirk and I understand each other so perfectly on a musical level that it is almost frightening how well everything goes without the need to explain much. He sends me his arrangements, I sing to them and then we listen to it and it just gives us goose bumps ...





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**[SP]** On "Tranquilised", there are seven out of eleven tracks. Are not all the tracks convertible to acoustic versions or how do you make the choice? **[SF]** I thought seven tracks would be a good number for this bonus CD. Thus, you don't have to somehow convert all songs come hell or high water, but you can select the ones which will work best. Actually, I've let Dirk select the tracks, because in the end he had to rewrite the songs accordingly.

**[SP]** In winter / spring you'll be going on tour with the new album. Of course this leads to the question if there will be an acoustic tour following this tour ... **[SF]** Oh, at the moment we're first planning the "real" tour. But the acoustic tour was so much fun for us that we'll certainly do it again. But we'll see if we do it for this album or for the next.

**[SP]** In addition to the regular CD and the acoustic opus there will be a bonus album with cover versions and remixes again. How did you select the songs for the cover versions for the current album? "Papillon" (Editors cover) for example has already been performed live for a while. And there has also been a demo version of "Fuck U" (Archive cover) during the production of the last album. Why do these two songs in particular belong onto the new album? **[SF]** Well, "Papillon" actually, because we've been playing it live for some time and so many people have asked us if it will be released on an album someday. Yeah, and "Fuck U" just goes well with this album. This is also

a song you can sing to your own reflection, on a bad day or so ...

**[SP]** "These Things" (She Wants Revenge cover) was actually a third cover that really turned out well and it's definitely a bit of a loss that it didn't make it onto the album in the end. What was the reason for this and is there a chance to at least listen to it live sometime? **[SF]** Unfortunately, the publisher didn't respond to our numerous enquiries at all. The other two songs were approved even by the bands themselves and with "She Wants Revenge" not even the publisher replied ... It's funny if the small ones act as if they were really big ... The approval for the Depeche Mode cover on the Sedated Live came after only 2 or 3 days ... just as a comparison ...

Yeah, I don't know if we'll play that song live, at the moment we have many other songs to prepare and due to this whole fuss I somewhat lost interest in this song ...

**[SP]** Like on the last album, there are seven interesting remixes on "You win. Who cares?" again. How does this type of cooperation start and how do you select the artists? You've met Adam is a Girl at our fan club event 2017 at Event Hangar Werneuchen, but how did the cooperation with the other acts start? **[SF]** These are just artists with whom you'd like to work together. This is always interesting and I think all remixes on the album have turned out extremely well!

**[SP]** When listening to the remixes meticulously, we've noticed some interesting transformations. From inversion of intensities, synthesising, female backing vocals to future pop dance floor hits and a lot more. Principally I take it that you like all the remixes, as you just mentioned yourself, otherwise they wouldn't have made it onto the album. But is there a remix that you like in a special way? And if so, what do you especially like? **[SF]** Yes, funny, I really find all of them have turned out very well. Mr.Kitty's version of "The Pain that kills you too" is absolutely awesome and suitable for dance floors, just as the version of "Patenbrigade:Wolff". Also, the realisation and harmonic reinterpretation of Ost+Front is absolutely remarkable. But also the other versions of In Strict Confidence or of Adam is a Girl with the awesome vocals of Anja or Random Starlight with dubstep interpolations ... I'm really more than happy with the results!

**[SP]** Recently we've come across our fanzine of the year 2008 with reports about the first Solar Fake concert. Maybe you remember that edition. Back then there were video animations to each song during the live shows. Is this type of effects planned for the upcoming tour again?

**[SF]** By no means in the same way as we did at that time. But we're still planning the light show. Maybe there will be videowalls again, maybe not. I'm waiting for the suggestions of the light designer. Back then it was actually a means of distraction because I couldn't imagine how two people would be able to fill a stage ...

**[SP]** In the meantime, you're three people during live shows, since Jeans supports you at the drums. Has the planning of concerts become more complex due to this fact? And how is it during the tour, now that suddenly there is one more person with you? **[SF]** Yes, of course the planning has become a bit more complex, in par-





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ticular because now rehearsals in Leipzig have to be planned sometimes. And of course the costs have risen somewhat, but it's totally worth it. I think that our live performance has gained ex-

tremely thanks to Jeans. On tour it doesn't really matter, there is one less empty seat in the bus, instead there is one more very pleasant person on board. :-)

**[SP]** Will there be another tour abroad? When you look at the origins of our Shadowplay e. V. members, a considerable amount is from abroad. **[SF]** Yes, we'll have shows in Helsinki and London this year, we're still negotiating with Kiev, Russia and Greece are on our schedule for the first half of 2019. It's funny, we've already started several attempts to go to Peru and Chile, but the "organiser" always stops communicating with us in the middle of our conversation ... I have no clue if



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he's just lonely and likes to get an email from time to time ...

**[SP]** When we remember the first concert(s) of Solar Fake and look at our fanzines from the early years, it's clear that Solar Fake has been on a very successful course during the past years. Full stages at festivals such as the Amphi Festival 2018 are very impressive and also otherwise Solar Fake is in high demand, bursting examples being our fan club events. We also notice this development due to the rising number of members. We've just allocated the member number 450. This is a terrific development of Solar Fake. How do you perceive this development and in general, how do you look at the past ten years since the start of Solar Fake in retrospect? Unfortunately, you cannot plan your success, but you've definitely achieved it. How will things proceed? **[SF]** Well, I hope it'll proceed just like

that. I'll do everything to make this happen. Of course I'm very happy that we've climbed pretty much to the top on festival shirts by now and that our concerts are so well attended. It gives you the feeling that you've done something right and most of all that this music is important for other people. I'm always impressed by the development of the fan club. By the way, other musicians have noticed and talk about the quality of Shadowplay and all are immensely impressed by your work, the events and the fanzines. So I'd like to take the chance to thank you very very much for your great work and unbelievable commitment. In any case we have the best fans of the world, so it's great they get this awesome offer. :-)

**[SP]** Many thanks for the interview, Sven! We're very much looking forward to the "You win. Who cares?" tour in 2019, which we're going to attend

as Shadowplay e. V. of course. **[SF]** Thanks a lot, we're looking forward to the tour and what will come!



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