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Trans-Siberian Orchestra and Savatage Team For Unique Performance

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(Scoop) Last Thursday night (June 30th), at the Wacken Open music festival in northern Germany, Trans-Siberian Orchestra (TSO) and Savatage wowed 80,000-plus attendees with a never-before-attempted music festival performance.

Following a 40-minute Savatage set and a 40-minute TSO set, TSO and Savatage band members, across two of the festival's main stages, performed a perfectly coordinated set of fan-favorites. This ambitious feat, both musically and logistically, was helmed by Paul O'Neill. Al Pitrelli led TSO on the "True Metal Stage" and Jon Oliva headed Savatage on the "Black Stage." Beyond the unprecedented act of two bands hitting the stage at the same time, this show was also memorable as it marked progressive metal originators Savatage's first show in over a decade, TSO's first European festival show, as well as the only live appearances of both bands in Europe in 2015.

The closeness of these two bands is well-known to those versed in rock/metal lore. TSO was founded in 1993 by producer/composer/lyricist Paul O'Neill, who brought together Savatage's Jon Oliva and Al Pitrelli to fulfill a vision for a group that could meld the sound of classical and fury of rock music with Broadway's storytelling to create a unique amalgamation O'Neill calls "Rock Theater." Since gaining massive popularity after beginning touring in 1999, TSO has grown to include additional members of Savatage within its ranks.

Prior to the festival, the bands issued this joint statement:

"All of us in Trans-Siberian Orchestra and Savatage cannot believe the luck that has given us the opportunity to take a break from recording the new (TSO) album Letters From The Labyrinth, so that we can meet up in Wacken, Germany and together, look back at how we got here, as well as forward to possibly catch a glimpse of what might be. This is a once in a lifetime show for Savatage & TSO that we hope you will never forget."

At 9:45 P.M., Savatage, including members Oliva, Pitrelli, Johnny Lee Middleton, Chris Caffery, Jeff Plate, Zak Stevens, Bill Hudson, plus several backing musicians (including TSO's Vitalij Kuprij), ripped through such Savatage songs as "Gutter Ballet," "Hall of the Mountain King," "Edge of Thorns," "Jesus Saves" and more.

As the Savatage set came to a close, guitarist Pitrelli raced to the other stage to join TSO for a fierce performance including "Prometheus" from its upcoming release Letters From The Labyrinth, "Toccata/Carpimus Noctem" from the platinum-certified Night Castle and many more. For TSO's first set, the band consisted of John O'Reilly and Jeff Plate (drums), David Z and Middleton (bass), Angus Clark and Caffery (guitars), Mee Eun Kim and Derek Wieland (keyboards), Asha Melvana and Roddy Chong (strings). Vocal duties were handled by Jeff Scott Soto, Kayla Reeves and Andrew Ross, with the group also featuring dancers, background vocalists and more.

At 11 P.M. came the portion of the performance that left the crowd astonished: all band members took to their respective stages and began an hour-long simultaneous performance playing the same songs concurrently. They stormed through the set containing such songs as Savatage's "Turns To Me," a rousing version of "Believe" with a duet featuring Oliva and Robin Borneman along with TSO favorites including "A Last Illusion," "Requiem," "Beethoven," and "King Rurick" from TSO's forthcoming release. A united Trans-Siberian Orchestra featured four guitarists, four keyboard players, two drummers, two bassists, a string section, and multiple vocalists (including the addition of TSO's Russell Allen and Savatage's Stevens to the above). It was a sight to behold, with several generations on stage: from teenagers taking their first steps on an international rock stage to seasoned veterans who have toured the world many times over.

Throughout the two-plus hours, accompanying the unprecedented sonic storm, fans were treated to an incredible pyrotechnic display estimated to have cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. As anyone on site could attest, it was an unparalleled auditory and visual experience.

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