

Sabaton-Heroes Review



Heroes is Sabaton's seventh and most recent album, released in May 2014. It is probably Sabaton's most experimental album. It is the first album to feature Sabaton's new line up with their new guitarists, Thobbe Englund and Chris Rorland, and drummer Hannes Van Dahl. It is currently their best-selling album. While Sabaton's earlier albums focused on famous battles in WWI and WWII, and Carolus Rex focused on the Swedish Empire, Heroes focuses on individual heroes in WWII who they think "Went above and beyond the call of duty, and put themselves in harm's way for the good of others". While making it, they researched different war heroes and then recorded tracks that they thought would fit them, and each song is uniquely different.

The first track, "Night Witches", focuses on the Soviet all-women night bomber unit 588, commonly known as The Night Witches. Since the planes they used were outdated biplanes, they flew at night and would silently glide in low to their targets, mostly German weapon factories, and start their engines as they dropped the bombs. The Germans

compared the sound of the engines starting in the night sky to witches' broomsticks, hence the name Night Witches.



This plane is similar to the ones used by the Night Witches.

The second track, “No Bullets Fly”, focuses on the Charlie Brown and Franz Stigler incident. Sabaton had previously recorded the guitar track, then later decided to make the song about Franz Stigler. The famous incident started with pilot Charles ‘Charlie’ Brown’s B-17 being swarmed by BF-109s while on a bombing mission in Germany. The plane, ‘Ye Olde Pub’ was badly damaged, losing three engines, part of the tail and the tail gunner, and having airframe torn open and the entire crew injured. However, the plane managed to escape. Franz Stigler, a member of the Luftwaffe defence unit Jagdverband 44 (JV44), saw it and was ordered to shoot it down, but upon seeing the injured people through the damaged airframe, decided to escort it to safety. Franz’s captain, Adolf Galland, protected him until 1944, when he

evacuated the unit into allied territory against Hitler's direct orders. Franz and Charlie later reconnected and became best friends until their deaths. His story and this song serve as a reminder that human decency can prevail, even during the bloodiest war in history.



(Left) An artist's reconstruction of Franz Stigler escorting Ye Olde Pub back to Britain. (Right) Franz and Charlie on a fishing trip in 2008.

The third track, "Smoking Snakes", focuses on the Brazilian Expeditionary Force. The Americans had said that Brazil would join the war effort 'When the snakes smoke'. When Brazil joined the allies, they named their army Cobras Fumantes (English: Smoking Snakes). The song is mostly guitar-driven, and was intended to sound like some of Sabaton's earlier classics. It tells the story of three Brazilian soldiers who were trapped in a foxhole surrounded by Wehrmacht soldiers and refused to surrender. When they ran out of ammo, they fixed their bayonets and charged, meeting their deaths. The Germans buried them in a grave marked 'Drei Brasilianische Helden' (Three Brazilian Heroes).



The insignia of the Smoking Snakes, which was on the shoulder of each Brazilian uniform.

The fourth track, “Inmate 4859” is about Witold Pilecki, a Polish soldier who went undercover in Auschwitz. This is one of Sabaton’s more experimental songs, with a very dark, distorted sound to it. When the allies didn’t believe his accounts of the atrocities going on in Poland, Witold forged a fake Jewish ID and voluntarily interned himself. While in Auschwitz, he distributed supplies and started an uprising. He then escaped and wrote Witold’s Report, a 100-page account, which was the world’s first record of a Holocaust death camp. He later joined the Warsaw uprising. He remained loyal to the Polish government-in-exile after the Soviet takeover, and was murdered by the secret police in 1948.



Witold Pilecki.

The fifth track, “To Hell and Back”, is currently Sabaton’s most popular song. It focuses on Audie Murphy, America’s most decorated soldier. He won every American combat award available. He first landed in Anzio in 1944, and went on to serve in France and Africa. He was famous for an incident in which he and a small group of his friends were injured and surrounded by advancing Germans, and he climbed on top of a burning German tank, seized the machine gun, and held them off until reinforcements arrived. He had a bullet wound in his leg and was told he could go home, but instead field-dressed the wound and chose to stay. After the war, he became an actor for 21 years, mostly in Western films and he starred as himself in his autobiographical movie, *To Hell and Back*. The song was intended to

replicate the soundtrack of some of the Westerns he starred in, and the lyrics are based on his poem, “The Crosses Grow on Anzio”. The official music video depicts his battles later in life. He struggled with severe post traumatic stress and paranoia, and slept with a gun under his pillow at all times. He became addicted to sleeping pills, and locked himself in a motel room for a week to detox, as seen in the video.



(Left) Audie in combat dress. (Right) Audie with all of his medals.

The sixth track, “The Ballad of Bull”, really stands out from Sabaton’s previous experimental songs, because the main instrument is a piano. The song is about Corporal Leslie “Bull” Allen, an Australian soldier who rescued 12 wounded American soldiers when no one else would. The Japanese had secured a position on Mount Tambu, Papua New Guinea, and an American battalion attempted to drive them back and failed, leaving 12 soldiers wounded and the rest fleeing. At Base camp, Leslie asked them why they weren’t going back for the wounded, and they said it was too dangerous. So he went himself, through heavy machine

gun fire, and carried the wounded soldiers out on his back one by one. He was later awarded the Silver Star.



Bull Allen carrying a wounded soldier off of Mount Tambu.

The seventh track, “Resist and Bite”, is similar to some of Sabaton’s classic guitar-driven songs. It is about the Chasseurs Ardennais (English: Hunters from the Ardennes), the Belgian infantry unit. Their motto is “Resiste et Mords” (English: Resist and Bite). In WWII, they were only 40 members strong. During the Nazi invasion in 1940, their generals were going to order them to surrender as Erwin Rommel’s tanks headed for Belgium, but the radio broke. They held the rapidly advancing Wehrmacht off for three days, destroying several tanks, until they were eventually captured. When captured, Rommel asked them where the rest of them were, and they laughed and replied “There are no more. We are all!”, as referenced in the song.



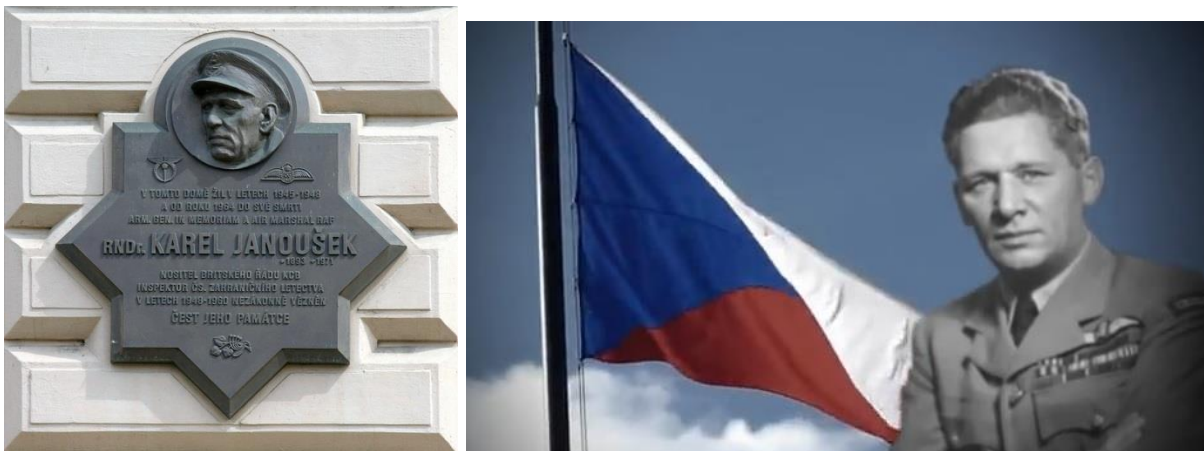
(Left) Belgian soldiers with a 47mm anti-tank gun, one of which destroyed five German tanks. (Right) The Chasseurs Ardennais insignia in Brussels.

The eighth track, “Soldier of Three Armies”, is about Lauri Allan Torni. Lauri started as a soldier in the Finnish Army during the Winter War, where he became known for annihilating Soviet forces encircling Lake Ladoga. After the Winter War ended in 1941, he travelled to Vienna to train with the Waffen-SS for seven weeks. He then returned to Finland, recognized as both a Finnish Officer and Untersturmführer. After WWII and the Continuation War ended, he moved to the USA under the name Larry Thorne and joined the army, and eventually became a Green Beret. He was deployed to Vietnam, where his helicopter crashed and he disappeared. His remains were found and buried in 1999.



(Left) Lauri in his Finnish officer's uniform. (Right) Lauri in his Waffen-SS uniform.

The ninth track, “Far From the Fame” is about Karel Janousek, the Hero of Czechoslovakia. In WWII, he organized Czechoslovakian units in the Royal Air Force, where he was promoted to Air Marshal. He was later imprisoned by the Communist regime, hence the title, “Far From the Fame”.



(Left) A memorial plaque dedicated to Karel. (Right) Karel Janousek in his Air Marshal Uniform.

The tenth and final track, “Hearts of Iron”, is about General Walther Wenck, possibly one of the most heroic soldiers of WWII. Some of his famous quotes are in the song. He was the youngest general in the

Wehrmacht, and was known as “The Boy General”. At the end of the war, he became commander of the Twelfth Army and was ordered directly by Hitler to attack Georgy Zhukov’s advancing unit. However, the Western and Eastern fronts were rapidly closing in (as referenced in the song; ‘going down in flames as two worlds collide’) and he knew it was a suicide mission. He then ordered his men to instead form an escape route out of Berlin and to the Elbe River, where civilians and soldiers surrendered into allied territory. He told them ‘It’s not about Berlin anymore, It’s not about the Reich anymore’(Which is in the song). During the final stages of the attack, he radioed ‘Hurry up, we are waiting for you’(Also in the song). Despite attacks on his corridor, he saved approximately 250,000 people.



General Walther Wenck.

Overall, This in one of Sabaton’s best albums in my opinion. I’d recommend it to anyone who is interested in power metal and

experimental metal. It's one of my favourite Sabaton albums along with Coat of Arms and The Art of War.

Malcolm's rating: 5/5.