

# TRANSATLANTIC

## **'The Absolute Universe: The Breath Of Life (Abridged Version)'**

Special Edition CD Digipak  
Gatefold 2LP+CD  
Digital Album

## **'The Absolute Universe: Forevermore (Extended Version)'**

Special Edition 2CD Digipak  
3LP+2CD Boxset  
Digital Album

## **'The Absolute Universe: The Ultimate Edition'**

Limited Deluxe Clear 5LP+3CD+Blu-Ray Box-set - contained within a foil-finished lift-off box with extended 16-page LP booklet & 60x60cm poster

**Release Date: February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Transatlantic have never been a band to resist a challenge. So it should come as no surprise that for their fifth album, the foursome of Neal Morse (keyboards, guitar vocals), Roine Stolt (guitar, vocals), Pete Trewavas (bass, vocals) and Mike Portnoy (drums, vocals) have really gone out to do something a little unusual. 'A little unusual'? No, it's considerably more significant than that phrase implies.

"We have actually come up with something unprecedented," says Portnoy proudly. "We've got two versions of this album. There's a two CD presentation, which is 90 minutes long, and a single one - that's 60 minutes."

So far this sounds fairly routine. However, as Portnoy goes on to explain...

"The single CD is NOT an edited version of the double CD. They're new recordings. What we have done are different approaches to the songs for this! We wrote fresh lyrics and also have different people singing on the single CD version tracks as compared to those on the double CD. Some of the song titles have also been changed, while others might remain the same, but compositionally what you'll hear has been altered. You must appreciate that what we have done is unique. We revamped the songs to make the two versions different. Nobody has done this before."

"We did write some new music for the single CD," adds Trewavas. "What's more, there are also differences in the instruments used on some of the tracks across the two records." However, that's not all...

"There will also be a third version that brings these two together in a box set," remarks Portnoy.

Now, it must be said that when the band began mapping out what was to be their fifth studio album they didn't plan for such a brilliantly bold approach. In fact, it was to be a lot more conventional.

“In September 2019, the four of us met up in Sweden to write and arrange the material for the new album,” recalls the drummer. “Roine and Pete weren't able to come over to the States, as they usually do for this part of the process. So, it made sense for Neal and me to go to Europe instead.

“Over a period of 10-14 days, we mapped out the songs. Then we all went back to our home studios and did the recording. That's the way we always do it. At one point, though, it was suggested that instead of doing what was by that time going to be a double album, we should just be content to do a single CD.”

“What happened was that everything kept expanding and expanding,” recalls Stolt. “Therefore we decided it made sense to make it a double album. It was Pete and Neal who then came out and said they felt this would be too long, and we should reduce it to one...But we were already recording, and it didn't seem feasible to cut it back. There were so many pieces that each of us loved in what we were planning and didn't want to lose. That's when we ended up in discussions over the best way forward.”

Trewavas reveals he was indirectly the person who effectively instigated what would become the master plan for two versions.

“I wondered if people would have the patience to listen to so much music Neal agreed with me, went away and came up with a shorter version of the album, which prompted those chats between us as to what we should do.”

This is where things took off in a wholly unexpected direction, as the idea was born that would transform the album and take it into uncharted territory.

“I came up the notion of doing both the two CD and single CD versions of the album in this very unusual way,” says Portnoy. “What I proposed was to make each of these editions different. We had further discussions about this possibility, and eventually decided to go down that route. Now, this was obviously going to cost a lot more money. But thankfully our label InsideOut agreed with this approach.

“By that time, we were facing the pandemic, so the extra writing for the single CD had to be done remotely. But that wasn't a problem for us. We're experienced enough to make this work.”

At this juncture, it should be noted that each of the two versions of the self-produced album has a different title. The double CD is titled 'Forevermore', with the single variation called 'The Breath Of Life'. There's also an umbrella title for both versions, and this is 'The Absolute Universe'. “There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing on emails between the four of us over those titles,” explains Trewavas. “We all had ideas. In the end Mike suggested 'The Absolute Universe', while 'Forevermore' was from Roine and 'The Breath Of Life' came courtesy of Neal.”

But wait, there's more to tell. Because this is actually a fully contemporary concept album. “Well, the idea of Transatlantic deciding to do a concept record this time around won't shock anyone, right?” laughs Portnoy. “What we have is essentially one giant composition, split into chapters. The storyline is about the struggles facing everyone in society today. Politics comes into this, but at no point do we ever become political. The pandemic also has a significant role in the subjects we've written about, as you'd expect. So, what we've essentially done is talk about the craziness of 2020, with the single CD concentrates a little more on the impact of the virus.”

“We didn't start out with the idea of this being conceptual,” admits Stolt. “The way things work with us is that we have a load of ideas, and these are developed spontaneously when

we meet up. Everything happens in the moment. But someone, and I am sure it was Mike, just said one day in Sweden, 'Let's make this conceptual'. And we were all happy to go for that."

"When we met up in Sweden to begin writing this album we didn't have any really preconceived ideas about what it was going to be," adds Morse. "In fact, it was still developing when we left! We simply followed the music where it felt like it wanted to go and wound up with this pretty crazy conceptual piece!

"It's become quite a natural thing for the four of us to write in a concept album way as we love to have themes recur; it's really fun to play around with them, and find out all the different ways that you can treat a particular piece of music. It's our favourite thing to do, to play around with these pieces and song bits and try to figure out how to fit them all together. It's really quite a bit of work and a challenge, but it's also a lot of fun."

So, how does this new ground-breaking album compare to Transatlantic's previous four albums? "I always try not to compare albums as much as possible," insists Morse. "It's very difficult when you're trying to be creative, because your natural instinct is to constantly compare. But in order to create you have to kind of step away from that. Having said that, I would say this would have more in common with 'The Whirlwind' album (the band's third, from 2009) than others that we've created."

"In some respects, it is similar to 'The Whirlwind'," agrees Portnoy. "In that it is one song split into multiple tracks. But by no means can you call it a sequel to that one. It's more a spiritual relationship between the two than any other connection."

Both versions not only feature the four members of the band, but also a string section, as there has been on Transatlantic's other releases.

"Neal was responsible for bringing in these fine musicians, to add their talents to what we were doing," comments Trewavas.

Rich Mouser, who has also worked on the band's four prior studio albums, handled the mixing stage.

The artwork this time is down to Thomas Ewerhard.

"Thomas is someone Neal and I have worked with a lot in the past," enthuses Portnoy. "What he has come up with are three covers. One for each of the two versions and another for the box set that contains all the music."

"The mothership, which has always been an ever present part of Transatlantic's artwork, is still there," reveals Portnoy. "But now it has been made a lot more futuristic. Each of these pieces of art has a different colour scheme and landscape. They look amazing."

"Per Nordin, who is a friend of mine, had originally come up with the mothership," says Stolt. "And we've used it on all of our albums so far. But it was now time to move on. So, I went online and found some fantastic artwork. I sent the links to the others and we decided on what we were looking for, and then handed this over to Thomas, who has brought it all to life."

As well as the CD format, there will also be vinyl editions for each version. 'The Breath Of Life' will be pressed on 2 LPs, while 'Forevermore' is to be a triple LP. And the box set houses all of these. "The box will have the five LPs, three CDs, plus a 5.1 mix of everything and a blu ray, which has a documentary on the making of the album," expands Portnoy.

For Trewavas, 'The Absolute Universe' is a momentous project.

"I think it is right up there with the very finest albums we've done. As the others have said, it compares very well to 'The Whirlwind', which I believe represents Transatlantic at our

best. As on that album, we took our time to write and arrange everything, and that shines through. I am very excited for people to hear it.”

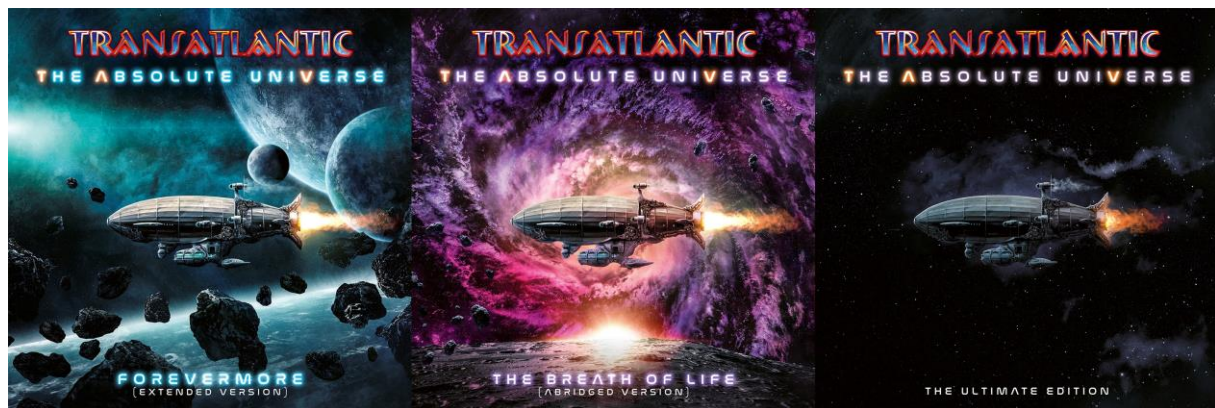
“Our job as composers and creators is to create from nowhere as best we can,” feels Morse. “And then trust that it will be a blessing to people when they listen to it.”

“I know what we have done here is special,” adds Stolt. “I hope others will find it as rewarding to listen to it as we did in making it.”

Let’s leave the final word to Portnoy, who believes this album takes the Transatlantic philosophy to a fresh level.

“We have always had the attitude that more of anything is never enough. But this time we have taken that idea to a new extreme. I am sure ‘The Absolute Universe’ as a whole will be any prog fan’s wet dream! In a way, it is bonkers. But we took on this challenge, and I know we’ve pulled it off.”

Malcolm Dome  
London, October 2020



### The Absolute Universe: The Breath Of Life:

1	Overture	00:05:53
2	Reaching For The Sky	00:05:40
3	Higher Than The Morning	00:04:32
4	The Darkness In The Light	00:05:43
5	Take Now My Soul	00:03:31
6	Looking For The Light	00:04:04
7	Love Made A Way (Prelude)	00:02:13
8	Owl Howl	00:05:26
9	Solitude	00:04:24
10	Belong	00:02:22
11	Can You Feel It	00:03:17
12	Looking For The Light (Reprise)	00:04:57
13	The Greatest Story Never Ends	00:02:57

### The Absolute Universe: Forevermore

Disc 1:

1	Overture	00:08:11
2	Heart Like A Whirlwind	00:05:11
3	Higher Than The Morning	00:05:29
4	The Darkness In The Light	00:05:43

5	Swing High, Swing Low	00:03:48
6	Bully	00:02:11
7	Rainbow Sky	00:03:19
8	Looking For The Light	00:03:59
9	The World We Used To Know	00:09:21

Disc 2:

1	The Sun Comes Up Today	00:05:38
2	Love Made A Way (Prelude)	00:01:25
3	Owl Howl	00:07:05
4	Solitude	00:05:41
5	Belong	00:02:49
6	Lonesome Rebel	00:02:53
7	Looking For The Light (Reprise)	00:05:12
	The Greatest Story Never	
8	Ends	00:04:17
9	Love Made A Way	00:08:02

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