

Spock's Beard: "Spock's Beard"

Band:

Nick D'Virgilio
(Vocals, drums, guitar)

Dave Meros
(Bass)

Alan Morse
(Guitar, vocals)

Ryo Okumoto
(Keyboards)

Discography:

"Spock's Beard" (2006)

"Live in 2005 – Gluttons For
Punishment" (2005)

"Octane"
(2005)

"Feel Euphoria"
(2003)

„Snow"
(2002)

„V"
(2000)

„Day For Night“
(1999)

"The Kindness Of Strangers"
(1998, Reissue 2004)

"Beware Of Darkness"
(1996, Reissue 2004)

"The Light"
(1995, Reissue 2004)

www.spocksbeard.com

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With their previous two releases, 'Feel Euphoria' and 'Octane', Spock's Beard has proved that despite the departure of Neal Morse, they remain one of the best prog bands on the scene. Since Morse's exit, the Californian quartet has continued to seek new forms of expression, with a focus on combining complex compositions with a more song oriented feel. With their latest album fronted by vocalist, drummer and guitarist Nick D'Virgilio, the band begins to explore other genres and assimilate some new sounds and textures into the Spock's Beard trademark sound.

The title of the new album is simply 'Spock's Beard'. Something you might expect for a band's debut but not for the band's ninth studio album. "We never had a self-titled debut album, so we thought it'd be cool to make up for that", explains bassist Dave Meros. "It doesn't necessarily signify a new beginning. But at the same time we do hope that we can look back to this album and realize that it was a turning point in Spock's Beard's career".

Meros, who had begun to contribute more to the song writing on 'Octane', has also contributed a lot to the new record. "'Feel Euphoria' was quite experimental for us", he recalls about the first album after their split with Morse. "It took a long time to find out how our various methods of composing could take best effect, what constituted the 'new' Spock's Beard and how we could write for the band without pinning it down to a certain style. With 'Octane' we succeeded in doing this pretty well but the new album is much more the kind of thing that I personally think captures the new Beard sound."

This new sound flirts with blues rock and occasionally even jazz, soul and funk without ever neglecting the traditional Spock's brand of prog. "Well, we are a bunch of old jerks who have played a great deal of stuff since our youth", Meros laughs. "With 'our' style of prog there must be an approach now and then to other genres as long as the songs still sound like Spock's Beard. Whatever we are doing, we make sure that it will sound 'proggy'. For example there is a part on the new album with a real 'Tower Of Power' groove but we play it in 5/4 and the vocals have this Peter Gabriel kind of feel, so the whole thing is still interesting for prog fans even if it's rhythm 'n' blues".

The track in question here is "As Far As The Mind Can See". At 17 minutes long, it is both the longest and the most demanding piece on the album, which shines with enchanting vocal harmonies, virtuoso rock, brilliant prog moments and gripping solos, most notably Ryo Okumoto on the organ. 'Spock's Beard' features some of the band's most amazing moments yet such as the instrumental corker 'Skeletons At The Feast'. The song begins with a breath-taking riff and odd timing in 11/8, which simmers into a Canterbury style middle section before climaxing in a fierce ending. 'Is This Love' is another adventurous trip which is paved with many rhythmic stumbling blocks.

Apart from the harder numbers, 'Spock's Beard' also has its fair share of quieter moments such as the piano and vocal duet 'Hereafter'. There is also the bluesy sounding 'Slow Crash Landing Man' which has the perfect blend of piano, strings and organ and virtuoso guitar playing and the album opener 'On A Perfect Day', which combines acoustic cello with heavy bass riffs and a wonderful interlude featuring two acoustic guitars and flute. All in all, the album offers 78 Minutes of captivating melodies, amazing twists and cleverly constructed songs. On this album the string and brass ensembles were utilised to a far greater extent than on any other Spock's Beard CD. The string quartet performed on several parts (sometimes doubled and tripled); and the two horn players, trombonist and trumpet player add much to the flavour of the album in various combinations. "Despite all that you can't have a prog album without any Mellotron", Meros says finally. "That's the reason why you can hear a damn lot of it too!"

The first edition of "Spock's Beard" will be released in a lavish slipcase. A European tour is already being planned for February 2007.

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