

VIRGIN STEELE

On October 31st...Halloween...**VIRGIN STEELE** will be re-releasing their albums **LIFE AMONG THE RUINS**, **THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN & HELL "PART I"**, and **THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN & HELL "PART II"**. These discs will be issued in Europe through the German label Dockyard 1. All three albums will contain bonus tracks and new booklets containing many photos, and liner notes.



01. A SYMPHONY OF STEELE
02. CROWN OF GLORY (UNSCARRED)
03. FROM CHAOS TO CREATION
04. TWILIGHT OF THE GODS
05. RISING UNCHAINED
06. TRANSFIGURATION
07. PROMETHEUS THE FALLEN ONE
08. EMALAITH
09. STRAWGIRL
10. DEVIL/ANGEL
11. UNHOLY WATER
12. VICTORY IS MINE
13. THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL REVISITED

BONUS TRACKS:

14. LIFE AMONG THE RUINS- (Live Version)
15. I WAKE UP SCREAMING- (Live Version)

VIRGIN STEELE

“The Marriage Of Heaven and Hell Part 2”

Reissue liner notes

By BRYAN REESMAN

BY THE GODS & GODDESSES! Greetings Royal Friends of VIRGIN STEELE! We are well met once again...As you all know I usually write the liner notes for each release and discuss the tracks contained within or reveal something about what was going on at the time of the making of the album, what was on our minds, etc... This time out for this “Marriage Of Heaven & Hell Part 2” re-release, I was approached by a Mr. Bryan Reesman, who asked me if he could contribute liner notes to the album. I have known that Mr. Reesman has always been a great believer in the VIRGIN STEELE cause, therefore when he informed me that this album in particular had struck such a deep resounding chord far within the core of his being, I thanked him kindly and told him that I would gladly abdicate my liner note responsibilities this time out, and that I would be honored to have his words here.

Before he begins first let me introduce you to this fine gentleman. Bryan is a veteran entertainment journalist who has been published in the New York Times, Playboy, and Metal Edge and many another esteemed publication. Mr. Reesman has also written liner notes for Judas Priest, Black Sabbath, AC/DC, and Yngwie Malmsteen. In addition to these outstanding credentials he is also a great friend... So now...with no further ado I leave you in his most capable hands and Noble company...

Cheers & Thanks, David...

Upon crashing into my mailbox back in the winter of 1996, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Part Two blew my mind. The album, brimming with aggressive, melodic music, was a huge breath of fresh air at a time when heavy metal had been banished back underground by the legions of insipid grunge and alternative bands dominating music charts and radio airwaves. As I was rediscovering my headbanging roots, it was just the sort of album I needed to reawaken the metallic monster stirring within me.

Marriage Two was also a revelation in another way. I was a Virgin Steele disciple back in the ‘80s and had presumed they stopped making albums with 1988’s



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Age of Consent. In fact, they had taken a five-year hiatus before releasing new albums in Europe. Thus when VS frontman/mastermind David DeFeis caught me up to speed with *Life Among The Ruins* and the two *Marriage* albums, all released between 1993 and 1996, I was both elated and fired up. I had always felt that 1985's *Noble Savage* – which intertwined Romantic, Renaissance, and jazz influences into its heady mix – was vastly underrated and one of the greatest metal records ever recorded.

The *Marriage of Heaven and Hell Part Two* blew it away. To this day it remains my favorite Virgin Steele album of all time. When I reviewed *Marriage Two* for now-defunct American magazine *Huh* in 1996, I rated it 10 out of 10.

There are very few albums I give perfect marks to, nor ones that I am able to listen to repeatedly over the course of a decade or more. The middle third of a trilogy that culminated two years later in the equally ambitious *Invictus*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Part Two* is one of those rare aural animals, a thirteen-song epic where every track has its own identity. No two sound alike, and each one occupies its own niche on the disc, from the rambunctious opener “A Symphony Of Steele” and the raging “Rising Unchained” to the majestic yet tragic “Emalaith” and the lush anthem “Unholy Water”.

The Virgin Steele sound really came into its own with this release, driven by David DeFeis' snarling, soaring vocals (listen to that searing high D on “Prometheus The Fallen One”), his classical keyboards, and Edward Pursino's impressive axework, which veered from stellar electric shredding to delicate acoustic playing. And while original skinbeater Joey Ayvazian offered a savage, hard-hitting style well-suited to the band, his successor Frank Gilchrist – who played on three key tracks: “Crown of Glory,” “Prometheus,” and the epic “Emalaith” – proved his metal mettle here. He could flail fluidly on his toms and also pummel listeners into submission with his thunderous double bass work.

While many modern power metal bands toy with classical sounds, DeFeis wrote *Marriage Two* like a metal symphony, utilizing distinct movements, reiterated melodic motifs, glorious harmonies, and dramatic orchestrations to imbue the music with a larger than life feeling. His keyboard work, which ranges from hard piano to ethereal synth sounds, has always been an important part of the Virgin Steele sound, but it does not detract from nor soften the music, as many guitar fiends often complain. DeFeis' keyboards are an essential ingredient to the music and add rich layers of sound that weave into a complex sonic tapestry. His thoughtful, literate lyrics, often rooted in Greek mythology, are also important. They elevate his epic tales of political conflicts, fierce battles, deadly betrayals, and passionate romances far above the other (often fantasy-based)

power metal groups proliferating across the globe. Who else could have penned the tragic romantic tale “Emalaith” and imbued it with such passion?

While *The Marriage Of Heaven and Hell Part One* reinvigorated Virgin Steele and took their Romantic metal to another level with more sophisticated arrangements and ideas, *The Marriage Of Heaven and Hell Part Two* continued that upward spiral in truly epic, orchestral fashion. It paved the way for successful European tours and for three heavy metal operas that DeFeis would stage in Germany, with *The House of Atreus* recorded in a two-album cycle to great acclaim, even in the band's home country of the United States, where they have been ridiculously underappreciated. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Part Two* also became an important pillar for the European power metal movement that exploded in the late '90s and early '00s. Twelve years later, its savage grace remains awe-inspiring to listen to.

--Bryan Reesman, Sept. 26, 2008

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