

VIRGIN STEELE

THE BLACK LIGHT BACCHANALIA

For David DeFeis, creative mastermind of American power metal act Virgin Steele, life seems too short to realize all his ideas, visions and plans. “In my mind, I’m always one step ahead of my current project,” he confesses, already musing over future plans while completing the recordings for his latest album, *The Black Light Bacchanalia*, at the studio. DeFeis has been directing the group’s fortunes since 1981, creating with them classics such as *Noble Savage* (1985) and *Invictus* (1998), among others – a multi-talented, visionary and exceptionally inspired musician. So it’s no surprise that *The Black Light Bacchanalia*, without a doubt one of the strongest and most unusual offerings in the band’s history to date, is a versatile and multi-layered release.

As during the group’s whole career, *The Black Light Bacchanalia* reveals the full range of Virgin Steele’s epic and at the same time tough music. Their songs are always powerful yet intricate, featuring tasteful chord changes, spherical atmospheres and raw rock/metal instrumentation. “My special challenge as the tracks’ composer is to process my ideas, which I worked out on the piano, into metal songs on guitar, bass and drums while keeping to their original concept. That’s a real struggle every time and requires a lot of concentration at the studio.” Because – and this is something which certainly can’t be said of the majority of tracks produced by other metal bands – all Virgin Steele compositions also work if performed by piano and vocals alone. A real phenomenon, but one that’s symptomatic of this group.

At the same time, *The Black Light Bacchanalia* features a number of interesting innovations which are cleverly integrated into typical Virgin Steele ingredients: in addition to guitarist Edward Pursino’s 6 string flurries, guitarist Josh Block recorded a number of passages on seven-string guitar, which naturally affects the song’s structure and tone colour. “I feel that a lot of harmonies sound darker and heavier than usual due to the seven-string guitar,” DeFeis points out. The drums also sound extremely powerful, dynamic and vibrant. “We consciously opted for a kind of live drum sound,” says the Virgin Steele boss, “creating a raw, very energetic flair, comparable to John Bonham’s drum style.”

So there’s a lot to be discovered on *The Black Light Bacchanalia*, not only musically but, as usual, also in the album’s lyrics. Again, DeFeis impresses with themes that are haunting and at the same time significant and rather unusual in metal. *The Black Light Bacchanalia* takes up where Virgin Steele’s previous release, *Visions Of Eden* (2006), left off, fascinating its listeners with a number of complex thoughts. “The basic idea behind this concept is rebellion against authorities,” DeFeis explains. An example? The track, ‘The Orpheus Taboo’, is about the Greek myth where Orpheus travelled into the underworld to bring back his deceased wife, Eurydice. His singing softens the hearts of Hades and Persephone, who set Eurydice free on the condition that Orpheus will not look back during their ascent to the upper world. The story goes that Orpheus looked back after all because he couldn’t hear his wife’s footsteps behind him and loses her forever. DeFeis: “Our lyrical approach breaks with that strange moral concept of never looking back. We say: Fuck you, I’ll turn around and look back if I want to.”

His statements show that *The Black Light Bacchanalia* is anything but everyday fare. The more than one dozen new songs (including bonus tracks) are all marked by a brilliant musical sense. “Each track was created in a different way, sometimes the lyrics came first, at others the chord structures or the melody. I compose all the time, permanently have new ideas, so what you hear on an album is only a fraction of what I’ve really written.” The album has depth and meaning, sparkles with intelligent parables and extremely multi-layered musical structures – all parameters that make for a real masterpiece.

Although only time will tell whether this album really is a monumental epos, one thing is for certain: *The Black Light Bacchanalia* lives up to Virgin Steele's reputation of being one of the most unusual and creative metal bands worldwide. So it's only logical that this status is also reflected in the formats their new album comes in: as a regular jewel case release, in a limited-edition Digipak and in a premium limited-edition LP box set. With a playing time of almost 80 minutes and lots of extras, such as a book, poster, sticker and postcard, 25 October 2010 will see the arrival of one of this autumn's most spirited and worthwhile metal releases.

TRACKS

1. BY THE HAMMER OF ZEUS (AND THE WRECKING BALL OF THOR)
2. PAGAN HEART 3. THE BREAD OF WICKEDNESS
4. IN A DREAM OF FIRE
5. NEPENTHE (I Live Tomorrow)
6. THE ORPHEUS TABOO
7. TO CROWN THEM WITH HALOS Parts 1 & 2
8. THE BLACK LIGHT BACCHANALIA (The Age That Is To Come)
9. THE TORTURE'S OF THE DAMNED
10. NECROPOLIS (He Answers Them With Death)
11. ETERNAL REGRET

BONUS-TRACKS *(limited edition digipak)*

1. WHEN I'M SILENT (The Wind Of Voices)
2. SILENT SORROW
3. FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM-(The Spoken Biography)
(Includes Excerpts from: the Black Light Bacchanalia (the Age That Is To Come), To Crown Them With Halos, Necropolis (He Answers Them With Death), Through The Ring Of Fire, Invictus, Kingdom Of The Fearless (The Destruction Of Troy), The Marriage Of Heaven & Hell (Revisited), Visions Of Eden, Crown Of Glory (Unscarred), and A Symphony Of Steele.

LINE-UP

David DeFeis – vocals, keyboards, bass and orchestration
Edward Pursino – 6 string guitars
Josh Block – 7 string guitars
Frank Gilchrist – drums

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