

Welcome to a new dimension in the Vanden Plas universe! With their new work, “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld,” the spectacular German progressive metal band has again shown artistic growth, continuing a pattern of development from album to album that we have grown accustomed to.

In this case, the developmental step was a bit bigger than usual, due to the story behind the birth of “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld.” Wolfgang Hohlbein, who with 43 million books sold worldwide is not only Germany’s biggest selling author but also a fan of VANDEN PLAS, suggested their creative collaboration: a rock opera for the stage based on his series “The Chronicle of the Immortals.” The result: “Bloodnight” (“Blutnacht”).

The libretto was written by VANDEN PLAS singer Andy Kuntz, together with Hohlbein and his manager Dieter Winkler, himself a respected author. The VANDEN PLAS team of Stephan Lill/ Günter Werno/Andy Kuntz composed 19 songs for the stage production.

“Bloodnight,” with Kuntz in the lead role and the VANDEN PLAS musicians in the orchestra pit, celebrated a stunning premiere on the stage of the Pfalztheater in Kaiserslautern in 2012. 25 sold-out performances in the 2012 and 2013 seasons with standing ovations that never seemed to end speak for themselves. Overwhelmed by this success, Hohlbein responded by writing another novel; the story of “Bloodnight.”

The next step for the band was to turn the successful theatre piece into an equally successful VANDEN PLAS album. “Chronicles of the Immortals - Netherworld - Path 1” has 10 tracks comprising the first act of “Bloodnight.” “Path 2,” the second half of the album, is scheduled to bring the story to a conclusion in early 2015. Kuntz, in agreement with Hohlbein, adapted the stage version to fit an album format. On it he appears as the storyteller, so that unlike the stage production he is not only the main character Andrej Delany but also embodies the roles of the other protagonists. In this way the story line is richer and more easily understood by the listener for whom the powerful visions from the stage production are not available.

The music of “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld” is pure VANDEN PLAS. The songs are noticeably harder than in the stage version and many solos have been included that were too difficult to stage in the theatrical production. Amendments to some of the arrangements can be heard and some scenes have been completely rewritten. Thus, some large chorus scenes from the stage production reappear with stark intimacy on the album, while in other sections a lush orchestral accompaniment replaces the piano line that had led the action in the stage version.

At the same time, all the elements come into play that have long been distinctive to VANDEN PLAS. Kuntz’s incisive lyrics are interwoven with Lill’s defining riffs and Werno’s diverse keyboard parts. A solid base is provided by bass player Torsten Reichert and drummer Andreas Lill, whose collaboration has produced an atmosphere that seems more homogenous and transparent than ever.

It is the details that make this album different from other VANDEN PLAS recordings. It is clearly evident that this album recounts the story from a newly staged theatre production, which makes the VANDEN PLAS music to “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld” even more diversified and vivid.

VANDEN PLAS fans will immediately feel at home with this album. Hohlbein was also immediately thrilled the first time he heard the music. “Great album; I loved it! I’m happy that fans of “The Chronicles of the Immortals” can re-experience the story through the rock opera ‘Bloodnight’.”

The theme of “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld” examines the essential question of human existence.

...“What is immortality? Andrej Delany knows the answer. Those who meet him sense that he is somehow different from them, more powerful, more experienced. They call him a sorcerer, revile him as a vampire or a demon. Yet he differs from them in only one aspect: he has lived much, much longer than they themselves have. Andrej desires only to be a human being, but he is incapable of sharing his life with mortals. In the search for his salvation, he wanders through the centuries, not knowing that doing so threatens to put him at the mercy of powers that themselves have Eternity on their side and are slowly tightening a noose around his neck. With satanic trickery, a dark shape shifter tries to convince the immortal one to join him and storm the Pantheon of the old gods and wrest the throne from them. Restless chimeras from the other side warn him against this unholy alliance. They tell him about lost love, the souls of forgotten children, and point him to a “forbidden way”, to Marius - the son he believed to be dead - and Maria, the great love of his life. Suddenly Andrej finds himself between the front lines of two worlds. He is in the middle of the eternal war raging between Heaven and eternal Darkness. But which of the archaic shadow beings is heresy and which is illumination? Which wants to help Andrej - and which wants to deceive and destroy him? He must choose which vision to follow, for in the end the truth lies only within him.”... (Bloodnight)

“Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld – Path 1” ends at a point where all seems to be hopelessly lost - if it weren’t for the soon-to-be released “Path 2,” which promises redemption. The VANDEN PLAS/Hohlbein collaboration is a creative cornucopia still filled to overflowing!

But first, we welcome you into the new but still familiar dimensions of VANDEN PLAS. There is much to discover in “Chronicles of the Immortals – Netherworld – Path 1.”
Stefan Glas (Rock Hard, Rocks, Underground Empire), translated by Cynthia Nay

The Band

Andy Kuntz (Vocals), Stephan Lill (Guitar), Günter Werno (Keyboard), Torsten Reichert (Bass),
Andreas Lill (Drums)