

Dead Kosmonaut – Gravitas, Song by Song

by bass player and principal songwriter, Mattias Reinholdsson

‘Black Tongue Tar’

I seem to draw inspiration from Judas Priest’s ‘Dissident Aggressor’ quite often. On this song it’s the mighty double bass drum and the overall style of the song – guest drummer Daniel Moilanen really channelled Simon Phillips on this one. But the guitar chord progression came first and the rest followed quite easily. Since it’s the first song on the album, and I decided pretty much early on that this would be the opening song, I added the intro to it. That the song is about depression is no secret – it’s literally there in the lyric! The cover of the album was an image I had carried with me for a while that went with the lyric and when Pelle suggested we should use artist Martin Jonsson it all came together perfectly. He pulled the image into reality beautifully.

‘Isariots Dream’

Once again the music came very easy. The bassline started it off. I thought it sounded like a strange combination of Judas Priest and Jethro Tull, so the flute was sort of an in-joke, but a nice touch, all the same. I like the way the song keeps changing and ends with a bit of doom, and the guitar duel turned out fantastically. Lyrically it’s a bit political, first playing with the sort of ‘ride free’ clichés often heard in metal then twisting it into harsh reality. It wouldn’t have been a lyric of mine had it not turned out that way. I am a bit of a killjoy!

‘Vanitatis Profeta’

The intro and the verses are very old, dating back at least twenty years or more, but it’s undergone a lot of changes and additions on the way. For me it sort of took off when I understood that it worked best if played a bit Dio-era Sabbath. Then the refrain and the midsection followed by itself. The lyric on this song is blatantly blasphemous. I really don’t believe there is a god or any other other-worldly powers. So, as the title says, I am the prophet of vanity. Did I say I am a bit of a killjoy?

‘The Spirit Divide’

This is also an older song. It was one of the unused songs from the ‘Expect Nothing’ sessions. At first I had it planned as the opening song for the ‘Rekviem’ mini-LP, but it was a toss-up between this one and ‘Frozen In Time’ and in the end co-producer Fredrik decided we should use ‘Frozen...’ instead. I have to confess I don’t remember now how the music came about. But I am very fond of the Maiden-esque midsection. This is another song for which John Gaffney wrote the lyrics. He really is a part of the Dead Kosmonaut crew now. When I get stuck with the words, he’s the one I turn to.

‘Hell/Heaven’

I have already come out as an atheist so I started to think that, if there really was a Heaven and a Hell, what would they be. That Hell is here on Earth was a bit of a no-brainer: the things we do to each other is Hell. Heaven was a bit trickier. Where is life eternal? Where does time stand still? On the Event Horizon, of course! On the ‘edge’ of a black hole time does stand still. So – spoiler alert! – I came up with the idea of a bunch of people trying to reach that eternity by building a space ship called Bifrost to

actually go there and, of course, it doesn't work out so well... The lyric for Hell was pretty easy to come up with but I got bogged down with Heaven. So who do I turn to? John Gaffney, of course! He got the concept and really made it so much better than I could have done. The music went under the name 'Wishbone Ash' for a long while. I had all these bits of songs and I am very glad that I pulled it off; it did take a bit of creativity to put it all together. And a bit of trivia is that it's me playing the piano. All two tones! And it really is an actual piano I play.

'Gravitas'

When I started to put the album together and came up with the concept of a rock side and a progressive side I thought that in-between the two long songs I needed something short as an intermission of sorts. So I came up with this piece on bass. It's my version of Swedish folk music, a very slow 'polska'. There's some who may find it a strange song on a hard rock/metal album, but to me this song is really heavy.

'Dead Kosmonaut Parts One and Two'

So, finally, the song that named the band is unveiled. As I have mentioned before in interviews this song was written for a different project that never took off. When the change of name to Dead Kosmonaut took place the first album was already well under way so I couldn't use it for the debut. So here it is, in all its glory! It's an obvious album closer, because what else could follow this behemoth? The lyric is a fantasy about the inner life of a zombie. But maybe the zombie is someone fighting with depression? Who can tell? Part One of the song is a choral piece I put together. My friend Love Bergman wrote the score from my recordings of each and every vocal part, and then we asked friends who can read music and sing to come and record it all. However, in my opinion the ultimate instrument for doom is the church organ. So to get a church organ on the song was a dream come true. We did find out though that mixing a church organ is quite tricky. It really is a massive wall of sound, and to make that work with all the other instruments was tough. Fredrik had to tweak quite a bit to fit it all in, but he did it, and I'm very happy with the results.

As for the cover art, as mentioned above this came from artist Martin Jonsson and was inspired by the lyrics for 'Black Tongue Tar'. "To me the sleeve depicts anxiety," says Mattias, "that pressure on your chest that makes it hard to breathe. It's something that weights you down, immobilises you. The title 'Gravitas' also reflects that, as well as the dead kosmonaut in the song."

Asked how he would describe the album, Mattias thinks for a moment or two. "I would describe it as a hard rock album that excites me," he says, simply. And believe me, it is an exciting album. Trust me on this.