

QUO VADIS @ Club Rokit - November 7th 2004
Joint NoOfficialCapacity.net and OntarioMetal.net interview
Photos by Luthien - www.luthienphotography.tk

Adam De Bartolo- NoC
Tina Sequeira- NoC/OM

Quo Vadis:

Yanic Bercier
Bart Frydrychowicz
Stéphane Paré
Will Seghers
Roxanne Constantin
Dominic Lapointe ('Forest')

Yanic: Everybody okay? (handing round fries) Anybody want some fries??
(laughing)

Tina: Oh no thanks! We went to McDonald's already!

Bart: Let me introduce everybody first. Okay so Yanick, you probably know - on drums. Steph Paré, vocals. Forest is bass, uh, for life! Will Seghers, he recorded solos on the new record...

Tina: And your keyboardist.

Bart: The keyboardist is one of the girls who is behind the merch table right now - Roxanne.

Adam: I'm just gonna start with some pretty general questions that I've been wondering for a while now. What does your name mean? At first I thought it was something French, I couldn't figure it out.

Tina: It's something in Latin.

Adam: In Latin? I can't figure it out.

Bart: Quo Vadis in Latin means "where you're going". So it's... it's been around for about... we've been called Quo Vadis for about 12 years.

Steph: Well, maybe 10 years...

Bart: Since '92 man!

Steph: I saw you guys for the first time in '94.

Bart: Ah shit, you're right!

Steph: I saw these guys back then in '94, when I was not in the band. It was one of the first shows, or second show, something like that. And I was watching some band I was really on at that time, Ancestral.

Bart: Oh I remember that show! It was like our demo launch or something like that.

Steph: Yeah it was in July '94... no April '94.

Tina: I heard that you guys used to have female vocals before?

Bart: Yeah for the demo, we had one of Yanic's friends from school.

Yanic: Oh the girl? Yeah that was a girl at my high school who did opera vocals. I didn't really know her that well but we were looking for a girl who could sing like that. I heard she was doing that on the side so I contacted her. That's old news though! (laughs)

Bart: Well actually talking about female vocals, we have two choirs on this new record, right? So you'll definitely hear female vocals on the new album, but it's not in the context of a song. They're more separate tracks. The two tracks that have Latin names, they're the choirs. And actually, one of them was written in memory - there's a whole section that was written in memory of Chuck Schuldiner. And one of the choirs, the music was written for Chuck. And the song is called [Faces??] and it's the song we've got problems with!! (laughing)

Tina: What problems? You mean with playing it?

Bart: It's just freaking fast!!

Steph: But the fact that this guy (points to Yanic) is not living with us in Montreal, it makes it harder for us to



jam. So what we do is that we play with the drum tracks from the CD, and we rehearse on that.

Yanic: And then I come in and we do the shows directly together.

Steph: Like, let's say the first shows in Ottawa, four days ago, and the day after, at Three Rivers (Trois Rivieres Metalfest)... it was somewhat like a jam, you know? Like rehearsing but live though!

Yanic: It was the first time we were playing the new songs together.

Steph: We did three new songs for a while, and now we're doing the rest of the album.

Adam: The last time you were here, you guys played "Silence Calls The Storm" and "Break The Cycle"

Steph: Yeah, "Break The Cycle" - I don't remember if we played that the last time or not.... Yeah, yeah we did.

Adam: What's the fan reaction been to those two - the last time you were on tour?

Steph: You mean the four new songs we're playing live? Well, these songs, I can't say we see much of a reaction right now because the album has just been out right now and people come to the show and they've just bought the CD. So they don't know the stuff right away, right? So I guess eventually we will have a reaction to it.

Bart: Well, the songs that are on the Internet, people actually know them. For example yesterday, or sorry, Trois Rivieres, when we played, the first song that we opened up with is a song called "Silence Calls The Storm". So right away man, people started headbanging and everything else. Same thing yesterday in Hamilton. So I guess people have been listening to the songs and they've been floating around.

Steph: I think the songs are easy to get into as well at the same time. You see it's the band, a few years after Day Into Night, that's for sure, there's some evolution in there. But it's still Quo Vadis, and you can really pick that up when you listen to the songs. So I think for the shows, even though they don't know the songs, even though they don't know them quite yet, it's still very easy to get into.

Tina: And I think this album's been hyped up a lot too, so it's probably why you're getting more people downloading it and listening to it.

Bart: Well I don't know, what do you guys think?? From the point of view of people who listen to the music... we wouldn't know of what people talk among themselves, you know? What have you heard? I'M DOING THE INTERVIEW NOW!!!!

MUAHAHAHAHAAA!

(everyone laughing)

Adam: I've actually heard the burnt promo, I think it was seven tracks. It was still called "To The Bitter End"... and I still listen to it now. I've been listening to it everyday for the past month since I've had it!

Bart: Was it the final mix one or was it something else?

Adam: It was the pre-mix, I think it was. There were only seven tracks on it. The first seven. That was really, really good, even though it wasn't final!

Steph: How did you get that?!

Adam: (laughs) I have my ways!

Bart: Well if it wasn't from us, it must have either been from Jason or somebody.

Adam: Well you know Adrian... Bromley? From Unrestrained?

Bart: Oh! He had the good promo, the good one. **Adam:** Having listened to it, I can just say... what do you guys think of Stéphane stepping in for Arie, for vocals?

Bart: I dunno, what do you think Steph, I think it sounds good?

Steph: (laughs) They're asking YOU!

Bart: Arie who? (laughs)

Yanic: I think it's been a step up for the band. In the past, both Bart and Arie were doing vocals. Right now, at this point, with the complexity of the songs which have definitely gone up, having a dedicated vocalist allows Bart to focus on playing guitars. The songs are quite challenging to play, so I think this was a good move by the band. Also, Steph is a vocalist. Bart has done vocals, but he is mainly a guitarist, not a vocalist. So, about the vocals on the CD, I'm very happy with them. I've worked with Steph a lot with the vocals, since I have made most of the vocal arrangements, and I'm very happy with it the way everything came out. I think it's been a boost for the band to have a dedicated vocalist. I think it's brought the band up to a new place.

Bart: I don't imagine Arie vocals on this album. It wouldn't fit at all.

Steph: We tried to do something different. Like, I tried some stuff with these type of vocals but it just didn't fit, you know, so it's only death metal vocals on the album. And some little parts where there are clean vocals.

Bart: From my point of view, I think the band is much stronger as a result of having a permanent vocalist.

Because, if you think about it, you have the two guitarists. You either have to be in front of the mic to sing, which means that we couldn't move. And because we have the guitars, we can't like... climb speakers and all that stuff! Steph is all over the place! Imagine one of us (points to Will and himself) trying to do something like that, it would be a disaster! And for him (Steph), he only has to worry about the words and the presentation and stuff like that. So obviously more attention will go to that. We have to worry about our sound, about our pedals, about changing sounds, about staying on the beat, and the vocals are on a different beat that the instrument is and...

Steph: There's more action on stage now that before.



Bart: Oh totally! I think the energy is...

Steph: I saw Quo Vadis before and I knew what this band was. I think we're really moving on stage now. And even if you have a little stage, like yesterday in Hamilton, you can still do it you know, you can still move around.

Adam: One other question... why did you change the name of the album from "To The Bitter End" to "Defiant Imagination"?

Bart: Actually it's a big secret, I can't talk about it. It's classified. If I tell you, I'll have to-

Tina: You'd have to kill us??

Yanic: (laughs) Yeah that's what I was just gonna say!

Bart: No they'd have to kill us! No seriously, the reason why is because the artwork... we were working with a bunch of different artists, and like when you ask people to make a cover, they kind of try to do what it is that you are imagining. But it's not really it. And I was like, clicking around, surfing around all the time, and I found this "log-lady" picture. It looks like this old log-lady, right, made out of a log, with mushrooms coming out of it and stuff...

(Adam and Tina laughing their asses off)

Bart: You haven't seen the actual whole piece, non-edited, cos it's cropped. But below all that, you have all these like... mushroom heads coming out. These mushrooms that are basically morphing into people, and these mushrooms are all looking for the light. And this piece was called "Seeking Light". Anyway, when I saw that I was like "Fuck! That just embodies the album perfectly!" And the reason for that was because it's just so twisted, but twisted in a creative way... it's not like something fucked up with some bowels somewhere and like...

Adam: Like Exhumed!

(more laughing)

Bart: It's something unusual. When you look at it, the proportions are unnatural but they're elegant. You know, like the face, it's unnatural, but it's clear, you can see it's a human face and you can see there's some emotion in there right? So man, I saw that and I was like "Fuck, we've gotta do this!" so I tried to convince him (Yanic) - I was like "C'mon, c'mon!!" He's like (mocking Yanic) "aaaaawww I don't know, I don't know". And we finally contacted the artist, we had an agreement that okay, fine we could use it, we got the copyright and boom!

Bart: Yeah she was totally surprised like "Oh, my artwork for a metal band, I don't know!"

Steph: You guys gave her a call right?

Bart: Yeah, and actually on the CD, we have a link to her site. And I strongly suggest that anyone who is into art, go check it out, because she's got some really original stuff. It's not just 3D stuff that she does... she does sculptures and also like... art made out of bones and stuff. Like skulls of sheep and all this native stuff. It's really, really cool!

Adam: One other question... What are your favourite live tracks, musically?

Steph: (pointing to Bart) He likes "Point of No Return"

Bart: I think "In Contempt" from the new album, cos it's really in your face. It's got this really cool guitar riff and the riff is very groovy at the same time. I'd say... "Dead Man's Diary" cos of the vocals. (Growls) "Put a bullet, In your heeeadd!" (laughs) Love that song, I love it!

Steph: "Ram!"

Bart: What? Oh, "Ram a bullet!"

Tina: Oh way to screw up! (laughs)

Adam: Wicked soundcheck by the way, you guys sounded awesome!

Bart: Oh for the soundcheck? Oh so you guys knew the songs already?!

Adam: (laughs) Well I've had the cd for a month!

Bart: Anyway, from the other records... Legions, of course! Shores... On The Shores of Ithaka. Hunter Killer is really cool. Point of No Return. Basically all the songs we play live!



Steph: Hunter Killer was Arie's song - I like it too. (Roxy walks in after selling merch and joins us for the interview)

Tina: Okay have you guys or the label been promoting the band outside of Canada? Do you have any plans to tour outside of the country?

Bart: Yeah, well yes, we're very serious about the band, and it's not really a past-time for us, you know? And with the amount of work that was put into it, we really want to bring it to the people. And Steph has been traveling actually, quite extensively to Europe... and one of his contacts got in touch and we booked a show in Germany.

Who's the guy... something...

Steph: It's the guy... (thinking)... I think he started his own magazine called Delicious Bowels (laughs) and he's also a booker, and he's organizing a festival. I think I actually met him at Wacken, at the entrance of the venue, and we spoke and exchanged stuff and that's it really. And the best thing about this is that I'm about to launch my own label and I signed a band from Germany which is called Symbiotic, and we're gonna play actually with these guys. And other bands that I met in Germany, like Fragments of Unbecoming, we're really looking forward to that! And I guess we're gonna try to book some dates around that... would be logical.

Bart: But right now there's only one show. It's gonna be March 5th in Osnabruck!

Steph: (in German accent) Osnabruck!
(random yells) OSNAAABRUUUUCCKKK!!

Steph: And we're planning the release show for sometime after that. That'll be in Montreal, that'll be the official release show for the CD.

Bart: Yeah when we get back from Europe, we're gonna get back home and do a fucking good show!

Adam: Yeah! Can you say "road-trip" Tina?? (laughs)

Bart: Actually, seriously, if we're gonna do that show, it's gonna be only one show at the beginning of next year, in Montreal. So if people wanna come, we're gonna try to organize buses and stuff.

Steph: Yeah, that's it! Actually we really wanna organize it so everybody can come!!

Bart: What we wanna do actually is record a DVD, and have that at the end of next year. And something really big, like very theatrical, we're working stuff out right now - what to put into the show.

Tina: Okay, so you guys are on Skyscraper... how much extra promotion do they do for you guys? Or is it mostly you promoting the band?

Bart: Well, we work very closely with Skyscraper, and we're very much involved with what's going on... so the way we see things is that the way this band works with labels is that we don't work for a label. We don't partner with them. So we're extremely involved in everything, basically it works out well for everybody. We're very good friends with Steph

(we look over at Steph)

Bart: Stéphane Mellui, who runs BCI and Skyscraper.

Steph: (laughs) Yeah, I work for BCI also!

Yanic: ...and Steph there has a lot of experience also. So there's a lot of discussions going around and I think it's worked differently than for the previous album. This one, I'd say the band is a lot more active in decision-making than for the previous.

Tina: Yanic, how did the endorsement with Sabian come about?

Yanic: Well, how it works for endorsements is usually... How did you get that?!?!
(laughing)

Tina: It's on your website!

Yanic: (laughs) Oh okay, okay! Actually, there is no set recipe for applying for endorsements. One thing for sure is that, to do it well, it takes a lot of preparation time. The first endorsement I received was with Yamaha and that took between 4 to 5 months to prepare the promotional kit which I was to send to them. The first time is always the worst! Although, I prepared it in a way that would require me to do only updates, which wouldn't take too long, when I would apply for other endorsements. For Sabian, to answer your question, I contacted them. I've been using their products for quite a while now and I think they are

great. Also, Sabian is a Canadian company so I am very proud of that as well! Anyways, so, I got in touch with them, and sent them the promo kit and they reviewed it. Like most companies, they have a committee which gets together to revise applications in order to decide who they will give endorsements to. It's not just one person so you never know what to expect. One day, I got the call from the endorsement rep. I was nervous as hell when I was speaking to him because he had not yet told me they had accepted me for an endorsement! When he told me I had it, I was like "YEAH!". I was very happy to get it. Since then, Sabian have been very good to me!



Tina: Okay cool... Tell me about the video. I saw pictures of it and you guys look crazy! You guys are in camouflage gear, running around the forest!

Steph: Yeah well, right now it's in editing process, and we're looking forward to this. I hope the results will be fine.

Tina: What's the video about?

Bart: It's about running in the forest! (laughs)

Steph: No, no, no

Adam: Immortal style! (laughing)

Bart: Well, basically it's a live video, the band playing in different scenes, in different sets. And what we were trying to do is just get some kind of dynamics and interesting visuals, you know? Not just have the same old video... in a warehouse.So, we found a big warehouse and - (laughing)

Bart: ...basically set up different sets in there and that's what you're gonna see. And it's actually pretty cool - it's an old beer factory, the Molson factory. And they have this huge hall; it's like roughly about 60 feet, two storeys. And they have all these like... what are they called...

Tina: Beer bottles?

Bart: (laughs) No, no! No, they have scaffoldings everywhere, all these ladders with rings around them - it's very cool, very industrial looking. But also very odd, you can have very cool angles with that. So we checked it out, we got approval to do it. Then we put all these nets and stuff to make it look like it's outside. And we filmed a big portion of the video there. There's uh... Steph's climbing up the ladders and there was a guy hanging from the climbing gear..

Steph: And at one point, I was also turned upside down... from a rope! Then they pulled me, I would go up (motioning with his hands) and the shot would start. Then I would go down. You see my head going upside down compared to these guys...

Bart: That was actually hilarious! He was complaining the whole time!

Steph: Imagine, your head down there and your face all red after a while -

Bart: It was fun! For us, you know what we had to do to pull him up? I mean, this is really low-tech right? You got all of us, I think you were there too, yeah Will? The whole setup, there's Steph - we had this little carpet for him. He was lying on the carpet with his feet tied up. (laughing) There's like four, five, six - Mya, Roxy, Will, Yanic, the guy that was filming... yeah, Boris. We start pulling on this rope, right? Like "pull, pull, pull, pull!!!" and he'd go up like above the shop and the guy that was filming would attach it to his waist. And he's BIG! So he held Steph up, and then we'd all run back to the set. He'd get behind his drums, I get my guitar. "We gotta go!" "Ready?" "GO!" And then the guy would slowly advance like "Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!" (lots of laughing) And Steph's like (gesturing) starts trying to swing from it.

Tina: So are you guys sending it to MuchMusic and MTV and stuff?

Bart: We will! Hopefully.

Tina: About your music... well, when you got Forest in on bass, how did he find it, learning stuff that Steve played? Did it take him a while to learn it?

Bart: No, not really. He's really, really good! He just picks stuff up. I told him "these are the songs we're doing" and two weeks later he knows the songs.

Tina: Does he change it up for the live shows?

Bart: No, it's exactly like on the CD. For some songs he maybe adds something, but he never takes away. The same thing for Will, actually. Will picked up the songs pretty much by himself. Uhh he doesn't speak English very well, do you guys understand French?

Tina: A little bit! (laughing)

(Bart starts translating questions and Will's answers for us...)

Steph: Oh by the way, it's great, this guy is Belgian right? He moved from Belgium, he sold everything to come into the scene in Quebec... Montreal actually, with hopes of finding a band. After a while, I think he met Bart. At that point, we stayed in touch... and there he is! The poor guy from Europe!

Bart: Yeah, he came with nothing, sold everything over there.

(Will speaking in French)

Bart/Will: Basically what he's saying is when we were preparing for the record, I was looking for someone to do additional solos on the album, and I asked Will for some input... and he came up with a couple of solos. And some of the stuff we liked, and some of the stuff we didn't like and we asked him to change it. And he prepared it and he worked with us basically to -

Steph: And he was open to making changes.



Bart: Yeah, he was very, very flexible.

Bart/Will: So for the old set, the songs from the old set, he picked them up by ear, and we just went over the details. And for the new songs, we just made the decision to play them about two, three weeks ago. So I prepared the tabs for his parts and he just picked them up like that. Because otherwise it would take some time - when you do stuff by ear, it takes a longer time.

Tina: And how did you guys decide to bring in keyboards too this time?

Bart: The same way we decided to bring in choirs. It was something that seemed to add another dimension to the songs, the same we decided to bring in bass, the same way we decided to bring in Steph. Music is such a broad medium that you can really add a lot of things to a song that's already written. And as long as you have different people looking from different perspectives... and Roxy, she's really talented. She did a good job.

Tina: Do you come up with your own keyboard parts when they write the songs? Or do you come up with that later?

Roxy: I think I came up with my parts... ummm... in a period of 15 minutes! (laughs) Because they just seemed to flow so naturally with the rest of the songs. Actually there's a funny story about the beginning of "Dead Man's Diary". The piano part used to be on the chorus parts - the piano parts at the end. But when I first played them to Bart, he hated them, because they were too early! We played the parts together and right now it sounds... we're happy with them! But before he couldn't stand them! (laughs)

Bart: Yeah I had a very strong reaction! I started freaking out, like "NOOO!!! It's gonna screw up the song! Blah blah blah blah!" and she's like "Yeah but it sounds so good."

Roxy: And then at the end, there are piano parts on the last verses of "Silence Calls The Storm" and "Dead Man's Diary".

Yanic: Actually the bad thing about the piano parts in "Silence Calls The Storm", I had written the lyrics to that song before... and then when the pianos came in, I had tried moving the part that had the piano, so we could have everything in there. I had felt really strongly about the vocal parts in there, but Bart said "Hey, we're putting that in there"

Bart: I think that the end result is the right expression, we're happy with it. We're already working on new stuff -

Adam: Already?! Wow!

Bart: Yeah, so you're gonna see, the next stuff is definitely gonna be different from this one. I hope to make as much of an impact compared to the older stuff as we have in the past, definitely.

Tina: I know you guys write out a lot of tabs and I was looking at them when I was trying to learn it, and it's really heavy on the theory. So I was wondering, when you guys write the songs, do you actually do it with the theory and technicality in mind? Or just write riffs?

Bart: No man, we just play it! But actually I'm thinking for the new stuff, I might start writing it out first. Because now that I've been working with the transcriptions, I started actually doing complete songs - not just this riff or that riff. So when you write out the riffs and you write out the whole song, you'll get the structure and you get certain ideas. Just because you see how the notes are placed rhythmically and stuff like that, it's visual. It's very different. For someone who's been writing by playing, which I have done since I worked with vocals, like we always did in the past, it's a very different approach. And that's like for Roxy, she's doing a Bachelor's in piano. So that point of view is kinda rubbing off on me. Because she writes everything out right away, she can write a whole riff or song on a piece of paper and then just play it. Never actually having to play it first. So that's really impressive.

Tina: Well, that's about it for my interview, unless you guys have anything else to say?

(someone yells "Metaaaallllll!")

Tina: We've definitely gotta rent some buses for that Montreal show!

Bart: Oh yeah, we're gonna organise them for sure! Toronto's really

cool, the people here. Not big crowds, but very energetic. Same thing for Ottawa. Those guys are crazy there!

Yanic: One last thing I'd like to say, probably about mixing the CD. We mixed over the period of a few months, with a few people. And we had the chance to work with Jim Morris, of Morrisound. And I think it was a great experience for us to go... not only to go into Morrisound, but to leave Quebec, to have the chance to work with other people and get different points of view. People in Quebec are very similar. They're very similar to one another. I think leaving Quebec, we get different points of views on recording, mixing, different ideas, different approach, different attitudes. So I think it's very good for us as musicians, as band members, for everything. And Jim from Morrisound and Jason from Audio Hammer, they were great to work with. We learned a lot from them, I think it was really cool.

Bart: When you were just talking, one thing just came to my mind: "herd mentality". You know, you've got one guy who's successful or a couple of people, and everybody just follows what they're doing. And I guess that's how you get a specific sound for a region. You've got the Quebec sound, the Gothenburg sound, the North American death metal sound... The Florida sound. You've got a bunch of guys that are successful, and everybody just



emulates it.

Roxy: I think Quo Vadis are setting a new standard... I think writing with Steve Digiorgio, taking a whole new approach with writing, putting the music together - I think it's the beginning of a new and great trend.

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