

QUO VADIS

The Age of Defiance

It seems like a lifetime since I first came in contact with the technical death metal of Quebec's Quo Vadis. It was 1996 and the album was *Forever... (Earth Ad)*, their death metal world consisting of punishing riffs, a monstrous rhythm section and a technical manner that would boggle any metalhead's mind. Even though several years have elapsed between releases, with lineup changes, studio and personal issues holding them back in some form or another, the band has grown ten-fold as musicians. Their work was powerful on 2002's *Day Into Night (Hypnotic)* but it's with their marvellous latest release *Defiant Imagination (Skyscraper Music)* that their technical proficiency, brutality and momentum have intensified to epic proportions.

The band has their creative musicianship down pat. Let's hope we don't have a longer wait until the next album.

"The long gap between this album and the last one had to do with lineup changes and studio availability," clarifies guitarist/singer Bart Frydrychowicz about the time span between releases. "We lost about a year waiting for the studio. That's where a good portion of the time went. We spent a lot of time trying to get the album done, as well as trying to get a lineup together to be able to go out and play shows. The skeletons of a lot of the songs on this new album were written in 2002. Had there not been any delays, this album would have been out a lot sooner."

Like a lot of the great metal acts that have come from Quebec in the past decade or so (*Cryptopsy*, *Kataklysm*, *Gorguts*) Quo Vadis has made a name for themselves at home in their province as well as in other parts of Canada. But like a lot of Canadian bands, it hasn't been an easy task trying to expand outside of Canada's boundaries. Is *Defiant Imagination* the album that will get their name out in the United States and possibly overseas?

"That's the plan," says the guitarist. "I think the next step for the band is to get outside of Quebec and Canada. There are a lot of great bands from Canada that do great things and work hard in their own local scenes and outside of their provinces, but they never make an effort to take it any further than that. No one ever hears about them or experiences them. I think the problem is that you need to get outside of your territory because if a band is good and the live show is great then there is no reason why support should not be there outside of your local region or country."

He adds, "This is why touring is extremely important for fans. I know when Quo Vadis was a much younger band we didn't know this. We thought we'd play some shows and labels would come to us, put a CD out and we'd get all of this money. Yeah, right. The way it works is a label will put out your CD if they know they are gonna make the money back by album sales and/or touring. If you don't tour, no one will sign you. You have to work hard to be successful—all the time."

With each release Quo Vadis makes a mark on the metal scene. It's like a good omen the year a Quo Vadis disc hits the store shelves. It's like welcoming back an old buddy from the summertime who has changed just enough for you to notice and appreciate.

Frydrychowicz agrees. "I think we did a very good job here with *Defiant Imagination*. It was important for us going into the recording to not come out with a *Day Into Night II*, as it was after *Forever...* and we went into make *Day Into Night*. A *Forever...* II would not have been the right choice. A lot of bands need to understand when you get bored of your songs and ideas you need to move forward and expand. That's what we do. Ask Yanic as well, and I think we'll both agree that this album has balls. That is my opinion, but I think we went into the studio and came out with a really heavy album. The musicianship has increased tremendously with each record and the focus is like a laser. We have our target set and are going for it full force."

Says drummer Yanic Bercier about their evolution, "I think with each record that we put out there is something that sticks out more often than once, but at the same time this album was assembled much differently than it has been done in the past. On *Forever...* the album was a combination of both guitarists writing the record and *Day Into Night* was geared more around the guitars and drums put together. With this one,

Bart was the only guitarist and he wrote a lot of the music. He spent a lot of time on this album and I think he made it really aggressive. I think the band is a lot more aggressive this time around when it comes to moving forward than it was in the past. In the past it's not that we weren't working—we were working very hard—it's just that the goal was not as defined."

You've aimed high.

"Yes, we have," Bercier continues. "We [singer Stéphane Paré, guitarist William Seghers, bassist Forrest Lapointe, and keyboardist Roxanne Constantin] now have a particular goal in mind we've set, and that is to get out of the country and make a name for ourselves with this band. Canada knows us already."

The topic turns to Steve DiGiorgio (of *Sadus* and *Death*) and the fact that Quo Vadis got him to play bass on the album. How did this come all about?

"Well, in 2002–2003 when we were recording this album, our bassist at the time, Remy Beauchamp, decided he had enough of this business and left at the point of recording. We had a choice for myself to record bass or find a bassist that would suit the record properly," explains the guitarist.

The choice was obvious, wasn't it?

"Yeah, pretty much," he laughs. "I mean, I am a big fan of Steve's work and I enjoy a lot of the albums and bands he has been a part of. So I decided to send him an email to get in touch with him. Everyone thought I was crazy for doing so. People were telling me to give up and not pursue Steve because he was a serious musician and would not want to have anything to do with Quo Vadis. People laughed at me and said it was ridiculous. If you don't try you'll never know, right? So I send off an email to him asking him if he would play bass on our album but did not mention the band name or anything about us. I figured if he hated the idea he wouldn't know who we were. He got back to me right away and said he was interested. He wanted to know more so I sent him the band bio and other news clippings. He wrote back saying something like, 'I don't want this crap; send me the music.' So I sent him the songs. He liked the material and was going to do it. We made arrangements for him to come here after his European tour with Testament and to stay in Montreal for a week, four days of which were at my house."

That must have been a tad strange.

"Not really," says Frydrychowicz. "Let me tell you something. That man is such a professional. He was up every day at 6 a.m. with his bass and Walkman on learning the songs. He learned the whole album in four days and recorded it all in two days. He did all of this in seven days, no hassles, no complaints. Both Yanic and I have the utmost respect for Steve."

Having DiGiorgio on the album just added a bit more to the already booming and moving evolution of the band.

"Totally," states the guitarist. "He added a new dimension to this album through his playing. It's great that this is Steve DiGiorgio playing on the new album, but that's not the point. The point is that the guy is extremely talented and has his own distinct style that we've heard, and we needed that for Quo Vadis."

"His emotions and ideas really enhanced what we were creating with the music at the time. Sometimes I still can't believe he played on our *Defiant Imagination*. I think, 'We asked Steve DiGiorgio to come and record the album and he did.' How cool is that?"



By Adrian 'The Energizer' Bromley