

TRACING BACK ROOTS

VENTURING AWAY FROM THE BOMBAST OF 'WRETCHED AND DIVINE...' **BLACK VEIL BRIDES** ARE LOOKING TO THEIR EARLY YEARS FOR INSPIRATION. BUT CAN THEY PULL OFF THEIR VISION FOR A "HEAVY, TRADITIONAL ROCK 'N' ROLL" RECORD?

INTERVIEW: Rob Sayce / PHOTO: Kevin Estrada

SO, WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE ALBUM?

Says vocalist Andy Biersack: "Even before we found out that Bob Rock [Metallica, The Offspring] was interested in producing, we wanted to make a return to darker, heavier material. We touched on that with the first record, but weren't as mature songwriters back then. Bob is a great fit for it, as [he produced] so many of the records that influenced us growing up. I feel like we've found our definitive sound. It's a lot more heavy, traditional rock 'n' roll than anything we've done before. Through this experience I've learned so much about what it is we do and what we've been trying to do for the last half-decade."

THAT SOUNDS LIKE QUITE A CHANGE FROM YOUR PREVIOUS OUTING...

"I don't want to discount 'Wretched And Divine...' in any respect. I feel proud of that, but it was a very theatrical record. It was glittery, in a lot of ways! This time we wanted to make something more straightforward."

WHAT ABOUT THE LYRICAL SIDE OF THINGS?

"In some ways, I wanted to tie up the loose ends of the story from 'Wretched And Divine...' There are a few songs on this album that do so, but otherwise I was shooting from the hip a little bit more with this one, writing about things that were happening to me as they happened. There are a lot more opinions and viewpoints, which I haven't done in a long time. I haven't lost the elements that make the band, stylistically, as I always like when there's a theme to a lyrical style. I'm a huge Alkaline Trio fan, for example, and I'm interested in the way Matt Skiba approaches his lyrics. I respect that, but at the same time I wanted to do something that was fun and exciting for me, not to mention different."

WHAT'S INSPIRED THAT MOVE? "This is our fourth record in four years, and if you write the same thing over and over then not only is it essentially pandering, but it becomes incredibly boring for you as an artist. My thing was this: if crazy things happen in my life, and they frequently tend to, I should feel free to write about them directly. I should be able to talk about my political and religious opinions, and I think the sound of this record lends itself more to that approach. I don't think that these lyrics would have made a lot of sense in the context of a more theatrical record."

DO YOU HAVE ANY WORRIES ABOUT HOW THIS ALBUM WILL BE RECEIVED?

"I've always done what I've felt the band has needed to do, to take the right next step, and we've never played it safe. Certainly, I feel an element of responsibility towards our audience, to the people who have put us here. If new people find this and give it a chance, and the fans are happy, then that's still the ultimate goal, but I don't have the same level of angsty narcissism that I used to have. That's not to say that I'm not still a huge egomaniac, it's just that I don't concern myself with these things to the same degree."

DO YOU HAVE ANY PERSONAL FAVOURITES YET AS FAR AS SONGS GO?

"There are two songs on the record that I'm particularly excited about, and they're not actually the heavier songs. On the previous album there was one called 'Lost It All', an epic with horns and live strings and I really enjoyed that. We're not doing so much of the theatricality on this record, but in place of that we needed to create the same feeling. We've built a few five or six-minute songs to meet the challenge, and that's resulted in weeks and weeks of strings and instrumentation. As much as we're scaling back on the ear-candy production, some of these compositions are the biggest things in terms of scale and vocalisations that we've ever done. Actually, in general there have also been fewer feelings of 'Shit, we have to get something out' with this record. It's a little ironic because I'm a lot sunnier in outlook and disposition, but we're making a much darker rock record!"

YOU'RE HAPPY WITH HOW THINGS ARE GOING, THEN?

"Definitely. The number of people entering Black Veil Brides' world is still growing. We're still divisive, plenty of people want to see us fall flat on our face, but there seem to be more people behind us now. That makes it more fun. I'd be lying to say that it's not stressful to be this polarising figure, but I also revel in it to some degree. We get to make people a little upset through our music, and that's what rock 'n' roll needs to do."

Black Veil Brides' fourth studio album will be released on October 27. The band will tour the UK earlier that month; see the gig guide for details.

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ANDY BIERSACK**

