

EPICA



Balance seems to be the word of the day when discussing the latest offering from dutch band Epica called Requiem for the Indifferent. Guitarist Isaac Delahaye explains that balance is something going through everything from cover art to the lyrics and that the album is something of their take on problems with the world and like the latest offering from Hate Gallery it is a message to start thinking for oneself before it all falls down.



questions.

There is no doubt that "Requiem for the Indifferent" amasses a lot of work for the band, something that we'll have time to get back to later, now let us first start looking at the album. It is in Isaac's words a big brother of its predecessor "Design the Universe" in the way that they see it as better than predecessor. "Design the Universe" was by many seen as a masterpiece which is a word Isaac prefers not to use in relation to that album but explains that the press hailed it as a very influential album, and the band has continued along the same path this time but with the difference that they have tried to make it more diverse and more dynamic than before.

- I think "Design the Universe" was really bombastic, lots of orchestration and therefore the really heavy stuff kind of got lost maybe in too many details on top, this time if something is really heavy you'll definitely hear it.

Another difference was that Simone (Simons) was involved much earlier in the process this time, as they have earlier written all and saved the vocals for last but this time was different. This time they wrote the basic song structures before working on the vocals and finally added all the details that make up the music of Epica last.

- So it is much more vocals oriented and therefore we think it is much more catchy and so far the reviews are pretty good so I think it was a good move for us.

Isaac explains that it was also refreshing to change the way they worked, not to do all the little details before the vocals came in as he felt that they were getting into some kind of Dream Theater syndrome (that's what he calls it, editors note) where there is so much stuff going on in the music that it is difficult to find a place to

put the vocals. I must admit that I have never seen that with Dream Theater as their music has always felt complex but logical to me, although there is sometimes very much going on in the music from Dream Theater and the same can be said about the music of Epica according to Isaac, and it was becoming something of a problem.

- I don't want to compare us to Dream Theater but it was getting kind of similar so we had to do something about that. Basically the word I like to use for the whole album is balance, not only because also concerning the lyrics like everything seems more in balance than before.

Concepts

The lyrics are not conceptual in the nature that the album tells a story but they are connected in lyrical content and once again Isaac goes on about the word balance as he points out that it nowadays seems that there is a general lack of balance in the world.

- We can't have a perfect world, we can't have peace love and happiness all the time so we're not saying that but it seems that nowadays there's a very select amount of people who have all the power, those who have all the money.

And those who have the money seems to be a very select few in relation to the rest of the world and some of them might be dictators or other who does no good. There is also the financial system that completely lacks any sense and balance and the fact that people always keeps wanting everything without any regard for consequences, the lyrics span this but the core of the message is that many people are very greedy, very selfish and shows absolutely no respect for other people.

- You can't have a perfect world but let's do something about it like the guys who did something



in northern Africa, if they wouldn't have revolted, then nothing would have happened and it would just had been the same with the dictators and all of that. If you don't do anything, nothing's going to change anyway.

And this is a situation that has to come to an end just like the financial bubble, Isaac explains that people have to start acting more wisely, to find a good balance and not just wanting eve-

rything all the time. Sure Isaac acknowledges the fact that he is only human as well and asks who are they to say what is right and what is wrong but it is a way of pointing out that there is something disturbingly wrong with the picture of the world today. Look at what happened in the Mexican Gulf with the *Deepwater Horizon* platform and the disaster in caused, there is a song of that on the album.

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PHOTO: HEILEMANIA (S. HEILEMANN)
PUBLISHED ON: 17/2-2012

Epica is a band that has been constantly growing and have gotten bigger and bigger during their time with Nuclear Blast and therefore it would not be that strange that Isaac Delahaye is currently along with his mates working on planning the tour that they are soon to be undertaking and of

course also handling the massive promotional duties of a band of Epica's stature. They have done a short tour visiting places for promotional work, places like London, Amsterdam, Milan and some other European cities, but nothing in my neighbourhood of Scandinavia that was too complicated to plan which is why we had to make due with a simple phone call, which of course is very adequate if you want to ask

- The lyrics is about *Deepwater Horizon* the oil leaks which shows we are too greedy we want to much and in the end you get natural disasters and human failures and that's the big price you pay for it.

And normally we as ordinary human beings don't get to know of these big risks and the violations on nature before something goes horribly wrong like in this particular case and that is something Isaac finds a bit scary sometimes, because how many other platforms like *Deepwater Horizon* is out there? Was it the only one taking such risks? Are there more such potential disasters out there that we do not know about?

- It is the message to try to think for yourself so that other people don't fool you or play tricks on you so you always have to be open-minded and not always believe what other people say. Which is something that is not always easy but just keep your eyes and ears open.

Reception

Such big subjects might appear a bit overwhelming to some people, but Isaac has so far only seen and heard positive feedback on "Requiem for the Indifferent". He does acknowledge however that it is an album that might be a bit overwhelming if you only hear it once and then it may be difficult to really make heads or tails out of it.

- On Epica album and especial-

ly the last two albums you need to listen at least ten times to really get into the music, to get all the details because there's so much going on and a lot to comprehend at once.

But that is not something that has been seen in the feedback he has gotten so far, but there are some differences in that there are

less grunts in the music and the order of songs is changed as well.

- Because Epica makes albums and not songs so basically you need to hear the whole thing if you want to have a decent opinion about it, you should realise that it all fits into an album where it is not all like that. On previous albums we have started heavy then had a ballad in the middle with more mellow songs before getting to a climax at the end of the album, on this album we have two of these climaxes so basically the first six song until "Requiem for the Indifferent" is like the first lets say act and then the second one starts right after that and reaches its climax in *Serenade of Self Destruction*, the last song. But people seem to like the new approach and its still Epica so it is not that much different.

But the single is the most commercial track and a short catchy one at that which has made some fans go ask themselves what has happened to the band and saying that it is totally different without realising that it is a part of a whole and fits into a bigger picture.

The good critique for the album should be well deserved considering this is the album the band has worked the hardest on, not only Isaac who only does his second album with the band but the other guys of the band says the same. As the last album was well received the band had a little pressure to do something that at least equalled that album.

- It has been a very exhausting process because there's so much stuff going on and if you want to have every detail right then it is really time consuming, we really wanted to have the best album that we could possible make at this moment.

Teasing & Interest

With the press positive there is something for the band to be

pleased about, but what about those who makes success for the band? I am not talking about the butterflies because they cannot really buy the album, can they? I am of course talking about the fans, the ones who are about to buy the album and how does it look, is it a buzz around the album?

- It always exciting when your about to release the album, both for us and for the fans as well. These days with iTunes its a little tricky as there's already short samples of every song available if you want to preorder the album on iTunes. So basically you already have something like ten minutes of the new album online and I guess its going to help the sales but it is also taking away the magic of the album so its kind of double feeling.

We should say that there are other services selling music files on the internet, not only Crapple's

program but it is a double edged sword I agree because it is only fair that you can get a sample before buying but at the same time it is very exciting to buy an album from hearing maybe one song or just a small part so the excitement is gone nowadays. But people are talking about Epica's album now and that is good according to Isaac.

They did try a little different way of releasing a teaser for this album, something to make the band really want to anticipate the album. They do have a single in *Storm the Sorrow* but they also do release *Monopoly on Truth* in pieces where you get a new piece each week, kind of like a puzzle. It is being released through the band's Youtube channel where you get one layer at the time.

- It started with only drums and then the next week there was drums and bass. Then there's drums, bass, guitars and the the

same with orchestration, just to give the fans a little insight on how the music is built up and all the layers of which it consists.

This is of course a simplified picture of how the music is built as the guitars are in at least four layers when recording them according to Isaac and Epica's music is in many more layers than those you might see on their Youtube channel but at the same time it is an indication on how it's made. And it is a unique way of a slow teasing process in giving out their music according to Isaac and as far as I have seen not many bands have done this before Epica. This has also triggered some ideas from some of the fans which might be something for the band to try and develop further.

- For instance we released the first layer which is only drums then you had guys online who started to record guitars on top of that so it was pretty interesting to





<http://is.gd/1AIJZV> - our review

see what they came up with because it was totally different from what I did.

It is a way of interacting with the fans that they didn't think of before but Isaac explain how they find it funny to see how some people see it as a challenge to play along with their drummer. And when I say it might be something for them to try for a later album Isaac sees the comfortable way of making music in that.

- Exactly, maybe we should make a whole album with them, we just do drums and they can do the rest.

Touring

So with the future of Epica settled, where you will be a part if you like but how about the touring? It will be a very big tour with many visuals and it will start in the Netherlands with the release party which will take place the 16th of march a show which is sold out. Following that they will do some shows in Germany and then in april they will embark upon their European tour. Besides the European tour they have some festivals planned and Isaac mentioned the festival show in Falun which is their only date in

Sweden and he explains that this is due to Scandinavia being out of the way and makes the routing for a European tour difficult so he explains that he would like to do a tour of Scandinavia so that they can bring their entire stage show which is going to be more visual than before.

- We are for the tour looking for better light effects because most metal band have their backdrop and maybe some things here and there but there's not much going on except for the people playing. We happen to work with an extremely good lighting technician so

where thinking of changing the whole pyro setup because we've done that for quite some time now and just looking for cooler light effects.

And with cooler light effects comes lots of advantages compared to the pyrotechnical as they do not pay money for something that goes up in smoke, and also there are many venues nowadays that aren't that keen on the whole pyro thing. This is also something that comes with a bigger budget according to Isaac and he thinks it looks good for them in that touring department.

This work on the visuals is a way to take the atmospheres of the album onto the stage, because as Isaac said it was before like when they had finished the album it was all done and they were just musicians going out playing songs. So they decided to work on those details and incorporate them into their stage show with all the visuals like the drumkit being worked over to be made in the same character as what we see on the album cover art. They are also going to have special stands for the microphones and also special guitars for

the tour. Some of these are from endorsements Isaac explains but they also work with a clothing designer to work out the right costumes for the tour.

- She'd never worked with metal bands before but went to a show of ours and just had a look around and saw what she could use and she is still working on that. We want to take it a little bit further and it also feels a bit refreshing, it is nice to be able to take next steps and it means that we're still growing and that's fine for me.

But in tours with Epica things



<http://www.myspace.com/epica>



REQUIEM FOR THE INDIFFERENT

<http://www.youtube.com/user/epica>

aren't always like what you see is what you get because Isaac also wants to credit all the loyal guys that work behind the scenes on their tours. The road crew who are a loyal bunch and are basically the same as they were in the beginning.

- And they all help us and they all want the band to become bigger as well so we have a whole team and it is looking good so far.

It is likely that more tour dates will show up later on the band's website, Isaac speaks of

a possible Scandinavian tour late this or early next year, although that might only be because I am Swedish as all bands speak of visiting here when I speak with them but you'll never know. He also mentioned possible North and South American tours but none of that is confirmed but it is probably likely that they might do something there as they are a band of a good stature these days. But for that you will have to keep yourself updated on the band's website as we do not have

any further information on tours, the same goes if you want all the dates.

The Climax at the end

We are nearing the end and we do that with a second climax, or at least another look at the new album "Requiem for the Indifferent" which is the fifth studio album from Epica. It is an album that Isaac is very satisfied with.

- I think it is kind of a cliché that you think an album you just released is the best you've done so

far but if I just talk personally as a guitar player then definitely this is the most challenging album I have done.

He explains that with challenging he doesn't necessarily mean very complex structures and scales but it might be picking the notes at the right times in very complex melodies. And also to keep it a little bit more balanced and to avoid getting too much going on at the same time, there's also some cool guitar work going on here and there on the album. In

the songs written by Isaac himself there are also some very technical things which he finds amusing to do, he likes that kind of stuff he explains.

- And for the solos, I couldn't have played them better than this and I am really proud of the whole guitar work.

We have been looking at it in passing but the artwork is another thing on an album and that is often the first thing one sees when looking at an album and the artwork of "Requiem for the

Indifferent" is made by the same artist who did Design the Universe, Stefan Heilemann and it represents in a sense the balance that we have been talking of this entire interview.

- If you look at it, it is kind of abstract and you don't really see it but it basically represents a yin and yang sign with black and white, good and evil just a the balance in your life you need the bad to have the good and so on.

But we also have the person coming out of the mechanical stuff

which would represent the metal world so to speak but then we also have all this technology lying around which is something that is taking over our lives more and more which can be a frightening perspective even though it makes life slightly easier.

- Because if there is a natural disaster and we don't have our internet and our mobile phones or computers we seem totally lost, Isaac explains.

And with that we thank Isaac for his time and his monologue in the telephone, I happen to find it being great when musicians are that passionate and have that much to say about their work. Fans of Epica should book the 9th of march because it is then the new album will be released, you can already tease yourselves by reading our review of said album.

All that remains now is to see whether or not the music and message of Epica will make a difference or if it will become a requiem for the indifferent.

