

MIDNIGHT JUGGERNAUTS THE CRYSTAL AXIS — COMING 28 MAY 2010

PANORAMIC SCREENS. ANALOGUE HARMONY WALLS, SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN...



THE CRYSTAL AXIS is MIDNIGHT JUGGERNAUTS' second album — their first since DYSTOPIA launched the Australian trio into a vortex of global intrigue.

For those who arrived late, ANDREW SZEKERES, VINCENT VENDETTA and DANIEL STRICKER had pursued an organic course through multiple indie EPs, singles, and retro-futurist videos before they found themselves hailed as de facto pioneers of a perceived new frontier of “indie-dance” circa 2007/08.

But the infinite unknowns of musical imagination will always make light of such musty generic pigeonholes.

“We’ve always seen ourselves as a band that continues to push itself and evolve,” says Vincent. “We could see that the scenes we’d been linked with had crossed over to larger audiences — and that’s great. We could easily had made more music in that vein, but for this time round we decided to take a more unpredictable path, to explore a few new tangents.”

Ground zero for THE CRYSTAL AXIS was live experimentation. Having spent much of 2008 satisfying a raging hunger on the worldwide stage — from Australia’s BIG DAY OUT to COACHELLA, FUJI ROCK, GLASTONBURY and the MONTREAUX JAZZ FESTIVAL — the JUGGERNAUTS were bristling with the kind of intuitive performance chemistry that demands spontaneous creativity.

In early 2009, they wired themselves into a house on a remote stretch of coastal New South Wales. Surrounded by synths, keys, guitars, drums, racks of pedals, and other electronic and percussive flotsam and jetsam (not to mention the constant lapping of the sea and complete isolation), the writing process immediately took on a life of its own.

“As a live band we have a looser approach,” Vincent says. “A lot of the songs were created through jams without much pre-thought, which allows for a lot of happy accidents. Some of the music tended towards prog-rock and spaced out soundscapes so we’d balance it out with our own warped take on pop music.”

After several weeks of negotiating grand synth-operas, droned out psych-rock sojourns and groove based jams (yet never relying on a 4/4 beat), the band emerged with a large collection of songs ripe for recording at Melbourne's SING SING STUDIOS. Befitting the DIY ethic of their self-owned and operated SIBERIA label, they again opted to self-produce, with engineer CHRIS MOORE (TV ON THE RADIO, YEASAYER, YEAH YEAH YEAHS, LIARS) facilitating. But still, the main influence on the unnamed album's direction was the ever-morphing material itself.

"We continued to play with old school synths, pedals and other toys," Vincent says. "Certain tracks were kept loose enough to jam on while recording, with no preconceived endings. It was hard for me, in particular, to let go of that control, to just let things happen but that's what we wanted to try — and that's what's given the album its own unique character."

No kidding. From the opening drum roll of the overture, 'INDUCO', to the hypnotically spiralling "final goodbye" of 'FADE TO RED', THE CRYSTAL AXIS is an album that relentlessly forges its own path.

As previewed in the dramatic lead single, 'THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY', and now through the sheer pop exuberance of second single, 'VITAL SIGNS' - THE CRYSTAL AXIS constantly veers from percussive, hypnotic grooves to luxuriant jams via rich morricone esque textural diversions, walls of sound, and 70s AM melodic forks to map a 50-minute symphony of synth-rock invention.

Thematically, the trip finds lyrical parallels in the urgent pressures and inbuilt failings of human mortality juxtaposed against the limitless possibilities of 'THE GREAT BEYOND'. The ominous implications of 'CANNIBAL FREEWAY' are balanced by the airborne optimism of 'DYNASTY'; the sheer pop exuberance of 'VITAL SIGNS' by the unsettling strangeness of 'LEMURIA'.

"I grew up watching too many '70s sci-fi and horror movies," says Vincent. "I like space imagery, dystopic futurist subjects and landscapes, but this time we were keen to convey more optimism shining through.

We enjoyed having these dark atmospheres and then this feeling of positivity coming out of it. Like light coming out of darkness. There are more direct, genuine calls of hope, euphoria, freedom of expression and creativity, perhaps in battle against some status quo of fear, negativity or other forces which will drag you down. It's about diving in without a care, which is progress and evolution."

"If there was another genre that was influencing us, we were watching a lot of Italian cannibal films," he adds with a laugh. "So maybe you can hear more of a tribal, percussive element going on at times. That gave us further scope to play with the idea of light and shade."

And THE CRYSTAL AXIS? "That refers to the three axes used to define the edges of the unit cell of a crystal," Vincent says. "It seemed a suitable description for the creation of the record."

THE CRYSTAL AXIS is released worldwide via iTunes and on Vinyl on 28 May 2010.

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