

VIRGIN STEELE

Chapter I : " **INTRODUCTION** "

From a whisper to a scream; barbaric, romantic, bombastic, yet subtle; grandiose, yet earthy. A call, a shout, an invocation to Freedom and the continual awakening to the awareness that every moment of life is lived to its fullest potential. It is a force, a sacred quest which drives VIRGIN STEELE on!!

Ah, yes, the name . . . People have often asked me what does the name VIRGIN STEELE mean? It means: a fresh approach, a new lease on life; pure metal, baptized in the flame of life; full of hunger and power, rich with dignity and majesty, with an awareness and respect for tradition, but with a desperate need to carve out new frontiers of expression. To take the music as far as it can possibly go, to break the boundaries wide open. There are no limits!!

Another question often asked in this day and age of people and their need to affix labels on things, thereby wrapping everybody up in tight, little boxes is, 'What do you call your music, and how do you categorize yourself?' There are three terms I like to use when discussing the VIRGIN STEELE sound ... 'ROMANTIC EXPRESSIONISM', 'SYMPHONIC BLUES BASED METAL', and, my favorite, or more appropriately, the one that most aptly njures up the sound in my mind, 'BARBARIC ROMANTICISM'. All things are possible in the land of STEELE.

From the symphonic grandeur of 'EMALAIITH', or 'I WILL COME FOR YOU'; to the delicacy of 'STRAWGIRL', or 'LAST ROSE OF SUMMER'; to the brutal crunch of 'PROMETHEUS THE FALLEN ONE', or 'WEEPING OF THE SPIRITS', one can tell that we are an eclectic band that delights in risk-taking and experimentation. We do not care about trends or being the 'flavor of the month'. We are here to create music that will have a lasting value like the great masters. If that sounds pompous, then, hey . . . So be it. We are not put on this earth to conform to what someone elses opinion of us is. We are here to be all that we can possibly be within ourselves... Do what thou will.

With our music we wish to invoke the spiritual nature locked within all men and women. Our thoughts harken back to an older Pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, such as Dionysus, God of the vine, and Demeter, Goddess of the grain, Earth Mother and spirit of fertility. It is our believe that all religions/ myths speak essentially about the same occurrences. There may be differences in dialect, syntax, or phrasing, but the fundamental beliefs are all the same. Just as with language, there are different words or dialects, but we are all expressing the same ideas and communications.

It is our dream to convey through the music, a feeling of Power in oneself, and a feeling of togetherness with all people on this planet, as well as a strong sense of personal freedom and spiritual well-being. Music is the great unifier and universal language. It crosses all boundaries. On stage we are striving to commune with the infinite, searching for that spark where the lifestream touches Eternity!!!

We yearn for that moment of exultant glory, where we and the audience transcend. It is raw, sexual, earthy, spiritual, yet tangible. Everyone should come away from the show feeling transformed - something new has come into the room that was not there before we began playing. Ultimately, we wish to smash through barriers of ignorance, and reach that divine place of Freedom, where you can go out on a limb and become a God or Goddess. A Journey to transport one through Chaos to Enlightenment and Beauty!!! . . . THAT IS THE GOAL !!!

Chapter II : " **THE BEGINNING** "

What I remember most, is the primitive, powerful pounding sound of guitars, bass, drums and keyboards, combined with an eerie, hypnotic vocal. I would hear them playing in the basement beneath my room, an unearthly, metallic roar. They being my brother Damon on organ and piano, my sister Danae on vocals, and their band STALK. They rehearsed nightly in the basement of our parents' house for years, and me being only 9 or 10 years old, having school the next day, I would fall asleep to them playing 'BLACK SABBATH', or BLOODROCK'S 'D.O.A.', or perhaps MOUNTAIN'S 'THEME FROM AN IMAGINARY WESTERN'. The sound permeated my soul and changed me forever. But the roots of it all actually go back even further . .

I remember my first portable record player. It was given to me several years earlier. I would listen to music and get excited, or be soothed, depending on what was being played. Eventually, I would fall asleep next to it. And in my hands, I held not a toy (FUCK THAT) - in my hands, every night I fell asleep, there was a 45 RPM record (customarily, this record was CHOPIN'S 'E MINOR PRELUDE'). This affinity, this passion for music lead me quickly on the road to learning to play and compose myself. I began piano lessons at the age of eight. By age eleven, I was performing in my first metal band, PHOENIX. Kind of prophetic, in light of later events which sidelined me and VIRGIN STEELE . . . No matter what happens, we keep rising from the ashes. My quest for musical knowledge led me to study formally at a two year music college, where I met a tall bass player named Joe O'Reilly. He and I began jamming together regularly and thought about putting a band together.

We graduated in June of 1981, a few months afterwards, I came across an advertisement in the local music paper, GOODTIMES, for a band seeking a lead singer. The ad mentioned that there was an upcoming tour planned (there WASN'T!) - naturally, I was very intrigued. Upon phoning the number in the ad, I spoke with a guitarist named, Jack Starr. We arranged to meet at a nearby rehearsal studio the next day. I arrived on time, but there was nothing scheduled for us as Jack had forgotten to book the time. I suggested that he and the drummer, Joey Ayvazian come back to my house where I had all my gear set up, to afford them the opportunity to hear my singing and keyboard playing.

I played three songs for them, 'NO QUARTER', by LED ZEPPELIN, 'CHILD IN TIME', by DEEP PURPLE and 'CATCH THE RAINBOW', by RAINBOW. They liked what they heard and asked me to join the band on the spot. While I was interested, I had yet to hear them play. I suggested that we jam together first, which we did a day or so later. I thought that Jack and Joey were great, the same could not be said of their bass player, and so I suggested my friend, Joe O. They agreed that Joe was better than the guy that they were working with, ergo, he was in - their guy was out. And it is from these small beginnings in October of 1981 that VIRGIN STEELE was born. (Incidentally the guy we fired did improve, and went on to find success with LA.GUNS. His name is Kelly Nichols.)

Chapter III : " **THE FIRST ALBUM** "

After rehearsing for three weeks, we entered the studio to record what I thought would be only a demo - It was, in actuality, **VIRGIN STEELE ONE**. The album was recorded mostly live in the studio, with very few overdubs. The entire thing cost about \$ 1,000 dollars and took about a week to record and mix. As I mentioned earlier, we thought we were recording demos, but Jack had other ideas. He began sending our 'demo' out to all the various metal/rock magazines and fanzines. They all liked it, and interest began to build. Fan mail started pouring in, and then, **SHRAPNEL RECORDS** president, Mike Vraney called us. That call was to inform us of his intention to include us in his **US METAL, VOLUME II COMPILATION** album. The featured track was 'CHILDREN OF THE STORM'.

After the release of 'US METAL', the flood gates opened. More people knew about us, more fans were writing, so we felt that we should press up the demo/album ourselves to see what would happen. The first pressing of 5,000 copies sold out in a matter of weeks. I drove boxes of records to distributors all over the East Coast of the States (If this wasn't a great way to learn how the music business actually works, huh?!). The second pressing of 5,000 also sold out. Things looked great, we were sparking interest in record companies, and our fan mail was becoming more interesting. Two letters in particular stand out, one from a young band like ourselves, who were from Seattle. Their name was - **QUEENSRYPHE**. The other, from California, also a band, who called themselves **METALLICA**.

Our best offer from a record company came from an English label called, **MUSIC FOR NATIONS**. We signed with them in 1982; we were their first release, **MFN 1**. We were later joined on the label by **METALLICA, WASP, MANOWAR** and **MERCYFUL FATE**. It was a very exciting time, it was the New Wave of American and British Heavy Metal, magazines like **KERRANG** and **METAL FORCES** in England were giving us great reviews. In the USA, we began supporting many great bands like **MOTORHEAD, KROKUS, RIOT, THE RODS** and **MANOWAR**, with whom we later did a very enjoyable German tour in 1987.

Chapter IV : " **SECOND RELEASE AND TIME OF CHANGES** "

With the dawning of 1983, came our second album 'GUARDIANS OF THE FLAME' and two EP's, 'A CRY IN THE NIGHT', in Europe, and 'WAIT FOR THE NIGHT', in the States. That year would prove to be very successful for us, and the prospects on the horizon were even brighter. However, there was tension and disarray in the ranks. Jack and I were not seeing eye-to-eye on a musical level, and in 1984 he began recording a solo album called, 'OUT OF THE DARKNESS', with **RIOT** singer **Rhett Forester**. Incidentally, I sang background vocals on that, but I never received the credit on the album . . . An oversight, perhaps? Hmmm . . .

Meanwhile, **Joe 'O', Joey** and I started jamming with my good friend **Edward Pursino**. (See more on the subject of Edward below.) We began rehearsing some new songs I had written which included 'DON'T CLOSE YOUR EYES', and 'THY KINGDOM COME'. Ed and I discovered our collaborate potential; the first song we completed was 'THE EVIL IN HER EYES'. The partnership between he and I had begun, as did the reunification of the band. And so, we thought it best that Jack continue his solo career. Interestingly enough, we never actually asked Ed to join the band, he just came down one day and never left. (Thanks, Ed! !)

I first met Edward when I was 16 years old, when **MOUNTAIN ASH**, my band at the time, was auditioning for a gig at the high school dance. I sang **BLACK SABBATH'S 'WAR PIGS'**, and after we were done, Ed came over and introduced himself. I knew then and there we would some day work together, as we established a rapport immediately. If for no other reason, he, like me, had hair longer than most people at the time, and he also wore stacked heel boots. Oh, yeah, my band did not get that gig - I guess we were too heavy with our **SABBATH** covers.

Chapter V : " **COMING OF NOBLE SAVAGE** "

Armed with new blood and enthusiasm, VIRGIN STEELE began recording the classic 'NOBLE SAVAGE' album in 1985. Completed in about seven weeks, and our best album up to that time, I felt that justice was finally being done to the music and the vision. 'NOBLE SAVAGE' was released in 1986 and has proved to be a milestone in our career; there is no denying the power of that album. (Some of our fans rank it as one of the best metal albums of all time!)

1986 was a busy year for us. Things were going well, we had a great new album that got excellent reviews, sold more than any of our other efforts, and we began touring the US and Canada quite regularly. We also had a new label, SPV, and a new manager, Zoran Busic. At the time, Zoran was also the manager of the band SAGA. Considering their success, we thought wonderful things would happen for us . . . We were so wrong. I began doing lots of production work in '86, I produced PILEDRIVER, EXCORCIST, ORIGINAL SIN, MARC DENARO, DAMIEN THORNE, FOXX, and Jack Starr's 'NO TURNING BACK', album. (With full credits ...)

We ushered in 1987 with two tours of Europe, one with MANOWAR, and another with BLACK SABBATH, our early idols. These both proved to be truly wonderful experiences. At this point, we had released our albums in almost every country of the world, including Japan, and South America. High on our European success, we began recording 'AGE OF CONSENT', in late 1987, with the feeling that 1988 could only get better. We finished the album on July 11, 1988, and it was released in October of that year. Most people don't know this but I played keyboard bass on all the songs, with the exception of 'LION IN WINTER', on which Edward played bass guitar. This was due to Joe O being ill for most of the recording. By this time, Joe started feeling too much pressure from outside forces and from our management and eventually left the band in 1992.

Life wasn't easy for us during the years between 1988 and 1992. Our manager had made a royal mess of our career, both financially and spiritually, and with other legal problems rearing their ugly heads, we didn't record another album til '92. However, we still remained strong on the live circuit.

Chapter VI : " **THE RISING OF VIRGIN STEELE** "

In the summer of 1992, we began recording a new album. The sessions began with Teddy Cook, ex DIO member on bass, and concluded with Rob DeMartino, on bass. Rob had played previously with Bobby Rondinelli, (ex RAINBOW, DORO, current SABBATH drummer), in a band that also featured Bobby's brother Teddy on guitar, and their sister Dorothy on keyboards, and was appropriately called RONDINELLI.

That band also had at one time the late great Ray Gillen, as a member, and before Rob joined them, ironically enough Teddy Cook was their bass player. (What a tangled web we weave.) (I hope all this is making sense.) (Pay attention there will be a quiz later.) As fate would have it, I had known Rob for several years, we met when I came by one day to jam with RONDINELLI, (this is getting out of hand). They had wanted to know if I was interested in joining their band, but as I had just finished recording the 'AGE OF CONSENT' album, I was totally committed to VIRGIN STEELE. Later however, I played with Rob in a short lived band that sprang up in 1990, called SMOKE-STACK LIGHTNING, which featured Jack Starr on guitar, and Craig McGregor from FOGHAT on bass. After Craig left, Rob filled in for the remaining gigs. It was a good band, too bad we never recorded anything, though there is a live video floating around somewhere. Whew! ! ! . . . Enough of my long windedness - - -

As I was saying, the subsequent album, 'LIFE AMONG THE RUINS', was released in March 1993, and that summer we completed a headlining tour in support of it in Europe.

Chapter VII : " *THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL* "

In 1994, I felt an abundance of energy and creativity and I came upon the idea to do a double album. Thus the concept of 'THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL (PARTS I and II)' was born. I told our new label T&T RECORDS/ MODERN MUSIC RECORDS about my idea and they were very excited. I wrote about 30 songs on my own, and Edward and I wrote another 25-30 songs together. For the project we chose the best of these. The recording sessions began as a trio, with me, Edward and Joey, as Rob had been asked to join Ritchie Blackmore's new RAINBOW. (It's strange how our paths keep crossing with RAINBOW. Come to think of it - I also jammed with them on keyboards, when I was 17 years old.) Sorry for digressing again! ! !

Anyway, it was much easier to work as a three piece, than finding a new bass player. It was just like the 'CONSENT' album, only this time Edward played all of the bass tracks except 'WARRIOR'S LAMENT', which I played bass on.

The first part was completed and released in January 1995 and has proven to be a real favorite with the fans. Some say it is even better than the classic 'NOBLE SAVAGE'. A tour was planned for April with URIAH HEEP and we came over to Germany only to find that their singer Bernie Shaw had injured himself in a bizarre bicycling accident and the tour had to be re-scheduled for September. We were disappointed, but we knew we'd be back. Oh and as consolation, we did get to play one headlining show in Hamburg at the Grosse Freiheit.

Ah yes, guess who was back with us for that tour, and the subsequent September tour, our old friend Rob DeMartino returned to the fold. If you saw us in September through October, then you know this already. You may have also noticed that Joey Ayzajian is no longer with us, though he does appear on most of the tracks on 'PART II'. He decided to retire, so he could sort out other areas of his life. We all wished him well, there are no hard feelings, he's a great drummer and human being.. Perhaps he will go back to his first love - inventing things.

Our new drummer is Frank Gilchrist, we refer to him as 'THE BARON', for he is a true medieval Lord of the drums! ! ! Frank appears on three songs on 'PART II'. These songs were recorded just these past few months. Ok, if Rob is back then why isn't he on 'PART II', you may ask? Well, due to prior commitments, Rob unfortunately was unavailable at the time of our recording. Once again Edward played bass guitar and I played keyboard bass. We're becoming quite proficient at this. Rob will hopefully play on the next album. (You better 'OL CHAP'.)

Chapter VIII : " *CONCUSION, or The Marriage of Heaven and Hell ...Revisited* "

PART I and PART II can function as two independent releases, but upon closer examination, you can also see the thread that binds the material together. Musical and lyrical ideas return transformed and disguised, or blatantly recapitulated. There is a sense of closure yet the search for truth, answers, justice, etc., continues. Vengeance is fulfilled, what is lost is found, that which doesn't kill us makes us stronger. We will all achieve our immortality, and the quest for beauty, honor, and dignity is maintained with courage in the face of extreme adversity.

We will never give up or go away. We will always remain. The Spirit is still willing, the Flesh is strong, and the Dream still lives on . . . How? With true power and grace. The thunder still calls and the fire burns brighter than ever in the eyes of every enchanted Hour. Why? Because I say it is so, we will it to be, and so do you.

David DeFeis

Chapter IX : "Addition"

We were born to defy, we were born to heed our own heart's call and our own voice. Amidst a sea of lame excuses, mediocrity, conformist rhetoric, and other bland sentiments that pass for ROCK MUSIC these days, we stand as an Island, a Fortress, a Bastion, a Haven for the Foundation of what we consider to be the True METAL Faith and perhaps the CLASSICAL MUSIC of the 21st CENTURY. A Testament to the Power of the Will, exploration and self expression. An alternative to the ever present corporate menace that passes for Popular Music. As we approach the new Millennium, we see our goal to be a union, a convergence of various Forms into one. Music, be it ROCK based, CLASSIC based or whatever, Poetry, Theatre, Painting, Sculpture and Film can and will be molded, blended and reborn in new and exciting shapes which enrich our World, galvanize our emotions, open our senses, our hearts, our minds to Spheres, Plains, Oceans of unlimited possibilities through which we may see our Universe and our relationship so it in a new and different Light! To truly live, to drink the new Wine, to bathe in new Waters strange and beautiful, to embrace what was lost and what may be found, this is the Spirit which drives our passion ever onward! We invite you to join us on this Quest for Life, Adventure and the Pursuit of all Forms of Emotion, Expression and Passion!!! BY THE GODS it is time to Fly!!! ALL are Welcome, ALL are One, THE GATE OF KINGS AND QUEENS is Open for those who have the Wish and the Will to Walk on through!!! After the Fire, Water, Wrath, Storm, Pain and Tears... We will meet again in Honour, Faith & Love... Don't be late!!!

BY THE GODS,
D. DEFEIS