

## Interview Rick van Heuzen by: Pedro Carvalho - Via Nocturna

1. Hi Rick, how are you? Thanks for your availability. Land Of The Damned arrives after a period of relative silence from RVH Project. What did this quieter phase represent for the band creatively, and how did it shape the identity of the new album?

*I'm doing great, thanks for having me. After we recorded the debut album, which was actually meant to be a solo project, each of us refocused on our own bands. The lockdown had just ended, and everyone was eager to get back on the road. When the vinyl release of Enter the Machine came out, we decided to record a single to coincide with it. Once we were back in the studio, ideas started flowing, and before we knew it, we were working on a whole new album. The relative quiet of the lockdown actually had a really positive creative effect on us. I came up with most of the songs, but there was a lot more input from Orion and Gerry this time. It gradually turned into more of a true group project, which really shaped the direction of the album.*

2. Compared to Enter The Machine, this new record is more cinematic and heavier, while still rooted in your retro-inspired DNA. At what point did you realise you were heading towards a bolder, more expansive sound?

*The songs we began recording were already leaning in a heavier direction, but that realization really sank in as the sessions progressed. We could feel ourselves taking a step forward, pushing each other to embrace new challenges. Some tracks definitely felt like a risk, but in the end, everything came together exactly as it should.*

3. RVH Project has always blended metal, hard rock, funk and pop sensibilities. On Land Of The Damned, how did you approach balancing groove, melody and atmosphere?

*It's different for every song. Sometimes it starts with a simple idea or a spark of inspiration. As you begin developing it, you either go looking for what it needs, or you just feel your way toward it. Other times, a song grows out of a spontaneous jam. "Marilyn's Here" is a great example of that. During a soundcheck, I started playing a bassline, and suddenly the rest of the band joined in. It turned into this fantastic groove, and I remember thinking, Hey, this sounds good, there's a song in this.*

4. Lyrically, your work often explores confrontation, transformation and escape. Are these themes still central on Land Of The Damned, and do they take on a darker or more urgent tone this time around?

*My lyrics mainly reflect what's been on my mind. Some songs look back at the pandemic, particularly the lockdown, and those are definitely darker in tone. But that's not the whole story, there's also plenty of rock 'n' roll and a sense of fun.*

5. The album features several guest musicians, most notably John JayCee Cuijpers on lead vocals for two tracks. How did these collaborations come about, and what did each guest bring that you felt the songs truly needed?

*Orion Roos, our guitarist, had worked with John before, and I've always been a big fan of his voice. Orion brought in the music for what later became "The First Time," and I wrote the lyrics for it. It turned into this kind of question-and-answer song, and at some point we thought, "Why not ask John to sing it?" It just felt right. And since he was already there, he ended up singing "Marilyn's Here" as well.*

*We're also really lucky to have Hans Voerman on keyboards and Martin Verdonk on percussion again, just like on the previous album. They bring so much color and depth to the RVH sound, they really lift the songs to another level.*

*With “Open Your Eyes,” I felt like it needed something extra. So I asked Mariloe Rorije to record a part, just to see what would happen. It actually turned into a bit of a duet, and it worked so well that she added some backing vocals too.*

6. From a songwriting perspective, did the presence of additional vocalists and keyboards influence how the material was composed, or were the songs already fully formed before guests stepped in?

*No, not really, it didn't affect the writing process. Most of the songs were already written before we went into the studio. But the arrangements definitely changed. Once we started working on the tracks together in the studio, new ideas came up, parts shifted around, and some songs really opened up in a different way.*

7. We can highlight the heavy grooves and layered guitar textures as key elements of the album. How did the recording process at Studio Spitsbergen help you achieve this sonic depth?

*Of course we had a clear idea of what we wanted to achieve and how we wanted to get there. But I really have to mention Bauke van der Laaken, our studio engineer. He did an amazing job and played a huge role in shaping the overall sound and atmosphere of the album*

8. As a trio at the core, how has the internal dynamic between you, Orion and Gerry evolved since the band's formation in 2021, especially when moving from a debut album to a more ambitious follow-up?

*Over the years, you really get to know each other better, both socially and musically. When we first started this project, I knew Orion and Gerry, but not very well, and we hadn't played together much. Still, there was an immediate connection, and that's only grown stronger over time. For me, that's what really explains the step forward we took in recording this album.*

9. With influences ranging from Deep Purple and Savatage to Psychotic Waltz and KISS, do you consciously reference these bands during the writing process, or do they surface more organically?

*I think what we create is really just a sum of all the influences you pick up over the years, and that list is far from complete. I've got a really broad taste in music, and all of it somehow comes back into what we do.*

10. Finally, with Land of the Damned aiming to resonate with both long-time rock fans and a new generation of listeners, how do you see RVH Project positioning itself within today's rock landscape?

*That's a tough one... I honestly don't know. We just make music from the heart and hope it connects with the audience, whether they're young or old. For me, making music is really about expressing creativity and having fun.*

11. What have you planned to promote this album on stage?

*We've got a number of gigs lined up, and more are on the way. Unfortunately, Gerry de Graaf couldn't continue because of other commitments, but in the meantime we've found an excellent replacement in Thom Versteegen. The band has also grown with a second guitarist, Armand Wijskamp. We're really excited to get back on stage.*

12. Thanks, once again, Rick. Any parting messages you'd like to share with your fans or our readers?

*Thanks to everyone who's been listening and supporting us. Keep enjoying the ride, and we hope to see you at a show soon!*

Thank you!