High On Fire - De Vermis Mysteriis (2012)



01. Serums Of Liao 02. Bloody Knuckles 03. Fertile Green 04. Madness Of An Architect 05. Samsara play 06. Spiritual Rites 07. King Of Days 08. De Vermis Mysteriis play 09. Romulus And Remus 10. Warhorn
Personnel: Matt Pike (vocals, guitar); Jeff Matz (bass guitar); Des Kensel (drums).

Here's something not many bands can pull off; 6 albums, none of which suck. While there's not too much re-imagining going on here, it definitely seems like High On Fire have found a nice little crossroads of all their best aspects. In fact, De Vermis Mysteriis makes a lot of their previous recordings almost sound like beta testing.

You all remember Snakes For The Divine? Of course you do. It was a pounding, blistering sludge clinic, cram packed with varying tempos exploring both sides of the sludge coin; fast and noisy, or slow and crushing. De Vermis Mysteriis takes the variation found in Snakes..., but uses the more fitting sludgier production from their earlier works (albeit a little clearer), and ties it all together with some slightly more consistent song writing. To boot, Matt Pike's voice isn't nearly as irritatingly strained and shrill this time around, revisiting his smoky, gravelly side we'd all missed.

This basically sounds like a whole lot of nit-picking what is essentially another High On Fire release, not too different from the rest, right? In a sense, it is true...Yet somehow they've managed to create something here that should come to surprise even the long-time fans without abandoning their signature sound. The greatest example of this lies in "King Of Days", possibly the most melodic of their career, so butt-clenchingly epic it seems like it belongs in one of those slow-mo montage trailers for a Zack Snyder movie.

What does this all add up to for all the folks who haven't been keeping tabs on this bands career? Well, for once showing up to the party late might have actually paid off, because this is arguably their best album yet. It's just a fantastic display of gritty, heavy sludge metal that covers both the massively crushing, plodding monolithic speed and some frantic, break-neck paced stuff...and everything in between. There's not really many other ways to describe it. It's just ugly, dirty ass metal.

This is High On Fire balancing all their best features perfectly, while some long-time fans (this reviewer included), may not place it above previous albums due to sentimental reasons, most people tuning in now should find very little reason to not put this at #1. --- metalstorm.net

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