

SPOCK'S BEARD MAKE SOME MELODIC NOISE

Snow makers welcome drummer Nick D'Virgilio back on their 13th studio album.



► **Spock's Beard** release *Noise Floor* via InsideOut on May 25. It was recorded with longtime engineer Rich Mouser and showcases an even more melodic sound than on 2015's conceptual *Oblivion Particle*.

The album also marks the return of drummer Nick D'Virgilio. The Big Big Train sticksman left Spock's in 2011 but has played live with them a handful of times over recent years, including their two-part defrosting of *Snow* with former vocalist Neal Morse.

"We made a very half-hearted effort to find a replacement for Jimmy Keegan [who left in 2016]," says bassist Dave Meros. "It was always going to be extremely hard to find a drummer of that quality who also has high-range vocals. It's like finding a unicorn. So we just decided to see if Nick would be interested in doing the album. He's the best and he's really a great friend so it's been like getting back together with your brother who you haven't seen in a few years. It was very natural."

Although Spock's Beard's will be reining in their live shows to fit around D'Virgilio's busy schedule, the drummer's day job at music superstore Sweetwater Sound made tracking the album a lot easier.

"The way we record these days is, like a lot of bands, very fragmented," says Meros. "But we recorded the drums at Sweetwater and we did a songwriter's workshop there a few weeks later. When I got Rich's rough mixes of the album, I thought it turned out really nice. Rich is very creative and a great musician in his own right. He understands how the songs should sound."

The eight-track also comes with a bonus four-track EP that features ideas hatched more than 20 years ago.

Meros reveals, "There are songs on this record that go way back. *Days We'll Remember* was written primarily by our writing partner John Boegehold. I was in a band with him in the late 80s/early 90s and that song comes from way back then. We prog-ified it and reintroduced it. *Beginnings* is

another song that wasn't finished for our last album so it resurfaced for this one."

Of the band's decision to include a bonus disc with their latest long player, Meros says, "We took the tracks off to make the main album a little bit more cohesive, but we're writing constantly so we usually have little bits and pieces that have been written over time." **NRS**

For more, visit www.spocksbear.com.



"To find a drummer of that quality is like finding a unicorn."



KING CRIMSON LIVE ALBUM

King Crimson are giving fans the chance to relive their 2016 concert in the Austrian capital. *Live In Vienna, 2016* is out on April 6 via Panegyric, and includes the live recorded debut of *Fracture* by their 2016 line-up in Copenhagen. The three-CD set also includes newly sequenced soundscapes drawn from the improvised introduction music with performances from Robert Fripp, Mel Collins and Tony Levin. King Crimson return to the UK in October.

Soundscape: Mariusz Duda.



LUNATIC SOUL'S ALBUM OF THERAPY

Riverside frontman comes out of mourning with his experimental side-project.

► **Lunatic Soul** release *Under The Fragmented Sky* via Kscope on May 25. Mariusz Duda felt compelled to complete the companion album to last year's *Fractured* before he could start work on the next Riverside release.

The mostly instrumental eight-track continues the theme of "coming back to life after a personal tragedy" and deals in part with the sudden death of Riverside co-founder Piotr Grudziński in 2016.

"The more I tried to dig in, the more coherent the music became," Duda reveals. "With *Fractured*, I decided to use compositions with lyrics and singing, no instrumental tracks. I thought it would be nice to do something instrumental as a companion, but I also had two really nice ideas for songs."

He describes *Under The Fragmented Sky* as "intimate, nostalgic, very cinematic and different than everything you have heard from me so far, but at the same time, very 'lunatic'."

He also points to key lyrics from the track *Untamed*, "So it's done, won the fight, war is over," and adds, "It's something that I wanted to mark. It's done; you should start a new chapter. It was my therapy."

But he didn't want to write about the experiences that immediately followed Grudziński's death just yet. He'll explore these on the follow-up to Riverside's *Eye Of The Soundscape*, which he aims to release later this year.

"Riverside will be darker," he says. "It's funny; it means that within a year I'll have done three albums. Art comes from unhappiness."

For more, visit www.lunatic soul.com. **MK**

AARON CLIFT AND CO RIGHT A WRONG ON NEW ALBUM

Texans team up with guest guitarists on their punchy third.

► **The Aaron Clift** Experiment release *If All Goes Wrong* independently on May 4. Despite the negative title, vocalist and keyboard player Aaron Clift says it carries a message of perseverance against the odds.

"This album was all about taking risks, learning to live with uncertainty, and ultimately coming out the other side triumphant," he reveals. "It felt like a very dangerous title, [but] the more we thought about it, the more it felt right."

The hook-driven release takes them to even more melodic territories than before.

"I wanted to make an album that didn't pull any punches," says bassist and co-writer Devin North, whose brother Dave (The Cuckoos)

is one of several guest guitarists on the album.

"The biggest influences were King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, Queen, The Beatles — bands that were really progressing music — and it pays homage to them as well as progressing in its own direction."

For more, visit www.aaronclift.com. **NRS**

