

*Hi, Ben, once again! How are you? The last time we talked, was about the **Last Chance To Hear** album, back in 2016. What have you done through all this period, even with a pandemic in the middle?*

I was trying to make a living without going crazy! In my spare time, I was experimenting with different musical projects. I co-wrote and produced five singles in a progressive-pop-classic-rock band called “Frankenfido”. The tracks are really great, and I urge anyone vaguely interested to check them out on their favorite streaming service. Unfortunately, nobody really heard them, and we never found an audience, so we have hours of terrific material just lying dormant. I also forged a musical relationship with another multi-instrumentalist named Tim Bennetts. We performed a live show as “ProgAustralis”, released it on Bandcamp, and then started writing together during the pandemic. It’s a very different experience from making a solo album because we just communicate with each other musically without thinking about it too much. There are new recordings on the way. I feel we have an exciting Gilmour/Wright vibe going on!

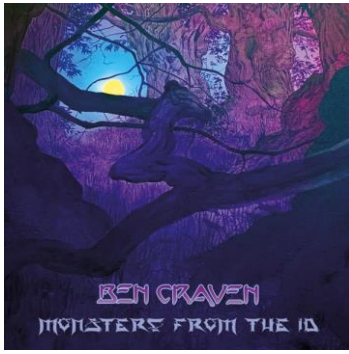
*Did you use all this time to work on your new album?*

Well, the whole time, the music that became “Monsters From The Id” piled up steadily and started to overflow. But the complexity of linking all the pieces together was sending me bonkers. So, I took about nine months off from all other distractions, to record the album properly and do all the other things a record label would do, including the surround mix, the mastering, the video clips, the packaging, the promo, and so on.

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*Speaking of your new album, let me congratulate you on that superb piece of art!  
Can we say that Monsters From The Id is the work of a lifetime?*

I think that's a fair statement! It might sound odd, but I approached this album as if it were the last album I would make. Not that I plan on stopping, but I wanted it to reflect all my musical hopes and dreams and be a piece of work I could be completely satisfied with. So it does encompass most of my ambitions. Side-long epics. Big orchestral arrangements. Huge guitar solos. The instrumental passages are interesting. Vocals that enhance the music, not just fill up space.

*Once again you work alone on this magnificent opus?*

Yes, for better or for worse. I had a very clear vision of what I was trying to achieve with this album, and just got on with it. The biggest challenge was the orchestral arrangements. But I think the reason they work is that I use the orchestra as a palette while I am writing, rather than adding it in later, so I get no arguments from, say, the guitarist that he can no longer be heard, or from the keyboardist that someone else is playing his part! On the other hand, if things don't work, I have nobody to blame but myself. It must be said though that it wasn't entirely a solo effort. That incredible cover painting is the work of Freyja Dean. Sometimes it doesn't hurt to bring in a genius.

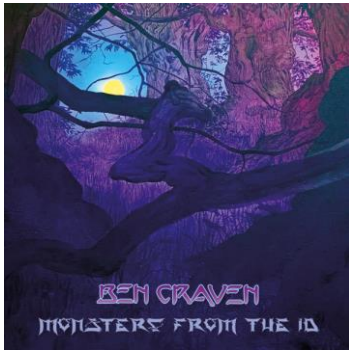
*This time you took the option of creating only two long songs. It was your goal from the beginning, or did your work lead you that way?*

Creating an album with a side-long epic was always something I wanted to do, in the tradition of Pink Floyd, Yes, Genesis, and so on with "Echoes", "Close To The Edge", "Gates of Delirium" and "Supper's Ready". As the music revealed itself, I realized I was lucky enough to have not one but two long songs on my hands! So I steered the album

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more towards a “Part One” and “Part Two” structure, like the classic Mike Oldfield albums. Musically, one epic was entirely in 7-8 time and the other was a combination of 4-4 and 6-8. I had the basic structures in my head, and then it was a case of matching the keys of each part to complement each other and my vocal range. Unexpectedly, more music kept appearing and for a while, it was going to be a double album with four side-long epics! But sanity trumped ambition, fortunately, or unfortunately depending on your point of view. A double album is a lot of information. To this day, people still debate whether “The White Album”, “The Wall” or “Tales From Topographic Ocean” should have been single albums. But, more importantly, it was going to be very expensive to produce on vinyl if the opportunity came along.

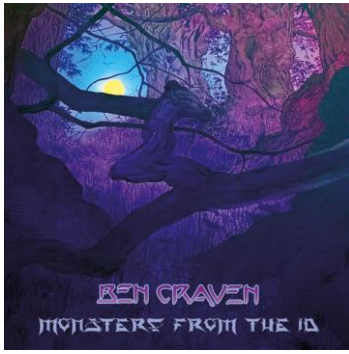
*It's two pieces following the methodology of soundtracks or classical opus. They were some of your creative influences?*

I am in awe of classical film composers and great arrangers. It's a very different skill set from being able to write a nice tune. Some of my favorite pieces of music are film score cues arranged as performance pieces. One of the greatest shows I saw here in Australia before the pandemic decimated international touring, was Hans Zimmer. Not much inspires me these days, but he certainly did. Rather than a rock band touring with an orchestra providing extra backing to music that didn't originally feature an orchestra, this was the opposite. These were film score pieces performed by an orchestra, augmented by incredible rock and classical musicians. Danny Elfman is also performing shows like this now. He can play an entire career retrospective from Oingo Boingo to film soundtracks to solo work in one show. I would dearly love to see it in person. His performance at Coachella earlier this year was incredible.

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***How the album title, Monsters From The Id, appears? What does it mean?***

The title “Monsters From The Id” is a key phrase from the 1956 sci-fi film “Forbidden Planet”, which is loosely based on Shakespeare’s “The Tempest”. The movie explores the consequences of giving unlimited technological power to your unconscious desires. I first saw the film maybe 25 years ago and that phrase just stuck with me. I still have the notebook somewhere where I wrote it down immediately and circled it as a future album title!

***The album is predominantly instrumental, however, you said that lyrics are incredibly important to you. How did you manage that situation? And what are the issues with the lyrics of this album?***

I suppose the point I was trying to make is I don’t take the lyrics for granted. In the beginning, I considered making this album entirely instrumental, inspired by my love of those early Mike Oldfield albums and also more recently and surprisingly, “The Endless River” by Pink Floyd. But once I was satisfied that “Monsters From The id” could carry itself as an instrumental, I figured it might be more interesting to add lyrics! The problem I had was trying to write some words that could match the music and not diminish it or bring it back down to earth with a thud. In the end, I had to approach the lyrics like a playwright and pictured myself as a singing actor. So the lyrics are poetic, tackle grand concepts, have multiple meanings in each line, but reveal few mundane details about myself personally.

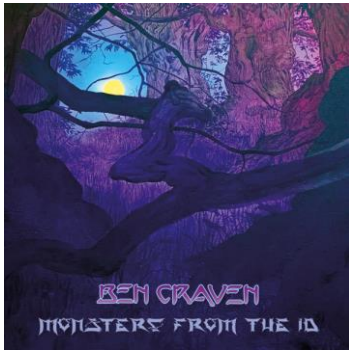
***The album is presented with a DVD. What have you included in the DVD?***

The main point of the DVD is to include the 5.1 surround mix. It’s in DTS 96/24 format which, while not completely lossless, still sounds very good. I was quite surprised to

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learn that many people don't yet own Blu-ray players, so I settled on a DVD instead to reach as many people as possible. As a bonus, the DVD also contains the stereo mix in 24-bit 96kHz lossless, plus four video clips.

*It's funny because you also included four bonus tracks that are small excerpts, can we say, of the two long musical pieces. It was a look at the radio airplay?*

Radio airplay was definitely a consideration! Nobody in their right mind is going to play a new 20-minute song on the radio, although I am delighted to report that some online radio programs have indeed done that already for "Monsters From The Id". The other main reason for the single edits however is a promotion on social media, YouTube, and Spotify. I have no intentions of placing this full album on streaming services, but I'm happy to throw the single edits up there for discovery purposes and hopefully inspire listeners to look a little further.

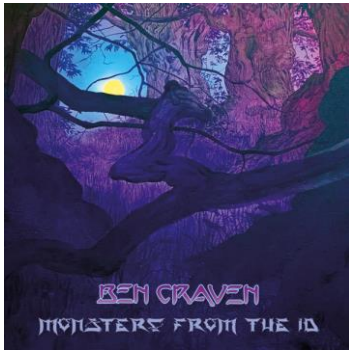
*Was it an easy task to choose and "cut" those excerpts?*

It was very easy to choose the pieces but not quite so easy to edit them! In some cases, I had to be inventive with key changes and arrangements to get the edit points to work. But those musical ideas were conceived simultaneously as part of the longer pieces and also as short standalone songs, so there's nothing contrived about them. The single edits give me the chance to present, I suppose, the equivalent of a shorter concert arrangement from a full movie score.

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*To the ones that took the option for the digital version of the album, you also have something for them, haven't you? Can you tell which consists of?*

I am very conscious of the price of postage these days and the longer delivery times for CDs and vinyl since the pandemic began, that is if people are even interested in physical media anymore. It's also very easy to personalize a CD by signing it, but I wanted to find a way to personalize a digital item so people could simply download it and still feel all warm and fuzzy! So I hit upon the idea of offering individual thank-you videos for anyone who wanted them, and autographing and dedicating the cover artwork digitally using a stylus on a touchscreen rather than a marker pen. And anyone can order that from my Bandcamp site!

*What has been done and what have you planned to promote this album in the next times?*

That is an extremely difficult question given my status as a self-funded artist, the remoteness of where I live, and the relative unpopularity of symphonic rock over here! The main focus has been publicity, reviews, and interviews in Europe and the US to drive album sales. It seems to be working since this has quickly become my best-received album to date. The next obvious step is live shows, but reaching an international audience is a challenge, so online performances may be the answer.

*Thanks, Ben! Do you want to add something else?*

Pedro, thank you so much for the interview and it was a delight to speak with you again. Please stay safe and well!

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