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## Crystal Ball - Virtual Empire (Reissue)



2009 Metal Mind Productions/MVD Visual  
www.metalmind.com.pl / mvdb2b.com

One of the finest melodic metal bands to surface, their last album *Secrets* from 2008 was a serving of vicious guitar attack bolstered with the AOR sensibility that put these guys in line with Jaded Heart, Fatal Smile, & H.E.A.T. While they do heighten up the antae when it comes to the musical factor, they don't let it get in the way of the tunes themselves. A record from 2002 has become accessible again to the masses as a reissue from Metal Mind Productions (MVD in the US), originally released in the golden age of power metal, when bands such as Stratovarius, Gamma Ray, & Helloween were still setting the tone for the second wave of intense heaviness, **Crystal Ball** executed a more straightforward approach on *Virtual Empire*. Actually rooted in the power metal sound, the band stripped the arrangements down to the 4/4 time signature while keeping them highly lush and fluid amongst the grinding riffage instead of going all-out symphonic.

"Hands of God," "Blind Side," and the title track are an exposition of the quick tempo, double bass sound that was at the helm of the power metal aura, but the tunes didn't stay that way throughout the record, "Savage Mind," "Private Visitor," & "Dance with the Devil" hearken the old-school melodic metal mindset of Dio's heavier moments meeting Malmsteen's more tame instances, while the dark "Am I Free," the emotive & anthemic "Talk in Circles" & the ballad "Look in My Eyes" exemplify the band's AOR sweet tooth.

A lost classic to be rediscovered, *Virtual Empire* has moments of big harmonies, dense musical arrangements, churning aggressive guitars, soaring vocals, and massive hooks colliding, where the multiplicity of the songwriting skills keep this record heightened with diversity, but with the **Crystal Ball** sound in tow throughout - and that's' what a great album should be, a collection of diverse tunes that retain the spirit of the moment.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read a review of *Secrets*

**Added:** January 10th 2010

**Reviewer:** Tommy Hash

**Score:** ★★★★★

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