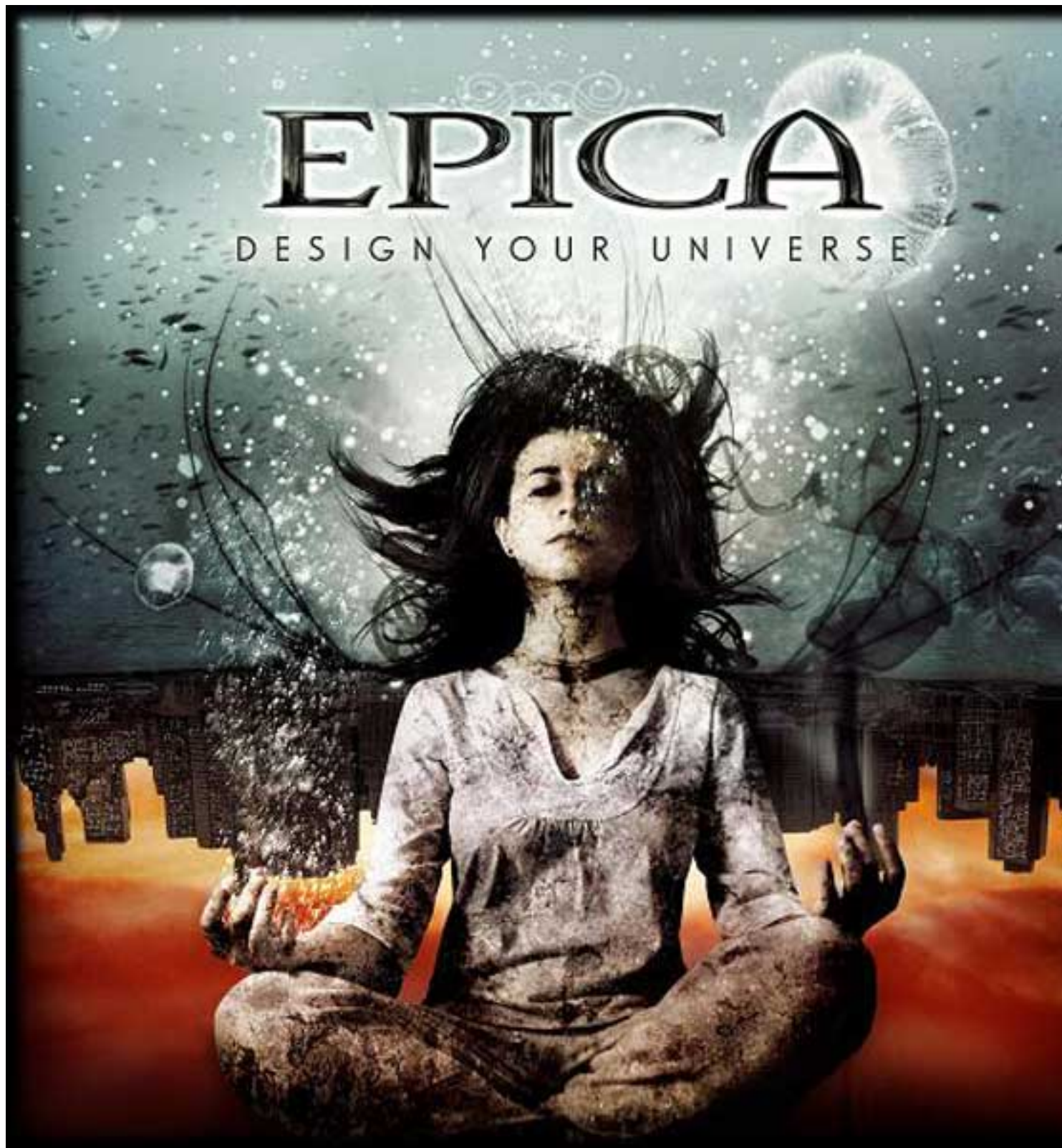


Escrito por Pedro Aneudys Santana

Miércoles 14 de Octubre de 2009 23:01 - Última actualización Jueves 15 de Octubre de 2009 22:24



Mark Jansen and his progressive symphony-metal band, Epica, started to hit the Gate Studio in Wolfsburg, Germany since March 2009 with producer Sascha Patch to begin work on their fourth studio album following the release of their first live CD *The Classical Conspiracy*. Released on October 16, 2009,

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Design Your Universe

is yet another collection of majestically crafted songs that showcase the vast growth and development the band has gone through since their first album,

The Phantom Agony

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Discography Sample

Consign to Oblivion

-



[Consign to Oblivion](#)

-



[The Last Crusade](#)

The Classical Conspiracy

-



[Classical Set medley](#)

-



[Epica Set medley](#)

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Miércoles 14 de Octubre de 2009 23:01 - Última actualización Jueves 15 de Octubre de 2009 22:24

The Divine Conspiracy

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[Chasing the Dragon](#)

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[Fools of Damnation](#)

-



[Menace of Vanity](#)

-



[The Obsessive Devotion](#)

The Phantom Agony

-



[Facade of Reality](#)

Escrito por Pedro Aneudys Santana

Miércoles 14 de Octubre de 2009 23:01 - Última actualización Jueves 15 de Octubre de 2009 22:24

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[Seif al Din](#)

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[Sensorium](#)

The Score ~ An Epica Journey

-



[Insomnia](#)

-



[The Ultimate Return](#)

-



[Under the Aegis](#)

This new album is a bit reminiscent of *The Divine Conspiracy* when it comes to strong guitar riffs, frenetic hard-hitting drumbeats and the use of an orchestra and choir, that deliver both English and Latin lyrics, to create a truly larger-than-life feeling. Their signature sound of mixing and contrasting Simone Simmons's melodious mezzo-soprano vocals with Mark Jansen's dark death grunts is definitely present to keep the album as varied, complex, and versatile as possible. Also, this time around,

E

pica

got itself a new guitarist: Isaac Delahaye from God Dethroned. This brought along the introduction of an element that has been absent in past albums: guitar solos. And there's plenty of them because you can never have too much of a good thing.

The title, *Design Your Universe*, shows the new lyrical focus of the album. According to an interview on *Metal Underground*, Jansen explains that it refers to how everything is connected and how people can influence matter with their thoughts. The album opens with an instrumental prelude overlapped by a Latin choir. The track's name, *Samadhi*

, is a Hindu term that refers to a higher level of concentrated meditation where the subject becomes one with the universe. The second song,

Resign to Surrender

, introduces us to the first guitar solo of the album and it also employs the use of spoken word elements to add flare and spice up the concoction. These poetic bits add more punch to the song's critique of government oppression on its people.

The Price of freedom

is a spoken word prelude to

Burn to a Cinder,

which states that freedom is something you get on your own and that its price is death and it also contains excerpts of one of President Obama's speeches.

Tides of Time is a ballad that has Simone singing in a delicate and emotive voice during the main verses through which it seems to take flight and glide through the chorus over a beautiful piano arrangement. The song then builds up, accompanied by drums and guitars that give way to a guitar solo climax that doesn't fall into the overdone stigma. The second ballad is actually a duet between Simone and Sonata Artica's Tonny Kakko called *White Waters*. If there is a low point in the album, this is probably it. The song feels like it would have been better off as an instrumental piece because the vocals leave something more to be desired. With great voices like that, the song should have been a vocal showdown between the two but instead they sing mainly in calm voices leaving the song feeling half-empty instead of half-full.

The highlight of the album might be *Kingdom of Heaven* and it is also the longest track, playing thirteen minutes and thirty-five seconds. The song's powerful instrumentation is perfectly

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complemented by Jansen's grunts and Simone's voice accompanied by an amazing choir. Halfway through the song, things wind down to guitar strings and drums with Simone's cool and collected voice only to then be ramped up again with a spoken scene of what seems to be a servant pleading to his master. An extensive guitar solo that leads to a long-winded finish then follows this.

If you are a metal fan, then *Design Your Universe* is bound to have something in it to quench your thirst for good music. From the hard killers like

*Martyr of the
Free World*

,
Our Destiny

, and

Semblance of Liberty

, to the slow grandeur of

Tides of Times

, or to the just plain epic

Kingdom Of Heaven

and, the title track,

Design Your Universe

, Epica does an outstanding job at creating what feels like a timeless album that, by no means, should be overlooked.

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