



HEAVEN & EARTH ANNOUNCE DEBUT UK TOUR DATES

Los Angeles' highly acclaimed rock band Heaven & Earth have announced their first ever UK tour. Starting on 26th June at the O2 Academy 2 in Birmingham, the band will play further dates in Glasgow, Newcastle, Sheffield, Liverpool and London.

Taking up from where iconic bands like Deep Purple and Bad Company have left off, Heaven & Earth is on a mission to resurrect the sanctity of classic rock to its purist, most accessible form. Heaven & Earth fuses elements of hard rock, blues, even bits of classical, to create a potent blend of high-powered anthems, melodic rockers and introspective ballads that evoke the spirit of a magical era.

Tapping into the methodology and madness of old-school rock with a new-school attitude, Heaven & Earth shook their classic rock roots down to the very core on their newest effort, *Dig* (Quarto Valley Records). The album, produced by Dave Jenkins — who's turned the knobs for everyone from Metallica to Tower of Power — was released in April 2013, and features guitarist Stuart Smith, singer Joe Retta, bassist Chuck Wright, drummer Richie Onori and keyboardist Arlan Schierbaum, along with special guests Howard Leese (Heart, Paul Rodgers) and David Paich (Toto) and Richie Sambora (Bon Jovi).

As the band's founder and visionary, Smith says **Dig** is “the best thing I've ever done in my life.”

The origins of Heaven & Earth aligned the guitarist with a rich lineage of rock's most celebrated musicians. Kelly Hansen (Foreigner), Joe Lynn Turner (Rainbow) and Kelly Keeling (King Kobra) all fronted the band at various junctures. Guitarist Richie Sambora (Bon Jovi), singer and bassist Glenn Hughes (Deep Purple, Black Country Communion), and drummer Carmine Appice (Vanilla Fudge) have each contributed their extraordinary talents to the music of Heaven & Earth.

Early in his career, Smith distinguished himself by making the acquaintance of Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore, who mentored the up-and-coming musician. “I'm probably one of the few people in the world who grew up with a poster of someone on their wall, ended up meeting them, becoming friends with them, and getting mentored by them,” Smith notes. “I feel I owe everything I do to Ritchie. He taught me a lot about the guitar.”

Heeding Blackmore's advice, he migrated to New York and after three years jamming around Manhattan and Long Island, headed west to Los Angeles, where he's been ever since. Smith established himself as an in-demand guitarist in L.A., playing countless sessions and joining up with other British expats like Keith Emerson and Sweet. Around the same time, Heaven & Earth was conceived as a side project, something to cultivate Smith's creative juices between stints working with others.

A few false starts and random gigs in, he recruited Richie Onori and singer Kelly Hansen to record the first album, **Heaven & Earth Featuring Stuart Smith**. He also invited along a few heavy friends like Richie Sambora, Joe Lynn Turner, Glenn Hughes, Carmine Appice, Howard Leese, Chuck Wright, Arlan Schierbaum, Robbie Wykoff and many more to appear on the record.

Windows to the World, produced by Howard Leese, followed in 2000 and featured Onori, Wright, Schierbaum and singer Kelly Keeling. Four years later, when Smith and Onori started their own label,

Black Star Records, to reissue the first Heaven & Earth CD, they recorded a four-song EP called A Taste of Heaven with Paul Shortino handling the vocals.

Joe Retta entered the picture when he joined Sweet in 2008. “I wanted to write and record new music and so did Stuart,” the singer recalls. “We discovered eventually that Sweet did not.” Smith adds, “After touring with him in Sweet and recording with him in the studio, there was no other choice. Everyone else was second best.”

In the summer of 2012, the guitarist tendered his resignation to Sweet bassist Steve Priest and set out to mold Heaven & Earth into a world-class recording and touring band. Having Retta, Onori, Wright and Schierbaum committed and on board, Smith said Heaven & Earth is now a “real band,” ready to unleash its unique brand of classic rock upon an unsuspecting public.

Dig is very much a collaborative effort. Quarto Valley Records has been integral in allowing the band to develop and nurture the album without pressure.

“We are incredibly lucky to have Quarto Valley Records president, Bruce Quarto behind this project,” Smith says. “He told us from the very beginning that he didn’t care how long it took or how much it cost. If we come out of the studio and feel we could have done better, he wants us to go back in and do it again. We’ve been able to take our time crafting the songs. It’s very rare to have that kind of support and belief in what you’re doing.”

A good portion of the music on **Dig** was brought to the band by Smith. He came up with riffs and the band worked up songs as Retta wrote vocal melodies and lyrics. On one occasion, Smith and Retta went on a hike and discussed the idea of putting together a song in the vein of a Rainbow classic co-written by their friend Ronnie James Dio.

“We both played at his memorial service,” Smith recalls. “I thought we needed a song like ‘Long Live Rock N’ Roll.’ But instead of saying society hasn’t saved me, the church hasn’t saved me, school hasn’t saved me, religion and politics haven’t saved me... rock and roll has. So we wrote a song called ‘Rock ‘n Roll Does.’ That was a turning point of the album.”

The music just kept coming. Smith might throw out a title or a concept for Retta to run with, or the singer might have an idea to develop on his own. Or they may turn to the other band members for input — especially Wright, whom Smith describes as a “great part writer.” The bassist known for working with rock music icons, Alice Cooper, Ted Nugent, Greg Allman, Gene Simmons and Slash concurs, “Stuart brought in a riff that had a real Middle Eastern flavor, and I jumped right in with a lot of parts that basically rounded out the song.”

That song is “Victorious,” one of the more intense and heavier tracks on **Dig** — mightily driven by a surly, dominant guitar line, magnificently sustained by Schierbaum’s inimitable swipes at the keys. “He’s the most amazing Hammond player I’ve ever seen in my life,” Smith raves. Quite an impressive endorsement from someone who was in a band with Keith Emerson.

Where does the inspiration come for such an epic piece? Retta says “Victorious” was originally called “Arabia.” He and Smith decided the lyrics should appeal to a wider audience, so they went back to the drawing board and recast the song. “The music feels violent to me,” the singer explains. “The ‘Arabia’ version gave me visions of men at war on horseback in the desert. It was already about battle. So a transition to the pre-battle scenario that you hear now is more natural.”

According to Smith, when work began on **Dig**, he had just gone through a nasty breakup, which set a dark tone for the first few tunes. “Back In Anger,” “No Money No Love” and “I Don’t Know What Love Is” all reflect the emotions the guitarist was experiencing.

As work progressed, Smith's mood started to lighten, which affected the direction of the music. For the final number, the uplifting "Live As One," a choir was added to sweeten the melody, ending the record on an extremely high and positive note.

Dark to light, hair-raising rockers to intense ballads and all things in between — Smith believes the diversity of material on **Dig** is inherent even in the Heaven & Earth moniker. "I think it sums up the music," he says.

"**Dig** is very different from the first album I was involved with," Wright adds. "That first album was more of a Stuart Smith solo record. This one is truly a band effort."

All the backing tracks on **Dig** were recorded at Ocean Studios in Burbank, California, and all the overdubs were done at the band's own Wine Cellar Studios in Woodland Hills, California. To further refine the record's sonic reach, Jenkins used a Closed Loop Analogue Signal Processor (CLASP), a device that integrates real analogue tape recording into digital tools like Pro Tools to create a warm and vintage sound. Both Van Halen and Aerosmith enlisted a CLASP on their most recent albums.

In the same tradition, Heaven & Earth brought in photographer/creative director Glen Wexler to create the cover art for **Dig**. Wexler has shot and designed over 300 album covers, including records by Van Halen, Black Sabbath and ZZ Top. He also directed the music videos for **Dig**, released last year.

The future has never looked brighter for Heaven & Earth. After years of stopping and starting, adjusting and shifting, Smith feels his time has come. "Everything sort of fell into place for this — the songs, the players, even the old-school approach to recording. I couldn't be more excited."

Heaven & Earth's debut UK tour dates are as follows:

Thursday, 26th June: O2 Academy 2, Birmingham - [Buy tickets](#)
Friday, 27th June: O2 ABC 2, Glasgow - [Buy tickets](#)
Saturday, 28th June: O2 Academy 2, Newcastle - [Buy tickets](#)
Sunday, 29th June: O2 Academy 2, Sheffield - [Buy tickets](#)
Tuesday, 1st July: O2 Academy 2, Liverpool - [Buy tickets](#)
Wednesday, 2nd July: O2 Academy, Islington - [Buy tickets](#)

Heaven & Earth online:

www.heavenandearthband.com
www.facebook.com/Heaven-and-Earth-Band
twitter.com/heavenearthband
www.youtube.com/user/HeavenandEarthBand

Heaven & Earth EPK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJW97xM5LnY>

Promo Videos: ['No Money, No Love'](#) & ['I Don't Know What Love Is'](#)

Behind the scenes footage: [Richie Sambora in the studio with Heaven & Earth](#)

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