

**Ponte del Diavolo** used to be a band I knew only by the name - fortunately enough, premiere of their new album made me do my homework. Eventually, it resulted in their full-length debut **Fire Blades from the Tomb** staying in my earphones and loudspeakers for quite a while.

To everyone who's not entirely convinced by the doom/black label on Metal Archives: fear not, since **Ponte del Diavolo** are not just another band reinterpreting the genre and plainly arranging different musical styles.

The band from Turin is – nomen omen – devilishly skilful in combining black metal, psychedelic/doom and occult rock, completing their signature sound with gothic rock inspirations, as well as some unexpected instrumental touches (one can mention synthesisers and clarinet here). Even though the first track, **Demone**, kicks off with a harsh, black metal tremolo, soon enough the stage is stolen by the hypnotising melody and **Elena Camusso's** characteristic, dramatism-filled vocals. Sure, some listeners prefer a different vocal manner, but those enchanted by her voice are sure to enjoy over 40 minutes of top-tier music. Personally, I find the frontwoman's skills and vocal expression to be the perfect fit with **Ponte del Diavolo's** music, bringing out the dramatism of their tracks without sounding kitschy or over the top.

**Fire Blades from the Tomb** features quite a few interesting, almost virtuoso-like motifs and lyrics both in Italian and in English. The perfect combination of these features can be found on **Covenant** with its excellent, contagious, rhythm and powerful bass. Dramatism of the Italians' repertoire is simply excellent here and the track loses none of its heaviness and gloom. One can even find some similarities between the band and **The Devil's Blood**. Hell only knows if this was done on purpose or purely coincidental...

Another short break from the rock vibe and a sonic shift towards slower, occultism-tinged sound, is **Red as the Sex of She who Lives in Death**. Tempo slows down while the atmosphere becomes psychedelic and doomy – sometimes so much that the track brings forth a mood similar to **Jess and the Ancient Ones'** music. The atmosphere is masterfully built with vocalizations, which adds to the dark, sinister mood.

On one of the following tracks, the excellent **La Razza**, the artists skilfully build up suspense and at the same time set the mood for the following tracks on the album. This trance-like, psychedelic atmosphere stays with us basically to the very end of the release. With its looped sound, **Nocturnal Veil** guarantees to entrance the listener and combined with the sound of clarinet, it can, without a doubt, be called "a masterpiece". Similarly, an eerie, chant-like singing on **Zero** is backed up by the heavy sound of distorted guitars, providing a hypnotising effect.

The final track is **The Weeping Song**, a cover of **Nick Cave**. The band presented this song with a brilliant twist, with its opening motif being appropriately "blackened" and the whole track sounding both dark and heavy. It can only be called a true work of art – **Ponte del Diavolo** play with the convention and definitely know how to set together diverse musical styles.

The heaviness of rock together with the influence of numerous different genres, occult vibe and truly outstanding vocals prove that the listeners can immerse themselves in a sound associated with widely understood occult rock bands. Still, the group doesn't just follow these artists with a "copy-paste" approach – it has much more of a tribute feel and clearly

remains an inspiration. And, of course, inspiration should always come from the best. **Ponte del Diavolo** have released a very promising full-length debut and I'll be sure to follow their next steps closely.

**Rating: 8,5/10**