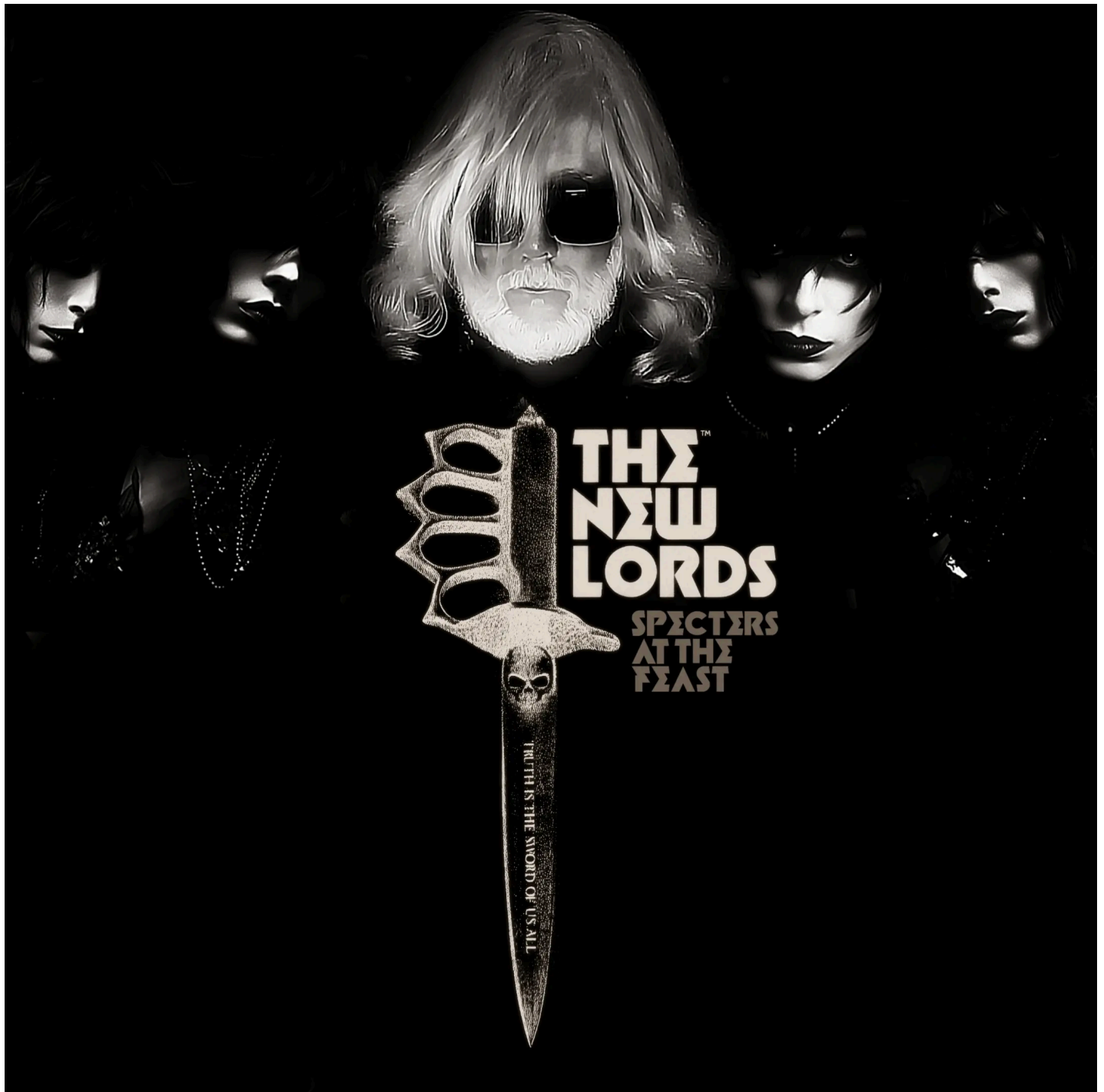




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## VCUarts alum Steven Marque has remained in tune with his dream

The interior design graduate found himself singing with his favorite college-era band – and is still making music.



Steven Marque showcasing merchandise for album "Specters at the Feast." (courtesy photo)

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By Audrey Alder

Interior design, music and caregiving aren't a common trio, but along the unique path that connects them, Steven Marque touched on his "fantastical dream" – thanks in part to the confidence he honed at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts.

Marque – that's his professional surname, derived from the formal Steven Mark Blankfield – graduated in 1987 with a degree in interior design. He points to three factors that have propelled him: his artistic passion, his parents' encouragement and "the incredible belief my professors instilled in me" at VCU.

"[Those professors] didn't just encourage me – they made me feel like a superstar when succeeding, as well as making me feel healthy humility when failing," Marque said. "They infused me with the certainty that anything I wanted to create, whether artistically or professionally, was entirely within reach."



(courtesy photo)

Building off a senior-year architecture internship in Richmond that one of his instructors, Kelly Ault, had facilitated in 1987, Marque began more than a decade of work that included computer-aided design and space planning; facilities

management, asset tracking and planning; and executive marketing management positions with the likes of American Express and Bank of America.

With his mother fighting leukemia, Marque relocated to Florida to be near his parents. He expanded his skills to web design, began to work independently – and those two factors became the springboard to pursue what he “though was a completely fantastical dream: becoming the lead singer of my favorite rock band from my college days.”

That would be the Lords of the New Church, a British-American rock band active in the 1980s. In the early 2000s, Marque reached out to the band manager to propose a fresh digital presence for the group. As it turns out, the manager and the lead guitarist, Brian James, had been discussing a new version of the Lords – the band’s original lead singer had died – and Marque’s outreach became an opportunity to pitch his singing and songwriting skills as well as his design talent.

“Eight months later, I was living this surreal dream,” Marque said. “Not only [was I] singing with the band but also collaborating on music and art with the original founding guitarist. That moment felt like a true intersection of my career and artistic passion.”

After launching Marque’s web design and reforming as a group, The Lords of the New Church were making music again, even touring Europe twice.

As the band continued to perform, Marque had relocated from London to Hollywood, where some connections led to a solo contract. That prompted his departure from The Lords of the New Church, and several solo albums followed – but family soon became his top priority again.

From 2007 to 2017, Marque devoted his time caring for both of his elderly parents. He continued playing guitar, singing and writing songs, but it wasn’t until his parents passed away that he got back into the studio.



Navigating the care of his parents as well as his own post-concussion health issues, Marque had turned to his creative practice for emotional release.

“It wasn’t just a career—it was a lifesaver ... a much-needed outlet to keep my mind and soul balanced as I navigated the overwhelming responsibilities of caregiving,” Marque said. “My art not only allowed me to stay connected to myself but also helped me maintain the strength needed to care for them as best as I could during their final years.”



The New Lords' "Specter at the Feast" album cover. (courtesy photo)

Today, Marque continues to produce and release music as a solo artist through his self-named publishing company. His efforts have included albums that reimagined work from acts including Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Steely Dan, and he recently released a theatrical soundtrack titled “Returneth of The Macbeth.”

And with his college fan days still in mind, Marque also founded The New Lords in 2021. After several years of writing, recording and producing, he released the debut album, “Specters at the Feast,” on Feb. 1 this year.

Looking back – and ahead – Marque is grateful that VCU still helps his life journey find its rhythm.

“I really was filled with so much artistic confidence from my time at VCU that I just knew the right thing would come along,” he said. “That’s kind of been the common thread through my whole professional career – just accepting everything as it comes, knowing that the right thing is going to come my way. And even if it’s the wrong thing, approaching it with some sort of beginner energy means that you’ll learn something from it.”

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