

## REVIEW OF "NUMBER TEN"

By PAUL BAKER (RADIO ARFM)

Ten years and ten albums is quite a record for Manning but with this tenth release, called funnily enough, Number Ten, Guy Manning has probably produced his most complete album to date.

A sweeping statement maybe, but having been a keen follower of Guy's music for about 8 years and having witnessed some amazing musical moments I honestly feel that this album is the best yet.

Starting with the rocking 'Ships', upbeat, driving rhythm, captivating hooks, just try sitting still to this one. In turn powerful and gentle, always melodic but full on, just a fantastic way to open an album.

'The Final Chapter', is I suppose more typical 'Manning' whatever that is? Once again an intoxicating blend of power and melody. A funky feel creeps into this piece, with the usual subtle changes in style, but I won't spoil it by giving all of the secrets away, you'll have to listen for yourselves.

'An Ordinary Day' is probably the most beautiful melody that Guy has penned thus far. Gentle and captivating, Guy uses his voice to its full potential on this one, gentle and expressive at times, then at its powerful resonant best. A gentle song that has an amazing impact on this listener, how can such a beautiful melodic song be so powerful?

After the quiet reflection of 'An Ordinary Day', 'Bloody Holiday' comes along almost like a slap. A sideways, almost self effacing look at the delights, or otherwise of the institution that is the summer holiday. A jazzy middle section, with a subtle nod to 10CC, sorry you'll just have to listen to the lyrics.

'Valentine's Day' takes us back into gently flowing melodic waters. Something slightly different here, with Julie King joining in on vocal duties to wonderful effect. This song builds in power and brings in some majestic instrumental moments, pulling all of the best elements of a Manning composition together in fine style, with maybe a subtle hint of early Electric Light Orchestra at times.

'A Road Less Travelled' starts with a real Celtic feel, the song glides effortlessly along ebbing and flowing, building, rising, falling, gripping and enticing but with maybe a darker more melancholy message in the lyrics. As always, Guy has built in some dramatic changes into the music, but still gets the song to feel just right, the instrumental passage is one of those moments where power is represented by dramatic use of tone and style of the instruments rather than raw volume.

'Another Lazy Sunday' is anything but lazy, a real, jazz funk feel to this one, probably the most commercial song Guy has written thus far! Marvelous sax on this one in particular.

So on to the last track on the album, 'The House on the Hill', probably the quickest 15 minute track you'll ever come across. What am I talking about; well it just doesn't feel like a 15 minute track. Gentle opening explodes out into a more upbeat section with a hint of Tull hanging in the air but quickly slots back into a more magical Manning sound. This track again flows, I'm sorry but I just don't know how else to describe it. Almost as if you're reading a musical book, each change in the music is a turn of the page, the story continues and it all fits together in an elaborate yet hugely accessible musical tapestry.

In short , Number 10 has set the bar for all other releases in the Progressive Rock Genre for 2009, if this had been released in the late 70's or early 80's then we'd have been seeing Mr Manning on our TV screens in the endless documentaries about how 'good the old prog was'.

However don't let that put you off, this isn't a album that wallows in stale mid 70's styling, it is very much today's progressive rock, time changes, a blend of styles, excellent vocals, virtuoso instrumentation, what more can I say, simply marvelous.

Paul Baker  
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