



Studio Album, 2010

Charlestown

Guy Manning Eclectic Prog

Review by Simon Jackson

★★★★★ I confess to being an avid fan of Manning since their 'View From My Window' album back in 2003. Since then I have acquired the back catalogue & bought each successive album with enthusiasm. His albums never fail to entertain & vary from album to album, when you consider the frequency these are released this becomes all the more impressive. It is obvious that there is a great deal of care & attention within the production of each album than a new-comer may first think.

'Charlestown' is Mannings 11th release to date & if you believe the website a 'challenging listen'. After a couple spins of the CD I can say that this is not the case [as far as I'm concerned anyway] & the album is far from challenging.

The opening title track is epic in both length & scope, taking you on a journey & guiding you through all the events on the way. Guy always appears to research his subject matter carefully & this shows in his lyrics. In fact I have found myself drawn into the story as it unfolds, because of this the 35 minute duration seems to pass very quickly indeed. The music follows the storyline very well & there is hardly any repetition in the riffs & phrases used, so it keeps you interested through to the end.

The next track 'Caliban & Ariel' is a gentle breather after the epic opener & a pleasant ballad. The multi vocal harmonies showcase Manning's scope for writing touching songs.

'The Man In The Mirror' is more upbeat & brings more substance. The lyric suggests a more somber subject matter, which seems at odds with the music, however it works really well.

'Clocks' is another ballad with a beautiful melody. This is different to the other ballad on the album as it has a more complex arrangement. The chorus is catchy & stays with you after it has long finished.

'T.I.C.' is definitely the bounciest track on the album & is another winner. I have been lucky enough to hear this track in the live setting & it works incredibly well.

'Finale' is Manning's first real instrumental track & is definitely a nod to 'Los Endos' in style & execution. Again the variation throughout the track keeps your attention & it is fun to spot the snippets of other tracks on the album along the way.

The Manning band work very well collectively & this shows. The music presented here is both well written & played, a quality that seems to [amazingly] get better with each new release. If you get an opportunity to see Manning live I would highly recommend them, they prove that this quality of musicianship is not some studio trickery & are well worth the admission in both acoustic & full electric band formats.

Another winner from Manning to my ears & definitely not as 'challenging' as the creator may suggest. I would recommend this album to anyone interested in exploring the Manning catalogue for the first time as well as the seasoned Manning fan [if you don't already have it, shame on you, buy it now?].

Good stuff Manning, I now await your 12th album?
