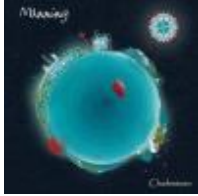


Manning "Charlestown" Harmonic CD Review by Todders (Adrian Jones - Harmonic Lizard)



Guy Manning is a name that most you should be familiar with if you follow the progressive rock scene and has released a number of well received albums over the past few year most of them to critical acclaim from the music press.

I have been eagerly awaiting the release of this album over the past few weeks as a new Manning album is always something musically special.

Guy has also mentioned that the record would be a challenging listen and that fans would need to give this album a chance as it was not as immediate as his previous albums...

With this in the back of my mind the first track "Charlestown" which is just over 35 minutes long started with Guy singing "Coming Home" and immediately I was comfortable in the knowledge that I was listening to an artist at the top of his game this historic tale is told with the usual passion, emotion and musical diversity that Guy is known for.

This epic song which centres around one voyage made by the Barquetine, the Waterwitch in and around 1805 has some superb keyboard, saxophone and guitar interplay it has so many different parts to the song it is almost impossible to describe them all. The vocals fit the mood and the atmosphere of the track perfectly, the song carries you along on their voyage of adventure and is a masterpiece in storytelling and probably the best song to date Manning have written and recorded.

From the above paragraph you could be led to believe that we are talking about a concept album here, this is not really the case even though the track "Charlestown" is a mini epic in its own right.

The next track Caliban and Ariel is placed perfectly in the running order of the album and contains a very heartfelt vocal by Guy, it is backed and accompanied by some very subtle piano and guitar to great effect. It is the perfect foil to the musical odyssey you were taken on by the previous track.

Man In the Mirror follows and starts with some excellent saxophone and keyboards and immediately hits the ground running with another great narrative from Guy. This is the most immediate track for me on the album and has an excellent sing-along chorus

which I can imagine would come across really well in a live environment, when you mix this with the number of different instruments on display here you have another track that you will certainly not forget in a hurry.

Another change in pace greets us with the next track “Clocks” and this is a lesson in how to create a haunting ,and melodic song within the four minute format. This track has bags of atmosphere whilst containing another thought provoking vocal and excellent chorus. The song remains capable of losing you in its tapestry of emotions present here.

There is so many twists and turns with this album and next we have an almost feel good fun song from Manning, where the other songs on the album feel like they have some sort of personal in depth feeling attached to them, this time we have much more focussed Manning band thoroughly enjoying themselves with blues guitar, saxophone and flute all combining together with a very laid back vocal from Guy, a very different but very enjoyable song.

To finish the album off we have a purely instrumental track aptly called “Finale” which clocks in at over 7 minutes and if you were in any doubt about whether Manning could deliver without any vocals prepared to be proved wrong. In parts it is a sort of reprise of the title track and the associated them but with some complex interplay between all the different instruments, the whole Manning band get to shine on this track.

I luckily have been very privileged this year to review some superb albums by a number of different artists, this album from Manning is certainly in my top three of albums I have heard this year. The album is set to be released on the 25th October 2010 and in my opinion it is a must buy if you are a fan of modern progressive rock it really is that good.

The album is available to pre-order from www.guymanning.com

Reviewed By Adrian Jones (Todders) for Harmonic Lizard