



ANSER'S TREE

Guy Manning

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Prog Reviewer

★★★★☆ This is my first acquaintance with GUY MANNING's solo albums (his band Parallel Or 90 Degrees I haven't yet listened to. He appeared on a TANGENT album I've heard, and on the "Spaghetti Epic" anthology together with his band mate Andy Tillison). I was happily surprised about the quality of this album. And not only music is good, also the visual and narrative level is interesting: each track is about a character (some of them may be real historical persons, I'm not sure, but the living years of the last few ones go to the future so obviously they are fictitious!) and their stories are printed after the lyrics. For example: woman in the 16th century presumed to be a witch; a miner in a mining accident; New York's first woman police who gets killed by a criminal; scientists dealing with the environmental crisis.

Songs are longish (7 tracks make 63 minutes) but not very symphonic or Neo-Proggish in structure; there appears refrains and choruses to some degree and there are no notable solos. But they never get boring, and they are clearly progressive rock with a rich instrumental palette featuring e.g. mandolin and reeds. Jethro Tull -reminding folkish touch is present throughout the album. Which leads to the thing that was circling in my mind right from the start...

Boy, he sounds disturbingly much like Ian Anderson! No, his voice is not as distinctive and warm, but his way of producing the sound is very close to Anderson's. If you like Tull, that shouldn't be a problem per se, but it may feel slightly annoying. Does he imitate Anderson consciously?

Another thing that decreases my rating a little is that the songs don't differ VERY much from each other. For example the tempo is more or less the same; I was hoping for either slower or faster tempo here and there. But still, recommended and easily worth four stars.

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