

Manning "Charlestown" by John Sealey (Progressive Ears)

I've been playing this CD regularly since it dropped through the letter-box at the end of last week. The title track is hugely impressive and I envy anyone attending the live show on Saturday. (23rd Oct 2010 Ed.)

"Charlestown" (the track) may be an "epic" but it's also a stirring suite of well put together tunes which flow excellently throughout the whole 30+ minutes. The most pleasing thing for me is the that the subject matter of the "story" and it's lyrics fit so well with the musical themes. Guy Manning, I think, is a composer who understands the link between the poetry of the lyrical content and the drama of the music. I can't see this being anything other than a real "grower" for me and I'd heartily recommend it to anyone who has an interest in the written word as well as the music played.

Actually, although I've so far concentrated more on the title track (it's 35 minutes long, back in the day it's what I was used to for a complete album!), the other five songs on the CD are very good too! I'm kind of saving them as the dessert when I'm getting full of the main course.

"Caliban and Ariel" is a really gentle piece that, again, fits the lyric beautifully. I suppose it keeps the watery theme going too! "The Man in the Mirror" is a tale that reflects that sometimes life is just not full of happy endings, delivered with real pathos, I think. I like this song very much. "Clocks", another rather gentle song with a beautiful and very wistful lyric, may turn out to be a personal favourite for me - only time will tell! In some ways it reminds me of The Musical Box in it's sentiment, although interpreted differently, of course. "T.I.C" takes us into more up tempo territory with it's more blues-rock feel - a bit of fun here I think and even a bit of Wishbone Ash twin lead and some Tull flutes! "Finale" wraps it all up with a full on instrumental coda rounding up some of the themes from, I think, the title track? The reworking here works superbly well and provides a fitting end to a high quality album. A little irony at the end really; an album so brilliantly served in it's lyrical content ending with an instrumental. I like that and it says a lot about the artist.

There you go, I've done the lot now. It's a pleasure from start to finish - a highlight in what has been a super year for the music I love.

Nowback to my epic!!