

Round table reviews of MANNING "Number Ten" at PROGARCHIVES

REVIEW OF - NUMBER TEN

By [tszirmay](#)

Guy Manning is severely underrated and Prog's best kept secret, not getting enough tender loving care from us fans. But he troops on like a dedicated soldier, producing quality albums, dripping with juicy folk/rock/blues adventures that have a storyline and a delivery to boot. His tenth album in 10 years proves that he is prolific as well as supremely talented. "Ships" is an infectious cavalcade with bruising organ, rippling guitar and that suave sax that cleverly permeates all his compositions. A sing-along Springsteen like chorus and a rapid pace keeps the toes tapping, as the wind breezes through the open windows of your speeding sports car. Laura Fowles blows with some Clemonsian fury, the synths crackling in the maze, the full fledged guitar solo searching and searing. Yeah, babe! "The Final Chapter" is a moodier venture, perhaps closer to classic Brit folk, loaded with flutes, fiddles and bluesy guitar fills and a light yet impassioned vocal, replete with that now famous nasal twang (a dash Ian Anderson, a slice of Dave Cousins and a tad Al Stewart) and an uncanny ability to compose songs that have meaning. The keyboard bombast adds oomph to the proceedings, clearly progressive and not some folk yawn- inducing lattice, as the instrumental sections display great technical musicianship and that gutsy spirit that must be so utterly amazing live, certainly one of his finest tunes. "An Ordinary Day" lullabies with delicate piano, the spotlight firmly on Manning's trembling voice and his deeply felt lyrics (Cousins, eat your heart out!), condemning the routines of daily life. A stunningly gorgeous melody lights the chorus up with genuine simplicity and the "candles burning bright" reflects on the dim reality of a forlorn existence. "Bloody Holiday" is a sardonic wink and humorous nod at your typical British travel experience , a take on 10CC'genial "Dreadlock Holiday" (mentioned too) with hilarious lyrics dealing with the pains of voyage, the sarcasm and self deprecation dripping with that English savvy. A superb groove section with e-piano, sax and synthesizer really gets the mood aroused. Fun, fun, fun ("Enjoy the ride?") that even hints at early Manzanera or Eno albums. "Valentine's Night" is quite surprising as Guy raises an octave and sings high- pitched with very English skill, as an organ rolls into unseen musical gulfs, loaded with colossal string orchestrations that heighten the vague melancholia of a sorrowful evening once, long ago. This is Manning at his most creative, gliding self-assured in a musical terrain he is very comfortable with and its obvious. The 10 minute + "A Road Less Travelled" returns to the slight Gaelic influences that are so particular to the British Isles' musical tradition, mandolin taking the front and centre stage with that magic flute , as Guy relates another one of his patented stories about war, heroes and homecomings. Timeless and unpretentious music that flows effortlessly and soothes the soul, it has a mid-section that evokes the sweaty deserts of the troubled lands of war, swirling synths and cascading guitar follies adding to the magnificence of the remembrance theme. Classy guy, Guy! "Another Lazy Sunday" slithers into raunchier expanses, featuring exotic percussives and a quirkier atmosphere that again reveals some early ENO-esque humor with more dashes of 10CC harmonies, another example of an artist enjoying his craft and not swimming in pretence and arrogance. The lazy Sunday sax delivers its sexy message once again with exhilarated verve. "The House on the Hill" is the 15 minute 4 part epic finale, flute propelled by organ (I bet that's Tillison!) that recalls the Tull extravagances with typical Manning passion and attention to detail, some Beatles-like harmonies and a sublime sax blast that exudes warm fury and

intricate bravado, the following keyboard section features funky lightning fast piano and an expressive guitar solo that veers towards unconventional dissonance. Manning always surprises, not really pigeon-mouldable, constantly on the vanguard of something comfortable yet elusive. I deeply enjoy my 6 albums, I need to get the missing 4 soon because I am convinced that we are in the presence of a prog giant, easily within the prolific realms of Steve Wilson, Xavier Phideaux, Andy Tillison (yeah, love him or hate him) or Roine Stolt. Excellent opus, Guy. I hope you forgive my admiration for your splendid work.

4.5 Downings

REVIEW OF - NUMBER TEN

By [SIMON JACKSON](#)

You can almost set your watch by this man, give him just twelve months & he will have written, recorded & produced a great new album. This is a momentum he has kept going now for TEN years. A fact that becomes even more amazing when you hear how good each new album sounds. Not to mention the variety & scope contained within each release. This new CD does not break this momentum & the quantity of previous releases will give a clue to the origin of this album's title. The first track 'Ships' is a great start to the album. With its driving rhythm & catchy hook it gets you attention straight away. This made a strong impression on me the first time I heard it. There seems to be a lot going on in this track musically & it sounds huge. An opening number on a 'grand scale' that doesn't hold back. An excellent start!

The next song 'The Final Chapter' has a very catchy keyboard start before settling down to a more laidback vocal. This gives way to a keyboard dominated instrumental before returning to the vocal melody. Although this time the vocal is not as relaxed as earlier & has a sense of urgency.

'Ordinary Day' follows & slows things down a bit, a breather if you like after the previous two.

The second track to immediately impress is 'Bloody Holiday!' which surprises me. Lyrically it showcases Guy's humour & musically it's really catchy. At first I thought this maybe a bit of a throw away track but the more I hear it the more I look forward to it coming up.

'Valentines Night' is quite reflective in mood & pace, very easy on the ear. The instrumentation is subtle but yet effective.

Next up is 'The Road Less Travelled' which starts off in an easy going song structure building gradually as it goes. For me it really kicks off at the 6min mark. That's when the instrumental section takes over & things change up a gear. Great stuff indeed & this eventually returns to the melody from which it came.

After that we get 'Another Lazy Sunday'. This is a catchy song with a punchy beat & some interesting percussion. Lyrically the subject matter is exactly what the title suggests.

Then we come to the grand end piece 'The House on The Hill'. This is a great track which wanders beautifully through different musical styles. This really shows all that is good about Manning albums. The track is divided into four parts. It starts slowly with a simple piano & voice, it then progresses into picking up the pace & adding some Tull-like flute work. We also get treated to some

nice Saxophone before a very jazzy keyboard part, then onto a guitar break, then another. The flute is back in play before suddenly it all dies down to a much more sombre mood. The vocal comes back for the third & fourth parts of the song. Although the pace has slowed, the intensity has not & as with most other tracks the sound is still on its grand scale. This gives THOTH a spacious feel, something which it truly deserves & does not waste.

The production across the album is very impressive & continues the high standard where the previous 'Bilston' left off. It sounds amazing.

A note must also be made of the package for this CD. Although a jewel case release Guy has managed to create some very nice images within the booklet. All the images are thoughtfully put together to reflect the song lyrics for each track. They also cleverly incorporate the cover 'symbol' within the design giving a sense of continuity throughout.

In summary this is my tenth Manning album (as well as Guy's) & I can recommend this one without any hesitation. In fact I can recommend the other nine just as easily. The opener 'Ships' is streaming on Guy's MySpace page, give it a listen & see what you think.

Highly Recommended & a great addition to the Manning back catalogue

REVIEW OF - NUMBER TEN **By [toroddfuglesteg](#)**

I only know Guy Manning from THE TANGENT and it is 16 months since I their last album hit my ears and a new universe opened up for me. I purchased this album together with some other MANNING albums and forgot about it. I finally gave it a listen some days ago and..... VOW !!!

This album is an album of songs and not what I normally regard as a progressive rock album with one theme running through it. The songs are coherent, but also diverse at the same time. The album opens with the rather frisky Ships. A good opener, but nothing special. Still, it gets my attention and I eagerly awaits the second song. The Final Chapter starts almost like an Irish Jig and continues down with a very interesting melody and good references to THE TANGENT. The instrumental middle part has a lot of references to the Canterbury Scene and the likes of CARAVAN pops up before the Irish theme comes back. Excellent ! The first ballad An Ordinary Day is absolute excellent with it's moody, pastoral theme. STRAWBS is a reference here. I absolute love this song. Bloody Holiday! is a funny song with references to last year's total chaos at the British Airports. Heathrow Airport was an absolute shamble and Guy Manning describe it in a funny way. His last line is something about "next year in Margate". Margate is a beach resort just outside London and an old favourite among proggers and holiday makers. What would prog rock be without Margate ? Anyway, the song is pretty funny with some good Canterbury Scene like keyboards in the middle. Thumbs up from me and I will take his advice about staying away from English airports in the future. Guy cares about his fans !

The fifth song Valentine's Night is another lovely ballad with some introspective moods and pace. It is another one of my favourites here. The keyboards is very nice and the mood almost dark.

Superb. The ten minutes long A Road Less Travelled starts with an Irish theme and continues down a very interesting path where the music builds up to a very interesting instrumental part. There is shades of STRAWBS and THE TANGENT all over this melody. But most of all; this is Guy Manning. And he is very good at what he is doing. This is another favourite of mine. Another Lazy Sunday is a rather catchy and fast song with a great keyboard theme. It is almost a hawk among eagles here, but still a good song. I like it although this is the weakest song on the album. Some may say it is the best song on this album. You decide. The fifteen minutes long The House On The Hill is the closing song here. It pretty much sums up the album with some excellent melodic parts. The references are the Canterbury Scene, JETHRO TULL, THE TANGENT and PENDRAGON. But most of all; Guy Manning himself. When the last tone fades out, my head is filled with great music and I am a happier man.

This is a truly great album which in my view sits somewhere between THE TANGENT and STRAWBS. This is the first MANNING album I have heard and I not an MANNING expert by any means. But from what I hear from this album, Guy Manning is most definite an artist I need to spend time on. This album is on my heavy rotation list and Guy Manning is on my Christmas Card list.

4.5 Stars