



Band: Manning

CD Title: “The Root, The Leaf & The Bone”

Band Website: www.guymanning.com

Label: Festival Music

Label Website: www.festival-music.co.uk

Release Date: 2013

This is **Manning**'s 14th studio album since 1999, virtually one album every year like clockwork. In that time he has crystalized his performance skills and writing style. And yet, this album, *The Root, The Leaf & The Bone* holds more than a few surprises. As always **Manning** handles the bulk of the musicianship (acoustic 6 & 12-string and classical guitars, bass, diddlybow, drums, electric guitars, FX, incantation bell, keyboards, orchestrals, mandolin, percussion, samples, lead and backing vocals) but enlists the band help of Dave Million (electric & acoustic guitars, banjo), Rick Henry (percussion), Kris Hudson-Lee (bass) and Julie King (backing vocals). Then there's a group of more than a dozen other musicians brought in on specific tracks, including a string quartet. More than ever there are some new musical angles at play here.

The title track for *The Root, The Leaf & The Bone* [11:59], the longest of the bunch this time shows **Manning** at his quirky best with a tune that runs through a number of segmented permutations including some darker and more odd-tempoed than ever before. This track really presents some new musical adventures. In some ways this is the most adventurous track I've heard in a while; perhaps an intentional effort to bring in some new musical motifs and it really works well. Track two “Deconstruction Blues” [3:46] will satisfy all the Jethro Tull fans out there for sure with both its blues feel and flute work. Then “Autumn Song” [7:06] one of many mid-length tracks, covers more traditional song-writer territory with its wonderfully melodic theme and acoustic guitar and piano intro. Throughout these compositions the use of various stringed instruments like cellos and fiddle or bassoons, trumpets, saxes and flutes create different musical feels. Not everything starts as you might expect; sometimes it'll be a different use of an instrument or sometimes it will be an unusual stylistic approach. On some of the later tracks, the fiddle becomes more prominent really changing the overall tone from orchestral to more folksy. Overall it's a much more eclectic feel this time around.

With this release it's clear that **Manning** has not run out of musical tricks nor has he decided to simply sit back on his laurels. *The Root, The Leaf & The Bone* manages to retain plenty of his classic sound but manages to infuse some new and different vibes to keep fans guessing. Melodies continue to be the cornerstone on which these compositions hang together but the sinews doing the holding are very new and fresh. Wonderful stuff...and certainly recommended.