

Ralph Towner - Lost And Found (1995)

Written by bluesever
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01. Harbinger 2'36 02. Trill Ride 3'00 03. Elan Vital 6'19 04. Summer's End 5'12 05. Col Legno 3'15 06. Soft Landing 2'16 07. Flying Cows 4'56 08. Mon Enfant 4'04 09. A Breath Away 5'15 10. Scrimshaw 1'27 11. Midnight Blue...Red Shift 3'24 12. Moonless 4'37 13. Sco Cone 3'44 14. Tattler 3'06 15. Taxi's Waiting 4'34 Musicians: Ralph Towner - classical and 12-strings guitars Denney Goodhew - sopranino, soprano, baritone sax, bass clarinet Marc Johnson - double bass Jon Christensen - drums

This 1995 date shows guitarist and composer Ralph Towner in estimable form. For a guy who's released literally dozens of records under his own name and with his band Oregon and played on dozens more, he still seems to have plenty to say with only two guitars in his arsenal (well, there was the period where he used a Prophet Five synthesizer with Oregon, but we won't go into that here). Using familiar (Marc Johnson and Jon Christensen) and new (Denny Goodhew) faces, Towner goes searching for that elusive muse he has been pursuing for over 30 years: the root of what makes complex harmonic and melodic improvisation possible. His relentlessness is in fine shape here. Using the horns and Johnson's large dynamic range for texture and shading, he, with Christensen in tow, can go ferreting through intervallic forests of prismatic chromaticism and changeling modal systems to place notions of "song" firmly within the context of spontaneous composition. Nowhere is this more evident than on the striking "Élan Vital." Towner opens the track and Goodhew follows him playing soprano. There are three melodic exchanges, each more far-reaching than the last, before Towner goes off with Christensen trading fours and slipping through chorded wreaths and trills of augmented sevenths and ninths. There is a space at midpoint where Johnson, for the sake of adding color to the melodic abstraction, begins by playing chords and then others based on those, singly, then doubly, until the bass sings! There are 15 tunes on *Lost and Found*, most of them Towner's compositions, but two by Johnson -- "Col Legno" and "Sco Cone" -- deserve special note. On the first, his bowing of this wrinkled, out of time immemorial melody, and his restraint to keep the timbres in the piece from mixing too much, are stunning. On the second, a solo work, his subtle lyricism is in dramatic contrast to his funkiness and staccato playing. It was gracious of Towner to include them. This is a guitar player's recording, but it is obvious that Towner writes for ensembles equally well, and he has clearly written the vast majority of this recording for this particular

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ensemble. It's seamless from start to finish; it moves and is far less ponderous than some of his earlier outings; it's a winner for sure. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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