

Sting - Symphoncities (2010)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 29 August 2010 13:26 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 March 2021 17:30

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1. *Next To You* 2:30
2. *Englishman In New York* 4:23
3. *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic* 4:56
4. *I Hung My Head* 5:31
5. *You Will Be My Ain True Love* 3:44
6. *Roxanne* 3:37
7. *When We Dance* 5:26
8. *The End Of The Game* 6:07
9. *I Burn For You* 4:03
10. *We Work The Black Seam* 7:18
11. *She's Too Good For Me* 3:03
12. *The Pirate's Bride* 5:02

Sting - Primary Artist, Acoustic Guitar, Vocals
with:

Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra
London Classical Players Ensemble
New York Chamber Consort Ensemble

Musicians:

Dominic Miller - Acoustic Guitar, Guitar, Electric Guitar
Rob Mathes - Acoustic Guitar, Piano, Conductor

Gerald Gregory - Concert Master
Jackie Shave - Concert Master
Lisa Kim - Concert Master
Steven Mercurio - Conductor

David Finck - Acoustic Bass
Chad Yarborough - Horn
Larry Di Bello - Horn
Theo Primus - Horn
David Peel - Horn

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Ira Coleman - Bass
Dick Clark - Trombone
Birch Johnson - Trombone
Jeff Nelson - Bass Trombone
James De La Garza - Trumpet
Dylan Schwab - Trumpet
Jeff Kievit - Trumpet
Jim Hynes - Trumpet
Anthony Pleeth - Cello
Aaron Heick - Clarinet
Marcus Rojas - Tuba
Shelley Woodworth - Oboe
Jo Lawry - Background Vocals
David Cossin - Percussion
Joe Bonadio – Percussion

Symphonicities is Sting's tenth studio album, sharing its name with his most recent tour and no doubt playfully reminiscent in title to Synchronicity, the final album from his band The Police all the way back in 1983. Heralded as Sting's greatest hits, re-imagined for symphonic arrangement, he is joined by the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra in a delightfully alternative album suitable for fans old and new alike.

Symphonicities doesn't waste time with tune-up notes or gentle whisperings. Any doubts that an orchestral arrangement of Next To You could ever match the fast-paced, rock-based guitar riffs of the original 1978 The Police classic are quickly cast aside when a furious wave of violins rushes forward in perfectly measured harmony, keeping both Sting and the listener on their toes as the album begins.

Listening further, Englishman In New York, Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic and Roxanne are all present and correct. Unsurprisingly, they provide some of the album's biggest highlights too: these are songs that have been around for a long time, covered to death by many different artists over the years. Yet with the backing of a full orchestra and the original recording artist sounding as passionate and vocally powerful on them as ever, new life is born. It is a wonderful feeling to rediscover the melodic and lyrical beauty of these timeless classics in a way that doesn't cheapen their memory in the slightest.

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Some critics have argued that these reinterpretations don't stray far enough from their original incarnations. Although I largely disagree with such sentiments, it isn't exactly hard to sympathise with such complaints either: swap the clarinet solo in Englishman In New York back to a soprano saxophone and you certainly wouldn't be a stone's throw away from the original song. Personal taste will largely dictate whether the changes introduced dampen or elevate the original songs for each individual listener.

Yet it does sound different enough to warrant praise and to Sting's credit there is plenty of reinterpretation here where it counts. Some songs would suffer greatly if too far removed from their original versions; changes to each arrangement are made with respect. Roxanne in particular has a beautiful new introduction that will be notable in its absence whenever the original song is played on the radio from now on. Elsewhere, Sting's back-catalogue is allowed to shine with tunes making appearances that casual fans may have previously passed over, but will certainly remember from now on.

Overall, Symphoncities is a delightful album that tries something new and largely delivers. Each song was written by Sting throughout his illustrious career, earning him the right to redeliver them in this new style. The fact he has done so without it seeming like a mere cash-in is admirable, although I am somewhat suspicious that this is only a one disk release. The twelve songs selected work well but Symphoncities does omit many more obvious choices that would have made great inclusions. As a result, a few points must be knocked off while I wait for the as-of-yet unannounced Symphoncities 2. ---Marty Mulrooney, alternativemagazineonline.co.uk

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