

Wishbone Ash - Clan Destiny (2006)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 19 September 2012 16:32 - Last Updated Friday, 31 July 2020 15:07

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1. "Eyes Wide Open" 2. "Dreams Outta Dust" 3. "Healing Ground" 4. "Steam Town"
5. "Loose Change" 6. "Surfing a Slow Wave" 7. "Slime Time" 8. "Capture The Moment"
9. "Your Dog" 10. "The Raven" 11. "Motherless Child" Musicians: Andy Powell - guitar, vocals Muddy Manninen - guitar Bob Skeat - bass Ray Weston – drums

Wishbone Ash was mistakenly lumped in with the boogie bands of the late '60s and early '70s when it first started out, but the group soon developed its own voice—a majestic sound of intertwining guitars and regal vocals, matched by a certain propensity to improvise upon lyrical imagery of knights and warriors that made the group sound like refugees from King Arthur's court with guitars instead of swords.

Not surprisingly, the band's been through more than its share of personnel changes since then, but it soldiers on under the aegis of guitarist Andy Powell these days, constantly touring and regularly recording. Clan Destiny is a play on words that carries more than a little significance when you listen to the current Ash lineup (though some more action photos would have been preferable to the lyrics printed in the CD book liner).

It's one thing to deliberately try to recreate a distinctive sound and style, quite another to actually do it. Listening to the opening track, it's absolutely uncanny to hear the tenor vocals mesh with the dual guitars that harmonize to create hooks. The effect is the same on the next track, "Dreams Outta Dust, but the little things make it sound different, including how the second vocal enters on the second line of the verse while a mandolin murmurs in the background. The largely original material on this disc, recorded in just over three weeks in Massachusetts, takes a variety of forms. "Healing Ground, for instance, alternates a dirty guitar figure that acts as a refrain, the dynamics of which are highlighted by way the instruments drop out on the bridge to

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reveal a sole falsetto vocal.

Clearly Powell has assembled a band with a palpable chemistry, including some not untalented, though perhaps overachieving, musicians. Yet you can't really deny the savvy of bassist Bob Skeat, second guitarist Muddy Manninen and drummer Bob Weston, nor their versatility: Skeat plays various keyboards, while Manninen handles lap steel and slide (the way he decorates "Your Dog demonstrates how he serves the song, instead of flashing pure technique). And for his part, Powell, still brandishing a Gibson flying-V guitar, does an admirable job on vocals—and like his three compatriots, he knows that less is definitely more when it comes to soloing.

In fact, Clan Destiny keeps improvisation in tight rein. Wishbone Ash uses the studio as a means to craft smart arrangements, rather than confine jamming. Nevertheless, the quartet generates some momentum on "Steam Town, while the instrumental "Surfing a Slow Wave sounds at once everything like vintage Wishbone Ash and something more, its delicate tandem lines echoed in the melancholy of "loose change. ---Doug Collette, allabout.jazz

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