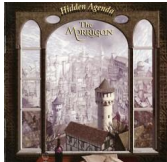


The Morrigan - Hidden Agenda (2002)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 02 January 2020 15:15 -

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1 *Swallow's Tail* 2 *In The End / Tristan's Lament* 3 *Volta / Basse Danse / Volta* 4 *South Australia / Roaring Forties* 5 *A Night To Remember* 6 *Slieve Russell / The March Hare* 7 *The Other* 8 *Joe Cooley's Reel* 9 *The Parting Glass* Drums, Percussion, Vocals – Arch Guitar [Guitars], Bass, Keyboards [Occasional Keyboards] – Dave Lodder Guitar [Guitars], Bass, Keyboards [Occasional Keyboards], Vocals – Colin Masson Vocals, Flute, Bass, Percussion – Mervyn B. Vocals, Recorder [Recorders], Keyboards, Guitar [12st. Guitar] – Cathy Alexander + Mandolin & Banjo (8) - Matt Carter

Here Yee, Here Yee, Fans of Mostly Autumn, Iona and Karnataka will enjoy this immensely! The Morrigan is an unknown little jewel of a band that has a few very good things going for it, namely Cathy Alexander's recorders, keyboards and soothing voice (also featured on the 2005 Lands End album "The Lower Depths") and multi-instrumentalist Colin Masson (whose solo album "Isle of Eight" was a delight to listen to and review). If one must, this group is squarely in the more Celtic-folk rock pigeonhole (not a very clean place, come to think of it) but also suggest a harder edge that mélanges a hint of Jethro Tull, a dash of Giant and a slab of Oldfield, with mandolin and banjo thrown in for good measure. Most of the pieces are traditional British folk songs that are rearranged in whole or in part with their special recipe that is utterly original. "Swallow's Tale" is a rambunctious almost heavy sympho-rock intro that evolves into a flute led jig, short, brief and fun that then explodes into a wrapping guitar solo. "In the End/Tristan's Lament" is a definite highlight, a throbbing bass-led vocal melody that grooves along splendidly with slashing shafts of rhythm guitar until the traditional flutes kick in, all topped off with another fluid fret flight. The next one is a towering medieval suite "Volta/Basse Danse/Volta" that is a pure pleasure, a "raconteur-troubadour minstrel in the gallery in the court of the King" electric gavotte, hens roasting on the spit, pewter goblets filled with lusty wine, a torch-lit castle room fantasy. All that's missing is Robin Hood! "South Australia/Roaring Forties" is more upbeat, a cheery barroom sendoff for sailors that serves as a brief interlude. At almost 10 minutes long, "A Night to Remember" is the main epic and a cracker at that! The twin guitars spin a web of arpeggios, lustily abetted by massive hell bent symphonics, until Cathy's beautiful voice kicks in, sounding like a heavy version of Renaissance until the section slings into a crescendo of various lewd guitar leads that are all hair raising. Back and forth, up and down, the

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ride is exhilarating; a final genius touch adds a speed vocal passage that is dizzying. "Slieve Russell/The March Hare" is another fine instance of combining a well known time-honored Irish recorder-led tune whilst adhering to a The Morrigan twist, this time throwing in a jazzy fret board duet that will knock your knees together. "The Other" is an Alexander penned piece that continues the eerie spooky ritual of infusing atmospherics with dramatic vocalizations, sounding at times almost like a tune out of the famous My Fair Lady musical. "Joe Cooley's Reel" is my favorite here and, you guess it, is another Celtic instrumental romp, with spirited flute/recorder interplay, banjo and mandolin ablaze with fuzzy guitars crackling in the background, rollicking bass and chugging organ to finish off the glee. The disc ends successfully with the gentle "the Parting Glass", a vocally entrancing classic piece that exudes that strong passion that characterizes these proud people, flutes serenading the way into the mist. ---tszirmay, progarchives.com

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