

Agalloch - Pale Folklore (1999)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 22 April 2019 18:48 - Last Updated Monday, 22 April 2019 18:54

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01. *She Painted Fire Across the Skyline 1* [00:08:35] 02. *She Painted Fire Across the Skyline 2* [00:03:09] 03. *She Painted Fire Across the Skyline 3* [00:07:09] 04. *The Misshapen Steed* [00:04:54] 05. *Hallways of Enchanted Ebony* [00:09:59] 06. *Dead Winter Days* [00:07:51] 07. *As Embers Dress the Sky* [00:08:04] 08. *The Melancholy Spirit* [00:12:27] - John Haughm - vocals, guitars, drums - Don Anderson - guitars - Shane Breyer - keyboards - Jason William Walton - bass

Agalloch's first full-length album *Pale Folklore*, often overlooked even by the band's most hardcore followers, is more than just an outstanding debut. Utilizing influences from various sources, from 80's Gothic Rock to Ethnic Folk music, from Italian 70's Symphonic Prog to Norwegian 90's Black Metal's scene, and much much more, Agalloch managed to create a unique, extraordinary style of their own, achieving something nobody had achieved before. Opeth are famous (well, in our circles anyway) for combining two parts - mellow and heavy - to create a very special sound. Agalloch, whose influences were as diverse as Opeth's, from the fusion of all elements gained one sound that is very easy to recognise if you have experienced this amazing band.

The album starts with the atmospheric *She Painted Fire Across The Skyline*, consisting of three parts. The first part starts out slow and maybe a little repetitive, but sets the vibe of the album very well. Although *Pale Folklore* is more often dynamic, the mood of the album is melancholic from the beginning until the end. The melodic riff that starts at about 3:00 gives me chills everytime I hear it, it is also done again in the end of the third part of the epic track. I'm not sure which part is my favourite: I would tell this about the third part, but, unfortunately, it is ruined by the spoken vocals just before the 1:00 mark, which sounds out of place and, fortunately, is the only thing you can blame this masterpiece for, which doesn't make it any worse than it is, really. The fourth track is an instrumental, in fact the only one on this record, and doesn't follow the pace of the whole work - it is gentle and nice, with piano's and flutes, a very sad instrumental indeed. I'm not going to describe every other track, because they are quite similar, which is

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crucial in making an album a masterpiece, in my opinion, as having too many ideas for a group of musicians who, most of the time, can not turn them into one single idea, while not a disaster, often gives their music more faults; instead, I will just speak on the album as a whole.

The album has a specific mood and everything: the music, the instruments, the vocals and the lyrics follow it without a single failure, which I find remarkable. The vocals are something that I should speak on in the first place. Most of the singing on the album (about 90% probably) is harsh, and could be quite unusual to the ears of any listener, whether you are a classical progger, or a metalhead. However, although I say "harsh", don't get me wrong: there are no loud, over the top screams, which I also find fortunate, as any other style of singing would make the album less wonderful than it is. There is no virtuosity or plastics in the vocals, but just like I said, this vibe in music wouldn't go in foot with, say, Russell Allen (take no offense, heheh). The songwriting is inspiring from the beginning until the very last second, and for me is one of the finest examples of creativity and hearing in contemporary music. The riffs are all melodic and done to follow the mood set by the musicians, they flow into each other very well. I will be most likely wrong when I say this, but to me the riffs sound like what Iron Maiden would write if they were depressed all the time. A work of pure genius. The drumming is done very well for a group without a specific person as a drummer, and the bass work, which I can't hear all the time, maybe because of the flaws of production, maybe because I find it most adventurous to listen to the record in headphones at about half of the maximum volume (which I recommend you too!). There is a rich amount of instrumental sections and whole parts, where musicians display their emotions instrumentally for the sake of displaying emotion not showing pretention or technical overkill. I have nothing against technical musicians, but in the case of this album, it is done perfect.

The conclusion, therefore, is that you don't have this album on your hands, you are missing out greatly. No matter what listener you are, Agalloch's Pale Folklore should be as dear and special to any listener, as it is to me. The album's successor, The Mantle is appreciated more widely, but personally I think that this is the best starting point for any intellectual and adventurous fan of music. Highly recommended, this is an essential masterpiece! ---Trickster F.,
progarchives.com

Płytę Amerykanów otwiera podzielony na trzy części utwór "She Painted Fire Across The Skyline". Jest bardzo klimatycznie, słyszymy intro grane przez gitarę, w tle szum wiatru. A gdy Don Anderson i John Haugm włączają przestery, a do gry wkraczają basista Jason Walton i drummer Chris Greene - Agalloch zaczyna pokazywać na co go stać. Jest ostro, ale cały czas

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dominuje melodia i schizofreniczny, mroczny klimat. Piękne brzmienie gitar, wyraźny bas i coś pomiędzy szeptem a skrzekiem towarzyszą kolejnej części utworu. A potem znowu powracają elementy melodyjnego blacku. Agalloch to zespół, w którym przejścia od Anathemowych wstawek akustycznych do takiej lżejszej wersji Old Man's Child są na porządku dziennym. Ciężko jest się czegokolwiek doczepić... ktoś mógłby powiedzieć - brzmienie! Trochę brudne, może nie za bardzo selektywne, z małym "kopem", ale ja jestem przekonany, że żadne inne nie pasowałyby do "Pale Folklore". Tu na pierwszym planie jest melodia i klimat. Nie chodzi o to, żeby podniecać się talentem gitarzystów (a ci są naprawdę niezli w swoim fachu) czy przejściami perkusisty. Ważne, że wszystko jest słyszalne, nic tu nie jest na pierwszym planie (na może z wyjątkiem gitar, ale one tu tworzą całą melodię, więc tak musi być) a cała ściana dźwięku tworzy ten niesamowity klimat. Jest na tym albumie sporo innych smaczków (jak na przykład cały symfoniczny utwór "The Misshapen Steed") które tylko udoskonalają to dzieło.

Jeśli nie wyobrażacie sobie połączenia In Flames (melodie gitarowe), Anathemy (akustyczne wstawki) i jakiejś blackowej kapeli (skrzek) to musicie posłuchać "Pale Folklore". Jeśli jest przeciwnie - tym bardziej, bo panowie z Agalloch dodali do tych elementów klimat, jaki potrafią stworzyć tylko oni. Naprawdę warto zapoznać się z tym krążkiem. ---itsnotablog.blox.pl

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