

Guy Manning continues to enlighten us all about his lack of limitations with his new CD "Charlestown." The career of the Troubadour of Prog has spanned 11 years of solo projects and group enterprises; none the least of which is the prog super group par excellence The Tangent.

With "Charlestown," Manning has asked the listener to gird themselves for a good long epic to open the disc, the title track itself. Spanning over 35 minutes, "Charlestown" the song welcomes the listener into a bright, melodic, semi-melancholic excursion into Manning's trademark sonic realm. Drawing on the reliable traditions of epic prog song crafting, Manning opens Charlestown with a few repeatable melodic lines, presenting each as musical entities of their own for the first 2 or 3 minutes. By this time in the CD, you are involved and unable to withdraw as the performances meet the same excellent quality that Manning fans have come to expect.

Caliban and Ariel, a haunting melody with a genuinely lovely "hook," draws the listener into a lightly balanced acoustic landscape. "Man In The Mirror" crackles with bright tones, courtesy of fine saxophone playing by Steve Dundon, and lops off another chunk of bluesy-rock. More expansive and slightly more emotive than "Caliban and Ariel," "Clocks" moves in the fashion that many Manning fans have become

accustomed.

"T.I.C." is a blues-rocker (as much as Manning can be considered as such!) that smacks of driving fun, complete with beat-stops and bluesy jags on synthesizer. Wrapping up the album, "Finale" opens with a quite traditional progressive keyboard sound, lifted delicately with a saxophone once again. The song releases into a Saga-style groove, complete with semi-speed picking and deep keyboards acting as harmonies.

In all, the Troubadour of Prog has released another gem, deserving of a solid place in his repertoire and a fine example of his versatility as songwriter and lyricist. A suggested buy for any Manning fan and a great intro to this oft-overlooked master of the UK prog scene.

Review by Jason Bermiller, ProgDog Radio."