

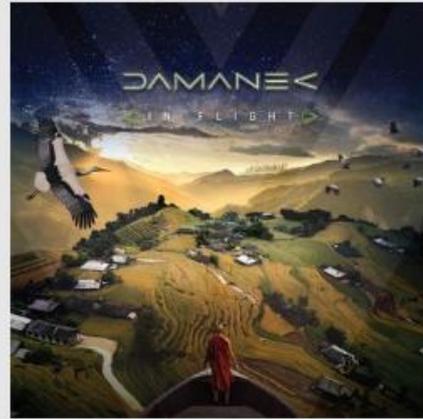
## Damanek - In Flight

(CD 2018, 61:23, Giant Electric Pea GEPCD1059)

The tracks:

- |                                      |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| 1- Ragusa                            | (5:17)  |
| 2- Skyboat                           | (5:47)  |
| 3- The Crawler                       | (8:50)  |
| 4- Moon-Catcher (Heaven Song Part 2) | (4:38)  |
| 5- The Crossing                      | (7:10)  |
| - Big Eastern :                      |         |
| 6- Part 1 - Cruel Skies              | (12:02) |
| 7- Part 2 - The Shaking Earth        | (10:35) |
| 8- Part 3 - A Life In Chinatown      | (7:04)  |

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Following the critically-acclaimed debut album *On Track* ( see [review](#)) released in 2017, **Guy Manning** returns for this the second outing with his musical project **Damanek**, who appeared with **Southern Empire** on their European tour last November/December, both bands having keyboards player **Sean Timms** and for this album **Brody Thomas Green** in common.

This is another richly philosophical, masterful album of storytelling from Manning, full of melancholy and yearning, huge themes surrounding the fate of mankind and the planet interwoven into the six tracks. Again, the core line-up is Manning, Timms, saxophone ace **Marek Arnold** and bass player **Dan Mash** and guitarist **Luke Machin**.

The sweeping introduction of *Ragusa* leads into a melancholic tale of an old man reflecting on the city of his youth, told through some beautiful guitar work from Machin, Eastern-sounding piano from Timms and superb vocal harmonies.

Jazzy stabbing piano from Sean Timms starts *Skyboat*, an aerial view on a new landscape in a post-Dystopian future in which Arnold's rich saxophone and Timms' synthesiser add texture before a fantastic gospel-like harmony section brings it to a climax.

Creepy goings-on in the night are central to *The Crawler* which has a spooky vibe and a heavier feel enhanced by resonant guitar work from **Antonio Vittozzi** and fluent keyboards from Timms.

*Moon-Catcher* is a gentle piano-led ballad-like companion piece to *The Cosmic Score* on *On Track*, which muses on the machinations of the moon, some lunar guitar loveliness coming from Machin

Faster and more furious, *The Crossing* has a hypnotic saxophone hook and gorgeous lilting guitars. The story of a family torn apart while fleeing to freedom, while the father has to stay behind, there's a distinct change of tempo half way through, **Raf Azaria**'s glorious violin leading the gorgeous musical harmonising.

Closing track *Big Eastern* is a huge epic journey, initially deep into the heart of rural China, the lilting Eastern melody on piano transporting you into this other world. Timms' wonderful piano work takes on another dimension on the instrumental *Intermezzo - Following The Sun* before the story moves to New York for *Once Upon A Time in The West* to show the contrasting fortunes of young people living both the west and the east.

*The Shaking Earth* is dramatic and dark, focussing on natural catastrophes over which neither man nor machine has any control, but which shapes the fortunes of those having to work in such conditions. It culminates in the gospel-like repetition of the line, "Get on your knees" sung forcefully by Manning before it morphs into more intricate Eastern musical patterns, guitar, saxophones and

keyboards all beautifully interwoven before it gently ebbs away.

[A Life In Chinatown](#), its huge beat laid down by Brody Thomas Green is a sweeping finale full of with more lush melodies and vocal harmonies before a huge almost tribal drum beat finally brings it all to a close.

Though perhaps not so immediate as [On Track, In Flight](#) is another thoughtful and deeply satisfying album from Damanek, bursting full of insightful story-telling from Manning, which will continue to emerge on subsequently listening. Seven months after its release, it's still working its Eastern magic!

\*\*\*\* Alison Reijman