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Guy Manning – Damanek "On Track" Review (German & Translation)

REVIEWS



Jorriger Neeping DAMANEK "On Tracks Corrections * * * * * * * * * *

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DAMANES

Rep Treads Dark Sun ****Seacha Sedar Jazzy neo-prog DAMANEK "On Track" (GEP/Soulfood) 8/10 stars

Try this if you like: King Crimson, The Tangent, Steve Hackett, IQ

Guy Manning is by no means an unknown in the world of prog. He has released over a dozen albums under his own name, he is a permanent member of The Tangent, and he has also played with United Progressive Fraternity among others. His new band Damanek has just released its debut album "On Track" on IQ's illustrious label Giant Electric Pea – an album that shows quite how adventurous and cliché-free contemporary prog can be. In his compositions and arrangements, Manning adopts a very unorthodox approach, making a conscious attempt to steer away from the rocks that can so often be the downfall of progressive music.

In places, "On Track" is reminiscent of Steve Hackett's recent albums, and just like Hackett, it displays a strong openness to Eastern influences. Added to this is a jazzy approach to compositions, which is combined with a perfect use of wind instruments (most of which feature inspirational performances by permanent band member Marek Arnold), which in turn harks back not only to the King Crimson side project Jaksyk, Fripp And Collins, but also to Manning's work with The Tangent. But despite this, his compositions are never overly playful – instead, they always retain a clear focus in the context of prog, sometimes embellished with the necessary pop hooks and even a dash of soul (according to Manning, "Believer-Redeemer" is inspired by Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On").

The lyrics are highly political, even though this may be hard to spot for the first few listens underneath Manning's metaphor-rich language. Topics range from Native Americans and war suffering in the Middle East to the risk of imminent climate disaster in the epic closing track "Dark Sun".

In summary, this is a really exciting and progressive album, and one that is not afraid to experiment. I think it represents an innovative step forward for the genre.

Top track: Dark Sun

Review by Sascha Seiler

Translated from German by Gareth Cole