

album reviews

"IN FLIGHT" by DAMANEK (ProgVisions)

Damanek - In Flight - 2018



“... more dark and intense ...”

“In Flight” is the successor of the highly acclaimed debut album (“On Track”) from Damanek, the project of Guy Manning, Dan Mash, Marek Arnold and Sean Timms. The album has just been released on the Giant Electric Pea label. The album consists out of five normal songs and a three part epic. The quartet is assisted by several guest musicians ... an impressive list. All music and lyrics are written by Guy Manning while the arrangements are from the hands of Guy Manning and Sean Timms. Sean Timms did some additional programming and was responsible for the mix and production. So you can see that Manning and Timms are driving forces behind this project.

Dan Mash - basses; Guy Manning - lead/backing vocals, keyboards, bouzouki, mandolins, acoustic guitars, bass, percussion; Marek Arnold - saxes, seaboard; Sean Timms - keyboards, backing vocals, guitar

Brody Thomas Green - drums; Luke Machin - electric guitars (on 1,2,4,5); Antonio Vittozzi - electric guitars (on 3,6); Tzan Niko - electric guitars (on 6); Raf Azaria - violin (on 5); DavidB - backing vocals; Julie King - backing vocals; Kevin Currie - backing vocals; The Gospo Collective and Jones Commentary Choir (On 2,6) Jessica Bigg, Ellen Walsh, Kelvin Maynes, Hannah Cooper-Dineen, Zac Moore, Bailey Barnes

The album opens with a beautiful electric guitar part of Luke Machin in the opening of the song “Ragusa”. Supported with keyboard orchestrations this flows into a beautiful sung song that also includes a wonderful piano solo. While the tension of the music is slightly building up the electric guitar returns. A fine opener of a good sounding album with a sleek production. In “Skyboat” you can enjoy lovely vocal melodies, a synth solo and the first sax parts of Marek Arnold. His instruments gives the music an extra layer of diversity and some uplifting injections. After these two songs with a more optimistic character the band gets more serious and intriguing with the great song “The Crawler”. The song has a mysterious and dark keyboard opening with a nice electric guitar injection. But the band combines this with a beautiful and catchy vocal refrain. The sax gives the piece a somewhat jazz fusion like atmosphere. With skilled instrument control the band increases the tension and pushes this track towards my first personal highlight of this album. Amazing track! “Moon-Catcher” (“Heaven Song Part 2”) is a slow ballad with a beautiful vocal line and some nice keyboard orchestrations. The contrast with the next track “The Crossing” is high. The song has some Rock and Jazz influences but as on the whole album the vocal lines are melodic and catchy. I like the instrumental middle section with the violin, sax and synth solos. This part has again a more mellow character. Then it is time for the epic “Big Eastern” which is divided into three parts. The information sheet talks about an emotive journey from East to West: from the poorest rural lands of China to the West Coast of the USA. Part one has the sub title “Cruel Skies”. You can find the most wonderful vocal melodies and delicate piano work in this part in which the band manages to evoke several Eastern atmospheres. But there also some more Rock oriented parts. The keyboard orchestrations are of a high quality. “Cruel Skies” flows seamlessly into the second part which has the sub title “The Shaking Earth”. If you are interested in keyboards this part will be very interesting to you. There is so much going on in this part. But you can also find some great sax and guitar parts in “The

Shaking Earth". But it is mainly a keyboard drenched composition. Part three is called "A Life In Chinatown". Here you can find uplifting keyboard melodies and jazzy sax parts.

Personally highlights of this album are "The Crawler" and the three part epic "Big Eastern". You can find a lot of keyboards and keyboard orchestrations on this album. And as always high quality vocal melodies and harmonies. If you are a fan of Sean Timms you must know that the music of Damanek is a kind of counterpart of his other band Southern Empire. This band makes music that has a heavy side to it and can have a overwhelming impact. On the other side the music of Damanek is more on the mellow side of the progressive rock spectrum. "In Flight" is an album full of great melodies and musical craftsmanship. Comparing it with the debut album "On Track" this "In Flight" is a little bit more dark and intense. Guy Manning, the composer of this album, impresses again. "In Flight" is a beautiful album with lovely compositions.

Douwe Fledderus - November 2018

 - [Giant Electric Pea](#)