

## Damanek - Making Shore

(CD 2023, 1.11.53, Giant Electric Pea)

The tracks:

### Part 1:

- |                                       |        |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| 1- A Mountain Of Sky                  | (7:15) |
| 2- Back2Back                          | (5:59) |
| 3- Noon Day Candles                   | (6:33) |
| 4- Americana                          | (4:55) |
| 5- I Deep Blue (Sea Songs Pt. 1)      | (4:23) |
| 6- Reflections On Copper              | (5:02) |
| 7- Crown Of Thrones (Sea Songs Pt. 2) | (6:04) |

### Part 2:

- |                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| 8- Oculus Overture             | (9:07) |
| 9- Act I: Spot The Difference? | (4:31) |
| 10- Act II: The Corridor       | (4:25) |
| 11- Act III: Passive Ghost     | (6:28) |
| 12- Act IV: A Welcoming Hand   | (7:17) |

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*Making Shore* is the third album by a prog collective founded in 2016 by British singer/songwriter and composer **Guy Manning**, in collaboration with other musicians such as **Southern Empire's** saxophonist **Marek Arnold** and keyboards player **Sean Timms** who appear with him here.

*On Track* (see [review](#)) was released in 2017 and *In Flight* (see [review](#)) the following year, both full of complex but always accessible all-consuming compositions reflecting places, opinions, and possibilities; and both of which received critical acclaim.

The five-year hiatus has certainly been worth the wait, *Making Shore* continuing this tradition, but this time, it's very much an album of two halves, the first full of socially aware songs and the second comprising a fascinating construct of a Gothic ghostly story.

Tingling Nepalese bells and a penetrating Himalayan wind lead off the uplifting [A Mountain of Sky](#), a paean to the majesty of Mount Everest and those who seek to conquer the world's highest peak. Jazzy saxophone, Eastern motifs, floating synths and muscular drumming from Southern Empire's [Brody Thomas Green](#) lift this lovely song to ever greater heights, Manning's vocals soaring upwards. There's even a choppy little reggae section, a vocal harmony chorus and some muscular guitar from Southern Empire's [Cam Blokland](#) in there. This is an early contender for song of the year.

The keyboard introduction and stately chord progression launch [Back2Back](#), a commentary on overpopulation and its consequences. [Nick Sinclair](#)'s fretless bass underpins the airy melody. Multi-layered, its funky section and Blokland's flowing guitar make this another delight.

The Indian-style groove of [Noon Day Candles](#) is more sedate and mannered, the theme a plea for collective voices to be heard to end inequality.

[Americana](#) swings along while telling the story of life and survival out in the hard Mid-West, featuring delicious jazzy piano and saxophone solos.

The sound of waves begins the watery shuffling rhythm of [In the Deep Blue](#), based on Manning's son going on his first scuba dive while [Reflections On Copper](#), a touching narration on the effects of dementia that incorporates a fabulous synth groove which is reminiscent of the classic [On Broadway](#).

[Crown Of Thorns](#) is heavier with a fantastic organ-led riff and fairground-like melody, the song being about the decimation of coral reefs, much of it due to Crown of Thorns starfish.

The second part of the album, [Oculus](#), is where nothing is quite what it seems- lyrically at least.

[Overture's](#) frantic piano-led introduction builds up a theatrical and slightly ethereal atmosphere, [Linda Pirie's](#) lilting flute and piccolo plus [Riley Nixon-Burns'](#) melodious trumpet playing high in the mix.

References to [Alice In Wonderland](#) set the scene for the folkish [Spot The Difference](#) where Manning eloquently tells an other-worldly tale of the effects of mirrors.

Upping the pace, the melodic, rocky [The Corridor](#) features delicious vocal harmonies and terrific change of tempo halfway, introducing some choppy guitars and driving rhythm.

[Passive Ghost](#) is full of flowing synth and piano, Manning's resonant tremulous voice, which has never sounded better, staying central throughout the multi-layered, magnificent instrumentation.

Quirker and more staccato, Arnold's multi-tracked saxophones providing texture and tone, [A Welcoming Hand](#) delivers a fitting climax to this story, the curtain being pulled back lyrically, and Manning meditating on its significance. It builds into a rousing climax, saxophones blazing, gorgeous, lush harmonies coming to the fore and a fantastic guitar solo that hits the same heights as the opening track.

Thoughtful, insightful, invigorating and life-affirming, [Making Shore](#) is a delight and triumph from start to finish, setting the bar remarkably high for the rest of 2023.

\*\*\*\*\* Alison Reijman