



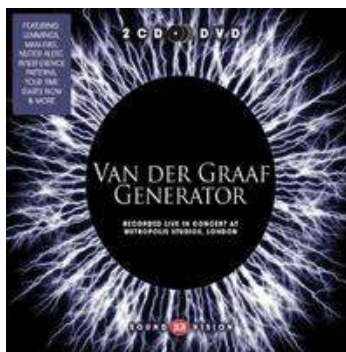
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Van der Graaf Generator

Live at Metropolis Studios London

Review by G. W. Hill

I really have a lot of trouble with the vocals on this thing. That said, the music more than makes up for it. This is a strong album with a lot of varied progressive rock. Those who know the group will find plenty to like about it. I don't know that it would be the best introduction to this outfit, but it is cool, nonetheless. There's also a DVD to add to the festivities.



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Track by Track Review

Disc 1

Interference Patterns

Angular patterns seem to bring both jazz and symphonic textures on board. When the vocals enter it certainly infuses the piece with a rather Italian styled texture, despite the fact that the vocals are in English. This thing gets pretty crazed and weird at times, but it's also great.

Nutter Alert

I love the angry lyrics to this and the seemingly ever escalating pattern of jazzy progressive rock. The retro keyboard sounds are classic and this song is awesome. Around the three and a half minute mark it works out into weirdness. Then a bit of drums serves as a segue back into the earlier section. Again, there's some great keyboard soloing later in this number.

Your Time Starts Now

There's more of a triumphant feeling to this, the vocals really carrying that element. It is a slower moving piece that has a lot in common with the kind of music that Procol Harum did. The instrumental section is inspired and powerful.

Lemmings

There's an extended introduction here that works through a number of changes, at times feeling a lot like RIO. There are ties to King Crimson's early 1970s sound, too. The vocals are jarring and remind me of some Robert Calvert's singing. This is a strange tune that's still quite powerful and effective. It includes several shifts and some tasty keyboard sounds. It's hard to pin this thing down because it just keeps changing and rearranging. Of course, since it's over fourteen minutes in length, there's plenty of room for it. I particularly like the harder rocking, jazzy movement that takes it for a while. There's also a cool spacey jam later in the piece that especially resonates with me.

Lifetime

This is slower and more melodic. It's also less dynamic than a lot of the music here. I like this one quite a bit.

Bunsho

There are some sections of this that have a lot in common with classic rock guitar based jamming. Still, other sections are mellower and more like the rest of the set. It's all quite cool, though and this is one of my favorite pieces from the set. It has some great building in terms of volume and intensity.

Childlike Faith

With a lot of classic progressive rock in the mix, at times I'm reminded of ELP on this piece. It's another that's pretty dynamic and features quite a few changes. The instrumental section later in the cut is particularly tasty and part of that's because this has some of the most difficult vocals for me to tolerate, so the break is appreciated.

Disc 2



Mr. Sands

The vocals on this cut are better than those on a lot of the album. I really dig the jazz meets prog and musical theater approach on this tune. In fact, I'd consider this one of the best pieces here. There are some exceptional keyboard bits on this tune.

Over the Hill

I really like the mellow textures that open this. When it works out from there in a sedate, slow moving jazzy sound it's one of the best passages of the set. The vocals work particularly well there and this grows organically and quite well. It gets pretty strange for a short time and then turns out into a killer jam that's hard edged, frantically escalating and both proggy and jazzy. They work it out to a mellower, but still jazzy segment from there and the vocals return. At almost 12 and a half minutes in length, this is one of the longer pieces here and also one of the best. It really does manage to weave quite a compelling musical tale and is much more effective than just about anything else on the disc.

We Are Not Here

We get a much more rocking tune here and ELP is certainly a valid reference point. Still, the vocals are a bit hard to deal with on this number. The instrumental jam later in the piece certainly makes up for it, though.

Man-Erg

The first three-minutes or so of this are very much in that Procol Harum kind of vibe. Then it shifts out into ELP meets RIO weirdness. The vocals are certainly not for everyone, but the pounding musical vibe is pretty cool. Then around the five minute mark a mellower, jazzy jam takes it and moves us in new direction. This just continues through with various reinventions before it finally ends.

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