

Live In New York 1975

Gentle Giant

Glasshouse, 2005

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There is strange and there is eclectic. Then there is Gentle Giant.

Gentle Giant was an unusual, to say the least, British progressive rock band that released about a dozen albums from 1970-1980. While their later 70s albums moved in a more commercial direction, like other British art-rock bands beginning with G (and ending with "enesis"), the 1970-76 output (also like Genesis) was among the most interesting of the rock idiom, even if it wasn't always entirely successful.

How were they inventive? They would break a song down into single notes and then play each note with a different instrument. They would use 50 or more different instruments, a couple of their own invention, on their studio albums. They would constantly switch from minor to major chords and back again without warning. Yet despite all this experimentation, the songs maintained a structure and harmony.

Live In New York 1975 catches Gentle Giant at just about the end of their extreme experimental stage. Recorded live at White Plains Music Hall on October 3, it paints a good picture of Gentle Giant live and a bad picture of how to record a concert.

The major problem with *Live In New York 1975*

is the sound quality. It is poor even by 1975 standards. The sound has a tinny quality which is a severe handicap in listening to a group that incorporates so many instruments into their live show. The sound also is distant and unclear; it is doubtful that this performance was recorded with the intention of it ever being released to the public.

"Cogs In Cogs" starts the concert with some of the strangest instrumental noise to ever grace a stage. Th is electronic doodling, or the individual cogs, ultimately coalesces into a structured song. The vocals run counterpoint to the instruments.

"Funny Ways" shows Gentle Giant improvising within the structure of the song. Excellent guitar work and tempo changes show the group at its best. "So Sincere" is the most interesting song on the album. Vocals and violins exchange dissonant notes, then the lead guitar then picks up the medley which leads to an extended drum solo. The first half of the drum solo ends and then someone plays the solo again on the wind chimes. This was a terrific effect.

The last three songs are more of the same. "The Runaway/Experience" has keyboards laying down the basic song structure while different sounds are interposed against the melody. "Free Hand" is the most conventional song on the album with typical 70s guitar and vocals. The encore song "Just The Same" provides some more excellent guitar work.

Ultimately, *Live In New York 1975*

is just for the hardcore fans of Gentle Giant. While there are some nuggets here, and fellow musicians will likely enjoy the knottily rhythmic, demanding pieces, even the best music is obscured by the awful production.

Rating: [C+](#)

User Rating: Not Yet Rated

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