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Larry Coryell

Earthquake at the Avalon

Review by Gary Hill

There might be a lot of guys out there who still practice the fine art of bluesy jazz guitar. It's a safe bet that few are on the same level as Larry Coryell. He and his band tear through a series of extended jams that are just plain awesome. This disc might not be the most diverse thing you've heard, but when it's all this good it doesn't matter all that much. If I had a complaint to make it would be that a lot of the vocals just turn me off. The music is strong enough, though that I am not driven far away.

Track by Track Review

The Opening

This powers in feeling a lot like something from the late 1960's style of blue eyed blues. This is a smoking hot jam that has a lot in common with Cream and also Hendrix and John Mayall. You don't get much better than this. It's slow and incredibly tasty. It also wanders out into fusion-like territory as it carries on.

Souls Dirge

I have to say I'm not extremely enamored with the vocal performance on this track. That said the slow bluesy jam that we get here makes it well worth the effort. This is some great guitar jazz. There are points here where it's far closer to space rock and psychedelia, but other points where it's definitely all jazz. The thing that's consistent is powerful music throughout.

Slow Blues

As one might gather from the title, this is a much more straight blues number. It's a rambling piece that never fails to entertain.

Half A Heart

While in a lot of ways this is very similar to most of the music here it stands out for having some of the tastiest guitar work of the whole set. And considering the competition, that says a lot.

The Dream Thing/Stiff Neck

Where the last couple tracks have been based more heavily on the blues side of things, this is certainly closer to pure jazz. It's an extensive jam that really focuses on a duet of guitar soloing.

Morning Sickness

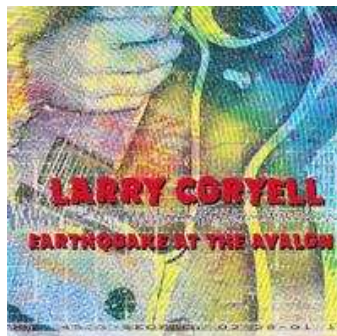
This is another fiery jam. It's not that different from a lot of the other stuff here, but then again, when it's this strong you can take a little repetitiveness. The penultimate segment here really reminds me of something from early Hawkwind.

The Real Great Escape

Here's another that's more bluesy. It's not all that unique, but there is a cool scat segment to make it stand out.

The Dragon Gate

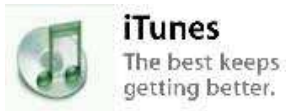
This is perhaps the most unique cut on show. There's a swirling sort of progression that reminds me a lot of the jazzier side of King Crimson. We also get a soaring saxophone solo. This is dissonant at times, but quite powerful throughout. They definitely kept the best as the show closer. While the instrumental work on every cut is impressive, this one certainly takes it to the next level. At over sixteen minutes in length it's also the longest cut on show. As we are told at the onset that this



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