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Jon Anderson – Searching for the Songs



By Gary Hill

Overall Review

This is a collection of tracks that Anderson never finished. As he explains in the liner notes these were from a period where he was working hard at writing pop music. The thing is, this is still quite a powerful disc. Some of the music is what one might consider “throw away,” but there are also some extremely powerful compositions and performances here. One of the numbers, “Hurry Home” was eventually finished and showed up on Anderson’s *In the City of Angels*, a disc I’ve always enjoyed a lot. This one is certainly a gift of magic.

Track by Track Review

Take Take My Love: With a very ‘80’s styled keyboard introduction, this song feels a bit like a cross between something from *In the City of Angels* and 1980’s R & B soul pop. It has some moments that work really well, though, with an emotional, spiritual sort of fire.

So Can It Be: A dramatic, more tentative approach leads this off. This one has even more of that *In the City of Angels* feel to it. I like this one a lot, just as I’ve always loved that disc. The multiple layers of Anderson’s vocals are a great touch and this is one of the strongest numbers on this set. The saxophone solo is cool, too.

The Meaning of Love: More of that retro keyboard sound starts us out here. This has a dramatic, but still almost cheesy ‘80’s pop approach on the music. Anderson’s vocals, though

are potent and powerful and lend the real beauty of this track. It's amazing that a song with this trite of a musical structure could be this strong. Anderson's voice and lyrics are to be praised for that. That contradiction of cheese and substance reminds me of The Rolling Stone's "Miss You," a great song with a bass line right out of the most generic disco. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that the two tracks sound anything alike, but the juxtaposition is similar.

Just Say We're Children: Sound effects and rather dramatic keys create the introduction here. When the track launches into the harder rocking section it feels generic at first (a bit like Survivor perhaps). The thing is, once the vocals come in over this backdrop it is another that becomes extremely powerful. This is catchy and meaty and another highlight of the disc.

I Love You: This little ditty is a fairly clichéd love song and one of the weakest pieces presented here. I guess it has its moments, but you'll probably skip this one from time to time.

Jessica: Bouncy and quite pop oriented, this is nonetheless a strong piece of music. It has a definite '80's texture to it, but it's still got some definite charm and beauty.

All I Want Is You: Keys make up the introduction here. Then world music percussion joins and Anderson begins to sing over a subdued version of both of these elements. While this one has its moments, it's definitely not one of the stronger pieces on show here. Anderson's performance approaches brilliance at points, though.

Hurry Home: This song, albeit in a different arrangement, wound up on that aforementioned *In The City of Angels* disc. I've always liked this one a lot and even in this more "demo-ized" approach it's still a powerful piece of music. It feels a bit like something that might have been produced during the Jon and Vangelis era.

Strawberry Wine: This has the most blatantly pop type of approach of anything on the disc. I'd have to say that it's also one of the weaker pieces here. It's another where you might consider hitting "skip."

Punta Del Este: Keys lead this off in a more dramatic manner. While this is a pretty and dramatic cut it seems to suffer a bit in terms of recording quality. It feels like either the production was less finished to begin with or the tape hasn't fared really well over the years. I'd actually love to hear Anderson revisit this one. With a more filled out arrangement and better recording it could be a strong number. As it is it feels like a rough sketch that shows a lot of promise.

I Can't Believe: This is a bouncy pop rock song that a definite classic texture to it. This definitely isn't prog rock, but it's also a cool composition.

Strawberry Wine (Instrumental): The first of three bonus cuts, this is (as the title would tell you) an instrumental take on the song from the main part of the CD.

Take Take My Love (Instrumental): Here we have more truth in advertising with an instrumental version of the disc's opener.

Take Take My Love (A Capella): The final bonus track (and in fact the last piece on the album), here we get a "vocal only" take of the same piece that was revisited on the last one.



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