



## Sections



Reviews

## Lewis & Clarke – *Triumvirate* Review

Alex Daniel on September 8, 2014 / 0 comments



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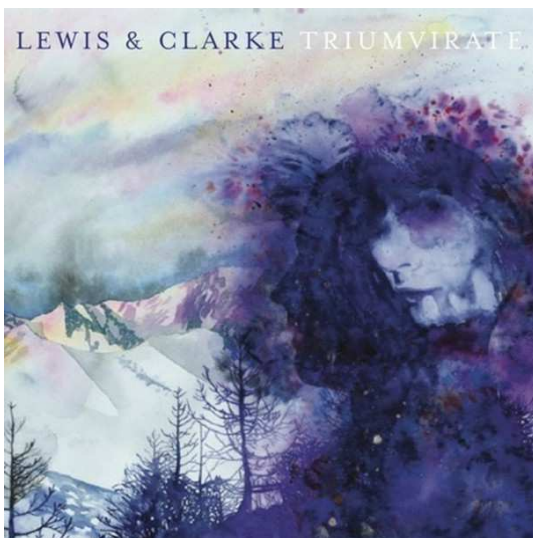
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Magnum opus? Maybe so.

[La Société Expéditionnaire](#), 2014

Purchase: [Bandcamp](#) / [Amazon](#)

**7.9 / 10**

Lou Rogai is Lewis & Clarke. Importantly, he's not Lewis and Clark — he's not named after the 19th century American explorers. Instead, he's named after the friendship of C.S. Lewis and Arthur C. Clarke, two authors with very different intentions and philosophies. Lewis, known for his *Chronicles of Narnia*, was a Christian thinker, and many of his writings pointedly reference his spirituality. Clarke, on the other hand, was an eminent science-fiction writer (usually regarded as one of the “big three”<sup>1</sup> of the time). Clarke's view of the world, and of the universe, was very different from Lewis's. Lewis was a classicist, and his writing reflects his love and reverence for all that came before him. On the other end of the spectrum, Arthur C. Clarke was a futurist (and his stories mirror this), and he championed the future for what humankind would one day be able to achieve.

So, in a way, the name that Lou Rogai performs under — Lewis & Clarke — *is* about exploration. It's

about finding a middle ground between these two ideologies. His folk music feels as old as music itself, but the progressive nature of his lyrics and song-structure do not leave him completely beholden to the past. He fits somewhere between these two extremes. His new record, *Triumvirate*, feels like a magnum opus, and it very well might be. It's a double-album, clocking in at almost 80 minutes all said and done, so it's certainly expansive, but it's the individual songs that make *Triumvirate* feel grand. Songs easily slide upwards of seven, eight minutes, but Rogai's arrangements are kept slow and subtle. Instead of having a billowing crescendo, à la Sigur Ros, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, or Explosions in the Sky, Lewis & Clarke keep things burning slowly, and that's where the real strength of this album lies.

With scarcely any drums or percussion, *Triumvirate* lives on Rogai's voice and acoustic guitar. Although there's not an abundance of instruments here, it never feels scarce or minimal — no, these songs sound full, and brimming with life. You wouldn't be wrong to compare this record to Sun Kil Moon, but the key difference between the two is their outlook on life. Where Mark Kozelek battles his existential anger by exploring the minutia of everyday life, Lou Rogai explores his existential pain by making everything grand and epic. For Sun Kil Moon, songs are brutally specific, but for Lewis & Clarke, songs — inspired by real events — are blown up and set on a legendary stage.

I suspect, however, that Lou Rogai didn't intend for *Triumvirate* to sound this way. He probably didn't mean for these songs to stretch to their lengths. He probably didn't mean for them to sound grand. This record is free from the pretense of an artist trying to make a grand statement. Instead, it feels like Lewis & Clarke wrote the only record they knew how to make. It's patient. It's quiet. It's beautiful. But it doesn't force itself on you. There's been seven years in between *Triumvirate* and Lewis & Clarke's last LP, and I'd bet that Rogai, during that time, wasn't laboring in the studio. He was living. He was outside. That's what *Triumvirate* feels like — a natural expression of something living slowly, patiently, and lovingly.

### **Key Tracks:**

“Black Cloud”

“The Reach and the Grasp”

“The Turning Sky”

1. The other two being Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov.

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