



## MUSIC STREET JOURNAL

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### Rick Wakeman – Fields of Green



By Gary Hill

#### Overall Review

Another in the series of Rick Wakeman reissues, this disc originally came out in 1997. It opens with a couple of intriguing pieces that, by themselves, make this a must have for Wakeman fans. First off is a track Wakeman recorded for the BBC election coverage of '97. It's a medley consisting of two new themes woven around a rearrangement of "Arthur" from the *Myths and Legends...* disc. That one was not included in the original release of this CD, but rather added to this reissue. It's actually quite unusual to have the bonus track lead off the disc, but it works. The second essential tune is a Wakeman solo take on Yes' "Starship Trooper." While these two cuts alone would make most Yes and Wakeman fanatics salivate until they get their hands on the CD, the rest of the disc lives up to the promise, making this one a "must have."

#### Track by Track Review

**Election '97/Arthur:** This is a reworking of the "Arthur" track from *Myths and Legends...* that was used by the BBC for their election coverage. This is powerful still in this transformed version. Two fully new instrumental themes are woven into the composition for great effect. Overall this is some amazing symphonic prog instrumental music and definitely a great way to lead this off.

**Starship Trooper/Wurm:** Here we get a keyboard heavy version of the Yes classic. The vocals at times really make you wonder if Jon Anderson is here, but alas, it's not him. Wakeman really shows off his keyboard prowess on this medley. I'd have to say that I prefer the original, but this has its charms. Anyone who's ever wished that there had been more Wakeman on

“...Trooper” gets their wish here. The closing keyboard jam is incredible.

**The Promise Of Love:** Coming in with dramatic and powerful waves of ambient keys, this builds out into an emotional and potent rock ballad. Female vocals deliver on the contract that the music promises and a tasty guitar solo comes in later. This is a wonderful piece of music and Wakeman lays down some killer keyboard sounds from time to time.

**The Spanish Wizard:** I don't know what it is about this track, but I love it. It has a dramatic hard rock, but still quite melodic texture, to it. The riff driven lines that create the main song structure are very tasty. You might find yourself wondering about the “Spanish” in the title until about two minutes in. That's because until then the music doesn't seem to reflect that part of the title. It's about there that we get a cool, Spanish styled acoustic guitar solo. This is followed by a meaty electric solo that rocks out quite well. We get a reprise of the Spanish elements later on. This time they are chased by a keyboard solo. This number doesn't have a lot of changes or intricate prog arrangements. What it does have is character and charm and some great melodies.

**The Never Ending Road:** Well, Wakeman lost me on this one. It's a bouncy, pretty generic piece with sort of an R & B, gospel approach. Wakeman's solo and instrumental segments later in the number are good, but just not potent enough to make up for the weakness in the rest of the song. Had he just released an extended version of the instrumental sections, this would have rocked – as it is – nah!

**The Fighter:** While not the proggiest thing I've heard, this hard rocking jam (it's almost metal) is pretty strong. It's definitely a step up from the one that preceded it. With a bouncy sort of keyboard riff and some nice crunch this one is quite cool – if a bit lackluster in terms of song structure. Wakeman's solos (as always) are great. The vocal section here reminds me a bit of Rainbow or Dio's solo stuff. Mind you, that's all about the song structure and not the vocal performance.

**Tell Me Why:** This is a more AOR related rock ballad. It's not extremely progressive rock oriented, but it also works pretty well. Yes, I know it's rather generic, but there is some great guitar work on here – and, of course, Wakeman's keyboards.

**The Rope Trick:** With a bit of an '80's hard rock texture – think “Survivor,” this is another with plenty of crunch. Again, progressive rock purists will probably be scratching their heads, but frankly this thing rocks! It's not quite metal (at least not to a metal head like me), but I would think that a lot of those prog heads mentioned above would consider it to be. An instrumental, this includes some exceptionally tasty soloing, particularly in the guitar department.

**The Nice Man:** Here we get a bouncy, playful textured number that has a fun groove. Again, it's not what you might normally think of as “progressive rock,” but it's also catchy and pretty strong. We get tasty guitar and keyboard solos on this.

**Fields Of Green:** The title track closes the CD. It's a pretty ballad that pulls us more into progressive rock territory. While this is powerful and has some great musical moments, I'm not sure it was the best choice to end the disc. It's actually a standout track, but a bit of a let down in terms of creating an especially satisfying conclusion.



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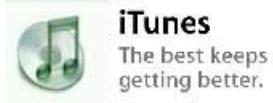
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