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### Rick Wakeman – White Rock II



By Gary Hill

#### Overall Review

If anyone out there remembers *White Rock* (the first disc), you'll know that it was music that Wakeman composed for the Olympics film. Well, when they set about to redo some of the film footage they wanted some additional music and *White Rock II* ensued. This is a great disc that shows that Wakeman was still very capable of producing killer instrumental work. The other interesting point about Wakeman is that while he's a keyboardist, he's not afraid to let other instruments shine – if it makes for better music. So, yes, the album is keyboard heavy, but frankly it has a lot of other sounds (especially guitar) that shine, too. This is really one of Wakeman's stronger solo albums overall and recommended to any and all of his fans.

#### Track by Track Review

**Oriental Iceman:** I love the hard rocking, almost metal approach to this track. It sets up a great musical motif, but then not a lot is done with it for a while. After about a minute and a half like this, though, Wakeman brings in suitably Asian tinged sounds on his keyboards to turn the piece into some new territory. After another minute or so, this moves out into a pretty typical Wakeman solo type journey, reminiscent of his work all the way back to *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* album. After a time like this it comes back to the Asian inspired sounds. The varying motifs seemed to be

merged into a new incarnation of the music as it is carried forward to good effect. “Oriental Iceman” is a cool piece of music and great opening cut. At nearly twelve minutes in length this epic is also the longest track on show here.

**Ice Pie:** A lot more playful than the previous number, this one doesn’t have the majesty and the scope (nor the epic size) of that one. What it does have is some strong melody and cool keyboard textures. It definitely has those last things in spades. This is a cool track.

**Dancing on Snowflakes:** This is much more gentle and sedate. It also has a lot more of an evocative texture than the previous couple pieces. Rather ballad-like this is a work of sheer beauty and has some neo-classical elements to it.

**Nine Ice Groove:** Appropriately, this has a definite groove to it and is nearly funky. It’s a killer tune and one of the best on the disc. It also includes a cool hard rocking guitar solo. This thing might not be the most musically dynamic number here, but the great alternating solos and overall textures of the composition both contribute to its status as one of the highlights.

**In the Frame:** Another somewhat playful and lighthearted piece, parts of this remind me a bit of some of the music from the ...*King Arthur* disc. This is a solid track, but doesn’t stand as tall as some of the rest here.

**Harlem Slalom:** At about eleven and a half minutes in length, this is the other epic of the disc. This first part of the track is a groove starts off a bit weak, but shifts gears later into a killer jam that I like a lot. This part is another that isn’t a highlight, but also holds its own. About halfway through the whole thing is reinvented in a new arrangement that’s definitely a standout portion of the disc. Fast paced and potent it’s makes this epic another track that really works well. This beast moves through several variations and incarnations and we get treated to some classic Wakeman instrumental work later in the number.

**Frost In Space:** Starting with some bouncy melodies, including some nice keyboard work, this shifts out towards space after a time and then Wakeman takes us one of the most impressive journeys of the whole CD. This might be my favorite track on show here. As good as a couple of the others are, that says a lot. It drops down towards space again later and then percussion brings it back upward. The jam just before the seven minute mark is especially powerful. This is a great way to end the disc.



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