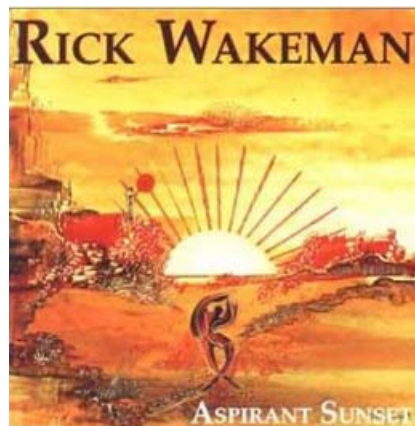




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Rick Wakeman – Aspirant Sunrise



By Gary Hill

Overall Review

There was a time when a lot of musicians were jumping on the “new age” bandwagon. As this recently reissued release from Rick Wakeman shows, he was definitely one of them. In fact, this was the first of a trilogy of new age albums. As you might guess, that means that the music is gentle and textural. You won’t find anything that rocks out. You also won’t find any of Wakeman’s powerhouse keyboard solos. You will find some restful music that is quite pretty. I’d have to say that to me it rises a bit above new age at times and it’s certainly better than a lot of the relaxation music that came out at the time. I’d recommend it, though, only to people who really enjoy new age sounds and to hardcore Wakeman collectors. There’s plenty to like here, but it’s certainly not for everyone.

Track by Track Review

Thoughts of Love: Pretty ambient tones open the CD. Wakeman weaves waves of melody over the backdrop, but this never really rises far above the point of ambience.

Gentle Breezes: Here we get more of a gentle balladic structure. This one is more “song” like than the one that preceded it. There is a lot of emotion packed into this track and at least as much beauty as the opener. I like this a lot.

Whispering Cornfields: This reminds me of Beethoven for some reason. I think it’s the pacing. Slow and measured, this has some definite drama and power, even though it still

maintains the “new age” sort of alignment.

Peaceful Beginnings: With an old world feel to it in some ways, this actually reminds me of Christmas music. Don’t ask me why, but I get a “Silent Night” vibe off of it. Of course, that could be because as I write this review the holiday season is about to hit us over the head. In any event, this one is a lot more textural, more like the first composition, but I think it is more dramatic.

Dewy Morn: This is one of my favorites on the disc. While it’s still very mellow and restive, it has a pretty melody and seems to be packed with emotion.

Musical Dreams: With sort of an acoustic guitar ballad feel to it, this is another of the stronger pieces here. It’s quite evocative and beautiful.

Distant Thoughts: The echoey, tentative sounds that make this one up work quite well. While overall it doesn’t differ a lot from the tone of the rest of the disc, I’d have to say it’s another that stands up above some of the rest. I like it quite a bit.

Dove: Feeling like tuned percussion, this is the most dramatic piece on show here. Mind you, it’s also one of the more sedate, but it has some intriguing elements to it. This would be my pick for favorite cut on the album. It’s quite cool.

When Time Stood Still: A pretty and rather powerful piano melody makes the central structure of this one up. I would probably not consider this song as “new age” music, but rather mellow (yet emotionally powerful) progressive rock. It’s another highlight of the CD. As other keyboard textures and treatments work across the arrangement to augment and intensify it, this feels the most like the kind of music one normally associates with Rick Wakeman.

Secret Moments: This is playful music that feels like harp sounds. It’s gentle and lovely. I like it alright and it does get a bit more potent as it carries on, but I wouldn’t call this a standout.

Peaceful: Well, what do you expect from a song entitled “Peaceful?” Whatever image you just conjured up in your head, it’s probably close to this. It’s another that calls to mind, in terms of song structure, Beethoven a bit in my mind. The tones that create the music are pretty, but this never really rises up very far.



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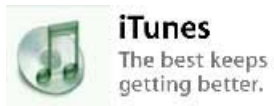
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