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Oblivion Sun – Oblivion Sun



By Gary Hill

Overall Review

What an album this is! Combining classic prog sounds of bands like Yes and ELP with nearly pure fusion and even the occasional modern prog element, Oblivion Sun have created a sound that is unique and powerful. It reaches out to capture the world of the 21st century while echoing the classic prog and hard rock of the previous millennium. The majority of the disc is instrumental, but they include just enough vocal tunes to keep things interesting. Not that they really had to worry, though, because the sound varies enough from piece to piece (and in fact within compositions) to keep it from feeling monolithic at all. This is a great neo-prog album that should manage to please prog purists while endearing Oblivion Sun to devotees of the newer incarnation of the genre.

Track by Track Review

Fanfare: A frantic, rather Yes meets ELP-like section leads off this introductory instrumental. From there they transition out into a melodic fusion type of journey that's quite strong. We get some killer Emerson-like keyboard work before they drop it way back to the sedate fusion approach. This moves back upward after a time and then wanders out into space. A section that calls to mind a fusion Pink Floyd with some Steve Howe-like guitar patterns takes over from there. The whole of this excursion is entertaining and extremely dynamic.

The Ride: Coming in with a smoking retro textured hard rock riff, this is a fairly stark contrast to the last one. The vocals enter and it feels like some hard-edged jam that would have fit

quite well in 1976. I'm not sure I'd call this one prog, but it has some unusual changes that have prog leanings. It's also retro enough to please a lot of progressive rock fans.

Noodlepoint: Swirling keyboard sounds serve to lead this off and the group begin to rise up from there in a rather jazz-like affair, threatening to turn RIO. Rather than get dissonant and “weird,” this turns to more melodic fusion. It does turn a bit strange later in a fusion meets King Crimson approach. We also get some great Satriani/Vai-like guitar soloing on the number. It turns dark and heavy, a bit like *Red* era Crimson later and horns and other instrumentation swim across in a cacophony that reinforces the KC-like comparisons. Another instrumental this is quite strong.

Catwalk: Here we have a more modern prog rock balladic sort of texture in the early modes. I hear quite a bit of Kansas in the stripped down mix, too. This has a slightly unusual soundscape. It never really rises up to hard rocking, but yet it's not really restful, either. It has an almost “non-song” sort of structure to it. In other words the music doesn't have any real hooks to latch onto. Still, this manages to be accessible. The instrumental break is especially strong. It turns to a Genesis meets fusion sound later for a while.

No Surprises: Heavy tones, a bit like 1970's hard rock and roll meets King Crimson start us out here. It becomes more proggy when the keyboards skirt across the top. When it drops down that *Red* era KC sound is once more all over this thing. There is still an edge of more straight forward classic rock, though, and perhaps a bit of Rush even in the mix. The keyboard solo is quite tasty. This instrumental is a cool and dynamic jam.

re:Bootsy: This comes in (appropriately – well at least to me because the title makes me think of Bootsy Colling) quite funky. Here we get a very jazz-like slab of sound that has a lot of funk and roll at its core. It's a great groove and a lot of fun. There is some killer fusion-oriented instrumental work on this smoker, too.

Chapter 7.1: The hardest edged number on show here, this jam has a lot of Eastern elements. There are more King Crimson tendencies here, but it also wanders towards modern progressive metal and towards the territory of Rush. This is a great jam. I guess I'd see it mostly like what *Moving Pictures* era Rush might have produced today after a healthy exposure to Fates Warning and Dream Theater. It's another killer instrumental.

Tales of Young Whales: The title makes me think of “Tales of Brave Ulysses” by Cream. In stark contrast to the previous cut (and that Cream comparison), this is a melodic and fairly sedate fusion number that's a nice change of pace. This is pretty and inspiring and a great change of pace. It wanders off into space for a time. Then it is reborn in a hard edged sort of jam that brings back more of that *Red* era Crimson sound, but also some modern progressive rock elements. That's all packed into a dramatic instrumental sound that's just plain incredible. It drops way down around the four minute mark and wanders along near the edges of silence. This motif carries the rest of the cut, with the latter segments dropped to ambience.

Golden Feast: This rises up gradually in a keyboard motif that's got a bit of Genesis and a lot of fusion in its arrangement. This moves out into a more rocking reworking of its central themes and moves forward from there. Melodic in nature, this grows and grows until a crescendo gives way to a false ending. Space and bass begin a new life for the number. A great jazz jam erupts from there, taking this instrumental in new directions. Before they end this powers out into a more rock based approach for a powerhouse showing. This has more hard rock meets fusion leanings.



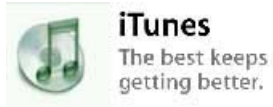
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