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Man – Diamonds and Coal



By Gary Hill

Overall Review

This latest studio disc from Man showcases the type of sound that has typified their career. They play an organic form of folky rock that is essentially, but not always, progressive rock oriented. The vocals have a very Brit-accent sort of delivery, not unlike The Kinks. This disc has some wonderful music and should please long time fans. It would also make a good intro to the group for the uninitiated.

Track by Track Review

Diamonds and Coal: A chirping guitar sound that calls to mind Steve Howe starts things here. This gives way to a bouncing jam that's quite cool. Those Yes-leanings are still prevalent here, but the vocals remind me more of a Brit-pop band or perhaps early Pink Floyd. This turns out to a cool jam later where the guitar accents each line of vocals with a short burst of soloing. As they make their way through later it really does start to resemble Pink Floyd quite a bit. It turns out to a pretty pure blues rock approach for the closing fade down.

All Alone: The pounding, retro textured riff that makes up the main motif here is just plain cool. It's another song where you might be reminded of Pink Floyd a bit. This is sort of a hard rocking

take on the jazzy sort of approach from Dark Side... The guitar sound later is quite David Gilmourish. We get a killer guitar solo later in this track and it turns quite crunchy at times.

Freedom Fries: This title reminds me of a quote that I loved from a leader of France. When asked about the whole controversy of renaming French fries “Freedom Fries,” he said something on the order of “there are important things going on in the world, why should we care what you call fried potatoes?” This cut has an odd sort of surf meets proggy spacey rock texture. It’s bouncy and fun, but definitely odd.

Twistin' The Knife: Power pop meets progressive rock is the order of business here. This is another bouncy number. I’m not sure that a lot of people would consider it progressive rock, but it’s cool nonetheless.

Man of Misery: A beautiful balladic approach leads this off and they build it in very dramatic ways. They work through like this for a while and then turn it out into a killer hard rocking motif later. It drops back down after a time to carry on in the more ballad-based style.

Welsh Girl: This is sort of a straight ahead, folk rock sort of cut. Fun as it is, it’s not really prog at all.

Thank God It's Not Miss Cathy: This tune is a bit more prog like. At times it feels like Pink Floyd, but at others I get a vibe similar to the last one. You might even hear some Bob Dylan on this. This is actually one of my favorites on the disc.

Teddy Boys Picnic: Here we get a track that has a lot of rockabilly texture to it. It’s a fun piece of music.

When You've Got Someone To Hold: Starting in a very prog-like fashion this moves out into another motif that has a lot of prog in it. This modulates out into a classic rock texture that reminds me more of The Beatles or some other pop rock act of the 1970’s There are some more progressive rock tendencies at times, but overall this is a retro rocker.

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