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Yes

Magnification (Vinyl)

Review by G. W. Hill

I've always liked the *Magnification* album quite a bit, and since the recent reissue of *Open Your Eyes* on vinyl was amazing, I was really looking forward to this. I have to say that it doesn't sound as great as I hoped it would. Mind, you it is equal to or beyond the record, but I somehow thought that the symphonic elements would really jump out here. Still, this is cool in that it's on purple vinyl, making it very collectible. I also wish rather than leaving side four blank, they would have put some rarities on there. Actually, there was a CD EP that came out at the time (strictly a promotional item, I think) with symphonic versions of Yes classics. Those songs would have been nice additions to this release. Still, this is quite good the way it is. Since, in general, this is the same as the *Magnification* CD, I'm going to include that overall review here along with the track by track - divided by the sides of the LP for the sake of consistency. That follows here:

Yes' brand of progressive rock has often been dubbed "symphonic rock." The term refers to the group producing arrangements in the vein of a symphony using typical rock instrumentation. With *Magnification*, Yes has taken that term to task, adding a symphony orchestra. The orchestra is not simply thrown over the top, though; the songs were written for this particular grouping. It is not the first time that Yes has flirted with using strings in their arrangements. The *Time and a Word* album (1969) featured a string section, but the complete integration is what makes *Magnification* a superior work. The material on the CD is pretty standard modern Yes fare, but the addition of that symphony really does create a whole new texture. It also seems as if it inspired the members of the group to put in performances that are head and shoulders above their recent work. The album does have its weak moments and gets just a little over the top at times, but the shining moments certainly outweigh the less effective ones.

Track by Track Review

Disc One – Side One

Magnification

Beginning with an easy going, almost bouncy orchestral arrangement, the cut begins slowly building on this mode until a crescendo ushers in the next movement. It is a fluid fast moving creation that is trademark Yes. This piece is one of the strongest the group has done in years. As it continues building and changing, the dynamic alterations are pretty hard to catalog, but the song is very powerful. It eventually drops back to the early elements of the composition, but seemingly with a renewed energy. The final instrumental movement truly calls to mind classic era Yes and both Steve Howe and Chris Squire get the chance to show off their chops. The cut dissolves into elegant chaos similar to that which began "Close To The Edge" all those years ago. It moves straight into the next track.

Spirit of Survival

Beginning with an acapella "In this world the gods have lost their way", the first verse is in a melodic, balladic style, but as the next movement comes in, Squire presents us with one of the coolest bass grooves of his career. This song is a killer. It is definitely the best piece on the album

and probably the best track the band has done since the '70's. It's all here, the quirky changes, the larger than life lyrics, the virtuoso playing - everything we have come to expect from a band named "Yes". It goes through numerous changes. It includes a couple of false stops with rebuilding processes. The outro is a dramatic one that calls to mind old Yes, but with strings taking the section that would have been keys in that version of the band. This composition alone is worth the price of admission.

Don't Go

Beginning in a progression that seems a lot like something from the first couple of Yes albums, it's all downhill from there. It's not that this is a bad song. In fact, it's bouncy and kind of fun. It's just that it's way too poppy and a bit of a let down after the previous two cuts.

Disc One – Side Two

Give Love Each Day

The orchestral intro on this one is quite a bit overlong. As the song proper comes in it first emerges in tribal rhythms then a great sort of textured mood ensues. This cut really works as an almost



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balladic track. It's just too bad they let the orchestra overstay its welcome during the intro. The lyrics, vocal arrangement and musical progressions are all quite strong in the main portion of the composition, which is divided into two main recurring sections.

Can You Imagine

This cut has lead vocal chores being taken by Chris Squire, and it is not hard to imagine that he wrote the song. Indeed, it feels a lot like something from his *Fish Out of Water* album. This is a dramatic balladic sort of number that rocks out harder as it carries on. It is a nice change of pace.

We Agree

This one begins with sedate acoustic guitar tones. The band comes in and the piece takes on almost a classical mode for a time. It becomes a good solid slower tempo Yes cut, but gets a bit long without really going anywhere. It just sort of keeps building on the same themes, getting more powerful at times and reworking those themes, but not getting adventurous enough. When the cut moves into other sections it seems to lack direction. It is not a bad song, just a little lackluster. Howe does turn in an unusual performance at times, and the later segments of the piece get interesting. It is just a little bit of a trek to get there, and even that ending movement seems at time like the band just doesn't know when to quit.

Soft As A Dove

This cut starts with the same guitar melody from *Open Your Eyes'* "From The Balcony". This one moves from there to a nice, almost medieval sounding tone. However, it is a bit too flowery for this reviewer.

Disc Two – Side One

Dreamtime

From the opening riff and its bass accents, it's obvious we're up for another fun ride here. The cut comes in with a classically laced dramatic flair that begins building on the melody. "Drama" is the keyword for this cut. Indeed, the first minute and a half or so are nothing but dramatic instrumental building. Next it drops down to the sedate for the first verse, and then explodes out into a very impressive aural exploration. This is another of the standout cuts showing off the old Yes mannerisms quite well, building and reinventing over and over in the course of one song. This one definitely does not get boring, but has a great flow throughout. Howe's guitar really soars from time to time. It does contain an outro that is strictly orchestral. One has to wonder if they might have been better off leaving that section out.

In The Presence Of

Beginning with drummer Alan White tickling the ivories, Anderson joins and a tender balladic form takes over. Don't get too comfortable, though, as this is just the first segment. They build on this for a time, then a more rocking variant of the melodic theme emerges, and it begins to feel like something from the Anderson Bruford Wakeman and Howe era. Just when the listener is used to this, an instrumental break heralds in a new section. This one is a fairly mellow building that just feels ready to explode. It is a very dramatic section. Howe puts in some fine work here. Even earlier themes of the cut return and it has yet to find its final theme. As it does enter that mode, Squire's bass is the catalyst, reworking the theme from the previous movement, heralding more dramatic things to come. And, dramatic is right! This movement builds slowly as a fruition of a promise and it does deliver. This is another very strong track.

Time Is Time

This is a poppy sort of number that feels very Beatles/George Harrisonish. This is pretty good for a more mainstream number. It is actually not a bad way to end the album.



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