



Tour 2011: Live in Concert

Renaissance

Symphonic Rock Records - SRR 000-01 (DVD / 2-CD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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The progrock era (mid-60s to mid-to-late 70s) spawned a hell of a lot of great music groups that first served to keep us Baby Boomers exhilarated in our time. Now those estimable ensembles are finding a second life in the revival circuit while providing superior fodder to later generations of musicians thirsty for actual, true, meaty composing rather than the monodimensionalities of punk and its peers. The whole 80s era, it turns out, was a capitalist nightmare...actually punctuated by quite a few good groups but overall nowhere near as artistic as it could've been.

Well, Renaissance was a group that stood in the mid-ground between King Crimson, Gentle Giant, Genesis—the rampaging earthshakers, in other words—and then pop prog like Art in America, latterday Kayak, and many others. They issued quite a few LPs, later went through their own pop transition, splintered, solo'ed, and disappeared, mounting a comeback or two every so often, efforts warmly received by Boomers. This DVD/CD three-fer is the latest such return and finds the band, with only Annie Haslam and Michael Dunford as surviving second-wave founders (the original band was actually the outfall of The Yardbirds), in damned good shape and very well supported by new members.

This new "gimmick" of doing live versions of classic albums is an attractive one—I to this day regret missing Todd Rundgren's *Wizard True Star* tour—and Renaissance here covers two of their many excellent efforts: *Turn of the Cards* and *Scheherazade*, not only faithful to the originals but with many new touches and improvs. Presently with two keyboardists, the group retains its symphonic rock aspect as richly as ever, in some places more so. The delicate passages are as fragile as spun glass while the rich pastorales open out to lush and luxurious vistas. Haslam's voice, always the centerpiece of the group, is as clear, beautiful, and confident as at any point in her long career. Every single element in this concert, though, meshes exceedingly well, an extravaganza that's a pleasure from beginning to end.

A couple small matters, however: first, the gig was filmed in whatever manner YouTube presents their videos in, wherein motion is slightly "strobed", not true to life. No big deal, I'll take whatever Renaissance I can get whenever I can get it wherever I can...but then there's the gesture of proper attribution as well, and the group has never, as far as I can discern, 'fessed up to *Turn's* beautiful pillaging of Albinoni's *Adagio in G Minor*, a masterpiece Satie would've given his eyeteeth to have penned, in *Cold is Being*. The LP issuance credits the cut to Dunford and Thatcher, but 'tain't so. 'Twas the esteemed Tomaso, y'all.

And as to classics, that's where Annie missed her second calling. Catch that selfsame *Cold is Being*, then go back and listen to her versions of Dvorak's *Going Home* and Rogers & Hammerstein's *If I Loved You* from her debut solo LP *Annie in Wonderland*, now very hard to find. Absolutely stunning! Prog has had a Streisand/Brightman/Collins/Baez in its midst all this time and never even knew it. Still doesn't.....but that doesn't mean the oversight can't be remedied, and I look forward to that day should it ever come. A CD or concert entirely of Haslam recitations of classical compositions to which lyrics have been added would be a thing of exquisite beauty.

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