

## BIG NAMES & LEGENDS

### THE HENSLEY/LAWTON BAND - THE RETURN

(2001, 80:00, Eagle EAGCD185/GAS 0000185 EAG)

I used to think that *Pallas* was the ugliest band in the world, but it appears that these two, briefly reunited, former members of progressive hard rock legend *Uriah Heep*, beat them by far. Not that this should be of any importance, since progressive rock never relied on sex appeal anyway.

Now, despite the fact that I own a couple of Uriah Heep LP's, the band never really had my interest and the only album I play every once in a while is "The Magician's Birthday" (which has the *Roger Dean* cover). If I wanted to hear some progressive hard rock with organ I'd rather choose *Deep Purple*. Anyway, I thought this live CD might be a nice (renewed) introduction to the Heepsters for me and because I hardly know anything, most of the 'best of' set would be rather new to me anyway. *Ken Hensley* (organ) and *John Lawton* (vocals) are accompanied by a bunch of (to me) unknown but capable musicians and play a pleasant set of songs, nicely mixing (up-tempo) rockers with balladish stuff. On a critical note I have to say that the vocals aren't always the best and sometimes sound a bit thin. The audience at least seems to have enjoyed the show the CD was recorded at and sing along with well known tunes like "The Wizard", "Lady in black" and "Free 'n easy".

\*\*\* (Carsten)



piece with saxophone. What comes in next is "Poppy z's" heavy bass drum, driven with guitar and keyboard soloing on top, mostly using distorted sounds reminds me of a more progressive mid section of "Music" by *John Miles*. Closing the piece is "Grounded" which returns to the intro theme. Several central themes return throughout the album. Especially on the vocal tracks there is a distinct similarity and repetition, although this gives the album a certain concept and reference point, like "Judy on the brink" returns to the "Grounded" theme. The similarity to *David Sylvian* or more striking *Rain Tree Crow* also adds to the atmosphere of the album. This tone is set on more parts on the album like on the striking "Heart attack" which is rather contemporary sounding or the magnificently dark "Dreamer's song" which comes closest to No-Man and has certain similarities to "All that you are", the final song on "Returning Jesus" or even *Porcupine Tree's* "Feel so low".

There is certainly a jazzy overtone on several compositions like "The laughter that turned to ice" having a sluggish tempo with jazz-like brushed drumming or as the title suggest "Jazz monkey" and "The mellow moods of Malcolm McDowell" showcasing a more jazzy David Sylvian (like he showed on his last tour). There are also more rocking tracks like the free-form "The David Warner wish list" a jazzy outing with fuzzed bass and saxophone, almost like King Crimson's improvisations or even *Radiohead*. Closing off the album is a return to the start; the Fender Rhodes piano comes in again leaving an open ending. I must say I enjoy this album a lot and the wide scope of styles explored, especially the combination of classic prog en more experimental ingredients like Radiohead here,

make for a varied listening.  
\*\*\*\* (Maurice)  
<http://www.collective.co.uk/henryfool/>

### SYMPHONIC SLAM - SYMPHONIC SLAM

(1976/2001, 41:45, Musea FGBG 4366.AR)

This CD evokes some memories, since a colleague of my father's once recorded this album for me on a cassette - together with an album by *Ashra* and an album by *Pekka Pohjola*, which featured (among others) *Mike Oldfield*. At that time, Symphonic Slam caused quite a stir, because *Timo Laine*, the main man of this

trio, worked with one of the first guitar synthesizers. It was quite an expensive machine, which contained a separate module for every string of the guitar. but enough about memory lane... Let's see what this disc has to offer to the current listener!

The CD starts very quietly, with a heavy drum and a low synthesizer part, which is taken over by guitars at a certain moment. I'm not sure if this is entirely Timo Laine's work, or that it's the keyboardist David Stone. The trio shows some slight similarity to their countrymen Rush, music wise. The music is best described as solid symphonic rock. I'm not quite enthusiastic about the singing and eventually I'm missing the bass. A good album, but not one that keep my attention over the entire length of the disc.

\*\*\* (Renate)  
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57070 Metz, France  
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### TALK TALK - MISSING PIECES

(2001, 50:09, Voiceprint PLVP004CD)

I must admit I knew very little about Talk Talk before hearing this recording. The press release said they emerged from Britain's post punk New Romantic movement, were signed to

EMI and had hit singles in 1982, enjoying international success thereafter. As the 1990's approached they moved into 'modern classical and free-form territory'. The only other thing I knew is that Rolling Stone magazine didn't like them at all - especially when they moved from sounding like "an artier *Duran Duran*" to "pointless noodling".

"Missing Pieces" (with cover art of a dodo by *James Marsh*) consists of different versions of tracks recorded for the "Laughing Stock" sessions (released on the jazz label Verve in 1991) with two tracks that never made it to the original album replacing two that did!

The CD starts with "After the flood", an atmospheric, haunting track with *Mark Hollis'* voice sounding uncannily like *Steve Hogarth* of *Marillion*. *Tim Friese Greene's* harmonium playing is another distinctive feature of this song.

"Myrrhman" starts with broken guitar chords and trumpet (*Henry Lowther*). Viola, cello and acoustic bass are also used as the music builds very slowly and deliberately to create a 'wash' of sound punctuated by odd piano notes and chords.

The real triumph of the album though is also the longest band track "New grass" (9:33). If I hear a more beautiful piece of music this year, I'll be pleasantly surprised. The lead guitar phrase is inspired and *Lee Harris'* off beat drumming ideal, organ chords reverberating nicely in the background and briefly emerging before giving way to piano and harmonium. The organ, vocal and guitar return then given way again. The music is timeless, words hard to distinguish but that doesn't really matter, the atmosphere is all and the atmosphere is charged.

I wanted the album to stop there but am glad it didn't (although "New grass" is the piece I've been playing over and over). "Stump" shows just how experimental a pop band can become with a dense industrial sound not far removed from 'musique concrète'.

"Ascension day" (6:00) was on the original album. This has more of a blues/jazz, less restrained feel than the other tracks and brings to mind some of *No-Man's* (later) work. It's the first time you hear the band having a bit of a 'thrash' and is probably the one I will listen to after "New grass".

"5:09" is Talk Talk's "Revolution #9", I suppose. It doesn't go as far perhaps but what could possibly follow that? Lots of backwards loops and effects!

The last track the, 14 minute "Piano", is a minimalist solo piano piece by Mark Hollis, originally recorded for a multimedia project called "AV1".

A very worthwhile collection of 'missing pieces' that comes highly recommended.

\*\*\*\* (Phil Jackson)  
<http://www.voiceprint.co.uk>

### UNIVERS ZERO - THE HARD QUEST

(1999, 49:59, Cuneiform RUNE 120)

Univers Zero is a band I have been anxious to listen to for quite some time - having read a lot about them (especially that excellent article in *Progression* some time ago) - but I just never came across any of their albums - until I picked up their latest studio album in a second hand store a few months ago.

Now, thanks to my readings I had an idea of what to expect, but, I was still a bit afraid of too overly experimental or too avant-gardesque music or noises. Luckily, I discovered something very pleasing instead!

The music on "The Hard Quest" (the band's first new studio album after a 13 year break!) proves to be largely played on acoustic instruments - mostly not quite common rock instruments, like bassoon, oboe, English horn, clarinet and violin, but also 'real' rock instruments like bass, drums, percussion and electronic keyboards appear in a perfectly integrated way. Much of the music on the album can be classified as slightly atonal sounding medieval or classically (the band's music has been compared to that of *Stravinsky* and by what I know from this composer I can agree) flavored avant-gardish chamber music with mainly acoustic instruments. As a perfect example of the band's sound on "The Hard Quest", I'd like to mention the tenth piece, the oddy

### HENRY FOOL - HENRY FOOL

(2001, 51:43, Cyclops CYCL103)

Henry Fool is a new 'super-group', if that's the right term for this project, formed with the idea to melt together the progressive styles of the Seventies and add a dose of experimentalism, jazz, ambient and contemporary sounds to the mix. Although at first the combination of musicians seems a little odd, there is some logic to the choice. The line-up consists of *Tim Bowness* on vocals and guitar, *Stephen Bennet* on keys and guitars, *Fudge Smith* on drums, *Peter Chilvers* on bass, stick, guitar and keys, *Michael Bearpark* on guitar and *Myke Clifford* on sax and flute. Of course Fudge and Stephen knew each other from the Eighties' neo prog band *LaHost*, whilst all the other members have worked together on and off in bands like *Samuel Smiles*, *Alias Grace* and *Darkroom*. I can imagine most of you will never have heard of most of these bands, but Fudge is mostly known for his work with *Pendragon* and *Steve Hackett* whilst Tim is of course one of the main figures in *No-Man*.

The album turned out as an almost one hour excursion of segmented tracks that are seamlessly mixed into one concept. The majority of the track are instrumental Tim Bowness, however, acts as storyteller with his distinctive style of singing. Fans of No-Man's more lush moments (like on the magnificent "Returning Jesus" album) will certainly like the slower moment on this album.

The album is build up of several shorter fragments that were pieced together out of jam sessions, improvisations and loosely based compositions. If you take some of the segments on it's own can sound incoherent, however as a whole this works wonderfully well.

Three instrumentals start off the album, the short brooding "Friday brown" sets the tone for the album with the wonderful Fender Rhodes piano sound with a dose of Mellotron topped off. Mellotron fans will get their kick on the album as it is dosed with care. The heavy "Bass pig" has *King Crimson* signatures with pounding rhythms and *Genesis* like keys showcasing the progressive side. The centrepiece is the five parter "Lateshow" that starts off with the trademark No-Man sound of Bowness' lush crooning vocals backed by hushed finger picked guitar playing and soft flute Mellotron before turning into a late night smooth jazzy

