

Robert Illesh - Golden - Reviewed on Sea of Tranquility

As the main man in the retro proggers Aquaplanage as well as Yes tribute act Fragile, Robert Illesh has already shown his knack for producing some wonderful Yes, Tull and Genesis flavoured progressive rock. However when you realise that Illesh has also performed alongside the likes of Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman, Alan White and Jon Anderson of Yes, as well as Glenn Cornick and Clive Bunker of Jethro Tull, then that should come as no surprise.

Golden is, I believe, the second solo offering from Illesh, with World Eyes being released back in 2004 and having not heard that earlier release, I have to say that I was initially expecting this album to be along roughly the same progressive lines as the aforementioned Aquaplanage. However where is the point in having a solo career and a band if they are going to sound the same? I suspect that Robert feels exactly the same way as Golden is for the main part a wonderfully uplifting and captivating collection of instrumental acoustic guitar tracks. To add a little colour to proceedings Illesh moves between nylon stringed and steel stringed guitars, with the gentle contrast between the two sounds bringing a welcome, if subtle counterpoint to each song. Simply constructed, but wonderfully arranged, the music floats from the speakers, offering a mixture of emotions ranging from melancholic introspection, to joyous uplifting celebration, with the end results being an album that flows seamlessly together, without ever losing focus.

Added to the mix at various points are the odd touch of backing vocals and recorder (both supplied by Illesh), violin and viola performed by Sarah Turner and cello which is provided by Val Banks. These embellishments allow the songs to ebb and flow with similar yet contrasting themes, while also bringing some added atmosphere to proceedings. However the acoustic guitars remain the driving force throughout, as the sharp melodies continually flow from the fretboard. Choosing highlights is almost unfair on this beautifully constructed album, as listening to it as a whole brings a filmic like quality to the music and whether a howling gale was battering my car, or I was sitting soaking the music in while staring out onto a warm spring day, I found Golden to be a welcome soundtrack to my surroundings.

Acoustic instrumental albums may not be to everyone's taste and to be fair Golden may not be an album for every occasion, however it is a beautiful and at times moving listening experience. Those who are willing to give just under an hour to an album that needs to be fully concentrated on to really appreciate, will be richly rewarded.

Added: April 17th 2011

Reviewer: Steven Reid

Score: 4/5

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