

Mp3 Elemental - Thee Divine Imagination



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All instrumental electronic music using mainly analog synthesizers and sequencers, with some digital synthesizers and some sampling, heavily influenced by the electronic musics of Europe, and the "Berlin school", in the 70s' to the mid 80's. 12 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Soundscapes, ELECTRONIC: Ambient

Details: Elemental is actually Steven Stokes and his music is played entirely on various analog keyboards, using no computers or midi at all. Some of his equipment includes an ARP 2600 and ARP Odyssey, a Yamaha CS60, a Roland VP-330 and a few more pieces of gear. As a result, the sound of Thee Divine Imagination is quasi-retro - warm and lush with that analog glow. The compositions range from sequenced pieces to classic space music and even some new age music, too. Most of what's here is friendly and approachable with an obvious human-touch behind it. For some reason, it took me a while to get into this release, but I was rewarded for my patience and now hear a lot to recommend on the CD. The album begins with the high energy "Splendor" which sounds like Phillip Glass played on a circus merry-go-round organ. It reminded me of some of Glass' score for Koyansquatsi. "18K," the next song, is more like a Berlin-school piece, full of laser-zapping synth effects underneath synth strings and washes, along with bell-like tones. Next, the title cut is a curious blend of serene synth chords (sounding, at times, like celestial church music) that have a classic mid-'80s space music sound to them intermixed with samples of children laughing and some muted percussive effects. Intriguing! The fourth piece is "The Solar Disc" and it's a bubbly sequencer song - full of energy, yet muted when compared to other artists in the sequencer-style school of music. Speaking of energy, though, "Solis Artus" has plenty of it to spare. Rapid fire sequenced lines and a second ebbing and flowing sequencer series of rising and falling notes makes this an album highlight. Another highlight is the following piece, "Faeire Magik," with shimmering synths and lush melodies whispering on the electronic wind. This cut reminded me of some of the songs

from Nik Tyndall's classic album, Lagoon. It's pretty without being syrupy. The songs so far have been short (in the four-to-five minute range) but later in the album, Steven, a.k.a. Elemental, stretches out with two cuts, both over ten minutes in length. "Illumination" should please fans of Berlin-school music. Steven has a solid knack for sequencers and those analog keyboards. It's a mid tempo number that moves patiently through its paces with few in-your-face changes in tempo or structure. This is followed by "Aethyria" which is moody and spooky, with alien-sounding synth effects (like the sound of a vast machine - a power generator belonging to the Krell, perhaps - busily at work) and a vague sense of foreboding. Pulses, whirrs, and whooshes combine with the slow steady drones to produce a somewhat chilling soundscape, yet one brimming with unspent energy. The album ends with another sequencer piece, "Solis Occasus." This time the pulses and notes are of a decidedly friendly and inviting nature - even somewhat whimsical to my ears. After the darkness of "Aethyria," this was a welcome change and I think it's a fitting end to the recording. Thee Divine Imagination is not for everyone. While not all of the CD is Berlin-school in nature, it will help if you are a fan of older style synth music. Even though it would be easy to type cast this as a throwback, I found the warmth on the majority of the songs sincere and I came to enjoy the album the more I played it. Don't be put off by the pictures of fairies on the CD cover. The music is not overly "pretty" or sweet. But it's not coldly Teutonic either. In some ways, it's a great blend of the warm side of Berlin and the cool side of new age. I think fans of early Tangerine Dream, Klaus Schulze, and other pioneers of electronic music, will enjoy this recording. New age music fans who listen to electronic music may also find something here for them - as long as they don't expect it to be particularly calm or serene. Thee Divine Imagination is rimming with electronic life. Those analog circuits got a real workout. I bet they're a little tired. review by Bill Binkelman

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