

Manning - The Root, The Leaf & The Bone

A Review For Background Magazine

(CD 2013, 66:07, Festival Music 201310)

The tracks:

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| 1- The Root, The Leaf & The Bone | (11:59) |
| 2- Decon(struction) Blues | (3:46) |
| 3- Autumn Song | (7:06) |
| 4- The Forge | (8:01) |
| 5- Old School | (8:54) |
| 6- Palace Of Delights | (6:34) |
| 7- The Huntsman And The Poacher | (5:39) |
| 8- Mists Of Morning Calling To The Day | (6:42) |
| 9- Amongst The Sleepers | (7:23) |



In 2012 **Guy Manning** and his band recorded the acoustic album *Akoustik*. Back then I wrote that this album proved that great progressive rock can also be made without layers of keyboards, stunning guitar solos or bombastic orchestral parts. Less is sometimes more, I said, so I complimented Guy Manning and his fabulous band for not only rocking electrically, but also acoustically! However, I have to admit that I'm glad that Guy decided to plug in his electric gear again for his follow-up album *The Root, The Leaf & The Bone*. Although I love acoustic stuff, yet I always prefer the complete setting of an electric band. However, usually both styles can be found on Manning's albums, which is also the case on this new one.

Those who like Manning's music are again treated to a fine album. Compared to the previous thirteen (!) albums little has changed. I can still notice influences of **Jethro Tull** and **Ian Anderson**, merely due to the fact that Manning's voice is quite similar to Anderson's, and also the flute has a dominant role. Then again it has to be said that Manning's music contains much more elements of prog rock than Jethro Tull ever had on their albums. After listening to this CD my wife asked me why I was in such a good mood! I told her that the nine compositions on this record are all of a high level and very entertaining. She must have noticed that I never had a dull moment!

On the new album Manning consist of Guy Manning (acoustic six-, twelve-string and classical guitar, bass, diddlybow, drums, electric guitars, FX, incantation bell, keyboards, mandolin, percussion, samples, lead and backing vocals), **Dave Millions** (electric and acoustic guitars, banjo), **Rick Henry** (percussion), **Kris Hudson-Lee**(bass) and **Julie King** (backing vocals). They succeeded in keeping me focussed until the dying notes of the final track. These musicians, however, are not the only ones who deserve all the credits. A special mention applies to some of the guest musicians who were rather important for this album. Especially saxophonist **Marek Arnold** (**Toxic Smile**, **Cyril**) put his mark on the music, but also the many contributions of fiddler **Ian 'Walter' Fairbairn** (**Jack The Lad**, **Hedgehog Pie**) and flautist **Stephen Dundon** (**Molly Bloom**) are excellent.

Although all of the nine tracks are great I still have some favourites. Above all the opening title track and the final piece *Amongst The Sleepers* are real beauties on which the musicianship stands out.

Finally I must tell you something about the album's theme. As the cover already reveals it deals with Mother Nature. Initially Guy Manning intended to write a concept about a faded village that became lost in the march of progress, so he created songs based upon that theme. But while writing he discovered that he was restricted by the subject. So he changed his plans and noticed that many songs are about the nature of change in one way or another. People who are familiar with the lyrics of Manning know that he's a real storyteller and each song indeed tells a story. Well, just read the lyrics and you'll find out that not only his music is entertaining, but the lyrics as well.

As I said before, the music on [The Root, The Leaf & The Bone](#) hasn't changed that much compared to the music on Manning's previous albums that I always rated with a high score. This album is no exception to the rule and gets an excellent rating as well. In spite of the fact that this is Manning's fourteenth album, I never get bored of listening to those fine records! Therefore I would like to advise devotees of progressive rock to check out [The Root, The Leaf & The Bone](#). I'm sure that you'll get in a better mood after listening to this or any other album by Manning.

**** Henri Strik (edited by Peter Willemsen)