



MANNING - "MARGARET'S CHILDREN" Review  
by Miles Bartaby for ROCK SOCIETY Magazine (CRS)





## MANNING

*Margaret's Children*

FESTIVAL MUSIC

Album number twelve from the incredibly prolific Manning, and another example of Guy's exceptional story telling skills. *Margaret's Children* is a continuation of 2006's *Anser's Tree* in which we first learned of the story of Margaret Montgomery (nee Fleming) and various decedents in her family tree.

*The Year Of Wonders* kicks things off and tells the story of Fleming Barras who inherits the gifts of Margaret Montgomery. Musically the flute, saxophone and violin make for a very full sound on what is an upbeat and catchy opener.

The album's epic track, *A Perfect Childhood*, starts off with a mediaeval folky passage – a minstrel like acoustic guitar and a

wash of strings accompanying the vocals to kick off the story of Amy Quartermaine, a nurse affected by the outbreak of the First World War. *A Night At The Savoy* is an interesting departure for Manning. Telling the story of Harriet Horden, a nightclub singer in the 1930's, it features Julie King on lead vocal and is a jazzy number in keeping with its setting. The lady is introduced in true club style by a compere, ably performed by Phideaux making a guest appearance. The track also features some clarinet provided by Marek Arnold of *Toxic Smile*, as are the saxes on the album.

The standout track for me though has to be the closing piece, *The Southern Waves*. A slow build with piano joined by strings, then woodwind, and then the rest of the band. The sparse lyrics allow for a lengthy instrumental passage that explores the opening themes and develops a life of its own before the whole thing is finished off with one of the best guitar solos I have heard in a very long time. Nothing overly clever perhaps, but perfectly pitched and with exactly the right feel for the track. Superbly done.

With seven new stories from the Manning stable and some great variety in the music, covering jazz, folk, middle eastern sounds and even a hint of Americana, *Margaret's Children* could well be the best Manning album so far. **MB**