

Silver Waves ~ Astral Dreams Review - Big Bang Magazine - France

“Since its creation in 2015, Tony Lowe's musical project ESP has released almost one album per year. In 2023, we were treated to the symphonic Reverie, where, contrary to his usual practice, the English multi-instrumentalist performed alone, including vocals. Clearly, the inspiration is still here.

This year, by teaming up with singer-songwriter Louise Browne and her soft, hushed voice, Lowe offers Silver Waves ~ Astral Dreams, his ninth album under this group name, still illustrated by the essential Cheryl Stringall (she also plays keyboards on two tracks as well as running the Sunn Creative label).

From "Curious Dreamer - The Dreaming Field", Tony Lowe picks up where he left off in 2020 with the excellent 'Phenomena', a mix of luminous and languid pop-prog "Curious Dreamer" an elegant jazzy prog instrumental. "The Dreaming Field", the sequence of two styles in the same piece however seems a little artificial here, a reserve that had already been noted on the previous album. "Silver Waves" proves to be most convincing, notably by its sensitive melody and its captivating vocal, set to a slow tempo that ends up accelerating into a bizarre technoid rhythm, the transition between the two parts being this time more obvious. Sung in an angelic voice on a slow rhythm.

"Glorious Persuasion" begins once again with a magnificent relaxing melody, Tony being a master in the matter. And for the third time in a row, what is becoming a formula, almost a gimmick, the rhythm suddenly accelerates, in an ever so abrupt way, to make way for an irresistible electro new wave that takes us into the atmosphere of the 80s and the group Propaganda. To put it more clearly, we have the impression that "Glorious Persuasion" is made up of two separate pieces without it harming the listener's pleasure.

"High Inspiration - It Wasn't a Dream" takes up the mixed formula, but this time in reverse. There are indeed two separate and apparently unrelated parts in the same piece, but the jerky allegro part is placed in front, illuminated by discreet synth interventions à la Tony Banks, followed by a dreamy ballad full of feeling.

"The Brightest Star" a pretty, feel-good country-pop, with a soft and light atmosphere, benefits from a Floydian guitar solo on a Hammond organ background that takes it to a whole other dimension.

On "Life Pod" a dynamic instrumental that Alan Parsons would not have denied, we find the organ in a more important jazzy role, supported by a blossoming bass, mixed with love, played by Steve Gee, an exceptional guest.

Tony Lowe has saved his best nugget for the end, "Love Returns" a devastating slow like the best days of the most romantic Barclay James Harvest. Perhaps the most beautiful melody ever composed by Tony, who has never been stingy with it, a positive music of the kind that sends us back to the infinite in which our mind gets lost while listening to it, daughter of the spiritual world, illuminated by the day of the sky, animated by a divine breath.

Silver Waves ~ Astral Dreams is not the most progressive album of the ESP Project, but it is one of the most enchanting and sophisticated, sublimated by a weightless Louise Browne. And we find ourselves already hoping for the coming of the next one for 2025, promise of beneficial melodic pleasures, if Tony Lowe's magical creativity still does not weaken."

Alain Succa – Big Bang Magazine – France - Dec 2024

<https://cosmosmusic.fr/produit/big-bang-127-decembre-2024/>