

Dewa Budjana - Mahandini (2018)

Written by bluesever

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1 Crowded 5:56 2 Queen Kanya 6:59 3 Hyang Giri 7:45 4 Jung Oman 6:52 5 ILW 6:39 6 Mahandini 8:18 7 Zone 5:55 Bass Guitar – Mohini Dey Drums – Marco Minnemann Guitar – Dewa Budjana Keyboards – Jordan Rudess + John Frusciante - vocals (1, 7), and guitar fill on “Crowded” coda Mike Stern - 1st guitar solo (5) Soimah Pancawati - lead vocal (3)

After the extensive double album venture *Zentuary* (Favored Nations, 2016), Indonesian guitar virtuoso Dewa Budjana returns with a more condensed set of tunes that have a much heavier edge to them. Instead of featuring a multitude of different guests and recording over a longer period of time, as on its predecessor, *Mahandini* finds Budjana in interplay with a fixed trio comprised of Progressive Rock pioneers Jordan Rudess on keys and Marco Minnemann on drums, while Indian prodigy Mohini Dey—who's made a name for herself playing with the likes of Mike Stern or Steve Vai—handles bass-duties. Ex-Chili Pepper guitarist John Frusciante makes two appearances on vocals while Mike Stern blesses the most straightforward fusion tune of the record "ILW" with a solo as well.

There's no doubt that for the composing and recording of this record Budjana felt no constraints at all. From the very beginning of "Crowded" he lets fat and fuzzy barred chords dominate the room with support of bold and heavy drum stabs. Frusciante's voice soars over the dramatic progressions of the chorus with emotion rather than calculation.

The album goes into more technical spheres hereafter, the subsequent "Queen Kanya" at times being reminiscent of Dream Theaters go-to Progressive Metal moments in the 90s. Here, Rudess shines on acoustic piano as well as synth, even though the restlessness of his rhythmic foundation in Minnemann and Dey doesn't give him an easy room to fill. An impressive drum and kannakol duo of the latter two brings the cycle back to the main theme.

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As followers of Budjana's work to date have grown accustomed to, Mahandini is once again an album which is jam-packed with an eclectic mix of western jazz and rock traditions that undergo an Asian treatment. The result is an exciting mix of odd meters, striking melodies and ultimately a unique sound. On top of that, the guitarist introduces vocal talents such as Soimah Pancawai to the mix, whom one might never have heard of before. Fortunately this has now been rectified.

Clocking in at just under 50 minutes and recorded in only a day, these seven compositions demonstrate Budjana's love for fusing Jazz with progressive rock in an accomplished way, that just might be able to win over the one or the other jazz-buff as well. Another impressive addition to the Moonjune catalogue. ---Friedrich Kunzmann, allaboutjazz.com

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