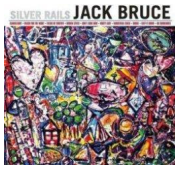
Jack Bruce - Silver Rails (2014)



01. Candlelight 02. Reach For The Night 03. Fields Of Forever 04. Hidden Cities 05. Don't Look Now 06. Rusty Lady 07. Industrial Child 08. Drone 09. Keep It Down 10. No Surrender
Jack Bruce: vocals, bass, piano,mellotron John Medeski: Hammond organ,mellotron (1,2,4,5,9) Tony Remy: guitar(1,2,3,5,7) Frank Tontoh: drums (1,2,3,5,6,9) Derek Nash: tenor sax (1,2,3) Russell Bennett: trumpet (1,3) Winston Rollins: trombone (1,3) Cindy Blackman Santana: drums(4,10) Milos Pal: drums, djembe (1,8) Rob Cass: percussion,backing vocals (1,3,6,10) Phil Manzanera: guitar (1) Malcolm Bruce: guitar (2,5,6) Bernie Marsden: guitar (9,10) Pearse MacIntyre: guitar (3) Robin Trower: guitar (6) Uli Jon Roth: guitar (4) Aruba Red,Kyla Bruce,Chantelle Nandi,Julie Iwheta: vocals (4).

Silver Rails is Jack Bruce's first solo studio album since 2003's fine More Jack Than God. Bruce recorded the set at Abbey Road with producer Rob Cass and collaborated with a dazzling array of musicians. Notably, he brought back John Medeski and Cindy Blackman Santana from the Spectrum Road project -- a tribute band to the Tony Williams Lifetime -- which released its own album in 2012. He also enlisted son Malcolm Bruce and guest guitarists including Phil Manzanera, Robin Trower, Bernie Marsden, and Uli Jon Roth. Bruce wrote songs with longtime collaborators Pete Brown and Kip Hanrahan, as well as his wife, Margrit Seyffer. The music is quite diverse, making this album a distant spiritual cousin to 1969's Songs for a Tailor. There are some scathing rockers, most notably the rumbling, politically intense "Drone," illustrated only by distorted bass and drums and samples of a WWII Stuka. "Reach for the Night" is a sophisticated, multivalent pop song with R&B and even jazz overtones. The piano-driven rock of "Fields of Forever" actually recalls the spirit of "Doin' That Scrapyard Thing" from Cream's Goodbye album. "Rusty Lady" (about the death of Margaret Thatcher -- Bruce wasn't a fan) is a funky blues with Trower's silvery guitar punctuating the mix. The Caribbean rhythms and horns in "Candlelight" make it a sophisticated outlier here, Medeski's organ careening around a bubbling bassline, stuttering drum kit, brass, and Manzanera's dancing single lines and vamps. The complex melody in "Hidden Cities" walks a line between metal and prog, while the next cut, "Don't Look Now," commences as a lithe, weary ballad before gradually cracking itself open and transforming into a midtempo rocker. Marsden's stinging fills punch through Bruce's bassline in the strutting modern blues that is "Keep It Down." The set closes with the thundering rock and

roll of "No Surrender," the most raucous tune on the set. Bruce's voice is a tad grainy, but his pitch and phrasing remain intact. Silver Rails is chancy and engaging, despite some inconsistent moments, and stands as a bright testament to an exceptional musician who, for over 50 years, has pushed at the margins of every genre he's taken on. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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