Hoelderlin - Rare Birds (1977)



01. Häktik Intergaläktik - 8:28 02. Sky Lift - 4:15 play 03. Before You Lay Down Rough And Thorny - 7:33 04. Rare Bird - 7:32 05. Necronomicon - 6:25 06. Sun Rays - 8:5+ + 07. Blackbird (Demo) 0:55 08. You Are The One (Demo) 2:29
Personnel: - Hans Bäär - bass - Michael Bruchmann - drums, percussion - Christian Grumbkow - lyrics - Joachim Grumbkow - keyboards, vocals (4) - Christoph Noppeney - viola, vocals - Pablo Weeber - guitar, vocals (3) - Manfred von Bohr - drums (5)

Hoelderlin were a German band who started out firmly with a prog-folk styling, but by their 3rd release (Clowns and Clouds) gave in to a more symphonic-prog direction (some could say that they took the easy way out by changing to this style). 'Rare Birds' is their 4th release and really hits this prog listener somewhere deep inside. The main keyboard utilised on this LP is a string synth, and IMO, it is used to great effect and compliments the arrangements perfectly (i.e. - it wouldn't sound the same with a mellotron, believe it or not !). The production is quite clear and well balanced - very professional. Almost straight away, the terrific opening track, 'Haktik Intergalaktik', starts with an immediately noticeable odd-time riff, with lovely viola playing from Christoph (Nops) Noppeney, and a tight, precise rhythm section (the Bass-guitar sports a lovely tone) - we are up and away. Quaint vocals from Nops, great progressions throughout, a brief interlude which I find is most touching, and great guitaring till the end. 'Sky-Lift' offers us a laid-back, fusiony feel with some tight playing all around. 'Before You Lay Down/Rough and Thorny' is again a smooth, jammy piece with a most blissed out end section. Side 2 begins with the title song, 'Rare Bird', and is a beautiful example of 'head music', the song is built around piano and string synth, with minimal drumming (just a bass drum, from memory), totally mellow, deep and profound, with a dramatic middle section - very dreamy, without question. 'Necronomicon' is a superb instrumental, starting out with an almost sinister undercurrent, and giving way to some stormy playing - especially a great semi-tone riff in 5/4 in the middle. The closing track, 'Sun Rays' is probably the weakest composition on offer here, and quite lengthy, but still holds the attention. Overall, a fantastic album from these highly skilled and talented musicians, and quite worthy of attention. Personally it commands the full 5 star rating, I have to give in - it's gorgeous !! --- Tom Ozric, progarchives.com

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