

Tristania - Rubicon (2010)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 15:46 -

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1 *Year Of The Rat* 4:36 2 *Protection* 4:16 3 *Patriot Games* 3:27 4 *The Passing* 4:48 5 *Exile* 4:26 6 *Sirens* 4:28 7 *Vulture* 3:43 8 *Amnesia* 4:54 9 *Magical Fix* 4:21 10 *Illumination* 8:13
Bass, Synth, Vocals – Ole Vistnes Drums – Tarald Lie Jr. Guitar – Gyri Smørdal Losnegaard Guitar, Vocals – Anders Høyvik Hidle Synth – Einar Moen Violin – Pete Johansen Vocals – Kjetil Nordhus, Mariangela Demurtas Vocals [Additional] – Østen Bergøy, Sigmund Olgart Vegge

Tristania had always been a band I held in high regard, from the more orchestral and bombastic music of their first three records to the more streamlined and straight forward approach of *Ashes* and *Illumination*. They've always had a fairly unique take on the gothic metal genre, and Vibeke Stene is easily one of my favorite singers in this particular branch of metal. Her vocals were often beautifully haunting, especially on their doom-laden debut *Widow's Weeds*. When she left the band, it was pretty sudden and pretty shocking. *Illumination* hadn't even hit the shelves yet when she quit and all touring plans had been cancelled. At the time, it was difficult to say if Tristania would be able to recover from this. While Vibeke didn't contribute much to the songwriting process, she still seemed to be a vital part of the band to many of its fans.

Enter Mariangela Demurtas, an Italian singer with a radically different style of singing - Mariangela's got a much more modern way of doing things as opposed to Vibeke's classical style. While one can compare Vibeke to (yup...) Tarja Turunen, a more apt comparison for Mariangela would be Cristina Scabbia (who also happens to be from Italy). With her on female vox, the band was finally able to tour in support of *Illumination* in 2008. Fans tended to note that she did really well with the material from that album and *Ashes*, but struggled with anything older than that. It seemed as though the mystery of whether or not they'd be able to put out anything worthwhile with her hadn't been solved just yet.

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Then came Rubicon in 2010. It's safe to say that the response to this album has been incredibly mixed, with some treating this thing as though it's the biggest abomination any band has ever put out in the history of fucking music. This, in my opinion, is a gross overreaction - it's certainly far from their best, but it's not bad. There are some hiccups on here that were worked out by the time Darkest White hit, that's for sure, but most of this thing goes by without giving me any major issues. Key word: most.

You see, "Patriot Games" is probably the worst song this band has ever done. It's got an obnoxiously borderline nu-metal chorus that reminds me of post-Karmacode Lacuna Coil. That's never a good thing. I never thought I'd hear this band sing a lyric as lame as "I can't believe this shit/I'll kill it one more time". It's just so incredibly ill-fitting for them - an experiment gone awry, if you will. Then there's Magical Fix, and while it's more typical of post-World of Glass Tristania, it's a fairly bad take on this formula. The chorus presented in this song isn't as annoying as what they shat out on "Patriot Games", but it's still pretty awkward and clumsily put together. An apt word for this one would be 'incomplete', sounds like they should have spent more time working on it.

The rest of this thing though? It's really not that terrible. It's essentially a continuation of what they were doing on Illumination most of the time, with the one major difference being Mariangela. Hell, I'd say there are a couple songs that are on about the same level as what one would find on that album - "The Passing" is a damn fantastic piece of work, featuring (for the first time in years) Pete Johansen on violin. Due to this, it essentially sounds like a merging between older and newer Tristania and I'm all for it, easily the highlight of the album. "Amensia" features some more fantastic violin work, as well as the haunting atmosphere I expect from this band. It also has what I'd say is my favorite performance of Mariangela's - while she tends to have a high and loud vocal style (and she does a good job with it), she uses softer vocals here and it fits the atmosphere perfectly. Kjetil Nordhus' clean singing is also pretty good and he compliments Mariangela well. "Illumination", at 8:13, is the album's longest track and never gets dull. Kjetil impresses me most here, with his deep, almost Andrew Eldritch-esque vocals about halfway through. It's a perfect ending to a not-so-perfect album, essentially. Most of the other songs are fine, though they don't leave as much of an impression.

It's not hard to see why this thing was met with such a vitriolic response. When you replace a vocalist as revered as Vibeke Stene, you're obviously going to have a large group of people that are going to be thoroughly unhappy about this. Hell, I wasn't so sure this band would make it out in one piece myself. However, this album does have some good shit on it, as rocky as it can be at times. Not a perfect introduction to Mariangela's voice and certainly not as fantastic as its follow up Darkest White, but worth giving a shot if the thought of a Vibekeless Tristania doesn't fill you with utter contempt. ---LycanthropeMoon, metal-archives.com

Tristania to zespół pochodzący z Norwegii, powstały z końcem 1996 roku i od tego czasu regularnie wypuszczający na rynek smuty spod znaku „gothic/symphonic metal”. Kobięcy wokal, pompatyczne refreny, chóralne melancholie – klimaty znane i (nie)lubiane. Przez ten czas dorobili się 5 albumów, ostatni pochodzi z 2007 roku. Kilka razy się posprzecziali, wymieniali skład, starali się także nie dać zaszuklądować jako Nightwish z ambicjami – na poprzednich płytach częste urozmaicenia, efekty gitarowe, instrumenty z epoki, męskie wokale.

Nowy album raczej takich poszukiwań nie zawiera. Zespół ponownie możemy podziwiać w zmienionym składzie, tym razem w postaci Kjetil Nordhusa i Mariangeli "Mary" Demurtas – pary nowych wokalistów (z czego płęć piękna została od razu wepchnięta na okładkę). O ile jeszcze sir Kjetil produkuje się w miarę poprawnie, wpisując się niezauważenie w ogólną przeciętność Tristianii, o tyle ta piękna topielica zawodzi w iście upiornym stylu. „Rubicon” zaczyna się 2-3 dość ciekawymi kawałkami, które nie odbierają już na wstępie nadziei na słuchalny album. Warstwy muzycznej nie muszę chyba dłużej opisywać, bo większość z Państwa na pewno wie „o co tu biega” – sztańcowe, rozmiękczone metalowe granie, podparte klawiszowymi patatajkami i stylizowaną na wielce smutną płaszczyznę wokalną. O ile początek płyty wpisuje się właśnie w taki standard (a jak wiadomo, nadal znajduje to dość duży poklask i uznanie wśród skrzywdzonej przez świat młodzieży), tak z dalszą częścią (czyt. z 7-8 utworami – no może po drodze znajdują się tzw. „momenty”, ale jest ich niewiele) mogą mieć już problem nawet zatwardziali emo-fani z pomalowanymi na czarno paznokciami. Nuda, plastik, wtórność, naiwność... niewiele ponad to.

Tylko dla wiernych fanek zespołu i takiego stylu – faceci mogą sobie co najwyżej wydrukować okładkę. ---Michał "Telperion" Nowak, artrock.pl

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