

Celtique

By

Doug Hammer

Written by

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Doug Hammer is back with a storybook album entitled **Celtique**, a musical journey that will emphasise a day in the life of a fisherman in the regions where I have lived, the regions of the Celts.

Let's climb aboard this musical boat with the artist and as we do so we have our sailing music entitled **Celtique (Daybreak)**. This is one amazingly powerful composition to start with, the magic of this piece is the performance of the artist, he gathers pace like the wind, settles us back down and then once again, we are off in a powerful embrace of the ocean in tone and sound.

The following piece offers a sight I have seen many times myself, it can be beyond eerie and called **Through the Mist**. One can imagine the boat settling into a routine flow from harbour to the main drift of the outer reaches of the bay and carving a straight line through the early morning mist. It is a sight to behold I can tell you, and **Doug Hammer** has manifested one very clever sound track for that moment within this very arrangement.

The world from which I came from is full of reminders of the ancient past; some now are just monoliths of a yesteryear, ignored by many other than the few with an enquiring mind. Here Hammer elaborates on the scenery around the Celtic headlands where you may well find an old tired **Wandering Path**. The careful and intelligent performance here draws a breath taking musical narrative of past and present almost coalescing, so that those venturing minds may once again wonder down those pathways of history.

I once walked an old path way and found the subject matter of this next piece covered in Ivy and weeds, but still proudly standing after many years. **Crumbling Wall** is a truly emotive offering that offers up one of the most outstanding performances from the release. Like the preceding composition it graces us musical memories of the past, and then reveals them in a reflective moment of a hesitant future. This is probably one of the most ambient arrangements I have heard from Hammer.

Across most of Western Europe you will find stones, these monolithic sentinels of time and tide still stand, weather beaten and unbowed to this day and after hearing this next song entitled **Ancient Stones**, I am now convinced that the artist has created the perfect anthem for them. The offering starts with a reflective pose, but manifests itself into something emotionally charged and melodic, this is indeed one of my favourite compositions from the album.

On **She Beckons**, we have a musical narrative that creates a sensitive reality of mystery, Hammers plays so intently, but with a great deal of care and attention it is a delight to float upon, then once the pattern is set, a distinct sense of movement can be heard in the ever increasing Celtic tempo. If you ever wanted to hear an arrangement that offers up the very best of build and progression in a track, this is the piece.

We now have two shorter offerings back to back as we return to the day of the fisherman, this one is called **To The Sea** and has a really empowering sense of onward movement, the delightfully happy refrain here adds power to the piece and one can feel it increasing with each note played, while on **Wind and Waves** we have the reality of being out there among the vast swathes of the all-powerful ocean and its own moods, sometimes tender and tremulous, sometimes violent and cruel.

However, when we arrive at the next offering a whole different mood falls over our voyage, as we find **Calm Water**. This gentle performance eases our soul after the tumult of the moments before. Hammer plays with heart here and creates a musical twinkling of peace and calm after the storm. The flow of this offering is again almost anthem like in its construction, which makes it extremely appealing to listen to.

After the easy nature of the last piece, our musical boat moves towards home, and for the first time we can now see on the horizon the ever pleasurable sight of our **Safe Harbour**. The boat is packed with the booty that it set out for, now all we need to do is rely on the winds and allow this journey of plenitude to take us safely home. Hammer has produced a perfectly sun kissed offering here, one that is so obviously bathed in a deep felt sense of gratitude.

As we tie up at Harbour, the evening seems to be setting in all around us and if we gaze back upon the sparkling ocean perhaps we can hear messages or even **Voices of the Past**. On this almost spiritual performance that begins this musical tale, one can truly resonate with those voices that echo in labyrinths of the sea. Hammers presentation of this offering breaks eventually a wonderfully melodic energy, and continually floats around us like the spectres of a bygone era.

We now move deeper into the release and come across a charming offering called **Golden Land**. When I first listened to this, it reminded me of that old folk song "Will you go" the melody is packed with an age filled, yet timeless motif, one that assures us that no matter how long we live in these lands for, providing we always treat them with respect, they will always be our golden lands. This is one of the most moving pieces off the album and one that increases with an emotional intent whilst caressing the senses.

I found **Moss and Earth** easily the most intriguing offering on the album; the deeper notes giving us the grounding that we need to start this next musical sojourn with. This is a clever performance and probably the one least expected, however it does give us a musical insight to the lands surrounding the deeper borderlands of the green forests. I have listened to this piece several times; there is something quite brilliantly addictive about its nature and latent intensity.

This has been a truly beautiful journey, but every voyage has to end at some stage. This is our penultimate offering from the artist called **Journey Home**. This seemed so memorable, until my classical musical head kicked in and I could feel *Dvorak's New World Symphony* going home with us along that final voyage of the day.

Our final gift from **Doug Hammer's** musical bag of plenty is a return to the opening piece, but the evening version of the arrangement, **Celtique (Twilight)**. As you would expect the artist has created something very respectful and easy as we now settle down from the days endeavour's and ease back into the night, with the sound of the sea forever in our soul.

In my opinion I believe **Celtique** to be the best work **Doug Hammer** has created since the release of *Heart* in 2013. Hammer has worked hard at this album that much is clear, he has performed with his *heart* on his sleeve and truly felt each and every nuance of the day of a Celtic Fisherman, and much more than that, he has captured the very essence of the area in a loving but poignant way. Full marks indeed Doug Hammer, for what is a sublime and quite emotive release, one that conjures up some fantastic images to get totally lost within.