

Wood, Wind and Skin

By

Chasm

Written by

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There is always time for something fresh and new in my music collection and this latest release by **Chasm - Mark Esakoff and Michael Whipple**, certainly fits the bill, and for me in these troubled times, it is a real breath of fresh air that delivers something unique at our musical doors.

This voyage of plenty starts with the opening piece entitled **Praying for Rain**, a fine example of native styled flute combined with acoustic guitar, and may I add some very delicious minor chords can be found in there as well, this slice of perfection leads us gently towards the next offering entitled **Sideways Sunshine**. This is a simply deliriously happy composition that powers its way around our minds and ears with a true driving force, one that contains a smart little Jazz ethic as well, it is truly music to make you smile indeed.

As we turn the corner, we find nestled into the weave a fine arrangement called **Look at her Glow**. The tempo is once again sun kissed and vibrant and the performance builds with such style and panache. *Whipple* excels here on percussion, on a track that is incredibly addictive to listen to, and one that could easily be released as a single.

One of my personal favourites is **Strange Currents**; this is contemporary instrumental music at its very best; almost light rock at times, here is a composition that creates such a wonderful depth to its performance, its multi-instrumental nature is beautifully arranged giving a wonderfully rich feel to the overall piece.

I have listened to this next piece several times now, there is something so familiar to its tone, it reminded me in parts of music you may have heard in the 60's, that light organ/keyboard sound, the flute, the specific percussive beat, meaning that **On A Lark** is not just a fine track on its own, it may cause moments of reflection to happier times as well through its compositional structure.

We're climbing now to the top of the album, but in order to do that we must reach the top of the mountain. **Mountains** the track has a light ambient feel to its construction that is really beautiful, *Whipple's* flute here is utterly transcending and the keyboard segment is uplifting and very pleasant to bathe within.

The second half of the album has been reached, here we are gifted a composition of a different colour entirely, entitled **Inner Jungle**. The Latin styled guitar here was utterly magical from *Esakoff*. This is one offering that would fit into the global fusion genre with ease, and at times reminded me of the US based band *Incendio*, especially with the elevation in tempo and intensity.

There are so many personal favourites of mine on this album, it's quite unfair to choose one, however the vibrancy of this offering is breath taking and quite brilliant and called **Agua Blanca**. The mixture of Rock, Jazz and a world vibe really made this a track to visit many times over; fine performances on a multitude of instruments by *Esakoff* and *Whipple* can be found here.

A lush combination of guitar and keyboards ushered in the next composition called **The Memory Box**. Now I must remember this one for my next jazz show, it is so fluently performed that it is deeply pleasurable to immerse within. The smooth approach here by the artists is certainly appreciated in what is the longest track off the album and just shy of five minutes.

Time to chill and we can do that with this offering entitled **Laguna Sunrise**. The guitar here is simply transcendent and offers the listener a moment to possibly enjoy a sunrise or a sunset, the music here would honestly work with both.

There is something quite light hearted and fun about this next arrangement called **Element People**, this toe tapping composition drives us through leafy country lanes with the top down, in a similar way the earlier offering **Sideways Sunshine** did, and leads us perfectly into the penultimate offering off the album entitled **Arctic Crossing**. This is however a mirror image of the preceding track and the keyboards plunge like the temperatures would do in this region of the planet. **Arctic Crossing** is a truly clever arrangement and a performance that I would personally find fascinating to watch played live, the gentle but chilling musical narrative is quite artistic to witness.

So the final musical portal has been reached, but before we step out of this realm of sight and sound we are gifted one more composition to take with us along on our way, it is called **The Silence Between the Words**. This is the only offering on the album with vocals, but happens also to be a total favourite of mine, the rock feel and guitar here is utterly amazing, the major minor chord change makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck, it is simply the best way possible to leave the album.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I first hit play, but oh boy am I glad I did, **Chasm - Mark Esakoff and Michael Whipple** have produced here with **Wood, Wind & Skin**, one of the most enjoyable, varied and unique releases I must have listened to for ages, certainly this year. Their performance skill, production quality and crafted arrangements must make this a perfect example of how to produce truly interesting instrumental music, and I am more than happy to endorse this one without a shadow of a doubt.