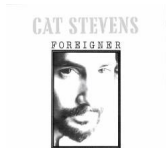


Cat Stevens - Foreigner (1973)

Written by bluelover

Sunday, 24 August 2014 15:47 - Last Updated Sunday, 14 August 2016 12:17

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1. *Foreigner Suite* 18:16 2. *The Hurt* 4:16 3. *How Many Times* 4:32 4. *Later* 4:47 5. *100 1 Dream* 4:10 Bass – Paul Martinez Bass, Electric Piano – Jean Roussel Drums – Bernard Purdie Drums, Percussion – Gerry Conway Guitar – Phil Upchurch Piano, Electric Piano [Fender], Synthesizer [A R P & R M I], Bass, Acoustic Guitar – Cat Stevens Voice – Barbara Massey, Patti Austin, Tasha Thomas

Between 1970 and 1972, Cat Stevens recorded four albums in the same manner, using the same producer and many of the same musicians, painting the album covers, and assigning the records ponderous titles. Things changed with his next album, *Foreigner*. The recording itself had been produced by Stevens, and while a couple of Stevens' usual backup musicians had been retained, New York session musicians appeared, and second guitarist Alun Davies was gone. With him went the acoustic guitar interplay that had been the core of Stevens' sound, replaced by more elaborate keyboard-based arrangements complete with strings, brass, and a female vocal trio featuring Patti Austin. It's easy to look at the 18-plus minute "Foreigner Suite" that took up the first side and accuse Stevens of excess and indulgence. What should be kept in mind, however, is that his peers in 1973 were acts like Jethro Tull and Yes, who in turn were taking their cue from the Beatles' *Abbey Road* and the Who's *Tommy*. Call *Foreigner* ambitious, then, rather than indulgent. Actually, the suite is full of compelling melodic sections and typically emotive singing that could have made for an album side's worth of terrific four-minute Cat Stevens songs, if only he had composed them that way. As it is, the suite is a collection of tantalizing fragments. But the album's second side, featuring the Top 40 hit "The Hurt," demonstrates that, even in the four-minute range, his songwriting and arranging were becoming overly busy. On the whole, *Foreigner* marked a slight fall-off in quality from *Catch Bull at Four*, which itself had marked a slight fall-off from *Teaser and the Firecat*. The decline seemed more extreme, though, because *Foreigner* clearly was intended to be better than its predecessors. That's the risk of ambition. ---William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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