Santa Esmeralda - The House Of The Rising Sun (1978)

1. The House Of The Rising Sun 2. Quasimodo Suite 3. Dance You Down Tonight 4. Nothing Else Matters 5. Hey! Gip Jimmy Goings - Vocals Leroy Gomez - Sax (Alto), Vocals C. Padovan - Bass, Strings Jean-Claude Petit - Bass

Having already assumed the onerous task of revamping the Animals' classic "Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" for the disco market -- and making a success of it -- Santa Esmeralda once again tackled the classics within this novel set. "The House of the Rising Sun," the same band's first international smash, certainly reinvented the classic sound. Keeping the crunch of the guitar and adding a disco beat and a horn section that crosses the border, the performance is anything but another tired old cover. And, although the strains of the aforementioned "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" do percolate up from the depths at times, "Rising Sun" ultimately comes off like a spaghetti Western crossed with Saturday Night Fever. Odd, but oddly compelling at the same time. That song segues into the accompanying "Quasimodo Suite," making up a luxurious first side that completely overshadows the three tracks on the flip. "Dance You Down Tonight" is pure disco, but pulls out a few funk stops on the way, while the ballad "Nothing Else Matters" takes the preceding frenzy down a notch. The closing "Hey! Gip," covering one of Donovan's most hallowed oldies, is probably best forgotten. Santa Esmeralda may be remembered as nothing more than a novelty band -- a product of its generation at a time when outrageousness ruled -- but at least the band took a stab at creating something different. And while not necessarily successful, the group's reinvention of the '60s music scene certainly gave people something different to talk about. ---Amy Hanson, AllMusic Review

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