

Uriah Heep – Innocent Victim (1977)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Keep On Ridin' (Hensley/Williams) – 3:41*
02. *Flyin' High (Hensley) – 3:17*
03. *Roller (Bolder/Ian McDonald) – 4:38*
04. *Free 'N' Easy (Lawton/Box) – 3:02*
05. *Illusion (Hensley) – 5:02*
06. *Free Me (Hensley) – 3:32*
07. *Cheat 'N' Lie (Hensley) – 4:51*
08. *The Dance (Jack Williams) – 4:48*
09. *Choices (Williams) – 5:42*
10. *Illusion / Masquerade (Full Unedited Version) 8:17*
11. *The River (Out-Take) 3:07*

Personnel:

- John Lawton – vocals
- Ken Hensley – keyboards, guitars, vocals
- Mick Box – guitars
- Trevor Bolder – bass
- Lee Kerslake – drums, vocals

After breaking in new vocalist John Lawton on the back-to-basics outing *Firefly*, Uriah Heep once again found themselves feeling the need to experiment a bit on *Innocent Victim*. The resulting album doesn't cohere as neatly as *Firefly* did, but manages to keep the listener engaged thanks to a combination of slick performances from the band and a handful of truly great Uriah Heep songs. Overall, *Innocent Victim's* blend of sharp, short rockers and pop-friendly ballads feels like an attempt to court the American AOR market. The rockers are all pretty strong stuff: "Free 'n' Easy" is a fast-moving tune built on an ear-scorching guitar riff that feels like boogie rock in overdrive, while "Roller" is a stylish midtempo track that blends funky, languid verses with a faster, bass-driven chorus that ups the song's rock quotient. The band also weaves in some experimental tracks that hit the bull's eye: "Illusion" is a spacy tale about dreaming that creates a rich atmosphere through an arrangement built on strong keyboard and

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vocal textures, while "The Dance" successfully marries a reggae beat to its prog-like melody. Meanwhile, the album's ballad leanings brought Uriah Heep one of their biggest international hits in the form of "Free Me," a tune whose acoustic style and accent on harmonies brought the group dangerously close to Eagles territory. The downside of Innocent Victim is that it works a little too hard at being radio-friendly: despite their high level of energy, songs like "Keep on Ridin'" and "Flyin' High" are too contrived and self-consciously poppy to sit comfortably alongside gutsy rockers like "Free 'n' Easy." Despite this unevenness in tone, Innocent Victim remains a likable album with enough strong material to satisfy Uriah Heep's admirers. ---Donald A. Guarisco, AllMusic Review

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