

Oblivion Sun ☐ – The High Places (2012)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Deckard* 2 *March Of The Mushroom Men* 3 *Everything* 4 *Dead Sea Squirrels* 5 *My Eyes* 6 *Awakening* 7 *Flowers* 8 *The Rules* 9 *The Cage* 10 *Our Eyes* - Stanley Whitaker - vocals, guitars - Frank Wyatt - keyboards, saxophones - David Hughes - bass guitar - Bill B. Brasso - drums

Oblivion Sun hail from Maryland, USA and rose from the ashes of Happy The Man (HTM). Founding members Frank Wyatt (keyboards, sax) and Stanley Whitaker (guitars, vocals) started this band in 2006 together with Bill Plummer (keyboards), Dave DeMarco (bass guitar) and Chris Mack (drums). Their eponymous debut album has been released in 2007. Now five years later they finally recorded a successor.

On *The High Places* their second keyboardist Bill Plummer has left the band. As a result you might expect that the music on this album sounds differently, or in any case more guitar-orientated than their first CD. Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't; it depends on how you listen to the guitar and keyboard parts throughout the album, but I guess that's a minor aspect as long as the songs are worth listening. And they surely are! The style of HTM can still be heard in the band's compositions, but that seems logical to me. In the opening piece *Deckard* these influences are evident. This instrumental composition could have been taken from any of their albums. The drum patterns, the piano parts and the guitar riffs clearly tend towards the music of HTM.

On *March Of The Mushroom Men*, the second instrumental, the band shows to be capable of playing another type of music as well. This time the music refers to albums recorded by bands like Focus and Camel, mainly due to Whitaker's melodic guitar parts. Sometimes his playing reminds me of Jan Akkerman's or Andy Latimer's playing. Whitaker proves to be a fine singer as well in *Everything*. This short ballad already appeared on the eponymous album recorded by

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another Whitaker-Wyatt project namely Pedal Giant Animals (2006). This rather short composition sounds like a track of Primary Elements (2012, see review) from his other band Six Elements that contains musical elements from early Genesis and Cat Stevens. Next track Dead Sea Squirrels is the third instrumental piece on which the guitars sound rather heavy and a bit in the vein of the riff in Crazy Horses (The Osmonds). Fortunately the keyboards assure that this song holds enough prog rock sounds to keep you focussed till the end.

The album ends with the title track. Having a playing time of 22 minutes it's not only the longest track, but also the best one. It's an adaptation of the old HTM piece Merlin Of The High Places from the Death's Crown (1999) album. On this epic piece, which is divided into six chapters, they sound like a mixture of HTM and Genesis at the time of A Trick Of The Tail (1975). It's mainly Whitaker's voice and Wyatt's playing on the acoustic piano, sounding like Phil Collins and Tony Banks respectively, which are responsible for this comparison. This piece also contains the best keyboard playing of the album; the synthesizer solo on the second chapter Awakening is just awesome! It makes you forget ex-HTM keyboardist Kit Watkins. After listening to this epic track I felt in a good mood and I realized that these musicians are still able to write superb compositions.

Of course Oblivion Sun aren't HTM and The High Places isn't an album like Crafty Hands (1978), but that doesn't mean that the music of Oblivion Sun is less enjoyable. On the contrary! I'm inclined to say that people who cherished the music of HTM are obliged to listen to the music of Oblivion Sun! I'm certain that you won't regret it; neither did I. The High Places contains music of a very high standard similar to the music of HTM! ---Henri Strik, backgroundmagazine.nl

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