

## Colosseum - Valentyne Suite (1969)

Written by bluesever

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*A1 The Kettle A2 Elegy A3 Butty's Blues A4 The Machine Demands A Sacrifice B The Valentyne Suite B1a Theme One - January's Search B1b Theme Two - February's Valentyne B1c Theme Three - The Grass Is Always Greener...* Bass Guitar – Tony Drums [Uncredited], Other [Machine By] – Jon Hiseman Guitar – James Organ, Vibraphone, Piano – Dave Saxophone – Dick

One of England's prime jazz-rock -- or, more accurately, rock-jazz -- outfits, most of the members of Colosseum had apprenticed in blues bands, and it shows very strongly on some of the material here. Both "The Kettle" and "Butty's Blues" are essentially tarted-up 12-bar blues, although they work well in a grander context; in the latter case much grander, as a brass ensemble enters for the last part, drowning out everything but the guitar, an indication that this recording is in dire need of remastering. "Elegy" is a fast-paced, minor-key blues that stretches guitarist James Litherland's vocal abilities. Things do get far more interesting with "The Machine Demands a Sacrifice," which offers solo opportunities to organist Dave Greenslade and sax player Dick Heckstall-Smith before re-emerging in what can only be called a proto-industrial style, all heavily treated clattering percussion. The album's real joy comes with "The Valentyne Suite," which takes the band out of their bluesy comfort zone into something closer to prog rock. Bandleader Jon Hiseman is a stalwart throughout, his busy drumming and fills owing far more to jazz than the studied backbeat of rock. Greenslade proves to be a largely unsung hero, his only real solo in the suite something to offer a challenge to vintage Keith Emerson, but with swing. As to criticism, bassist Tony Reeves has very little flow to his playing, which severely hampers a rhythm section that needs to be loose-limbed, and Litherland's guitar playing is formulaic, which can be fine for rock, but once outside the most straightforward parameters, he seems lost. In retrospect this might not quite the classic it seemed at the time, but it remains listenable, and for much of the time, extremely enjoyable. ---Chris Nickson, AllMusic Review

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