

Keith Emerson - Emerson Plays Emerson (2002)

Written by bluesever

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01 - Vagrant. 02 - Creole Dance. 03 - Solitudinous. 04 - Broken Bough. 05 - A Cajun Ally. 06 - Prelude To Candice. 07 - A Blade Of Grass. 08 - Outgoing Tide. 09 - Summertime. 10 - Interlude. 11 - Roll'n Jelly. 12 - B&W Blues. 13 - For Kevin. 14 - The Dreamer. 15 - Hammer It Out. 16 - Ballad For A Common Man. 17 - Barrelhouse Shakedown. 18 - Nilu's Dream. 19 - Soulscapes. 20 - Close To Home. 21 - Honky Tonk Train Blues. 22 - Medley (Nicola, Silver Shoes & I'll See You In My Dreams). Keith Emerson - Piano, Arranger, Composer

This is the album that longtime fans of Keith Emerson have dreamed of. For most of this hourlong CD, Emerson sticks exclusively to grand piano, eschewing the bank of synthesizers (and Hammond organ) that tended at times to distract from his abilities as a keyboardist. Since this CD was produced over a period of time in different locales, the sound varies depending on the conditions under which the recording was made. Emerson's originals include the reflective ballad "Vagrant" (though it has its flashy moments), the gorgeous and somewhat bittersweet "Solitudinous," the jaunty boogie-woogie "A Cajun Alley," "Roll'n Jelly" (a bluesy salute to jazz great Jelly Roll Morton), and a new version of "Barrelhouse Shakedown" (which mixes ragtime and boogie-woogie). One track that adds synthesizer is Emerson's moving elegy "For Kevin" (written in memory of his late engineer and friend Kevin Gilbert), which he wraps by slamming his forearm in frustration with Gilbert's untimely death. Another is "The Dreamer," composed for his soundtrack to the film Best Revenge. Emerson revisits classical composer Alberto Ginastera's fiendishly difficult "Creole Dance" with great success. A funky take of George Gershwin's "Summertime" adds electric bass and drums. But the biggest surprise is the inclusion of Emerson's guest appearance on Oscar Peterson's TV series Piano Party, as the jazz legend joins him for a wild duet of Meade "Lux" Lewis' boogie-woogie hit "Honky Tonk Train Blues," accompanied by a rhythm section and a big band. To top it off, a medley recorded by the pianist at the tender age of 14 wraps this intriguing CD. Emerson's detailed liner notes describing the music are also translated into German and Italian. ---Ken Dryden, allmusic.com

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