Blodwyn Pig - Ahead Rings Out (1969/2000)

1. It's Only Love 2. Dear Jill 3. Sing Me A Song That I Know 4. The Modern Alchemist 5. Up And Coming 6. Leave It With Me 7. The Change Song 8. Backwash 9. Ain't Ya Comin' Home, Babe? Mick Abrahams — guitar, slide guitar, vocals Jack Lancaster – saxes, phoon horn, violin, flute Andy Pyle – bass, 6-string bass Ron Burp – drums

None of Jethro Tull's progressive rock tendencies or classical influences followed Mick Abrahams into his creation of Blodwyn Pig, even with the inclusion Jack Lancaster's sax- and flute-playing prowess. Instead, Abrahams built up a sturdy British blues-rock sound and used Lancaster's horn work to add some fire to the band's jazzy repertoire. Ahead Rings Out is a stellar concoction of gritty yet flamboyant blues-rock tunes and open-ended jazz centered around Mick Abrahams' cool-handed guitar playing, but it's the nonstop infusion of the other styles that makes the album such a solid listen. After only one album with Jethro Tull, Abrahams left to form this band, and it's evident that he had a lot of pent-up energy inside him when he recorded each of the album's tracks. With a barrage of electrifying rhythms and fleeting saxophone and woodwind excursions, cuts like "Sing Me a Song That I Know," "Up and Coming," and "Backwash" whip up highly energetic sprees of rock and blues. Most of the tracks have a hearty shot of rock up the middle, but in cuts like "The Change Song" and "Backwash," the explosive riffs are accompanied by a big band style of enthusiasm, adding even more depth to the material. Andy Pyle's bass playing is definitely distinct throughout each track and is used for anything but a steady background, while labeling Ron Berg's drumming as freewheeling and intemperate would be an understatement. It's apparent that Blodwyn Pig's style is indeed distinct, releasing a liberated and devil-may-care intensity while still managing to stay on track, but the fact that each cut convokes a different type of instrumental spiritedness is where the album really gains its reputation. Wonderfully busy and even a tad motley in some places, Ahead Rings Out shows off the power and vitality that can be channeled by combining a number of classic styles without sounding pretentious or overly inflated. A year later, Blodwyn Pig recorded Getting to This before Abrahams left the band, and although it's a solid effort, it falls just a smidgen short of Ahead Rings Out's bluesy dynamism. --- Mike DeGagne, AllMusic Review

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