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Chris Dignam - Greenlit

Portraiture Records - April 28, 2009

by [Michele Mussatto](#)

Wow! Guitarist Chris Dignam spun a winner with Greenlit, released in May 2009 by independent label Portraiture Records. An instrumental rock guitar work for the most part, Greenlit also has folk, classical and new age moments, and contains the most unusual, inspiring and enjoyable guitar compositions I've heard since first opening a Led Zeppelin album. His first recording in five years, Dignam broke free from the conventions imposed on him in his previous CD's and used every type of guitar, device, timbre and playing style in his repertoire, to create a compilation of experimental yet deftly written guitar pieces that sated my thirst for fresh rock sounds.



All but one of Greenlit's tracks lack vocals. Given the complexity of Dignam's arrangements, this is a necessary omission for one to be able to hear and appreciate all the tonal qualities present at the same time in his compositions. The expressive soulfulness of his melodies more than compensate for lyrics, and offer the listener a chance to fill in their own images based on the different emotions each melody evokes.

While pleasant melodies provide the framework for Dignam's pieces, raucous heavy metal riffs energize many of his songs, and disharmonic tones from his non-traditional instruments add fresh, ethereal accents. Dignam demonstrates his skills on several different types of guitars and stringed instruments on Greenlit, including electric guitars and basses, classical guitars, the fretless glissentar guitar, 6-, 8-, and 12-string guitars, baritone guitars, mandolins, the Greek bouzouki long neck lute, the small acoustic papoose guitar, the Finnish kantele zither and the hammered dulcimer. Dignam's guitar work is coupled on most song by the drums and percussion of Jeff Moehle.

The title song "Greenlit" opens the CD. It immediately had me tapping me toes and playing air guitar along with Dignam's classic rock riffs, reminiscent of the melodic jams of Joe Satriani, one of rock's most influential guitarists. Then comes "White Noise," which immediately gave me chills. A deeper bass line gives the song a gritty edge, like Korn's 5-string bass work. The melody of the lead guitar is mournful and heart wrenching, but coupled with the angry determined beat of the bass and more baritone guitar lines, the song is very inspiring and energetic. "Hand of God" follows, which features the lead guitar again with improvisational guitar sounds backing it up.

"Up, Down, Top, Bottom, Charm, and Strange" provides complete contrast. The melody is provided by a light and airy Spanish guitar, which becomes increasingly improvisational and esoteric as the glissentar joins the mix. Dignam also introduces the e-bow to create many unusual sounds. "Balance" comes next with its bittersweet, romantic mix of acoustic guitar, dreamy electric leads and ethereal background melodies. "Coexist" returns us to the raucous rock beat with distorted leads and heavy bass. "Carpe Diem" is upbeat and inspiring like "White Noise." "Galloping on Water" is soft and beautiful, with the acoustic guitars, mandolin and dulcimer giving it a lovely folksy sound. "The Charlie Foxtrot" has a classic hard rock vibe. "Nights with You" is sweet and romantic. "Empathy" is another enjoyable toe-tapper thanks to the drum contributions of Bob Repin, Jr. "Road to Forgiveness" is nostalgic and heartwarming. The high pitch of the papoose guitar is soothing, especially paired with the moving leads from the electric guitar.

"End of the Line" completes the CD and is the only song with vocals. The lyrics were written by Dignam and sung by Dan Monahan, who recorded and mixed Greenlit, and also provided percussion for many of the tracks. Acclaimed cellist Eric Remschneider adds warm, dreamy cello lines to the track, giving it a folksy feel. The lyrics, much sadder than the melody itself, are about a person who feels misunderstood and alone.

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