

FRANK VAN BOGAERT - COLOURS (CD)

Groove has been reissuing a fair number of classics lately. Colours was Frank Van Bogaert's first CD, and it is the only one that, up to now, I had not heard. Without having gone further than the opening track "Amber," I can tell I've been missing something. It's like Jarre on speed infused with a touch of techno, this really cooks, full of energy and fun. The bouncy midtempo "Green" is equally good, although the vocals in the middle put me off some. Xylophone plinks along in "Blue." "Indigo" is very pop sounding, but there is a fair amount of chanting and other wordless vocals to lend an ethnic flavor. Rhythms are exceptional throughout, as evident on "Red," with a pounding beat that is a perfect hybrid between tribal and rock. "Grey" has a cool synthetic, robotic sound, yet another toe-tapper among many. "White" is one of the few without significant beats, a short beautiful track blending piano and synths. Rhythms return strong in "Orange," a slow but powerful number with breathy synths and wonderfully layered drums and percussion. Another lovely piano part adorns the end of the piece. "Magenta" has the sound and feel of romantic Tangerine Dream tracks circa 1990. The appropriately subdued "Brown" again scores high marks in the rhythmic department, dominating the surrounding synth flutes and pads without overpowering them. The musician most often mentioned in comparison to Van Bogaert is Vangelis, and that influence comes to the forefront in "Violet," a majestic, tender arrangement. The disc ends on the dance floor with "Black," making "Amber" seem almost but not quite listless by comparison. Colours is fantastic from beginning to end, don't miss it the second time around.

Phil Derby / Electroambient Space

Frank van Bogaert is a Belgian composer, musician and producer who already has a long career behind him. He is much at home in a great amount of musical disciplines like synthipop, straight-forward popmusic, filmmusic and pure electronic music. In his own music (now already on 4 CD's), this diversity can also be heard very well. In 1997 Frank started working on his first soloalbum. On this album, he intended each piece to be "no more than musical paintings", capturing the colours of the titles. Though, the album is also called "Colours". Frank is heavily influenced by Vangelis but also by the world-music style of artists like Enigma and Deep Forest. Where his later albums lean more toward a combination between this influences, "Colours" is aimed very firmly at the Enigma/Deep Forest market and is easily of the same quality of production and depth of composition of these more famous acts. Every track on "Colours" describes a certain colour. As every colour is different, the tracks on "Colours" are also different from each other. From uptempo technobeats ("Amber", "Red", "White"), Native American tribal music and chants ("Indigo", "Grey"), sequences over a straightforward 4/4 drum pattern ("Blue"), gentle pop pieces ("Red", "Violet"), modern dancemusic ("Black") and also some ambient passages ("Brown"). All these pieces reflect the many talents of Frank van Bogaert, now available as a re-release on Groove Unlimited.

Paul Rijkens / E-news

Frank is a Belgian composer who is influenced very much by the world-music style of Enigma, Deep Forest, et al. This album is aimed very firmly at that market and is easily of the same quality of production and depth of composition of these more famous acts. If he gets the right exposure and promotion, he's got a huge hit on his hands.

From a musical point of view, this is one of the most positive albums I've heard in a long time. Frank intended each piece to be "no more than musical paintings", capturing the colours of the titles. Listening to this makes me feel good, and what more could anyone ask?

1. Amber

Uptempo like Keller & Schoenwaelder 'beats' tracks. It's techno, but with that incessant 'bouncy' quality of K&S, and there are 'gulp' real melodies!

2. Green

Brings to mind chanting world-music tracks. Overlays a little child's voice which is endearing rather than irritating.

3. Blue

My fave cut on the album. Amazingly simple, almost minimistic, sequences over a straightforward 4/4 drum pattern. Just keeps building and subtly changing over the course of the track. Beautiful. Music to accompany film of a glider soaring on thermals.

4. Indigo

Tribal sounding, with some really good melodies played on expressive wind instrument patch. Interesting manipulations of vocal samples.

5. Red

Starts with a drum beat almost like an electronic version of Iggy Pop's 'Lust For Life' ! 'Trainspotting' has a lot to answer for. Quickly gets into its stride as another fine example of the tribal genre.

6. Grey

Infectious beat brings Native American images to mind. A little darker than the preceding tracks, this makes a nice contrast. Some interesting dubby echo effects fly around the stereo field in a subtle fashion.

7. White

My third fave track. Reminds me in some ways of 'Melt' by Leftfield. Some expert piano work shows off Frank's technical abilities. Enveloping waves of strings make this very relaxing.

8. Orange

A tropical desert island. No steel drums, though (thank goodness!).

9. Magenta

Positive and reminiscent of Songs of Distant Earth (probably because of the vocal samples used). Also brings to mind Vangelis' Oceanic.

10. Brown

A darker track. Slow and ambient. An autumn morning, walking past fields getting ready for winter. Lonely but quite beautiful, too.

11. Violet

Gentle arpeggios overlay velvety strings and deep bass synths, weaving a stereo tapestry not dissimilar to 'Burning of the Midnight Lamp' by Jimi Hendrix. Builds and builds into a wall of beauty. Puts me in mind of Floyd's 'Comfortably Numb', too. My second favourite cut.

12. Black

Unsurprisingly, this starts off in an ominous fashion in a minor key. Quite a bit more hard-core than the previous tracks, this features heavy kick drums, acidic

sequencers and an almost militaristic feel, enhanced by the addition of communications samples (NASA I imagine, but they tend to stay undecipherable in the background).

Summary:

My favourite tracks tend to be the more ambient ones, which move away from the 'Deep Forest' genre. I hope Frank develops this side of his music more, but overall this is one amazing album from a very talented guy.

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