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REVIEW

[DAVID ARKENSTONE](#)

Atlantis

[Narada Records](#) (2004)



review by Michael Debbage

From electronic to symphonic and everything in between, David Arkenstone's trademark is his majestic bold musical strokes on his canopy of compositions. But after releasing last year's very organic yet superb *Sketches From An American Journey*, Arkenstone may have put himself in a bit of a quandary as to how to follow up on that epic. Instead the artist borrowed from himself and returned to the *In The Wake Of The Wind* era emphasizing drama and larger than life music to grab the listener's attention.

The album opens in grand Arkenstone style with a mysterious atmospheric passage that slowly builds with percussion, strings and luscious triumphant horns in the form of "The Dream of Gods". Merging seamlessly into the mid tempo "Tower Of Light", the exotic level is maximized. Starting off more in the tradition of Arkenstone's very early spatial recordings, the song transforms as formidable guest vocalist Miriam Stockley seduces us with her distinctive chants. Along with the pulsating and powerful percussion it seemed like six minutes was not enough. Speaking of his label mate, Miriam also adds her golden touch on the last track "Below The Ocean-The Spirit of Atlantis", which plays out more like an overture. Along with her performance she is also involved in the actual angelical vocal arrangements. A great night cap to summarize the album.

But between the start and the finish are many memorable moments. For instance there is "Fire and Water" that heralds the above mentioned track, and this song will simply blow your socks off. But play it loud, as it will certainly accelerate your pulse and quicken your heart. With Persian and gypsy influences, here the mandolin and dulcimer intermingle prominently, along with the once again vivacious percussion.

On the more mellow side there are the gentle yet marvelous strings of "Jewel of the Sea" and a gem she is. Do not think that gentility translates to a lack of powerful, as even in his quiet moments David is a force to be reckoned with. The same can said for the emotive "Across the Great Oceans" that has soundtrack written all over it. Why this man has not secured a big break in the movie industry is beyond me.

However, "The Painted Sails" sums up this entire album. Combining the electronic atmospheric opening passage along with trotting strings, English horns and the persistent colorful percussion, Arkenstone continues to show us why you cannot set your emotions aside when you listen to his picturesque music.

So the Narada label managed to steer its prodigal artist back home. Musically, he paralleled this decision with a return to the heavy use of orchestration and wonderful electronic embellishments. Perhaps *Atlantis* will continue to be a monstrous but magical myth but it contrasts with the unequivocally Legendary status of David Arkenstone and his ability of painting detailed musical landscapes. And nobody does it better.

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