



Review cd “MADAME ZELLE”

Madame Zelle is the first disc I’ve heard all the way through and it’s a real treat. Conqueror creates that classic Italian symphonic prog sound all-be-it with a slightly modern sensibility. The band consists of five members: Simona Rigano (vocals, keyboards), Natale Russo (drums, percussion), Sabrina Rigano (flute, saxophone), Mario Pollino (guitars) and Gianluca Villa (bass). This is actually the band’s fourth CD and it has everything symphonic fans might wish for. Madame Zelle is in fact a concept album telling the story of Mata Hari who led an exotic and somewhat risqué life only to be executed as a spy in the early days of World War One.

Madame Zelle is made up of nine tracks, featuring that distinct Italian approach to prog. It is lushly symphonic with lots of twists and turns and musical motifs that pop out of nowhere. It is also very classically influenced in its arrangements and compositional structure. Sometimes this leads to a business, but here Conqueror restrain themselves and keep things on an even keel. Like so much symphonic prog from Italy this is a highly melodic disc. The opening track that starts things off in a very dramatic fashion is entitled “Margaretha” [14:42] and features many shifts in time and tempo and musical dynamics. Interspersed between the guitars and keyboards is some wonderful flute. The band isn’t afraid to rock in spots either, they never lose track of the fact they’re a progressive work. Take for example the flute. Given the exotic nature of the subject, the fact that Mata Hari danced and dressed in a Middle Eastern style, the flute and sitar sounds of “Indonesia” [5:15] really breathe life into the story even though it’s an instrumental track. Each of these compositions, short or long feature many musical change-ups giving the music an ever changing soundscape. The band never stays in one place for very long.

My guess is that if you enjoy the Italian sound from bands such as Banco, Le Orme and PFM then you’re going to love the music of Conqueror. Madame Zelle is a masterful work and something the band should be really proud of. It’s getting my recommendation for fans of symphonic prog.

Jerry Lucky

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www.conqueror.it