

Electrophon - "In a Covent Garden" (Polydor 1973)



The British duo Electrophon were one of the very few electronic progressive acts of the 70's to not come from Germany. Their debut "In a Covent Garden" consisted of lots of electronic covers of various classical themes. Tomita would then be a natural comparison, although Electrophon had a lighter and more simplistic approach to the material, and had probably more in common with the pioneering works of Walter Carlos in the 60's. The duo also used an orchestra to back them up, but personally I think the numbers where just the keyboards dominate are the best ones. This included Händel's "The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba", Debussy's "The Girl With the Flaxen Hair" (actually very similar to Tomita's version a year later), Mozart's "Allegro" and the sinister version of "Greensleeves". On numbers like Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Flight of the Bumblebee", Katschaturian's "Sabre Dance" and Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King" the duo played the main melodies on their synths while the orchestra backed them up. Waldteufel's unbelievable awful "The Skater's Waltz" is undoubtedly the most dreadful moment on the whole album, and represents classical music at its cheesiest. "In a Covent Garden" arrived at least five years too late to be of any interest or importance.

Electrophon - "Zygoat" (Polydor 1974)



As I expected, "Zygoat" is a much better and more interesting piece of work than "In a Covent Garden". There were no cheesy interpretations of classical music around this time (although some passages undoubtedly are inspired by classical music), and the record consisted instead of entirely original material composed by Burt Alcantara. His compositional style is dynamic, energetic and downright weird on some passages, but fresh and interesting through the whole album. All the music was played on RSE and ARP synthesizers, and the virtuosity of the playing is quite impressive. "Leaves of Sand" opens the record with a theme that surely must have inspired Tangerine Dream a bit when they wrote the introduction theme to "Tangram" six years later. The track quickly evolves into one of the main themes of the album, which obviously is a conceptual work about the goat creature on the cover. The title-track is something as unlikely as electronic progressive rock'n'roll, and this unusual approach is repeated in the even more energetic and faster "Zy-Clone" that has to be one of the wildest electronic progressive pieces of music recorded. This and the far more classical-influenced "Pillar of Salt" features some of most insanely fast playing I've heard on an ARP. The weirdest tracks are "Ybur Knom" and "Ybur Doon" which both are based around the same theme and reminding a bit of Vangelis' most experimental works from the 70's. "Movement to the Earth" is based in a slowly gliding pace with lots of quirky synth solos that are anything else than slow. This track transcends smoothly into "Seeds Cast to the Wind" that is one of the highlights of the album together with the mighty "The Ladder of Zeugma". "Zygomania" is a pure cacophony of tortured synth solos. "Preserverance Furthers" closes the album by going through several of the main themes. "Zygoat" is a quite unique and unusual listening experience, but you'll have to be into old analogue synths to fully get it.