



The Relatives & Phil Miller *Virtually* 43:42
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Anyone like myself who still follows the fortunes of the epic splendours of the Canterbury scene with unrestrained passion, will revel in this delightful work which features Phil Miller (a permanent fixture of this British quintet) as well as the guest appearance of Richard Sinclair in its intense conclusion, *On My Mind*.

Actually, within the group there's another member who should be familiar to Canterbury connoisseurs: Jack Monck, an excellent bassist with a gift for jazzy vocalisation – featuring in the original line-up of *Delivery* with Steve and Phil Miller and the late Pip Pyle as well as heading *Inside the Whale*, a very interesting CD released in 2001 with the collaboration of the aforementioned Pip Pyle.

Virtually unfolds over eight well-constructed tracks of authentic passion and commitment. Out of this emerges the horn, which reveals Marc Hadley (together with Monck) as a genuine band-leader. The sax stamps Marc's identity on most of the tracks as well as the bassist's (with the exception of the jazzy *Statelty Waltz*, bearing the signature of keyboard player Willem Jan Droog) but everything is supported by the very precise drumming of Damian Rodd.

Going Down, the first track - with its jazz-soul flavour, reminiscent of Donald Fagen - opens with wonderful aplomb by the great Phil who erupts with his typical guitar sound 'borderline' between rock and jazz to create a dialogue with Hadley's robust, full-blooded sax. A really great piece.

However this is not to take away from *Leading the Fight*, a typical Monck composition with its delicate reverberations, distinctly 'canterburian' in style, in which is heard Miller's sumptuous acoustic accompaniment and the excellent flute playing of the leader. The same is true of *When?* where Jack's vocals follow beautiful Sinclair-like contours: and above all, in the instrumental *Spaghetti* where Hadley's melifluous flute and Hatfield & The North style plunge, thanks to the 'Miller-esque' harmonisations, into pure and glassy acoustic waters. Probably one of the most convincing moments of the album.

The more muscular soundscapes evoked both in the vague rock undertones of *New Dawn* and the decidedly jazzy ones in *New Ship in Town* make way for the final pearl of the disc: *On My Mind*, a very sweet ballad which meanders vaguely, Wyatt-like, enriched by the yearning voice of the aforementioned Richard Sinclair, who creates great musical adventures in conversation with his colleague's guitar. This is fresh and invigorating music. And these times cry out for it.

(translated from) **Vincenzo Giorgio** for "WonderousStories"

