

Echo Us

Inland Empire

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If anything, **Inland Empire** by **Echo Us** is a surrealistic foray into the dark ambient mind of composer Ethan J. Matthews that seems to mesh incredibly well. The album consists of ten tracks of mind shifting electro-progressive dreamery. The previously released material seems to feel right at home in our chaotic millennium. The music can be sometimes described as progressive ambient rock, but it seems to defy pigeon holing for the most part. Echo Us is a long time construct of Mathews' incursion into metaphysics. It makes for interesting as well as challenging listening.

Across the Star opens the experience with an electro-industrial introduction which fades off into a stellar journey of moody sound and bold piano mixed with generated voice. Electric guitar takes the lead and you are submerged into the excursion of thought and body transportations. Hang on.

Echo Us, the title tune, is temperately flavored with 80's pop sensibilities with percussion in the forefront and a nuanced guitar theme. The vocal is modest, but for me it is the instrumental part that grabs my attention and I would have loved to hear more of an expanded refrain. It segues awkwardly in **Dark Shock** which is musically, much lighter than expected. That is okay. Otherwise it would not have had my attention after the euphoric instrumental before it. The vocal is about recognizing the need for change from within. Like many of the tunes on the album, it is manifestly introspective.

*"I Knew You'd Come Here Alone In A Vision
It's Not For Me, Or Anyone On This Mission
To Let Yourself Give Up And Be What's Inside You
Take It To Yourself
Turn Around Inside You".*

One of my favorites on Inland Empire is called **It's Time for Winter**. It's a jaunty ballad that suggests that the absence of activity, physical, mental, and spiritual can be renewing just like the cycle of the seasons promises. The hiatus is renewing, reinvigorating. Winter is not a time to be mourned, but celebrated on many levels. Echo Us' stylistic delivery, although slightly choppy, is memorable and convivial.

*"This We Trust
Now It's Time For Winter
Hibernate And Slumber*

*We Must Hibernate For Winter
Echoing Under”.*

Nest Egg offers some dynamic guitar over a complex theme. Musically, it is a mixture of black & white with colorful vivid interplay. It is a mystical dream sequence for the time traveler where doors open and close rapidly just before you can set foot into the proffered realm. Let the journey continue.

The music of Echo Us seems to have a timeless quality. Remember, this work is a decade old, yet it still has lots of fresh possibilities as it is re-imagined. Inland Empire is favored with Bowie-esque vocals full of angst and wonder. The music poses question that only the listener can answer, but that’s the beauty of the journey. The music is sometimes dark and primal, while at other times, it has a fanciful, appealing storyline in which you don’t want to miss a thing. Highly listenable.

-R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews