



Yearning for the Wind

Ancient Future

Ancient Future - AF-90352

Available from the [Ancient Future web site](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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This critique is a long one for good reason.

I'm breaking a normally strictly held personal policy, a self-made rule to not review EPs containing less than five cuts. The reasons for that regulation would take more time than is worth relating but interpolates decades of past experiences with PR people that were a good deal less than savory. That sort of thing was, and still a bit too often is, unavoidable, something that comes with the territory, one of several downsides of being a critic. One, however, does what one can to forestall and staunch problems when one can. Too, I've found that those who submit to FAME—the 'PR class', if you will—are vastly more personable and ground-level than the idiots I had to deal with in progrock, avant-garde, and other realms...which is why you, dear reader, will never again run across my writings in those magazine wastelands. Then there's the much more pleasant and preferable milieu of interacting with the musicians themselves when they self-promote.

Regardless, for me it's always the music that comes first, and in Matthew Montfort and Ancient Future we have creativity that breaks many boundaries. As such, it richly deserves non-ordinary attention. Don't think me an altruist, however. Though covering this ilk of stellar art forwards my critic's duty to inform fellow connoisseurs of aesthetic wares transcendently wrought, and indeed fulfills the Buddhist Vow I always observe (to awaken all sentient beings, even when I'm being a prick), my baseline is a form of greed: me first, in other words, me me me. I absolutely have to have AF's sort of intellecto-emoto-spiritual nourishment lest I grow even more cynical than I already am (ask about politics sometime if you think my largely upbeat music critiquing is typical of my frequently troublemaking mindset).

Ancient Future's a multi-member group but this latest issuance, a 10:39 single, involves just Matt and Vishal Nagar, tabla virtuoso, in a balladic duet of the most refined sensibilities, the sort of horizon Peter Green was heading for in his magnificently extended *Oh Well (Then Play On)*, with its underlying motives—before, that is, misfortune claimed him. Not, I add, that *Yearning for the Wind* contains any of the baroquely magisterial elements Green incorporated, indeed almost stentoriously at moments, but instead the wont to eternally forward thinking. In such, one could also cite Jimmy Page / Led Zeppelin's *Black Mountain Side* with Viram Jasani, a venture the unfortunately drug-ridden supergroup would never again repeat.

Yearning for the Wind marks a new high-water mark in recording, and it isn't a concert video but an HD studio vid of a long cut not based in click tracking; that is, the basic tracks were taken live through seven audio sources and three cameras plus a chordal overdub. It's released in E-CD (enhanced CD), one session dedicated for CD players, the other for computers. The consumer gets both, and the latter includes extensive digital liner notes explaining the musical traditions of Indian raga and tala as well as HD video in 96/24 hi-res audio. This devours all the space on the disc leaving no possible room for another track...and thus you see why I regard it as a unique event well outside normal releases. Montfort intended the "disc" to hit all levels: musicians' top-end aesthetics, audiophile expectations and delectations, and then great response in a standard CD player.

In EthnoCloud, *Yearning* had already hit '#1 video' by the time Matt informed me about the song...but...I'm not going to link in to it, as, though I only rarely look into the mercantile aspects of the house while critiquing, yet I'm highly sympathetic to the great amount of time and expense going into such efforts and tend to hope listeners will want to purchase such singularities not only to reward such ventures and encourage musicians to continue them but also purely for the extremes of beauty and quality. I mean, storing *Yearning* in an iPod??? Ai yi yi! That hideous practice also reaches a new apex...of vulgarianism.

I will, however, provide two tracks of exquisite music, the live *Bookenka*:



...and then a knock-out improvisation for scalloped fretboard guitar and Chinese pipa...which also attained to EthnoCloud's #1 spot (are we sensing a pattern here?):



If that isn't some of the coolest music available, then I'm afraid you're reading in the wrong venue, and therefore must suggest repairing to *Kiss Army & Three-Chord Bonehedz Quarterly* magazine and latrine headquarters, reporting for duty while leaving frontal lobes at the door, as you'll never need 'em.

Yearning is somewhat along the lines of that pipa/guitar duet, but with tablas instead of a second set of strings. I used to know a guy who played mrdingam, and the discipline that goes into becoming an accomplished Carnatic musician is unbelievable (read Ravi Shankar's autobiography if you want to be knocked out of your skull on that score). This cat spent thousands of hours reaching the level achieved, purely for the sheer pleasure of the ability, and could do with fingers and hands on a tabletop what Western drummers can't achieve with sticks and a full drum kit.

Thus, if this sort of genre is your cup of ambrosia, consider paying for the full-spectrum download. There's a danger inherent, though: you may find yourself somewhat discontented with normal formats afterwards. One can't help but feel involuntary gourmandry after such epicurean feasting, kinda like going first to Disneyland and then afterwards trudging through the lo-rent traveling carry set outside the city limits. As a cynical Ray Bradbury evil-twin brother might've put it: something wickedly mediocre that way dwells.

Let me now air a gripe, one that has nothing whatsoever to do with Ancient Future but rather with the current estate of music exposure per se. Take a look again at the 'Views' number for *Bookenka*. 735. Are ya fuckin' kidding me?!?! Art of this caliber obtains such a measly response while corporate transhuman airheads snag millions upon millions of look-ins for farting in a wind tunnel to the accompaniment of the LSO (London Symphony Orchestra—or, as some waggish musicians have put it: the Lowerthanlow Sell-Outs). Seriously: who's kidding who? I'm a Godwinian Schopenaueresque meta-anarchist, I fear for humanity's future, but do the beings I'm trying to uplevel really have to shove my face in it in that fashion? Tell Spinoza to shove over, I'm ready for an early grave.

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Top 30 of 2014

FAME 2014 TOP 30

by Mark S. Tucker

Being the most prolific reviewer of music in America, I dread this Best Of task because I inevitably leave out stuff that should be included from the hundreds of great discs I've covered each year. I blame all those damn PR people and their superb tastes in tunes!!! Other than the Kastning / Clements disc as #1, however, there is no set order:

- [Kevin Kastning / Carl Clements: Watercolor Sky](#) - #1 pick; so out there, cosmic and terrene while baroque, that it becomes a new wrinkle in music
- [Rob Derke & The NYJAZZ Quartet: Blue Divide](#) - killer writing and killer jazz fusion chops on the killer Zoho label
- [David Corley: Available Light](#) - if you dug the unique Tom House and his *Winding Down the Road*, you'll love this guy too
- [Ancient Future: Yearning for the Wind](#) - this is the only single I'll put on a Best Of. ever; Matt Montfort & Co. have always been cream of the crop
- [Harri Kuusijärvi Koutus: Koutus](#) - puts the 'progress' back in 'progressive music' and then bends the genre even further
- [Steve Khan: Subtext](#) - one of America's most undercelebrated guitarists but ever a revelation. and always a groove
- [William Susman Octet Ensemble: Scatter My Ashes](#) - immaculate serial minimal music a la Reich, Glass, Adams, Nyman, etc.
- [Volga: Kumushki Pjut](#) - serious evidence that progrock is mutating yet again; Volga's fun and mindbending simultaneously
- [Noura Mint Seymali: Tzenni](#) - this disc links Noura, a world-class Mauritanian singer, with her husband, Jeiche Ould Chighaly, a guitarist you have to hear to believe