

New Gandy Dancer No. 66

BLONKER - Straight ahead

Acoustic Music 319.1264.2 (Germany)

Straight ahead / Mother and son / Funky line / I will never forget / On the run / Dduje core pазze / La fenice / Magenta / Hallelujah / Klaar kiming / African rain

The name of Blonker remains best known for 'Indigo' from a 1980 debut album, a number recorded by The Shadows and The Spotnicks, amongst others. Both of these bands know a good tune when they hear it, and this album is melodic, though not perhaps with anything quite as memorable as that classic instrumental composition.

Having started as a 'real' group, Blonker became essentially a vehicle for the playing and compositions of Dieter Gieke, and as such has remained a very individual project. The sound and style has changed, moving more towards New Age, though on the evidence of this album a rather more gutsy brand. For this album, Dieter's guitars are joined by Robert Gast on keyboards (who also shares composing credits on the first and last numbers), with Rudiger Isler-Hartenstein contributing fretless bass on a couple of tracks. The guitar sounds seem many and varied, with hints of, say, Earl Klugh and Mark Knopfler, not to mention some overdriven sounds particularly evident on the lengthy title track. In fact it is the variety of guitar and keyboard sounds on offer that lift this set above others. Yes, it is melodic in places but largely it is about creating moods, many of which can be anticipated from the title of the track. Particularly effective is the hauntingly repetitive 'I will never forget' and the washes of keyboards, guitars and sound effects on the following track, 'On the run'. A long way from the traditional rock instrumental, but definitely harder edged than many so-called 'New Age' and as such worthy of a listen. Full marks to a musician who has been turning out instrumental albums for more than twenty years. (George Geddes)