



Band: Conqueror

CD Title: *Stems*

Band Website: www.conqueror.it

Label: Ma.Ra.Cash Records

Label Website: www.maracash.com

Release Date: 2014

Conqueror return with their fifth CD that continues to display many classic Italian Symphonic Progressive Rock sounds. The origins of the group go back to 1994 and they've experienced many personnel changes along the way with the drummer being the only original member. Their latest line-up, a quartet, consists of: Simona Rigano (vocals, keyboards), Ture Pagano (guitar), Peppe Papa (bass) and Natale Russo (drums). The new CD is entitled *Stems*. Conqueror are somewhat unique in Italian prog given their female vocalist. Also this time around it feels like they've taken a slightly rockier approach to the music.

Stems is made up of eight tracks that are mostly melodic compositions, heavily influenced by classical music in song structure and jazz in terms of performance. The songs tend to be longer when compared to other Italian Symphonic bands such as Le Orme. Here the songs are all about six or seven minutes or longer. As you would expect this allows for plenty of changes in time, tempo and musical dynamics. Musical arrangements are layered with an emphasis in certain parts on rhythmic and solo counterpoint. There is some nice interplay between the guitars and keyboards, both of which present a more modern tonal quality. The music is very textured and layered with strong melody lines that run throughout. In fact songs will feature multiple melody lines that are inserted into some rather complex musical arrangements. Nothing here however seems harsh or out of place even though there are touches of angularity, a guitar line here or there. In the end the musical style of Conqueror has a lot to offer symphonic prog fans.

As in my previous review of *Madame Zelle*, I would suggest if you enjoy the Italian sound from bands such as Banco, Le Orme and PFM then you'll thoroughly love the music of Conqueror. While the band aren't afraid to look back on the classic sounds, they've shown over five albums that they're all about forging ahead and taking Italian Symphonic Prog to new heights. Highly recommended.

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