

After The Harvest

By

Michael Kent Smith

Written by

Steve Sheppard

I adore uniqueness in music, something fresh new and exciting always wets the palette, and on this latest offering by **Michael Kent Smith** we have just that, originally inspired by music from the medieval period, this amazing multi-instrumentalist is about to take us on a journey as of yet unknown.

After The Harvest is about the wheel of life, we can celebrate after the harvest; we can sample the '**Fruits Of Your Labor**', the very first track, but the following spring it must start all again. However what **Michael Kent Smith** has produced here on this piece, and with the instrumentation used, almost touches the hem of progressive rock at times and the narrative weaved into this arrangement is so picturesque and very alluring.

The acoustic nature of '**Tapestry 1**' is warming and very ambient to flow with. Finger style guitar paves the way into a world of smooth tones and peaceful waving rich corn fields. One can hear the aged feel to the music; at times its energy reminds me of the old British folk outfit, the **Amazing Blondel**.

The sweet and gentle nature of '**Konstantin Surveys His Lands**' has a little Jazz ethic about its construction, one must surely marvel at the level of expertise the artist shows on this truly wonderful composition. Technically this is one of the most amazing pieces I have heard for ages. There is a hint of minimalism in the construction too, that creates a unique brand of ambience to enjoy.

The short form flow of '**Fourteen Generations**' jigs with a little Celtic magic and dances with the guitar, in a symbiosis of loving fun, and through this up-tempo

arrangement, we can easily see the families enjoy the end of the harvest, telling tales of years gone by and September sunsets past.

'The Veil' creates its own musical pathway which we must follow with an open heart and mind, the swirling essence of this piece and its quiet refrains gift me a memory of an early October morning, as the sun began to burn off the mist from the lake, like a veil of vapour lifting and revealing another day of work ahead.

On **'Sing Mother Earth'** I found something bathed in memory, but dappled in the sunlight of a late summer afternoon, this is a melody of reflection and of gratitude. One must applaud the musician, for with each and every brush stroke of tone, I can with ease picture such wonderful musical vistas.

The half way marker has now been reached and we come across a composition entitled **'Peace Is Every Step'**. Here we have a track that is so lovingly produced and played, that we can feel the brightness of its passion as it is performed with such an energetic style and pureness of spirit.

I enjoyed the pacey **'Family Tree'** with a relish; the steady beat was almost like the ticking of a clock signifying perhaps the passing of the many generations on the **Family Tree**, the performance here was simply sublime and one that weaved a wonderful sense of movement into its construction.

As we move deeper into this time machine of an album we find a real gem called **'Aucon Vont'**. Here is a track steeped in history and played with a purpose and intent so filled with passion, but energies of reflection can also be found here in this quite emotive multi instrumental opus of perfection.

'The Royal Chamber' flows like a spring stream, its vigour can be found in the musician's stylish and up-tempo performance, its lively nature has as certain essence of pomp and circumstance about its busy and bustling construction. Within this quite breath-taking moment of magic, one could even perhaps hear a hint of *Mike Oldfield* in the weave as well.

'The Whole above Me' had a real sense of mystery about its tone and had a slower and deliberate methodology about its progression; this would perhaps be the perfect music to listen to, whilst perhaps watching **Michael Kent Smith**

manifest a piece of painted art. The gentle, but beautifully crafted work here is stunning, and to do it any justice one should listen multiple times.

When I see a track on an album about a Crow, I smile, apart from compositions about thunder or impending storms, Crows for some reason hold quite a lot of magic for me, and it came as no surprise to hear a slide used on the guitar to announce the landing and stretching of the wings of the mystical and clever Crow. '**As The Crow Flies**' is exactly what it says on the can, and with a flick of its tail and a twitch of its head it is gone from the telegraph pole, as it shape shifts into the evening sky, to this, its very own soundtrack.

So, we have arrived at our penultimate offering and it's called '**Until Next Year – The Haymakers Dance**'. I featured this very lively number on one of my shows and it got a lot of attention. This is a party track, a celebration of a job well done, so raise your flagons, celebrate the end of one cycle of life, and prepare for another.

Before we leave this realm however, the artist has one more gift to leave us with, it is called '**The Noble Vine**'. Let us sit and watch the last few grapes disappear from the foliage, and salute them for the wine that they will bring forth. The bell in this piece was a stroke of genius and added a whole new dimension into the layers of this last offering.

After the Harvest by **Michael Kent Smith** is easily the most unique album I have listened to, or written about for many years, the care and attention to detail in this album alone deserves applauding, but to make the past and present join together, in such a blissful symbiosis of musical intellect, is quite astoundingly brilliant, I believe that music never dies, it just matures.

After the Harvest is going to be one of those albums that you are just going to have to add to your collection, it's a release that offers the listener something old and new at the same time, but with a freshness of musical spirit that will live on forever.