



MARTYN BATES *Arriving Fire* (A-Scale Records CD)

by Phil McMullen

Amongst my more debatable habits, I might include that of favoring solo albums amongst my preferred releases by any given band. Albums by Ernie Graham, Gordon Haskell, Reg King, Rick Hayward and Bob Bannister all score highly on my Desert Island Incline (much, much bigger than a mere list...), not all of them recognized solo artists in their own right by any means.

I love the intimacy of them, the extra effort that so often goes into them – there’s no hiding place on a solo album – and the fact that the supporting musicians are often surprises filched from some band you never expected the artist to have an association with.

Martyn Bates of Eyeless in Gaza recently confided in me that “few people seem to get my solo stuff, somehow,” admitting himself that songs like “World’s Eye,” which closes this album, “is strange and unusual territory for for someone that gets pigeonholed into the boxes I find myself pigeonholed into.” Well, all power to Martyn for pushing that particular envelope. The song in question counts amongst my favorites on here, with a cacophonous medley to open that gives way to strummed guitar and a haunting refrain about love, loneliness and yearning. The title track itself sounds for all the world like a Six Organs of Admittance out-take, with similarly trembling vocals flitting across some nimble-fingered six-string fretwork. “Liar’s Roses” is simply beautiful. “The Rhyme of Miracles,” which has nothing to do with ancient mariners, sings to us of flight, and conversely “Flight” beautifully echoes the swell of the sounding sea.

(www.eyelessingaza.com/asr.html) Ω