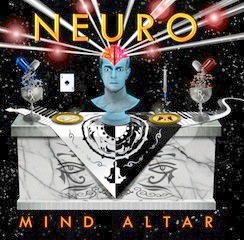
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**Review of** Mind Altar **by Neuro**

Progressive rock started in the 1960s and reached its commercial and creative peak in the 1970s, a decade in which Pink Floyd, Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, Queen, Rush, Kansas, Supertramp and Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP) recorded some of their best and most famous albums. But progressive rock continues to enjoy an enthusiastic cult following after all these years, and some of the younger progressive rock artists who have emerged in the 21st Century have been combining progressive rock with modern alternative rock. One such group is the New York City-based Neuro, whose Mind Altar draws heavily on old-school 1970s prog but has post-1970s influences as well.

The brains behind Neuro is singer/songwriter Jesse Short, who is originally from Roswell, New Mexico but has lived in New York City for ten years. Short has performed with various cover bands in the Big Apple (including Lemonshade and Glamasaurus Rex), but Mind Altar is dominated by his own songs. And those songs show a strong appreciation for the progressive rock and art rock of the 1970s without trying to be an exact replica of that era. Listening to “Night Mirror,” “Arcanas,” “Spinning Yarns” or “Killer Martyr,” it is evident that Short has a major fondness for Queen, Pink Floyd, Supertramp, Roxy Music and David Bowie (all of whom were huge during the 1970s). Tracks like “Vessels of Babylon,” “Vacant People Sleep Hallow” and “Capsule” have a highly theatrical quality, and back in the 1970s and 1980s, it didn’t get any more theatrical than Queen. Short clearly identifies with the exaggerated, larger-than-life bravado that the late Freddie Mercury brought to Queen’s performances.

But unlike the young retro-prog artists who go out of their way to emulate the prog recordings of the 1970s, Neuro has a strong goth-rock influence. One hears traces of Bauhaus and Sisters of Mercy (two of the most important goth-rock bands of the 1980s) on “Vessels of Babylon,” “Black Jack” and “Evolve (Lilithize),” all of which have the gloomy, dusky, brooding quality that goth-rock is known for. Short’s writing tends to be on the dark side, and he makes progressive rock and goth-rock sound

like a perfectly natural combination (which makes sense in light of the fact that many goth artists have claimed David Bowie and Pink Floyd as influences). Short obviously realizes that as great as the 1970s were, there was also quality music recorded after the 1970s (including goth).

One thing Mind Altar lacks is the type of really hooky, easy-to-absorb single that reaches out and grabs the listener right away. Many of the major prog-rock bands that were popular during the 1970s had killer singles with great, infectious hooks: Yes had “Roundabout,” Pink Floyd had “Money” and “Another Brick in the Wall,” Queen had “We Will Rock You”/“We Are the Champions” and “Crazy Little Thing Called Love,” and Kansas had “Carry On, Wayward Son” (which was their best known song). Those were artists who, for all their complexity and cerebral leanings, knew how to provide hooky, infectious, memorable singles when they wanted to. But on Mind Altar, none of the songs go for that type of immediacy. Short does not go out of his way to be accessible. Regardless, this is an appealing effort melodically and harmonically as well as vocally. Short’s material is not easy to absorb, and it must be accepted on its own intellectual terms. But the more one listens to Mind Altar, the more one realizes how nicely constructed Short’s songs are. Short puts thought into Neuro’s music.

For those who do not demand instant gratification from music 100 percent of the time, Mind Altar is a solid example of what contemporary progressive rock has to offer in the 21st Century.

Neuro

Mind Altar

Review by Alex Henderson

3.5 stars out of 5