



Giovanni Maier Technicolor

Featuring Marc Ribot/A Turtle Soup

LONG SONG 105

★★★★

It's old news by now that the '70s are back in a big way. Italian bassist Giovanni Maier has boned up on the fusion masters, and this two-disc set featuring his Technicolor quartet displays the lessons he has learned. But while he has been an attentive student, he hasn't heeded the cautionary tales his forebears provide, and there is much here that stumbles over the familiar obstacles of excess and indulgence.

Aside from three group improvisations, all of the tunes were penned by Maier, and the Weather Report influence is never out of mind for long, even when the music visits the outer-space orbit of Sun Ra's Arkestra. The tunes split fairly evenly between atmospheric jams and pop-funk grooves, the former ending up the more successful; Maier's melodies strive for Joe Zawinul-style hummability but veer toward anthemic simplicity, resulting too often in bubblegum-prog that cloy rather than catches.

On disc one, *Featuring Marc Ribot*, Maier creates settings for the Downtown guitar virtuoso and Italian counterpart Simone Massaron to roam free, for better or worse. Ribot gets the chance to show off several of his familiar guises, from bludgeoning metal gymnastics to mournful folk-sure twang. He pairs well here with Alfonso Santimone, whose laptop conjures a decaying industrial landscape, which frames some of the guitarist's harshest explorations.

The second disc, *A Turtle Soup*, foregoes the guest stars and lets the quartet come to the fore. Throughout both discs, Maier cedes the spotlight, especially to his dual-keyboard frontline: Giorgio Pacorig on Rhodes and Farfisa and Santimone on a variety of modern and retro devices. But the leader's subtle work is the group's backbone, at times beating in lockstep with drummer Zeno de Rossi, at others scything melodic paths through the synth-drone undergrowth.

—Shaun Brady

Featuring Marc Ribot/A Turtle Soup: Disc 1—Segovia; El Matador; This Is My Voice; L'Inafferrabile Fascino Dell'Incompletezza; Fiff; Old File; Miss T.; Manarola Song; Villa Santina; Marc's Mark. (66:06) Disc 2—Aeropagods; San Giovanni; Grandi Speranze; Prometheus; Arpegi; One Long Song. (57:42)

Personnel: Giovanni Maier, bass; Zeno de Rossi, drums; Giorgio Pacorig, Alfonso Santimone, keyboards; Marc Ribot, Simone Massaron, guitar (disc 1).

» Ordering info: longsongrecords.com