

NICK CASTRO & THE POISON TREE

Further From Grace CD – Strange Attractors

If Los Angeles-based Nick Castro sounds like he's from another era... that is the point. Castro is part of a rising underground psychedelic pop scene that breathes new life into Syd Barrett-styled acid folk. For Castro's sophomore album he's enlisted some friends (dubbed The Poison Tree), who help realize his ambitions. Josephine Foster adds ghostly vocals to opener "Sun Song," while members of Espers also contribute to the overall hashish haze. Castro doesn't stray far from influences such as early Pink Floyd, the Incredible String Band, and John Renbourn, but does have his own personality. His dreamlike pieces are warmly produced and belie the everyday urban environment in which he lives. Tunes such as "To This Earth" and "Unborn Child" have rural inclinations and almost pagan lyricism. Straightforward folk number "Won't You Sing to Me" evokes Pentangle, while jazzy instrumental "Waltz for a Little Bird" follows a swing similar to Soft Machine. Throughout, Castro avoids pretension, and is comfortable with both Middle Eastern tonalities (the instrumental "Music for Mijwiz") and long jams (melancholic "Deep Deep Sea," which smoothly augments flugelhorn to the mix). This is subtle material, meant for exploring. Do so, and you might find yourself affably lost for an hour or so. (Doug Simpson)

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