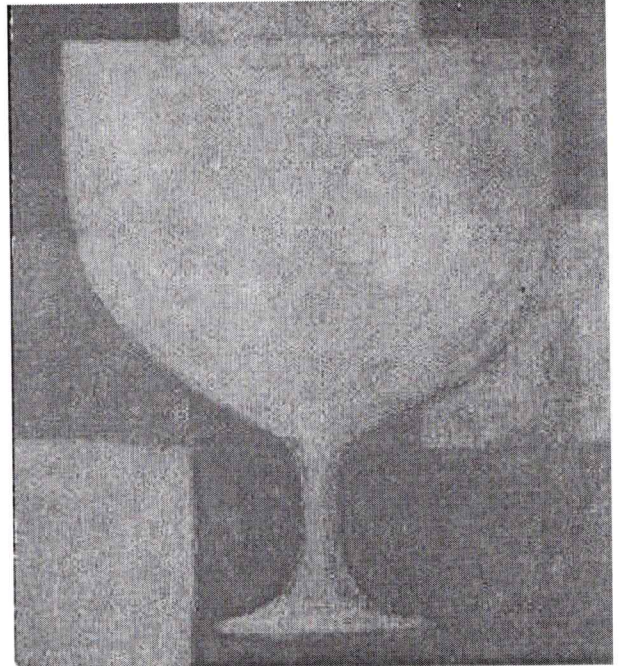


REVIEW: In Gowan Ring – “The Glinting Spade”

By Marcus Pan

BlueSanct Musak has become the releasers of prime example folk style music of a darker realm. Their headline band, In Gowan Ring, has gathered a number of CDs under their belt, dating as far back as 94's **Love Charms**, 97's **The Twin Trees**, and the two most recent: **Compendium 1994-2000** and **The Glinting Spade**. For those that are interested in what B'erth and his comrades are up to, **Compendium** is a good start (see Legends' review of this release as well). But by far, I enjoy **The Glinting Spade** much more.



For those lovers of the medieval and theatric, In Gowan Ring delivers tenfold within this genre of music. From the melancholy guitar strains of *To Thrum a Glassy Stem* to the smooth chord strums of *A Bee at the Dolemen's Dell*, In Gowan Ring's music is wonderfully arranged and driven with an old-world feel that encompasses you as you listen. Appearing at Terrastock somewhat recently, the interest in their music has risen in interest so that BlueSanct thought to revisit promotional pushes behind **The Glinting Spade** released in 1999.

The Glinting Spade is an assortment of pure melancholy, distilled and packaged in aural format. B'erth delivers parable-like lyrics in a hushing baritone voice. Other members of In Gowan Ring play upon the senses with such unexpected tools as Rubin Clinger's arrow & bow, Lincoln Lysager's crystal & water and Kendell Hall's sackbut. Also about are Sheri Throop (cornetto), Kendra Walton (viola) and Loma Cobia (organ).

The opening track, *Two Wax Dolls*, begins with floating and windy chords that give way to acoustic guitar. Later, at the track's end, it moves into a whining string ensemble which I didn't enjoy. But the first three minutes of *Two Wax Dolls* prior to this arrangement change are well done and sounds lovely. *To Thrum a Glassy Stem* is probably my favorite of In Gowan Ring's work. I first heard it on their **Compendium** release and have since fallen in love with the track. Again we are found within the confines of acoustic guitar with some background chimes and keys. *Bow Star's* constant chord arrangement is rather unimaginative, but provides a good (if however lengthy) opening to *A Bee at the Dolemen's Dell*. Acoustic guitar again throughout *Bee*, with B'erth's crooning baritone voice. I find that In Gowan Ring excel more at this acoustic-folk style of arrangement and songwriting.

Overall **The Glinting Spade** is a lovely album. It makes a beautiful end to an otherwise arduous day. In Gowan Ring's later-life folk-Renaissance work is by far their greatest skill. It provides a background to which one can relax and go on ambling walks of introspection, stepping lightly beside the paths of the fairies and wyrdfolk.

Contact Information:

Post: BlueSanct, PoBox 2192, Bloomington, IN, 47402
Fax: (812) 323-8494
E-Mail: bluepress@bluesanct.com
Web: <http://www.bluesanct.com>

Ten men and one woman are hanging on to a rope that extends down from a helicopter. The weight of 11 people is too much for the rope, so the group decides one person has to jump off.

No one can decide who should go, until finally the woman volunteers. She gives a touching speech, saying she will sacrifice her life to save the others, because women are used to giving up things for their husbands and children.

When she finishes speaking ... all the men start clapping.

-Margaret Pitman-