

Ryan Teague | Coins & Crosses

Artist: Ryan Teague
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After releasing the critically acclaimed 'Six Preludes' EP on Type Records in 2005, eyes were looking to young British composer Ryan Teague to see where he would take his sound next. Indeed, he referenced the EP release himself as merely preludes, so he clearly had plans to make an extra special effort for the imminent full length. In doing so he enlisted the help of a full orchestra; the renowned Cambridge Philharmonic with conductor Tim Redmond, as well as harpist Rhodri Davies who is best known for his work with the Cinematic Orchestra. Working with these key elements, Teague had the chance to compose without the limitations usually set on electronic composers and has ended up producing something truly timeless.

Opening with the short introduction piece 'Introit' the album quickly gets moves up a gear with the eponymous 'Coins and Crosses', a fabulous representation of Teague's intense production skill and Rhodri Davies' peerless harp-work. The result comes across like Alice Coltrane blended seamlessly with Steve Reich and is one of the high points of the record, perfectly realising Teague's grand vision. On producing the album Teague noted that his primary influences were early sacred music and mysticism, but instead of moving towards the obvious dark mystery associated with these subjects he has interpreted them as moving, emotional and affirmative.

When the album's centrepiece; the entirely orchestral 'Fantasia for Strings' appears at the halfway mark it is impossible not to be floored. A wholeheartedly moving epic which would not sound out of place juxtaposed with the cinematic imagery of Kieslowski or Bergman, this is where Teague's compositional skills flourish absolutely. Although he is equally at home blending electronic elements with orchestral sounds, 'Fantasia...' shows he has exactly what it takes to compose competently without the aid of electronics whatsoever.

As the album draws to a satisfying close with the rousing harp-led 'Rounds', you realise that you have been taken on a grand voyage. Each track tells a different part of an epic story taking you through waves of passionate energy and emotion, and like all the best films you will want to go through that journey time and time again.