

# VERITAS VAMPIRUS

## *LEFT* OF THE "LEFT"

News from the Undead

The *Rude*-imentary Truth

DECEMBER 2016

**JOSEPH L. YOUNG** – *Ethereum* (2016 / no label cited)

The flute has been through a lot in modern times. Ian Anderson, of course, was responsible for its rise in rock 'n roll, though some very good players flanked him (Ray Thomas for one, Peter Gabriel for another, Thijs van Leer for a third), but the steel/wood axe found its way into modern venues first from classical halls and then most directly from jazz, starting in The Age of Roland Kirk and proceeding to Hubert Laws, Dave Valentine, James Newton, and many others, with cats like Tim Weissberg cross-connecting rock and jazz. Then came the New Age movement.

Sweet Jesus but that genre strangled the instrument down in its goopy saccharine muck!! That and its antecedent, the shakuhachi. I was shocked and appalled by that and all the hideously chee-zee keyboard accompaniments, oft via Korg and Casio. As George Harrison opined, it was all too much. Ah, but times change, and New Age music, which grew out of World and prog – or, I should say: grew *down* from World and prog - started to come into its own. Thank Kitaro and others for that. The form has now shifted literacies so well in X amount of intervening years that I can finally not experience a panic attack whenever espying a new release.

That's the case with Joseph L. Young's *Ethereum*. In it and others of recent vintage, it's obvious the era of Pillsbury Doughboy Abominatunes is finally collapsing, and what's been left in the wake is palpably weighty, imbued with all the elements of art rather than crass pandering to goddessite acid-cases still recovering from the 70s. It's not that I object to calming beautiful music, as even Satie will attest from the grave ('cause, ya know, he digs my reviews when they appear in *The Afterlife Gazette*), but that so much of the oeuvre was so damnably vapid, insipid, treacley. This disc, however, is a good case in counterpoint.

Young has long been at pains to research the whys, wherefores, and applications of the flute in its many manifestations (Chinese xiao, Native wood flutes, South/Central American clay drone flute, etc.) and his inspissations of ancient manners with modernist compositions clearly show how well diverse influences come together in his work. More, he's logged a great deal of time exploring keyboards, percussives, and various other

instruments from near and far in order to make every note in each composition personal; only the female vocals are not of his crafting.

Myself a die-hard desert rat, I hear wide-open barren vistas bathed in quiet energies of amid beautifully aching plaints (or is that just me wanting to get back to the redrock territories?), stars looking down from satin nights or amid afternoons slipping into evening, but I'm sure others, depending on their nature preferences, will perceive various locales. Nothing is rushed here, all flows with serenity – even in the slo-jazzy “Entangled” – with the wind appurtenances aided by atmospheric synthesizers in a well-balanced mix-down (all the engineering carried off by Young). Thus, as pure listening fare, *Ethereum* is an ecology of meditative intellectualism contemplating itself inside and out, an oasis formed by closing one's eyes and just listening, at which point the self expands into the world, and the mind-theater adventures become your own. But there's more.

I was recently searching for a good massage music CD to complement my two faves – The Necks' *Sex* (no, thou perv reader, it's not a compendium of porn soundtracks but rather an hour-long instrumental of what I see to be an extension of Traffic's *Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys*) and Oregon's *Into the Woods* – and *Ethereum* arrived just in the nick of time. The music seeps not only all through the room and into mind and soul but also the muscles and bones, making for a three-dimensional healing experience. That's not just my opinion, it's my massage partner's as well: she's as enthralled as I am. All musics ultimately are healing in one or more fashions, but some achieve the goal more abundantly than the rest.