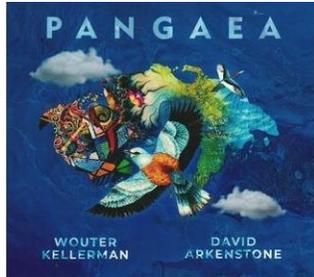


Wouter Kellerman and David Arkenstone

Pangaea



There was a time when the world was one. One land mass. One ocean. One sky. Some say it is a myth. Some say otherwise. It was called Pangaea. To remind us of the wonder and mystery of this myth (or truth) enter the new album **Pangaea** by **Wouter Kellerman** and **David Arkenstone**. Let me preface this by saying that I have never heard a more successful collaboration than the pairing of these two talents. Four time Grammy Award Nominee Arkenstone has almost a hundred albums to his credit and is known for his epic fantasy music. Grammy Award winning instrumentalist Wouter Kellerman is known for his genre defying prowess with his flute. Together they have formed a musical team that seems to be incredibly intuitive and cohesive. I have been a fan of both musicians for a very long time. I can imagine them doing more in the future.

The album consists of nine incredible scenarios that appear at different times and different places around the globe. The genres are world, ethnic, New Age, fantasy, and ambient all combined into a thrilling journey for the mind. The spirit is sure to follow.

Featuring vocals by New Age vocalist **Aeone**, the opening track **Desert Moon** conjures up a sky full of sparkling stars, a moon so bright that it creates blue shadows that precede our every move, and a jaunty trip across the Arabian Desert. Arkenstone's strong Middle Eastern keyboard themes combined with Kellerman's driving flute lead guide you along on the trip of your life. Hold on tight.

**Ungana** carries on the concept of unity with vocalist **Mbuso Khoza** adding to the mix as a voice from the wilderness. The song is earthy, primal, and steeped in mystery. A three-note bass lead permeates the tune while Kellerman's flute carries the theme across the land once known as Alkebulan. **Dance of Joy** could not have been better named. This is a celebration song, a festive meeting of flute and guitar and to me, it is offered in the carefree style of several of Arkenstone's original albums such as *Valley in the Clouds* (1987) and *Wake of the Wind* (1991). Kellerman's adds his signature popping sound on his flute (more about that later) and Arkenstone offers up his lighthearted fantasy ambience. Together you cannot help but dance along, happy to be alive.

So what we think is the dramatic bass embellishment is actually Kellerman popping his breath into his flute in the tune **First Rain**. I have seen him do this live and he gets rather primordial when he does this, but the sound is astonishing. With **Daniel Berkman** on kora, an African lute, the song takes on a somewhat savory Asian flavor, but the bassy flute drone dominates the song. The obvious Arkenstonian theme is one of elation. In this tune you can hear the first raindrops, fat and weighty and then the rains come to wash everything clean. There is delight in every note. From the Land of the Long White Clouds comes the tune **Taranaki Rises** which was an overall favorite on the album. From first breath to last, this complex melody is mesmerizing. The loping

cadence, the twittering flute, and the flowing bass by **George Varghese** lets us know that this is a song of movement. Sometimes it is vertical, sometimes it is horizontal, but always forward. The “shining mountain” smiles down on all.

**The Sun’s Reflection** offers up not only an impassioned ballad that soothes on many levels, but offers up the vocal talents of well-known New Age songstress **Seay** to balance out the aurally gentle movement throughout the song. Guitar, flute, cello, and bass blend into a soft, sultry song that catches and redirects the glimmer of sun on water like a never ending ocean of diamonds. The colors are ever-changing, the energy boundless.

The final cut, **Across Land and Sea** brings the themes together in a celebratory journey. **Jordan Buetow** adds his spritely dulcimer as a lead as well as **Rodolfo Zanetti**, who offers up the Bandoneon, an old world concertina to add synergy to the mix. The tune has Arkenstone’s fingerprints all over it as it presents the musical journey in an endlessly playable foray over lofty mountain paths and briny ocean courses. All we have to do is follow the leader, in this case, Mr. Kellerman’s flute.

What Kellerman and Arkenstone have done on Pangaea is to unite the world as one under the umbrella of inventive, exhilarating music that capitalizes on both their talents. They have done this admirably. If the world were still one mass, then this would be our anthem. One of unity, joy, love, and compassion. Every song is a story and every story has a happy ending. All with great musical accompaniment. Let us all listen, learn, and participate to that end. Highly recommended.

-R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews