The Electric Light Orchestra

The Move = The Electric Light Orchestra = Excellent!

The Electric Light Orchestra (United Artists)

Whoever has been the Move on any of their three American releases, will probably think that either Roy Wood, its leader, is a genius or that he's crazy (maybe both). This record, which has been a project of his for some time, will completely confirm either opinion. Wood has been developing the sound of his earlier work and he now has it down. It'll sell, too.

The music is ridiculously bottom heavy, carried by a suite of string basses, cellos, bassoons and bass guitars, almost all played by Wood, occasionally augmented by the left side of Jeff Lynne's piano. This monotonous sound is contrasted with shrill oboes and violins or Lynne's whistle voice. Actually it is a simple progression from the similar, but conceptually different, Lynne's whiny voice. It is an ambitious, but it is also presented and will illuminate your day with clear, brown light.

The total effect, usually matched by the lyrics, is to transport you decades, or even centuries, into the past. The pictures in the cover suggest wood and the music never fails to match it. You can visit with your old friend, "Mr. Radio," and he now has it down. It'll sell, too.

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The electric guitar orchestral (EO). This is really Roy and Jose's new project, named after the main character in the movie. The electric guitar orchestrals are a combination of the electric guitar and the orchestra. They are used to create a unique sound that is both electric and orchestral.

The Electric Light Orchestra, written and produced by Lynne and Lynne, is an ambitious undertaking, but it is carefully presented and will illuminate your day with clear, brown light.

Staging MacKenzie's Gauntlet was something of a gamble for the electric guitar orchestra. An unknown projectionist is not a good guarantee of success. The show opened last Thursday to an audience of twenty. But MacKenzie's Gauntlet is a fine, well staged, and deserves the patronage of the community.

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A number of small criticisms can be made about the performance: the actors have varying commands of foreign accents and some drop them occasionally; the guitar music was loud enough during a live scene. But it would be extremely difficult to emphasize such things; they do not noticeably detract from one's enjoyment of the evening.

Good performances break good direction, and Prof. Evangeline also deserves credit for the blocking. It is an achievement in itself to put 15 people on the Little Theatre Stage without the whole scene tripping all over each other, and blocking is usually best when the audience doesn't notice it at all. But there were moments during MacKenzie's Gauntlet when I found blocking the most interesting thing on stage. Some of the frozen poses took on an almost cinematic intensity.

The fine appearance of the show also derives from William Roberts' deceptively simple box set, which when becalmed changes from MacKenzie's ratly garret into a picturesque landscape of the Bolivian jungle. This allows rapid transitions between scenes. Roberts' set is well complemented by the orchestral lighting plan, and if the lighting crew missed any cues, I did not notice them.

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The problem with the electric guitar orchestra is that it is rather like the character portrayed by Jack Nicholson in Five Easy Pieces. But the absence of feeling, to feel guilty. (If Bakshi was trying to make a comment on the emptiness of plastic hip life, the message was already dated by 1969.) Yet, but for one decision, Bakshi might have salvaged most of the film's thematic integrity. The rape scene in which Fritz's crow friend Duke in the race riot is a moment of great pathos. But this successful moment, and others like it, ironically are the scenes that set up the film's ultimate failure.

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