Kayak: new band across the water

Phantom of the Night. Kayak. Juma records 7KS 7039
By David Shaw

For many years, Kayak was an obscure Dutch band known only to a small cult of progressive rock fans. The release of their magnum opus, Royal Bed Bouncer, in 1975 established their position as one of Europe's top progressive bands, yet they still remained relatively unknown in America. Last year saw the release of Starlight Dancer. Kayak's bid for American recognition. (Another album was released only in Europe, half of this material appeared on Starlight Dancer.) The album made it onto the bottom of the charts and was received with critical acclaim, considered by some critics to be on a level with Yes, Deep Purple, and Genesis. At the same time, Kayak's new material appeared on America, Last year saw the release of Time Machine, and Crime of Passion, to ballads and symphonies. Kayak was establishing their position as one of Europe's top progressive bands, and their sound continued to impress progressive rock fans. The release of the Kayak album was met with enthusiasm, and the band's popularity continued to grow. However, with the introduction of new members, Max Werner moved into the band, and his influence altered it. Max Werner manages to be the perfect blend of sharp, biting edge, and mighty cry.

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As Kayak becomes more and more popular, they move further and further away from their original sound—the Playing that style established them as such a great talent. Scherpenzeel's lineup changes have not improved the group's style, but merely altered it. Max Werner manages to be a competent drummer, but his style is a bit too plain; it doesn't compare at all to the technique of original percussionist Pim Kooiman. The other questionable change was assigning all backing vocals to Katherine Lapthorn. One of the group's strong points used to be the way the musicians harmonized so well; now we never hear their contributions. On the positive side, this new album opens with "Keep the Change," the obvious hit single that is already receiving extensive airplay. This tune, along with all the other songs, is a perfect model of current pop trends. The vocals are clear and sharp, the instrumentation is full but not excessive, and the orchestral arrangements just the right amount of fill. The tune ran the gamut from rockers such as "Journey Through Time" and "Crime of Passion" to ballads like "Phantom of the Night" and "Ruthless Queen." Of note is "No Man's Land," a bouncy rocker featuring former lead vocalist Max Werner. This tune is an example of how Kayak sounded previously: high-speed instrumentation, vocals with a sharp, biting edge, and slightly crazy lyrics.

Kayak is trying again, and with a new band and a new sound, they are guaranteed the success they deserve. The personnel of the band has changed since the last album: lead singer Max Werner has been replaced by Edward Reekers, with Werner moving into the drummer slot vacated by Charles Scherpenzeel, bass; Irene Linders, background vocals; Johan Slager, guitars. Keyboardist/songwriter/leader Schouten. Schouten has added Irene Linders (his girlfriend) and Katherine Lapthorn as Koopman. The other questionable change is that the band has altered it. Max Werner manages to be the perfect blend of sharp, biting edge, and mighty cry. The new album opens with "Keep the Change," the obvious hit single that is already receiving extensive airplay. This tune, along with all the other songs, is a perfect model of current pop trends. The vocals are clear and sharp, the instrumentation is full but not excessive, and the orchestral arrangements just the right amount of fill. The tune ran the gamut from rockers such as "Journey Through Time" and "Crime of Passion" to ballads like "Phantom of the Night" and "Ruthless Queen." Of note is "No Man's Land," a bouncy rocker featuring former lead vocalist Max Werner. This tune is an example of how Kayak sounded previously: high-speed instrumentation, vocals with a sharp, biting edge, and slightly crazy lyrics.