

Various – Totemism: Etnica Remixed (EtnicaNet)

Contributed by damion psyreviews

Dazzling moments ahoy, if you avoid Wizzy Noise

I have to say I was pleasantly surprised by this. To say this is "Etnica remixes" doesn't really go far enough; and at a time when limp recent releases have made Etnica a bit of a dirty word this one might slip under your radar.

Pion kicks off with Dominator, a wonderful bit of understated psytrance whose name betrays its subtlety and guile. It's almost progressive: form the get-go you're aware of this brooding melody underneath, that you just know is going to rise up and... er... dominate. Which it just about does, but what makes it so cracking is how it holds back, restrains itself, and lets the energy come from somewhere other than big stabs and changes.

PTX's Automatik (Colours Remix) has a gnarlier feel that pitches it down with "proper" psytrance. A few too many stopstarts on the way up, a moody peak that slowly opens up to a sweet sunrise melody, and a drop that puts me in mind of Wizzy Noise when they were still good.

Talking of good drops, you don't get a lot better than Atnica vs Arkanyodz remix of Totemism. This, folks, is the good shit: the bulk of the track is concerned with the journey upwards, the breakdown is nothing too engaging, but once it slides into its final run, it's one of those special moments in psytrance; when there won't be a single person not stomping up some dust. Guaranteed.

Bamboo Forest are hardly one of psyreviews' favourites these days, but the mix of Microdrive is pretty decent. There's a nice kaleidoscopic vibe to it, and it's all driven along by a very sweet and (for some reason) compelling snare drum. Amazing isn't it, that producers concentrate so much on intricate layering and god knows what snazzy production techniques, that a well-formed and well-placed snare can make all the difference. If the tune itself wasn't so big and ravey at the end, it'd be a classic.

Still, if you like big and ravey then Wizzy Noise's remix of Triptonite is what you want, but it's not what I want. Wizzy remixing this tune would have been big news a couple of years ago, but as soon as the minute-long swirly intro finishes it's all pretty much over. Their sound has become so thin, so generic, so formulaic; it makes me almost want to cry. It's an exercise in swirliness-getting-bigger which loses all credibility when the main Triptonite melody comes in over the top, plonked out on a thin high-end ravey line. Borderline unlistenable, yet I can see it doing massive things on the dancefloor.

Dickster's Vimana (Back 2 Old Skool Mix) happily puts us back in the realms of the quality tune. This has everything – from its sparse, barely-there opening it escalates and draws you in to the centre of a drippingly psychedelic bit of music. The acidlines and the general squelchiness will have everyone going all misty-eyed while simultaneously asking Shiva when Dickster is going to release a solo album.

The Object (Lost Planet Mix) from Arkanoydz is decent stuff – particularly enjoyed the spongy-spongy leadup to the midsection – and the production is quality all the way. It lacks that little something however, that little spark that would make it stand out. Good in its own right, but up against the other tracks on here it's going to get missed.

Finally you've got an unexpected twist: just when you thought you couldn't handle another mix of Triptonite, Aes Dana & Nova turn up a stellar ambient mix. It opens you out, stretches your spine and energises you like only Aes Dana can, all the while making intelligent and restrained use of the melody, almost making you forget what Wizzy Noise did.

All this is fantastic stuff. It's one of those fullon albums, a bit like Neo-Caine or Origin Stage 3, that has you excited about fullon again. Given the subject matter it could easily have gone either way, but happily there's enough substance and danceability here to make it well worthy of recommendation.