

Nox Arcana - BLACKTHORN ASYLUM (MusickReview)

FANGORIA MUSICK REVIEWS

Tuesday, July 07 2009 | 02:22 AM

Draconis Blackthorne



Amidst tangled vines and spiny black thorns, there lays the magnificently gloomy edifice surrounded in a miasma, suddenly enervated with a flash from the storm. Dare you pass through the gates into the recesses of this demented dimension?

The first spectacle one considers is the amazing cover art, an asylum still echoing ethereal shrieks in the still haunted air, whereupon entering the atmosphere, one is transported into a world of shadowy phantoms who lurk in the darkness of the sanitarium's corridors.

Nox Arcana are the musical wardens of this institution, guiding one via one Dr. Neville Aldritch, who unfurls his nefarious experiments upon the unfortunate residents; veritable so-called 'freaks' and undesirables of society, although each with their own fascinating complications. Cronologing his progress in journals bedecked with strange occult diagrams, Blackthorn Asylum does carry many secrets... can you decipher their meanings? What you thought could not possibly be begins to reveal itself before your terrified eyes. Take care if you learn too much - for the closer you get to solving the riddles, the closer you reach the threshold of madness...

The experiments begin as dusk settles... the results of sometimes morbid work to reach a new plateau of technology, where sometimes certain "sacrifices" must be made for the evolution of science.

Based upon Lovecraftian idealizations, with a strong From Beyond influence, Blackthorn Asylum also calls to mind the characters of Dr. Victor Frankenstein, Dr. Jeckyll & Mr. Hyde, and even Dr. Moreau.

Along with the always gracefully aphasic, in keeping with the theme, some of the orchestrations in this opus appropriately tend towards the more atonal at times, pressed with a sense of desperation and urgency.

Also with the splendid introductory and concluding narrations (some of Aldritch's recorded notations) perceived as is from a phonograph, also notable is a segue-way track entitled "Shock Treatment" from the introductory atmospheric impressions, entirely comprised of the sounds of said activity, in a combination of deep pulsations ebbing electrical currents amidst screams from the patient.

The richly ornate booklet contains stimulating puzzles, clues, and cryptograms depicting arcane theorems such as phrenology, procedures, treatments, and certain historical tools of the trade, manifested in Vargo's distinctive dark art.

Overall, Blackthorn Asylum manages to convey an entropically dramatic musical and visual presentation of 'chaos contained', sometimes blurring the lines in the listener's mind.

For more:

- www.myspace.com/noxarcana
- <http://www.noxarcana.com/blackthorn.html>