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CD Review

Nox Arcana – “Carnival of Lost Souls”

By Marcus Pan

In every Nox Arcana release we're taken to a new place and another dark world. In **Carnival of Lost Souls** we visit a spooky, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* style fairgrounds, where we are promised a look at "cruel oddities of nature" during the course of this 21 track dirge of calliope horror. After a ringmaster reads to us our promised visions in *Ghosts of the Midway* we continue through the tent as the music drones us towards a darker aesthetic with ghostly whisperings and disembodied chants *After Hours*.

Calliope will sneak fear on us, hidden behind what initially appears to be a nice, happy dirge. *Madame Endora* tells us dark secrets of our future and then a parade of ghouls goes by loudly with a crescendo of drums and orchestra outside her tent pulling us from her grasp to watch the dark inhabitants of the carnival march.

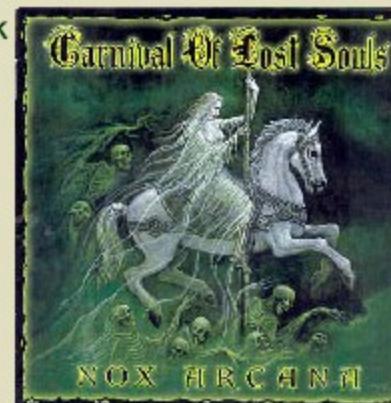


Hall of Mirrors is one of the most disturbing pieces, the laughter of evil clowns and deplorable ringmasters slide us through a funhouse of the macabre while the organ plays in the background trying to fool us into a state of complacency. *Cries in the Night* gets soft, but scary, with its slow moving ambient washes and droning sighs that sweep through.

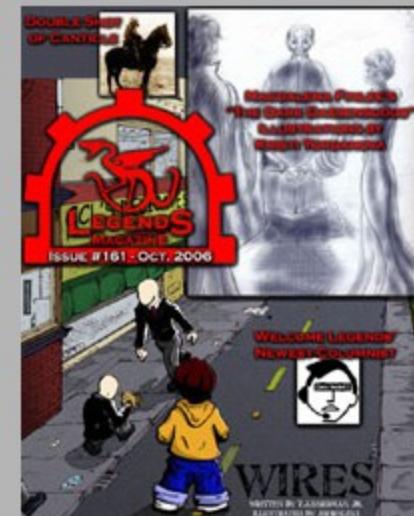
The spinning *Haunted Carousel* takes us for a ride before we enter the *Theatre of Sorrows* to watch the undead premiere of the *Living Dolls*. *The Circus Diabolique* follows the gathering of the *Freaks*, another hair raising march into the center tent of the carnival. *Pandora's Music Box* is easily one of the eeriest melodies I've heard, ranking right up there with *Tubular Bells* or *Halloween*.

Storm flies us back home amidst thunder and moody chants before the **Carnival of Lost Souls** leaves the fairgrounds with only a dark memory behind. And when the carnival has ended and gypsied out of town, we have a bit of a treat. Nox Arcana does rock 'n roll?! That's right! Combining the orchestration that Nox Arcana are known for and brilliant metal guitars by guest Jeff Endemann and powerful vocals from Jim Hamar, it's Nox Metal! *Spellbound* brings me back to the good old days of Iron Maiden and Ozzy. Snuck almost unmentioned on the back end of track 21 for a brilliant surprise.

It is carnival season here on the States' east coast, and I've already been to two of them with Felicia. But bright lights, spinning rides and happy faces are not the type you'll find here at **Carnival of Lost Souls**. The Vargo & Piotrowski duo once again successfully build on a dark theme to transport you there in your mind, as the soundscapes hover around you. One can only wonder where we're going to go with them next.



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