

RajMan Reviews

Musings on Movies, Music, and Television

CD Review – Music for Commuting, by Ken Elkinson

For years I have been searching for a perfect New Age album (besides Andy Summers' 1988 guitar-and-synthesizer classic *Mysterious Barricades*), and I believe I have finally found one in the form of Ken Elkinson's new release, *Music for Commuting*.

Music for Commuting is really a series of 6 CDs, most beautifully packaged as a compact and easily portable box set of 3 CDs with two albums each. To paraphrase Elkinson's description of each two-album set, Disc 1: Monday/Tuesday is dark and edgy, Disc 2: Wednesday/Thursday is more buoyant and based on Elkinson's love of 1980s synth pop, and Disc 3: Friday/Beyond is spacey and futuristic.

Regardless of these distinctions, the music on all six albums or three discs is really of one accord. Although there are latent guitar and percussion sounds on some tracks, the music is generated entirely with keyboards and synthesizers and sounds exactly like keyboards and synthesizers, and like *Mysterious Barricades*, the emphasis is on texture and sound, laced with beautiful melodies, tantalizing chord progressions, and ethereal chord washes.

Even with such a single style and sound, each of the 60 tracks in the box set is original and unique, setting it apart from most other instrumental albums that need to mix up styles and genres to maintain interest. This is quite an impressive feat on Elkinson's part and speaks to his masterful compositional skills.

The music itself functions on several levels. As the title suggests, it's perfect for commuting. It's also ideal for meditation and relaxation. It's intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually satisfying. It's akin to a religious experience. It would be a great soundtrack for a science fiction or fantasy movie.

Listening to *Music for Commuting* is like swimming in an ocean of bliss. Its cascading layers of soothing sounds have the effect of mental therapy, like acupuncture for the mind. It is the epitome of pure New Age music and as a result is one of the best in the genre.

--Raj Manoharan