

Walking the Bardic Road: The David Arkenstone Interview

Michael Lohr interviews musician, David Arkenstone.

{mosgoogle}

David Arkenstone is a legendary musician. For over twenty years, since the debut of *Valley In The Clouds* in 1987, he has been entertaining us and taking us on musical sojourns to many wondrous places.

Fans of Renaissance and Celtic music should be quite familiar with David's music. From such seminal records as *The Celtic Book of Days* and the J.R.R. Tolkien-influenced *Music Inspired by Middle Earth* to the Grammy nominated *Atlantis: A Symphonic Journey*, David has journeyed in the mist-shrouded realms of legend and lore on numerous occasions. This imagery has become an integral part of his overall presentation.

In 1995, David collaborated with science fiction and fantasy novelist Mercedes Lackey on the record *Quest of the Dream Warrior*. Produced by Michael Whalen, the record includes performances from a 24-piece orchestra and comes with a novelette that tells the story of Kayla, a young girl on a fantastic quest to find her father.

ML: Tell me about your new recording *Myths and Legends*? I understand that this is a multiple CD set should be played at the same time to enhance one's listening experience.

DA: Yes, it's a three-disc set. Two CD's, and a DVD with music videos for each song. Some of the videos are live action, and some are animation. Johnny Wilson, the man responsible for the lion's share of the editing, effects and filming was indispensable in putting it all together. I had fun dressing up for the Robin Hood video. The dual CD aspect was fun to conceptualize. It was born out of the idea that very often I run out of "canvas" in my songs. That is, there are usually more musical ideas I want to add to the mix, yet it might become a bit cluttered. With this idea, I was able to stretch out and add some things, like ambient sounds, effects, voices, and other musical experiments. The result was fascinating, as it becomes an optional surround mix, using any two players roughly synched together. Each listening is a different experience due to the nature of players and speed. Of course, you can play one CD at a time and still get a full picture and experience. This is my first project on the Gemini Sun label, and they have done a fantastic job getting it out into the world.

ML: Your last record, *Atlantis: A Symphonic Journey* was influenced by the ancient legend of the lost civilization of Atlantis. How did South African singer Miriam Stockley come to work with you on this project? Why Atlantis?

DA: I contacted Miriam after I realized the direction the Atlantis project was going. I saw some unique opportunities in some of the pieces for her wonderful voice-layering technique. She was enthusiastic and did a wonderful job.

I have always been fascinated by the legend of Atlantis and all that it means to the different people of the world. I thought I might be able to create a representation of it through music that people would identify with. I must have touched someone, as it was nominated for a Grammy!

ML: You've released a Lord of the Rings-inspired record, *Music Inspired by Middle Earth*. Songs such as "The Road to Rivendell", "Lothlórien", "The Palantir" and "Arwen and Aragorn" are splendid musical sagas that conjure forth mythic images. Do you intentionally include elements of the mythic or spiritual in your projects, or is this something that just flows naturally from you?

DA: Thanks for the kind words. I think a lot of my mythic character is in my soul, and part of it comes from what I like to hear and experience. My music usually stems from an urge to go on an adventure. And that's very often where I go. I am very fortunate lots of people like to go there with me.

ML: What was your inspiration for *Quest of the Dream Warrior*? How did you get fantasy novelist Mercedes Lackey to collaborate on this project?

DA: I was embarking on the second part of a trilogy that began with "In The Wake Of The Wind"; I was feeling that I would like to intensify the story line and collaborate with a powerful writer. So we contacted Mercedes, and she was very interested and away we went. The music on that CD was written partly from the story line, like a film score.

ML: I heard that you composed a Wedding song for the Princess of Saudi Arabia? That must have been an interesting gig?

DA: Through a friend, I was contacted by an assistant for one of the Princesses of Saudi Arabia who enjoyed my music, and wanted me to compose something for her wedding. So I did and recorded it and filmed it with an orchestra in Utah.

ML: What was your motivation for doing The Celtic Book of Days record? With songs such as 'Cailleach's Whisper', 'The Turning of the Year', and 'The Quest of Culhwch'; the spirit of the ancient Celts must have been with you while you were writing this record.

DA: My basic motivation for doing this recording was my love for Celtic music. I have been a fan of the Chieftains forever, and I have always had a fondness for the imagery and emotion that I get from Celtic music. Along with the folk character, I tried to bring an epic or cinematic style to that project. And yes, I felt I was not alone when I was composing and recording it. I definitely felt a certain reverence.

ML: What projects are you currently working on?

DA: I plan to tour more, and begin playing select concerts with symphony orchestras. I've also started doing music for video games, which is very exciting. It opens up entirely new worlds and gives my music a new audience. I've been writing movie soundtrack scores and have written production scores for the Discovery Channel and the History Channel. I'm doing a lot of traveling too, which always inspires me. I'm looking forward to meeting lots of new people, seeing new places, and chasing that adventure... To learn more about David, his music, his tours and his love of baseball, please go to his official website: <http://www.davidarkenstone.com/>