



**Artist/ Band:** Syzygy  
**Title:** Cosmos & Chaos (2013) 20th Anniversary Compendium  
**Label:** Self release  
**Year of Release:** 2014  
**The Review:**

On June 11, 1982 Stephen Spielberg released his heart-warming sci-fi fantasy classic "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial" to theaters worldwide. That cuddly iconic alien was loved by all and made him a wealthy man. And when the 20th anniversary of the film rolled around Spielberg decided the best way to celebrate the anniversary of E.T.'s maiden voyage to Earth was by re-releasing the film to a generation of movie goers who never experienced the film on the big screen. But Spielberg's vision expanded beyond simply re-releasing the 20 year old film 'as is'. Advances in special effects technology provided Spielberg with the unique opportunity to tweak a few minor things he wasn't quite happy with at the time of the original filming, such as seamlessly blending CGI with practical physical effects to create more naturalistic facial expressions for E.T.

In the last few decades its nothing new for filmmakers to re-release 'Special Expanded Editions' of classic films - inserting new footage, adding prologues or epilogues, re-editing the film's chronology, or tweaking the special effects.

***“The new album entitled ‘Cosmos & Chaos 20th Anniversary Compendium’ is an opportunity for new and old fans alike to experience the boundless energy, delicate beauty, and majestic wonder that is Syzygy.” (Joseph Shingler)***

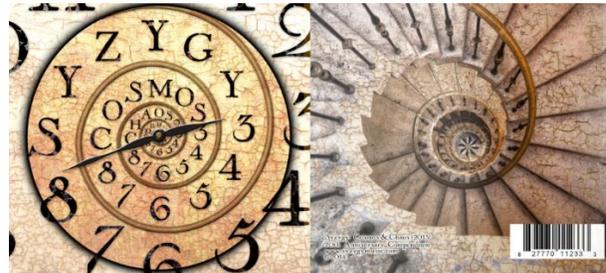
Francis Ford Coppola re-edited his film "The Godfather" on several occasions: in 1977 the seven hour mini-series "The Godfather: The Complete Novel For Television" combined both "The Godfather" and "The Godfather II" in chronological order; a longer version with all the violent scenes deleted from the TV

version showed up in 1981 as "The Godfather 1902 - 1959: The Complete Epic"; and then in 1992 another version was released on laser disc as "The Godfather Trilogy: 1901 - 1980", re-editing the three Godfather films into chronological order.

And let's not forget that George Lucas digitally enhanced and re-released the first three "Star Wars" films to the big screen before their eventual arrival on the home video market.

'What's old is new' is a principle that also applies to music.

For instance in 1998 the band IQ released the double-CD "Seven Stories into 98", which was comprised of one disc of archival and somewhat crude home-recorded demo tracks from the band's early years, as well as a second disc of highly polished new studio re-recordings from the band.



Which brings us to Syzygy and their newly released collection of older re-imagined studio material.

Syzygy, one of America's finest progressive rocks groups, celebrated the 20th anniversary of their 1993 Witsend debut album (Witsend was the band's original name) "Cosmos & Chaos" with a masterfully reworked variation of the original album. This is not just a marketing ploy used by way too many artists who drain the wallets of their fan base by re-releasing digitally re-mastered versions of the same album every five years. This is a fresh yet nostalgic re-examination of their music and a welcome addition to their discography.

Syzygy presents a unique new perspective on "Cosmos & Chaos" through reinterpreting, re-performing, and re-sequencing tracks into a bona fide progressive rock masterwork. The 20th Anniversary Compendium also features rediscovered tracks from the original 1984 line-up.

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Before writing this review I went back to the original "Cosmos & Chaos" recording to better my critical analysis and reacquaint myself with the original material.

After listening to the original recording for comparison the first thing that jumped out at me was how well the re-sequenced tracks worked. Under the heading "Miniatures" there is distinctive cohesiveness in the marriage of tracks like "Cosmos" (guitar prelude in E major), "Poetry in B Minor" (for solo piano), "Guitar Etude No. 1" (D major), and "Guitar Etude No. 2" (G major) which now flow as a single movement. On the original recording the tracks were scattered throughout the album - "Cosmos" was track 6, "Poetry in B Minor" was track 7, "Guitar Etude No. 1" was track 4, and "Guitar Etude No.2" was track 9. The track sequencing now flows much better.

The next segment entitled "Duets" contains the tracks "Tautology" (for guitar & bass) and "The Tone Row" (for keyboards & guitar).

Both "Miniatures" and "Duets" make up what I'd refer to as the "unplugged" acoustic portion of the album. But as the title of the album implies - "Cosmos & Chaos" - the tunes and mood shifts from the

ethereal wonders of the "Cosmos" to the frenetic climax of "Chaos", represented by the Ensemble Works and Bonus Tracks portion of the disc.

And here is where Syzygy really shines.

Part III "Ensemble Works" (featuring the Witsend trio) contains the energetic, complex prog/rock arrangements like "Voyager", "Circadian Rhythm", "Closure", "Strange Loop II", "Mount Ethereal" and "Chaos" which have elevated Syzygy to the top tier of progressive rock artists. And one of America's best.

Part IV "Bonus Tracks" (previously unreleased material) contains two tracks from the 1984 Witsend Quartet: "Opus No. 1" and "Opus No. 3", and a pair of live Syzygy recordings from 2010: "Strange Loop II" and "Mount Ethereal".

For the budget conscious who presently own the original Witsend album and think purchasing "Cosmos & Chaos (2013) 20th Anniversary Compendium" is a redundant waste of money let me assure you, this is an altogether different album.

The album is essential for not only the Syzygy completist - but any progressive rock aficionado with an appreciation of excellent music.

Members of Syzygy include: Carl Baldassarre (guitars and vocals), Sam Giunta (keyboards), Paul Mihacevich (drums and percussion), Al Rolik (bass guitar and vocals) and additional players Mark Boals (guest vocals), Gary Priebe (bass guitar), and Roman Zmudzinski (drums).

## Highly Recommended!

*Reviewed by Joseph Shingler on March 15th, 2014*

### Tracks:

Miniatures (solo works for guitar and piano)

01. Cosmos (guitar prelude in E major)

02. Poetry in B minor (for piano)

03. Guitar Etude No. 1 (D major)

04. Guitar Etude No. 2 (G major)

Bonus Tracks (previous unreleased material)

13. Opus No. 1 (Witsend Quartet - 1984)

14. Opus No. 5 (Witsend Quartet - 1984)

15. Strange Loop II (Syzygy - live 2010)

16. Mount Ethereal (Syzygy - live 2010)

Duets

05. Tautology (for guitar & bass)

06. The Tone Row (for keyboard & guitar)

Ensemble Works (Featuring Witsend Trio)

07. Voyager 08. Circadian Rhythm

09. Closure

10. Strange Loop II

11. Mount Ethereal

12. Chaos (Fantasia on drum track)



<http://www.prognaut.com/reviews/syzygy4.html>