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THE ART MUSIC LOUNGE

An Online Journal of Jazz and Classical Music

TJP's New "Peace and Love" Album

[December 9, 2017The Art Music Lounge](#)



Tony Miceli Paul Jost Kevin MacConnell Doug Hirlinger Joel Frahm

PEACE AND LOVE / SIMON-GARFUNKEL: *America*. MEDLEY: ARGENT: *Time of the Season*/LENNON-McCARTNEY: *Day Tripper*. TRADITIONAL: *Shenandoah*. BROOKER-FISHER: *Whiter Shade of Pale*. SOUTH: *Hush*. HAYWARD: *Tuesday*

Afternoon. DeSHANNON: Put a Little Love in Your Heart. STING: Message in a Bottle. MEDLEY: POWERS: Message in a Bottle/JOBIM: Waters of March. THIELE-WEISS: Wonderful World. WARD: America the Beautiful / TJP: Tony Miceli, vib; Paul Jost, voc/harmonica; Kevin MacConnell, bs; Doug Hirlinger, dm/electronics; Joel Frahm, t-sax/s-sax; Philadelphia Performing Arts Chorus / Miceli Music TJP-12345 (available at Amazon, iTunes, Spotify, Bandcamp)

Philadelphia-based TJP, formerly known as The Jost Project, has apparently made a specialty of playing jazz arrangements of rock tunes, and happily their versions really *are* jazz with little rock-beat reference in their playing.

And what a talented crew they are. In addition to leader-vibes player Tony Miceli, it was a pleasure for me to hear their bass player, Kevin MacConnell, whose playing is the best thing I've heard in a long time...shades of Mingus or Eddie Gomez. Playing here with guest saxist Joel Frahm, they transform these pieces in such a way that you become immediately wrapped up in their own personal feel for swing, driven by the backbeat 6/8 feel of drummer Doug Hirlinger.



L to R: Paul Jost, Doug Hirlinger, Kevin MacConnell, Joel Frahm, Tony Miceli.

Paul Jost's vocals, which dominate this set, are very jazzy in phrasing and rhythm despite his hoarse tone and occasional slurred diction (the latter, from what I can tell, by choice rather than accident). Despite this, there's a surprisingly strong R&B accent to their performances rather than a rock one, which is why I enjoyed the album so much.

Miceli is clearly an outstanding vibes player, and if he doesn't show off his chops the way Terry Gibbs did he is surely as fine an improviser. I was also quite impressed by Frahm's sax playing, particularly on soprano where he cut loose with some wonderful long lines that had a great sense of construction (i.e., *Hush*). One of the most rock-oriented pieces on the album is Justin Hayward's *Tuesday Afternoon*, but only in the opening chorus; after a drum break, we settle into a nice swinging groove which alternates with the former throughout the performance. Similarly, they transform the Youngbloods' iconic peace-&-love anthem, *Get Together*, even including voices from the Philadelphia Performing Arts Chorus. Frahm, again on soprano, plays outstanding embellishments around the principal melody.

They also give an interesting twist to Ron Argent's *Time of the Season* by incorporating the opening riff from the Beatles' *Day Tripper* (and why, in an album of old Hippie songs, they didn't include *All You Need is Love* baffles me), where the driving rhythm, Miceli's vibes and Frahm on tenor. In the closing minute, they just move right into *Day Tripper* for the ride-out.

There are some interesting Bach references ("Sheep may safely graze") in their arrangement of *Whiter Shade of Pale*, a song I only know by its title, having never heard it before this album. Miceli's vibes, along with the rhythm section, completely transform Jackie DeShannon's *Put a Little Love in Your Heart* into a nice, medium-tempo swinger, with Frahm playing some really nice Saturday-Night-Live-Band style tenor sax. This eventually morphs into the Louis Armstrong tune *It's a Wonderful World*—a song, I rush to mention, that *wasn't* a hit in America when it first came out, but only charted years after Armstrong's death when it became the theme song of the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Having never heard Sting's *Message in a Bottle* before, I can't say how much it's been changed around by the band, but I'll assume they improved it because it's a pretty simple, repetitive lick, not even really a melody. Thank goodness that Frahm is back on soprano, where he sounds comfortable and creative, to liven up an otherwise nothing tune. Jost adds some nice scatting in the penultimate chorus.

I'll give TJP great credit for ending their set with *America the Beautiful*, which I still think is the greatest song yet written by an American about America. They take it nice, slow and relaxed, with Jost's vocal backed by just vibes and bass. A lovely close to the album.

A personal observation on the album's concept: it's nice but dated. When conceiving the CD, Miceli says, he "wondered where all the Hippies went. Was the '60s only about sex, drugs and rock and roll? Where did all these values about peace and love go?"

If he wouldn't mind, I'd like to answer that from a personal standpoint. I grew up in the '60s but didn't have the time or the luxury to be a Hippie, even though I was against the Vietnam War (who wasn't, in those days?), marched in one or two protests, and wanted more peace in the world. I didn't have that much time to smoke marijuana or get drunk or protest in the streets because I had to, like, *work* for a living. No one subsidized my highs or my tie-dyed jeans. I busted my rear end to get enough to live on because by the time I reached age 20, all this white privilege stuff ran out. And then the veil was torn from my eyes and I realized that all this peace-and-love stuff really *was* just bullshit designed to help guys have sex with us. That's when I, and probably a few million other Hippie sympathizers, walked away from it all. We still had a strong desire for world peace in our hearts but worked it out on a more personal basis. And now we

realize we've been completely screwed (in more ways than one) and lied to by the Democrats *and* the Republicans, so we're trying, against the iron will of the Dems and the media, to take our country back. They've even *created* these "social tensions" you want to address out of thin air for no other reason than to divide and conquer our society. Since I sympathize with the working class, I don't want "a little love" in my heart. I want a little more money in my bank account, money I desperately need to pay my mortgage and buy food, and that's what I want for my working class friends, who I love and support with all my heart. The Peace & Love crowd needs to be constantly subsidized because most of them don't work for a living. So, Tony, that's where it went. Take it for what it's worth.

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