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TJP | Peace and Love CD Review

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By Jan Veldman

When it comes to repertoire most albums I receive for review contain either original material, Standards or a mix of both. Every now and then you see a treatment of a song sourced from outside the standard jazz repertoire however usually just a track or two. When I received a copy of "Peace and Love" from the Philadelphia based band TJP (formerly The Jost Project) I was surprised to see an album entirely comprised of jazz treatments of popular songs from the 60's 70's and early 80's. ♦



Rating: ★★★★★

A little research showed that TJP is a band that has built a strong reputation for doing exclusively this, taking classic rock songs and performing them in a jazz format. In a recent interview published on this website, TJP founder Tony Miceli stated when asked about their concept “Let’s do what jazz musicians have been doing all along’. In the 40’s and 50’s jazz musicians took pop music and reworked it or re-imagined it. That’s what we’re doing.”

With this album, the first thing that struck me was the title “Peace and Love” and the cover art featuring a monarch butterfly with peace signs embedded in its markings. This led me to ask the question – is this a subliminal nod to the caterpillar on the cover of the first album?

Looking at the track list was quite a surprise, with a title like “Peace and Love” one would expect a list of 60’s protest songs from the likes of Bob Dylan, Barry McGuire or Creedence Clearwater Revival, this was not the case. The songs included are very diverse ranging from the Simon and Garfunkel hit “America”, through to the 80’s Police hit “Message in a Bottle”.

The album opens with “America”, a tale of young lovers hitching their way across the United States. The band leaves this tune largely intact from a rhythmical perspective while introducing some extra harmonic interest. **Vocalist Paul Jost presents a wonderful interpretation of the lyric complemented tastefully by guest saxophonist Joel Frahm.**

Joe South’s classic **“Hush”** made famous by Deep Purple on their 1968 album “Shades of Deep Purple” receives a 5/4 treatment that grooves over a bass ostinato before opening up into a punctuated chorus. **This is one of my favorite tracks on the album.**

Justin Haywood’s Moody Blues hit “Tuesday Afternoon” (or “Forever Afternoon” as it’s sometimes known) opens with a frantic sax solo over an afro-cuban vamp before settling into a half time swing groove, this structure continues throughout the arrangement. It’s worth noting that this arrangement bears little or no resemblance to the original in fact, not being a Moody Blues aficionado, I had some challenges even identifying the track.

Other noteworthy tracks on the album are Jackie DeShannon’s “Put A Little Love in Your Heart” and the folk standard “Shenandoah” that are both given ballad treatments. **“Put A Little Love in Your Heart” almost secretly morphs into a semi double time feel and features an exceptional vocal performance from Paul Jost and soulful solos from Tony Miceli (Vibes) and Joel Frahm (Tenor Sax).** Shenandoah’s haunting harmonica intro conjures up visions of the great Missouri River as it winds its way through the mid west.

Less successful in my mind is the arrangement of “Message in a Bottle”. Miceli’s arrangement varies little from the original however it should be noted that Jost’s scat solo prior to returning to the theme is one of the best I’ve heard.

Throughout the album the performances are excellent. Miceli’s playing has made a convert of this former vibraphone hater and the rhythm section consisting of bassist Kevin MacConnell and drummer Doug Hirlinger provide solid ground for the soloists to build on. Joel Frahm is tasteful as usual and a valuable addition to the album’s line-up.

Star of the show is vocalist Paul Jost. Having heard him for the first time on this album I’m convinced he is one of the best jazz vocalists on the scene today. Why he’s not seen on all the major festival stages remains a mystery to me – someone needs to let the cat out of the bag.

Highly recommended.

Track Listing:

America; Hush; Shenandoah; Tuesday Afternoon; Get Together / Waters Of March;

Whiter Shade Of Pale; Put A Little Love In Your Heart; Wonderful World; Time Of The Season; Message In A Bottle; America The Beautiful.

Personnel:

Paul Jost: vocals, harmonica; Tony Miceli: vibraphone; Kevin MacConnell: bass; Doug Hirlinger: drums; Joel Frahm: saxophone; Philadelphia Performing Arts Chorus: vocals.