

Jazz Folk is reviewed by LMNOP Magazine

Jazz Folk - Jazz In The Stone Age

(CD, 1 Hr Music, Jazz)

Jazz Folk is the trio comprised of Peter Scherr (bass), Simon Barker (drums), and Matt McMahon (piano). The lead track on this album ("Corinna") reminds us very much of Booker T & The MGs...but the remaining tracks prove that these fellows are indeed serious musicians. Scherr, Barker, and McMahon play a brand of warm, friendly, keyboard-based instrumental music that is instantly warm and appealing. The music treads on that fine line that separates jazz from pop...interesting territory once chartered in the 1960s by baby'sue favorite Vince Guaraldi. Nothing but smooth satisfying cuts here...and all eight tracks hit the center of the target. Housed in a lovely cardboard sleeve that includes a cool booklet...the songs on Jazz In The Stone Age are as solid as a rock.

10/23/10 Jazz Times • Albums • By Wilbert Sostre

CD Review: Jazz Folk - Jazz in the Stone Age

Don't let the Neanderthal pic in the CD cover fool you, Jazz in the Stone Age is a collection of wonderful versions of rock songs (mostly ballads). Starting with Corinna, a blues by the great Taj Mahal. The organ give this piece that classic and cool 60's, 70's Rock/Blues sound.

A peaceful, folksy atmosphere is created by the music arrangement of the second track, Joni Mitchell The song about about the midway. The album also includes three compositions by rock musician Beck. Nobody's fault but my own, Tropicalian Shadows, the jazzier piece on the album and Cold Brains, this last one with a more recognizable Beck like sound and style.

From Lou Reed and the legendary group Velvet Underground, the beautiful ballad, Pale Blue Eyes and the freer more rockin All Tomorrow's Parties with nice dissonances on the piano solo.

All those Deadheads (Grateful Dead fans) I know are still out there, will love the folksy version of Jerry Garcia Lay me down.

Tracks: Corinna, That Song about the Midway, Nobody's Fault but my own, Tropicalian Shadows, Pale Blue Eyes, All tomorrow's parties, To lay me down, Cold Brains

Something Else reviews

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2010

Jazz Folk - Jazz In The Stone Age (2010)

by Mark Saleski

Jazz fans tend to have a love/hate relationship with pop music covers. On the one hand, there are examples like Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" that are sort of hard to argue with. Face it, reinterpretations like that not only put a new spin on an old favorite, but kick open the door of perception to reveal the structural tendrils that are hidden to many a listener.

That...and it just sounded cool as hell.

For me, the hate part of this never made any sense. Maybe that's because I've never subscribed to the supposed "purity" of jazz thing. You know...the idea that since jazz was constructed on hallowed grounds, it must not be exposed to any outside (read: popular) forces? The idea that jazz must remain in the museum? I'm sorry, but jazz is not dead. At least, not to my ears.

Which is why I can appreciate the efforts of groups like Jazz Folk. Bass, drums, piano (Peter Scherr, Simon Barker, Matt McMahon) and a bunch of pop and rock tunes only a true music nerd can appreciate. I mean, look at the artist lineup: Taj Majal, The Velvet Underground, Lou Reed, Joni Mitchell, the Grateful Dead, Beck. Trust me, this is not just a collection of jazzified pop songs.

The songs? "Corinna," (Taj Mahal), "Pale Blue Eyes"/"All Tomorrow's Parties" (Lou Reed), "To Lay Me Down" (Hunter/Garcia), "That Song About the Midway" (Joni Mitchell), and three from Beck's Mutations album: "Nobody's Fault But Mine," "Tropicalian Shadows," "Cold Brains." Thinking about these tunes in their original form vs. their Jazz Folkifications, it strikes me that the group managed to highlight the essence of each selection while tying together certain commonalities, giving the collection a great sense of cohesiveness.

Examples? There's a certain feeling of beatific elegance and majesty that runs through "To Lay Me Down," "That Song About the Midway," and "Nobody's Fault But Mine." Then we have the rootsiness and drive of "Tropicalian Shadows" and "Corinna" (I totally dig the electric piano on the latter). The pair of songs certainly come from different genres but somehow hang together here.

My two favorite tracks on Jazz In The Stone Age arrive toward the end of the program and illustrate the range of approaches taken. For "All Tomorrow's Parties," the emotional arc of the original song is mostly followed, with increasingly chaotic piano taking the place of the Velvet Underground squall. Beck's "Cold Brains," on the other hand, is turned into a trip-happy raveup that will make you reach for the volume. Even with these disparate takes on the pair of songs, they still feel like they're of a piece.

I'd like to think that Jazz In The Stone Age will have as much of an impact on new listeners as did Trane's groundbreaking record, but that's unlikely. Still, if it can draw a few more listeners into the world of jazz, that's good enough for me. Intent and results aside, this is still a fine bunch of covers.

Passing Notes Reviews Oct 10 by Mark Hayes

For listeners who might want something of a throwback to the old Bad Plus -- and then some -- there's this release from Jazz Folk, *Jazz in the Stone Age*. Recorded and packaged in a decidedly low-tech idiom, bassist Peter Scherr, drummer Simon Barker, and pianist Matt McMahon pound out a pleasant mix of covers from Taj Mahal, Lou Reed, Joni Mitchell, Hunter/Garcia, and Beck. Recorded, mixed, and with liner notes from Scherr all the way from Hong Kong. Jazz Folk manage, on each song, to pick a particular texture and stay with it, whether it's blues ("Corinna"), jazz ("That Song About the Midway"), or ballads ("To Lay Me Down").

The most remarkable tunes are a version of Reed's "All Tomorrow's Parties," which quickly rises to a loud, driving march and never lets up and the closer, a cover of Beck's "Cold Brains," clattering up from the world of lo-fi, widens into some lovely overdriven piano work, and then disassembles itself. There's a vision to this release that I see more and more clearly each time I listen. I'm going back to the stone age, and I think I like it there. They have good jazz.