

MUSIC NEWS (CDs, BOOKS, ART, ETC.)

GUMBO DREAMS
**- STEVE GOLDBERGER &
THE FRINGE LOCALS**



The CD begins with “In a Life”, a Celtic-influenced soft-rocker that whines about whiners, but the violin and piano instrumentation make up for its preachy lyrics. The catchy “Messin’ with My Mind” has a funky African feel to it and evokes Bruce Cockburn, vocally-speaking. I also heard echoes of Rob Lamothe and Elvis Costello throughout the CD. Speaking of vocals, Dawn Duvall is given a teasingly short vocal break here, in addition to her background vocals. This song and the collaboration with Maya Bannerman and Eric Mahar on “Cuvee” are worth the price of the CD alone.

As it was released in 2002, you might very well feel bittersweet when listening to the title track. It truly captures the essence of New Orleans in all of its historic glory, which, due to the catastrophic floods of 2005, might be lost forever, but for prescient tributes like this one, and no doubt many more to follow. There is even a recipe for “Pontchartrain’s Creolo Gumbo” (courtesy of New Orleans’ Pontchartrain Hotel) imbedded into the CD case. Ms. Duvall and Gail Ackroyd contributes backing vocals on this one.

Steve Goldberger’s lyrics have a heartfelt sincerity to them that might seem out of time in these days where superficiality reigns supreme, but his genius lies in his musical versatility. Possessing vocal similarities to Bruce Cockburn, Rob Lamothe and Elvis Costello, Steve’s thankfully not content to focus on brooding ballads (although I did like “Wishing Won’t Make It Come True”). In fact, on most of these uptempo tracks, he likes to rock (albeit lightly) with shufflin’ feel-good songs like “Hooray for the Weekend”, the tongue-in-cheek mockery of “Play Something Good” and “We Gotta Stop”. The lighthearted banjo on “Paying the Price” belies the seriousness of this song’s lyrics, but maybe I missed the joke.

For the most part, Gumbo Dreams is catchy but intellectual mainstream pop music backed up with superb instrumentation provided by Steve Goldberger (bass guitar, lead guitar, kalimba synthesizer, Hammond, lead vocals), Eric Mahar (acoustic and electric guitars), Penner MacKay (djembe, triangle, shaker, tambourine, cobassa, lap drum, etc.), David Norris (drums), Conrad Kipping (mandolins), Jan Hanko (fiddle), Mark Lalama (Hammond, piano, accordion), Herb Nelson (piano), Ed Kopala (slide guitar) and various back-up vocalists, including Helen Taylor, Jenny Wright and Jane Johanson.

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