

## **ALL ROADS LEAD TO YOU – Album Review by Lenny Stoute - May 6, 2022**

This week we step in saluting the hometown heroes, the journeymen and women who build careers on heart, guts and their naturally occurring talents. For the most part, they start young and the good ones just keep going, making music as long as they can. Shining case in point, Niagara On The Lake's Steve Goldberger, who's been making music since the Seventies, crossing boundaries and exploring genres and styles all the while. He brings to the table chops as a vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, producer, arranger and song writer. On current eleventh album, All Roads Lead to You, they're all put into play in the service of some of the most well-loved songs in the soft rock songbook.

We're talking Thunderclap Newman's 'Something In The Air', Dylan's 'She Belongs To Me', Patrick Alger's 'True Love', G. Beckley's enduring classic 'Sister Golden Hair' and nine others of equally sparkling pedigree. You don't approach that calibre of tuneage without a metal suitcase of confidence and a handful of hot ideas. It also helps tonnes if you surround yourself with players who you know and love.

The album was recorded in Steve's home studio, The Shed, and features many of the local musicians he performs with from his Gentle Spirits, Old Winos and Niagara Rhythm Section bands. Steve supplies lead vocals, bass, various guitars, keyboards and other assorted instruments. Recorded during the pandemic, most tracks were put down in isolation, with Steve playing most parts (other than drums) himself. Guest players recorded their parts remotely in their respective home studios across Canada and such is the slickness of the arrangements, you wouldn't guess that was the case.

The party kicks off with 'Something In The Air', Newman's call for revolution with its timeless exhortation to "get it together now", adorned with cello parts which bring a gravitas to the situation, and a vocal that stays close to the original plaintive tenor. Randy California's 1970 classic, "Natures' Way" gets a nice makeover with menacing drums and synth washes that give it a contemporary feel.

"One More Time" shows off its Western Swing bloodlines with contributions from members of Western Swing Authority in this moving tribute to Goldberger's departed friend Bob McNiven. Roots songwriter Shawn Colvin is a especial favourite of Steve's and "Knowing What I Know Now" is one of two on the album and is highlighted by a duet with Serena Pryne (The Mandevilles), the blended voices taking the edge off the hurt.

"Sister Golden Hair," is driven by a weirdly appropriate reggae-ish groove and sparkling guitar work by Cam MacInnes. Special mention to Steve's fluent picking on the ukulele. Yes.

Dylan makes his first appearance with "She Belongs To Me" and it gets the full Goldberger treatment. First he flips the melody, turning it inside out in places, then pins it to a countrified, loping rhythm, ending up with a new Americana gem.

"You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go" was countrified when Dylan wrote it and Steve leaves well enough alone, upping the tempo a tad and dropping in some neat harmonies while focusing on making his distinctive vocal shine through.

Also on board, deft banjo picking courtesy of Dave Matthews and tasty guitars from Mike Glatt. One of those songs you feel more than hear.

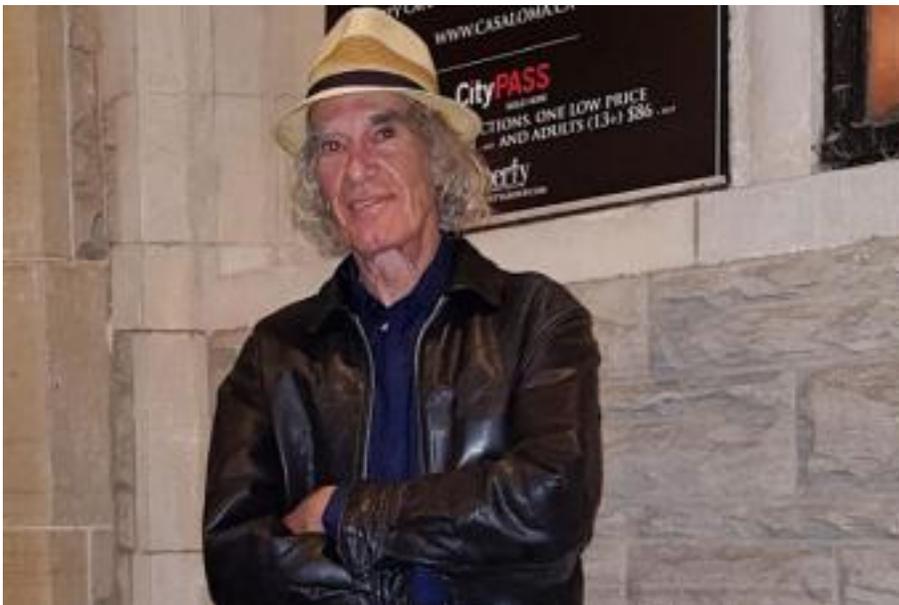
There are harmonies both lush and lively to be found throughout the album, including the sweetly effective tones of The Gentle Spirit Band singers Laurel Minnes & Lisa Winn on Poco's "Keep On Trying".

"Just My Luck" starts with jangly guitars setting up a soft rock Stonesey vibe that Goldberger manages vocally without a hint of Mick.

"Anyone Can Be Somebody's Fool" from the pen of Nanci Griffith, has a special place here as Steve's personal tribute to the now passed Griffith. As such, the vocal is caring and respectful without softening the edges on this damaged song of love. That's aptly followed by the other Colvin opus here, "Round of Blues" another round of deft vocalising from Goldberger on this scrappy number which teeters on but never goes into over singing. Same can be said of his crisp, Tom Pettyish guitarig.

The album ends with the uplifting romance of Badfinger's "No Matter What", stripped down and delivered with a ragged vocal totally in keeping with the song's sense of desperation. With the original's wall of sound torn down, it's up to Mike Glatt to provide the guitar magic and he does not disappoint with some Byrds-like echoes on his big 12 string.

In essence, All Roads Lead To You is a gorgeous love letter to Seventies soft rock song writing worth every nickel and moment of time spent in its company. No words to whether Goldberger intends to take her on the road this summer, and it'd be a shame if he didn't. This project, in both concept and execution, just screams out for a live recreation of the album in its entirety, in the Classic Albums Live mode.



Lenny Stoute is a veteran entertainment journalist based in Toronto, Canada. His credits include entertainment columnist for the Toronto Star, Canada's largest newspaper, editor for Music Express, Canada's national music

magazine, as well as stints at the Globe & Mail, eye, Metro and assorted like-minded media outlets. Currently the Editor at Cashbox Canada magazine, he divides his time between East Side Toronto and a small Eastern Ontario village where he's known to hang out at Stumpy's.