



by Janet Goodman
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It's been eight long years since singer/songwriter Steve Conn's last solo album, but fans will be happy they waited for his new ten-track stunner, "Beautiful Dream." Recorded in Nashville, these self-penned, never-before-released songs all showcase the world class piano player and his Louisiana smooth-yet-smoky vocals.

Produced by Conn, along with Richard McLaurin, this recording, featuring a live band in the studio, began on the same day as the devastating floods in May 2010. A long-time sought after sideman to some of the best in the business, like Bonnie Raitt and Kenny Loggins, Conn has a keyboard finesse that adds even more warmth to his already moving performance, giving him a confidently understated presence on the album that's hard to turn away from. Often compared to Dr. John on his sassier pieces, Conn – in his more tender moments – evokes early Hal Ketchum.

Introspective lyrics interest him, and right out of the gate Conn lets us know that: "If I had another chance, I wonder what I would do/Would I be a better man, or would I just keep stumbling through?/Would I be content to know that my day may never come?/It's easier said than done." "Trouble" is a bluesy mid-tempo with lots of brass, followed by perhaps his finest four minutes here caught on tape – "It's Just Not The Same" – where the singer tells his significant other how life breaks down little by little when she's gone. Conn's got the knack of taking listeners to the place in all of us that knows this kind of loneliness.

Another grab-a-tissue tune – "Let The Rain Fall Down" – has a Van Morrison vibe, and could have been poignantly put in the line up because of the historic floods last year. Conn's "Things Change" has some hard-to-swallow truths: "Nobody cheated, nobody lied/No ugly rumors, but Lord how they cried/Two decent people just drifting apart/Nothing in common but two broken hearts." The artist also has his loping light-hearted tracks, like in "It Is What It Is," where he answers age-old philosophical questions with an every-man's logic.

Big numbers with horns and strings are outdone by more intimate ones of bare-bones piano arrangements of his soulful, blues-felt melodies. Conn demands our attention; this guy can sing.