

Muen Magazine

Steve Conn “Beautiful Dream” CD Review By: Matty

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I received a stack of CDs from a publicist for singer-songwriter Carey Ott, who also previously worked with Drew Holcomb and The Neighbors. I didn't know what to expect when I saw the stack of CDs. I expected some acoustic singer/songwriter projects, and wasn't quite sure what to expect. I am a sucker for 1970s singer-songwriters such as Joni Mitchell, Jim Croce, and others. There is nothing more pure and holistic than a singer-songwriter singing about the troubles of the world, love, politics, and their ideals and dreams. It's music stripped down to its very core, and the listener gets to examine the soul and the heart of the singer-songwriter. It provides the illusion that allows the listener to emotionally connect to the very inner being of the singer-songwriter. The first in the stack is a singer-songwriter hailing from New Orleans, Louisiana known as Steve Conn.

Steve Conn has performed with the who's who in the world of country music, folk music, and blues music in his career before venturing out to make his own solo career. He has performed and recorded music with the likes of Mark Knopfler, Albert King, Bonnie Raitt, James Taylor, the Dixie Chicks, amongst countless other recording artists and musicians. For some reason, I had a vision when I first sat down and listened to his music. The vision I had was walking home from a hard day of work at the office, and a gentleman throws his sports coat over his shoulder and starts snapping his fingers and embracing freedom from the workplace. It seems random, however, his music is sleek, snappy, and each and every note is played with such precision and timing. “Beautiful Dream” starts with the track entitled “Easier Said Than Done”.

“Easier Said Than Done” starts off with a lush melody and a smooth soft rock sound. The piano dances to the music like a ballerina dancing to a timeless sonnet. Then after the first couple of verses, the beat picks up and it starts getting more snappy before going back into the melody. Steve croons in such a way where the listener can feel every word that he sings, “I wish I had a normal life, a job in town, and kids in school, maybe that's just what I'll say cause I don't know what else to do”. Steve emphasizes his voice to make it feel that he's having a serious moment of pondering about the meaning and existentialism of life. Then, Steve Conn gets more blues oriented and gets the toes tapping with the next song entitled “Trouble”.

“Trouble” has that sensational piano, mid-tempo blues beat to it. It's amazing how many influences Steve draws on in his music. It ranges from Ray Charles to Bob Seger to even the likes of Bruce Hornsby with a twist of NOLA jazz to it. “I've got a leaky roof, I've

got a bleeding heart, there's so much to do, I don't know where to start," sings Steve during the first verse of this song. It's a brilliant tale of dealing with the personal battle between starting to change oneself to changing the world, finding the balance, then putting it off to live a carefree life. The horn section sounds triumphant and it blends into the music like a chameleon blends into its surroundings. This song will cause the listener to snap their fingers and tap their toes. I see this song being a real crowd pleaser for his audience.

"It's Just Not The Same" paints a very gloomy, melancholy picture of moving on from life after losing the one that they are meant to be with. Steve does a wonderful job of painting the picture of a man that lets his appearance go, falls into a deep depression, and feeling a seemingly infinite moment of sadness after the woman finds someone else to be with. The piano does a brilliant job of emphasizing the sadness of this song. "The earth spins, the wind blows, and the sky is blue, but it's just not the same without you" sings Steve in a voice that is riddled with an intense amount of pain and sorrow in his voice. Steve is gifted at bringing a triumphant voice in the title track, which talks about embracing life no matter what comes our way.

This is a man that vividly paints images with strokes of a paintbrush in his lyrics. I love it when the lyrical content and the arrangement bring about a painting and an exquisite visual in their music. It causes the listener to go through a roller coaster of emotions during this CD. He's a musician's musician. He's gotten rave reviews from the German publication of Rolling Stone Magazine and his songwriting has drawn comparisons to the likes of Carole King and Townes Van Zandt. "Beautiful Dream" was also recorded in the same studio that Norah Jones and Neil Young record their music. Every track on "Beautiful Dream" is crafted like an artist would carefully paint its masterpiece or a seamstress will sew its finest fabric to make a beautiful tapestry. In essence, prepare for incredible piano arrangements, introspective yet vivid songwriting, and wonderful musicianship in this particular record. Please pick up this album at Tower Records, CDBaby, and I-Tunes, and wherever his music is sold.