



Steve Conn
Beautiful Dream
(self-released)

Lee Zimmerman

Steve Conn may be the best singer you've never heard, and after a single listen to *Beautiful Dream*, the obvious question that begs asking is where has he been hiding up to this point? A stirring vocalist whose voice commands instant attention, Conn has produced a sturdy set that blends heartfelt ballads and rousing upbeat rhythms which mine the essence of both Pop and R&B. "Easier Said Than Done," perhaps the prettiest of the lot, could serve as a mantra of sorts in the way it suggests that talent isn't always the determining factor when it comes to attaining that Big Break. Fortunately, Conn isn't the type to wallow in self-pity, and in the title track, his exclamation of optimism seems more than enough to convince disbelievers that dreams may indeed come true. The rich arrangements that surround his melodious vocals and fluid keyboards help him assert his stance, with horns and strings providing an additional flourish that speaks to his polish and professionalism. "Let the Rain Fall Down" hints at the early tenderness of Randy Newman, while the full-out funk of "It Is What It Is" and "Trouble" invoke the no nonsense attitude of any number of swampy soul singers. Yet through it all Conn is clearly in command.