

## Mp3 The Naomi Star - Pop: Power Pop



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The Naomi Star craft their own brand of pop-rock, swirling together the ringing guitars and catchy melodies of such British Invasion giants as The Beatles, The Kinks and The Who with the driving grooves and emotional intimacy of American folk-pop. 12 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, ROCK: Modern Rock Details: "Melodic songwriting, lots of harmonies and an electric/acoustic guitar combination make this one great pop-rock record. At least two tracks...seem to come from some mythical lost Badfinger album. All this plus smart, concise guitar solos, some Beatlesque "ooh la las" and lyrics that are straightforward in a Bee Gees 1970 kind of way." --Drew Cucuzza, New Haven Advocate "The Lineup: For those of you not in the know, The Naomi Star consists of three-quarters of the much-celebrated, now-defunct band, Hannah Cranna: Stephen Bunovsky (Lead Guitar/Backing Vocals), Rocco Villavicencio (Bass/Backing Vocals) and Steve Raccagni (Drums) and features Paul Kohler on Lead Vocals and Guitar. Personal Note on Hannah Cranna: I loved Hannah Cranna...no, I mean, I really loved this band! I will spare you, gentle reader, the tired Kinks-meets-Badfinger comparisons, but do you know that I actually saw Joey Molland back Hannah Cranna at a show? How cool is that!? Let me answer that one for you: ULTRA-FUCKING COOL. So let me preface this review by pointing out that I approached this disc with much skepticism...especially when I saw that Rocco and Stephen were delegated to backing vocals. GOT THE PICTURE!? Now consider this: I like The Naomi Star better than Hannah Cranna. The Naomi Star: Choose an Unorthodox Comparison: A. Bread playing electric guitars on hallucinogens B. Garth Brooks jamming with R.E.M. C. Loggins Messina backed by several Beatles on the Apple rooftop D. The Faces meet The Raspberries E. Elliott Smith in a decent mood F. A combination of all of the above The Bottom Line on The Naomi Star: The disc begins with "So Cool", a superbly simplistic piece of mellow acoustic-meets-electric pop. I was hooked in the first 15 seconds...and when the harmony vocal appeared

in the second verse, I was very glad that I came to discover The Naomi Star. I especially like the vocals on this disc: strong, smart, sincere. The backing vocals are good enough to be on any Wings record: submissive without being subservient and interesting without being overpowering. And while I'm still within the jurisdiction of a Wings reference, McCartney must wish he could still write melodies this memorable (please don't tell Paul I said that--I've been feeling a little bad for him lately). In fact, very few local bands can top the vocals on this disc; count 'em: three competent, confident crooners that can pull it off live...that's like discovering a stray \$20 bill in the pocket of a jacket that you haven't worn in a while. Alright! I've always loved the pairing of acoustic and electric guitars, and The Naomi Star play it well. The chord progressions are basic enough to make the songs sound familiar, but feature enough surprises to make them unique. The experienced rhythm section provides the percussive punch ("Poor" is a perfect example) to get the point across clearly. Overall, the songs are smooth, instantly hum-able and friendly. No lie, I've listened to this disc A LOT in the past week and I am not tired of it yet. In fact, I'm starting to carry it around so I can listen in the car. Although the following statement may be too anal of a comment for some of you, I'm going to say it anyway: I even like the order in which they presented the songs. The Short Review: (The Naomi Star) is an excellent disc from start to finish and ranks in my top five favorites this year. - Frank Critelli, CTMusic.com

The Story of The Naomi Star "Even when born of the alchemy of happenstance, events often happen for a reason." This intersection is what Jung called a meaningful coincidence - also a suitable description for the birth of The Naomi Star. TNS was actually conceived the minute singer Paul Kohler walked into a small record shop called Secret Sounds on the outskirts of Bridgeport, Connecticut to see his cousin (guitarist Steve Bunovsky) and his band (the now defunct Hannah Cranna) play a show in support of its first release on the Big Deal/Caroline Label. While the show may not have been memorable to some - it certainly was to the still-teenage Kohler. Over the next two years Hannah Cranna became indie-critic darlings, performing from Toronto (NXNE) to Texas (SXSW) and producing a second album with one of their heroes, Joey Molland of Badfinger. Unfortunately, Big Deal Records (Big Deal/Paradigm by then) folded before any real work could be done to promote the fledgling release. All seemed for naught - yet still, their influence was felt. After the band's demise, Bunovsky turned his attention to the release of what would become his first solo outing - Pleides Records' Hazy Sunshine - and when he needed a backup vocalist for a few gigs to help promote the album he asked his cousin Paul to sing with his band. After playing a few shows together, Steve and Paul decided

they liked what they were hearing and began to experiment by having Paul sing some of Steve's tunes in his basement studio. They quickly enlisted the help of Hannah Cranna's bassist, Rocco Villavicencio, and drummer, Steve Raccagni. The results were magical - "Waiting", "Holding On", "Sunny Day", "Walk to the Water" and "Hard Getting Over You" were finished in this manner. Collaborative pieces came next - "Glad That You Came" and "(I Wonder Where You Are) Tonight" demonstrated the band's ability to work together to develop unfinished material and make it their own. Paul then brought in "Voices", "So Cool" and "Poor" (soon to become Naomi Star standards) while Steve Raccagni penned the power pop nugget, "December Sun". Already attracting national attention, The Naomi Star has since charted 8 songs on mp3.com's top 30 in just one week of play in the Power Pop and AAA genres, with three breaking into the top 10. Having accomplished all this even before the planned February 2003 release of their debut CD, The Naomi Star is a band with a past crafted by fate and a future that shines like the sun

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