

Mp3 Various Artists - Every Word: A Tribute To Let's Active



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On "Every Word", some of Mitch Easter's closest friends and collaborators (including Don Dixon, Bill Lloyd, Tommy Womack and Bobby Sutliff) pay tribute to his formidable songwriting prowess. 20 MP3 Songs ROCK: Americana, POP: Power Pop Details: With a resume that includes R.E.M., Love Tractor, Game Theory, Velvet Crush and Pavement, producer and North Carolina native Mitch Easter almost single-handedly helped engineer the college rock explosion of the 1980s, and was the guiding hand behind some of the finest pop-rock of the 1990s. Working from his legendary Drive-In Studio in his parents' garage in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Easter cemented his place in pop lore, combining a deft ear with a music fan's passion, to craft some of the most timeless records of the early American underground. But for most of the 1980s, Easter was also the driving force behind one of the decade's finest and most commercially under-appreciated combos. Over the course of one EP and three long-players, Let's Active charted a unique course through the pop landscape, effortlessly combining Merseybeat jangle with swirls of psychedelia and unflinching blasts of guitar rock. Now on "Every Word", some of Easter's closest friends and collaborators pay tribute to his formidable songwriting prowess. From The Windbreakers' Bobby Sutliff and Tim Lee to frequent studio partner Don Dixon and Velvet Crush frontman Paul Chastain, songwriters and performers from across the spectrum have gathered to honour Easter's songwriting chops. "Mitch is an amazingly inventive songwriter, able to bring together the diverse elements of perfect pop, psychedelia and hard rock (as well as other genres), without forsaking thoughtful lyrical content," says Lee. "Like a lot of the writers of the eighties, he is vastly underrated because people tend to lump that crowd under the pathetic heading of 'jangle rock'. But to anyone who listens closely, there's a lot more to Mitch's music than can be covered in a two-word stereotype." Sutliff

puts it this way: "Mitch has a brilliant, non-linear approach to songwriting that can hardly be compared to anyone else", he says. "His lyrics are deep, yet concise, and his approach to chords and melody can be counted on to take unexpected twists and turns." The project is the brainchild of singer/songwriter and Winston-Salem native Michael Slawter, a lifelong Let's Active fan. Slawter said he decided to take on the project because he wanted Easter to know what a profound influence he'd had on not only his own work, but on the work of others. "Putting this tribute together became much more about honouring a great band," he says. "I got to witness many people - musicians, writers, music lovers, etc. reminisce about what bands like Let's Active meant to them, how life-changing music can be." So, sit back and enjoy, and listen to a heartfelt thank you card from one generation to another: Every Word - a Tribute to Let's Active.

PRESS: "While most rock fans know Mitch Easter as the man who seemingly produced every great jangle pop act of the 1980s and helped launch R.E.M. into the indie rock stratosphere (at a time when such a thing barely existed), his work as a musician and a songwriter never seemed to earn the same degree of attention, which is strange considering how good most of it was. Easter's band Let's Active cut three albums and an EP which, by all rights, should have made him the darling of the college radio (and maybe even the pop charts) with their sharp hooks and insightful lyrics; but the band's following never seemed to grow beyond a small, but rabid, cult. Thankfully, that cult consisted of some pretty talented people, and a bunch of them have joined forces to pay homage to Easter's songs on Every Word: A Tribute to Let's Active. Significantly, the album's best performances are the ones that drift farthest from what Easter and his bandmates had in mind; most of the participants on Every Word seem to have their own take on what great pop means to them, and Tommy Womack's skiffle-ish cover of "Make up With Me," Failed Energy Giants' (featuring Tim Lee) transformation of "Blue Line" into a surf tune, and the arty, almost psychedelic re-imagining of "Room With a View" from Marti Jones testify to the diversity and malleability of Easter's compositions. And hearing tracks like "Waters Part" by Doug Powell, The Crowd Scene's "Writing the Book of Last Pages," "Talking to Myself" by The Saving Graces, and "Two Yous" by Drop Quarters is to hear great pop songs played with passion, intelligence, and imagination. If the original Let's Active recordings communicated the same message, as well (and often better), that doesn't change the fact that Every Word offers 20 solid examples of why Easter deserves to be acknowledged as one of the finer songwriters of his time and place." - AMG All Music Guide

"This new tribute album, 'Every Word: A Tribute To Let's Active' was put together by singer/songwriter and huge Let's Active/Mitch Easter fan,

Michael Slawter and it's obvious that this 20 track collection of Let's Active songs was assembled with the love and care these songs deserve. The first thing one notices is the absence of any really 'big' names; no Michael Stipe or even Ken Stringfellow (although Stringfellow does contribute to the sleeve notes). But does this matter? No, not at all. When Bill Lloyd kicks off proceedings with 'Every Word Means No' from the band's 1983 six song 'Afoot' EP it nicely sets the mood for the rest of the album. The song is turned into a typical Bill Lloyd power pop gem; all jangling guitars and harmonies. Then we are treated to Don Dixon and Jamie Hoover's rendition of 'Horizon' from 1998's 'Every Dog Has His Day' album and it's clear that these musicians have put a lot of thought and care into their contributions. With very few exceptions (I can think of only one other tribute album I can say this about) most tribute albums are a hit and miss affair; all they do is make me want to listen to the original but, (dare I say this?) some of these tracks are actually as good as the originals. In some cases the artists have stamped enough of their own identity/sound into the songs that I have no problem listening to them over the Let's Active originals. The Doug Powell track 'Waters Part' where all the sounds are made by the talented Mr. Powell and the ever wonderful Spike Priggen's take on 'Last Chance Town' are two examples of this which spring immediately to mind. There is little point trying to pinpoint one track as a highlight, each and every one would be a standout on whatever album it appeared on. But apart from those already mentioned give a listen to the Trolleyvox version of 'Crows On A Phone Line' or the Crown Scene take on 'Writing The Book Of Last Pages', the latter being the best Beatle sounding song I've heard in a long while, it could almost be Lennon singing and the backwards guitar gets to me every time. The whole package is superb. The inlay book, and it is a book, contains comments from all the contributing artists as well as recording information and short essays from John Micek and Gil Ray (Game Theory) to name but two. The inlay is also littered with comments from Scott Miller, Peter Holsapple and Kimberley Rew. You get the picture. This is the way all tribute albums should be presented. With love, care, a real understanding of the artist's work and enough of the contributor's own identity to turn a 'cover' version into that something special. Of course, having songs of the calibre of Easter's helps in the first place. With the re-release of 'Every Dog Has Its Day' and 'Big Plans For Everybody' on the Collectors Choice label in the States we can only hope that this is the beginning of a much needed re-appraisal of the music of Let's Active." - pennyblackmusic

"What makes Every Word so attractive is not only its fresh sound, but also the cohesion of the album..." - Rootstown Music Free-zine (Belgium)

"1) Let's Active...worthy of a tribute album?...discuss (20 marks)

The 'tribute' album has become a bit of a cliché these days. When I started writing this piece, I wanted to make a point berating the fact that tribute albums are growing to be so prolific these days that the very abundance is making the act of homage a hollow, meaningless affair. If you analyse the inspiration behind these tributes there seems to be two trains of thought - in some cases it is an honest mark of admiration and appreciation, in others quite frankly it seems an excuse to jump on the band wagon. The success will always lie in the integrity of the artist whose is being flattered, and the quality of the readings that are presented. It is a rare gem that makes any sort of indentation on the record buying psyche, and indeed it is becoming hard to see the real point in putting together a collection of covers when they rarely come close to touching, never mind transcending, the quality of the original material. We have had in recent year's tributes to Neil Young, Gram Parsons, Hank Williams, Springsteen, a few for Johnny Cash and Waylon and now at long last the one we have been waiting for... 'Every Word' - tribute to Let's Active!...yup! Let's Active were a southern pop band out of North Carolina formed by REM producer Mitch Easter. The band made three albums 'Cypress', 'Big Plans for Everybody' and 'Every Dog Has His Day'. Their music was a lively blend of college rock and new wave-y punk, with an ear for a melody and that touch of the classic Beatles/Beach Boys era pop sound that appealed more largely to the critics than the public. To be fair it is hard to see why this somewhat anonymous pop band from the eighties should be receiving 'the treatment.' However they, like many of the great unknowns, had a very dedicated, devoted following and many of those who were inspired by Easter's band have come together here to provide their own personal mark of respect to his work. So when you accept that this then is hardly likely to be the bandwagon hopping kind of affair you come to see that this is an album borne of affection respect and love for their music and therefore the 'tribute' mantle sits properly on this set. Opening cut "Every Word Means No" performed by Bill Lloyd, is a neatly wrapped pop gem, and lays the pattern for what follows, which are nineteen more jangling guitar pop songs performed with the individual personality of the originals in tact whilst being embroidered by the new arrangements. There are some occasional throw away moments, but there are also some very fine performances or work on display. Doug Powell's reworking of "Water's part" is a particularly strong cut, and one that gets its fair share of replays, here he performs every part himself in one of the solo readings of the year. Spike Priggen turns out a notable "Last Chance Town" utilising the pedal steel of Jon Graboff to fine effect adding just a hint of country rock to the proceedings. Other notable moments are King Fly's funky warped guitar take on "Every Dog Has

His Day", Soap Star Joe's Weezerish "I Feel Funny" and my own personal favourites the twangsome surf guitars of Failed Energy Giants' "Blue (Pipe) Line" and Paul Chastain's thoughtful and moody "Flags for Everything". This is an album that I started out not wanting to like, and ended up thoroughly enjoying. Yes it's a 'pop' album, but it is not that kind of pop, it is the sort of music that is joyous on the ears and easy on the soul. It is a bit of a mystery that considering Mitch Easter had such a prominent effect on so many musicians, few of the big guns have turned out to pay homage, no Michael Stipe for instance, but maybe the absence of those big names does allow the body of work, the songs themselves to stand up and be counted. It is also a tribute to the bands and artists who appear here that every performance is superbly executed, and the whole set does hang together very coherently given that there are twenty different artists involved. A fitting tribute!" - AltCountryTab "Along with Don Dixon, Mitch Easter was one of the biggest originators of the American college rock movement during the 80's. As a producer he was responsible for the sound and the successes of, amongst others, Love Tractor, Game Theory, Velvet Crush, Pavement, Marshall Crenshaw, and especially R.E.M. The first albums of the latter carry his unmistakable signature! Moreover, Easter was also the driving force behind Let's Active, a vastly underrated collective that left behind an inheritance of one EP and three full albums, which weaved pop with Merseybeat jangle, psychedelia and uncompromising full blown guitar rock. Although commercial recognition eluded them world wide, they attracted much respect from countless fellow musicians. And as that goes, a tribute was inevitable! Numerous well known names, and also somewhat lesser gods, prove here that Easter had a damned good tune in his pen. Our favourite contributions to the album by Bill Lloyd "Every Word Means No", the Don Dixon - Jamie Hoover duet "Horizon", the jumpy "Make Up With Me" with Tommy Womack in good form, and "Last Chance Town", which [could have been written for?] Spike Priggen. Amongst others at the party, still Bobby Sutliff of the Windbreakers, Velvet Crush front man Paul Chastain, Neilson Hubbard and Marti Jones." - 3.5 / 5 - ctrlaltnoisy Website (Belgium) "Mitch Easter produced the first few REM records - for that, he has got his footnote in history. Yet under the name Let's Active, he also gave us four top-notch albums of pop music that melded classicism with new-wave spikiness: think of folks like the Bens, Kweeler and Lee. In a rare event, this is a tribute album that not only does justice to the songs, but the spirit of the original band, adding just enough to Easter's original to embellish rather than obscure, but also throwing in left-field musical ideas. Even better, beyond the tribute bit, it's a high-grade guitar pop album. Dig the roots." - 3.5 / 5 - Bernard Zuel, Sydney Morning Herald

"The name Mitch Easter will be familiar to those given to scouring the small print of their albums; he was the guiding hand behind R.E.M.'s 'Murmur', as well as the work of such as Pavement and Velvet Crush. Before that though he was the driving force behind little-known but much-appreciated North Carolina act Let's Active, whose output effortlessly combined the work of The Beatles (both the 1963 and 1968 versions) with what we now know as power pop. Here some of the brightest lights of America's alt-pop underground pay their own tribute to Let's Active, covering the cream of their three-album, one EP output. Big names are noticeable by their absence - no Michael Stipe, Ken Stringfellow or Scott Kannberg - but in truth this matters not a jot. Those that find upfront guitars, crashing chords and big choruses the closest thing to heaven will find themselves transported." - 3.5 / 5 - Logo Magazine

"Mitch Easter is the man who worked with REM in their early days and, in so doing, created a legend - not only because of the global success that REM eventually enjoyed but because of his unique take on music and idiosyncratic production techniques. Mitch also founded a band, Let's Active, that basically invented US college rock - precursors, if you like, of Velvet Crush, Game Theory, Love Tractor, Fountains of Wayne and Weezer, to name but a few. Let's Active were never really big; sure their albums attracted a lot of interest but they were, in the main, a critics band. They were also a musicians' band, and many players tell tales of how Let's Active, and more importantly, Mitch, affected their lives and probably altered their musical careers. For me, personally, it was Let's Active's take on psychedelia and Merseybeat - an unique blend that, in the over-synthesized eighties, was at odds with anything else going on - that was particularly exciting. Let's Active performed music that was bright, uplifting, optimistic - and you could whistle to it. There was nothing stylised or artificial about it. Now Let's Active/Mitch Easter fan Michael Slawter has lovingly put together a 20-track tribute to the man and the band, which became as much a musical project as a trip down memory lane. Artists like Spike Priggen, The Crowd Scene, Soap Star Joe, The Saving Graces contribute their versions of tracks from Let's Active's short, three album career and add thoughts on why they chose a particular track. This is a sumptuous release; the liner notes are comprehensive and detailed, and the music - well, what can I say? If you were ever a fan of Mitch Easter, and fancy immersing yourself in his worldview, this is for you. Individual tracks are hard to recommend, although contributions by Mitch's studio partner Don Dixon, and Waters Part, by Doug Powell, are worth the cover price alone. Congratulations are in order to Micheal for bringing the music of Let's Active back into the public forum. If ever a band deserved re-appraisal, this is one. Go out and buy, You'll not be

disappointed." - Net Rhythms Website

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