

Mp3 Steve Snelling - Perfect Strangers



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Pop for grown-ups: a little bit Joni with a touch of Dylan and Sting. Each song a journey. 8 MP3 Songs

FOLK: like Joni, EASY LISTENING: Mature Details: He's been called "a great jazz player with an amazing pop sensibility", and with nearly thirty years' experience performing virtually every style of Western music, this Oregon native is defining his own creative niche. Few artists make the leap between the jazz and pop idioms convincingly - Steve Snelling is one such artist. His songwriting is sophisticated, yet accessible. His themes range from sometimes dreamy, sometimes gritty melodies to surprisingly catchy pop hooks. His jazz tunes swing and his ballads are rich and penetrating. No matter the style, Steve's music has the power to move the listener deeply - a power felt on his current CD, Perfect Strangers. Teaming up with two modern pop and jazz virtuosos - drummer Mark Raynes and bassist Eric Thorin - the trio draw from their shared experience in numerous musical settings to weave an evocative texture of rich ballads and refreshing pop compositions. The eight songs on Perfect Strangers - four with the trio, four solo piano voice - share a common theme of "other-ness". From the haunting and heartbreaking "Daniel", to the lighter, whimsical "Postcards from Diane", all of the songs have their genesis in real events; but Steve's literate and intelligent lyrics transform them from mere reminiscences into moving personal journals. This is a beautiful work of tender melancholia, yet, ironically, gently inspiring. Almost everybody feels some kind of distance from the world - has at sometime stood on the edge of a canyon, or looked up under the night sky and cried, "I'm down here!" Steve's music speaks to our longing to bridge that distance and gives us an opportunity to share the common hunger of our hearts and souls. From his portrait of a violent disabled teen ("Daniel"), to the simple heartbreak in the universal hunger for love ("Perfect Strangers"), or the rebuke to the harsh lessons we unwittingly teach our children ("Precious Vessels"), these songs often involve difficult stories told in lush musical settings; thorny

subjects wrapped in tender melodies and rich harmonies. "I don't mind telling a rough story over a really uplifting musical bed," he explains, "writing something that makes your brain go, 'ouch', but your soul responds to the music like, 'oh... mommy's arms'." "I feel as if I'm finally writing from my heart," Steve shares. "For years I composed mainly in the 'angry young man' arena; but I'm just not that angry anymore. Sure, there are still lots of f****d up things to challenge, and timeless causes to champion, but it can be a way of hiding too. The really icky stuff - the politics, the horrors of capitalism - they're just so obvious. There seems to be another way to incorporate activism in my music, and I'm finding that it's got a lot to do with not being afraid to write about 'boy-meets-boy', or about my own adolescent fears. I've joked on stage that it gets old listening to every other singer-songwriter moan about the 'risk of romance' or the 'dangers of falling in love'. Tell it to Matt Shepard. The big danger of falling in love for me was worrying about getting my ass kicked." Some of his many influences emerge directly from Joni Mitchell's bittersweet lyrical imagery, Mose Allison's wistful tone, the intimacy of Bill Evans' ballads and Sting's soaring vocal laments. Steve started playing piano at the age of three and his surprising breadth of musical experience comes from what he describes as, "about a zillion bands, from psychedelic garage to full-on symphonic mayhem." He has performed with such jazz luminaries as Larry Coryell, Clark Terry, Sonny Stitt, Bud Shank, Lenny White and John Faddis, and with other artists as diverse as Molly Brown, Annie Marie Moss, the Platters, Billy Tolles and Guitar Shorty. Steve has shared the stage with artists ranging from the Red Hot Chili Peppers to Junior Brown to Terence Blanchard. In addition to extensive private study, he holds a Master's degree in Classical Piano Performance from the University of Northern Colorado. Steve lives in San Francisco, performing and teaching privately throughout the Bay area. Photos of the artist, along with music, reviews, scheduling and booking information can be found on the artist's website, stevesnelling.com. - Insights to the Songs - CD - Perfect Strangers, Steve Snelling

"Daniel" - I used to work in a locked facility with these really violent, developmentally disabled teens. It amazed me that, no matter how harsh a hand some people have been dealt, regardless of how fucked-up their scene appears, the whole gamut of human experience can still shine through: humor, irony, joy, sadness...all of it. But we're kidding ourselves if we think we know what goes on behind the smile - or the tears. A truly humbling experience. "This Can't Be My World" - This is from what I call "the before time", when I was really wallowing in it. I laugh now, but there were decades of utter darkness. I'm still thankful for that cop in the snow bank. (Wasn't too happy about the straight jacket though.) "Faces on the Train" -

We live in a circus. You can't really know what goes on in people's lives, but you can still learn a lot in the course of a twenty-minute train ride. "Precious Vessels" - Kids are these little information sponges. They take in everything, including the garbage. I consider it a major failing of our culture that we seem to either ignore or capitalize on it, but never really honor their vulnerability. Really pisses me off. "Postcards from Diane" - No news is good news, which dovetails nicely with the fact that most 'news' is bad news. Every once in a while I just have to take a break from the media and appreciate the grooviness of small town living - D. always helps me keep it real on the road. "If Only..." - Just because someone stares doesn't make them a threat. And fate is fate - the only choice we have is whether we revel or cower before it gets here; so lighten up and let some love in, will ya'? "Perfect Strangers" - Growing up, the real pain of being in love was not being able to tell anybody - not even my lover. "But for the Likes of Linda Barry" - Ernie Pook's Comeek, like Joni's sweet laments, came along at just the right time to lift my heart. God bless Marliss and Maybonne.

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