

Mp3 Desperate Measures - Two Can Play



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Alternative pop with classic rock overtones, amazing vocals, addictive hooks and intelligent lyrics -- Number 18 on CD Baby's August 2003 Top Sellers Chart -- SPECIAL \$7.00 SALE PRICE -- LIMITED TIME ONLY. 14 MP3 Songs POP: Power Pop, ROCK: Classic Rock Details: It's all about the songs. That's the philosophy of brothers Bill and Rob Sunkel, a.k.a. Desperate Measures. And they're putting their money where their mouths are with the release of their new full-length CD, Two Can Play. Bill and Rob began their musical careers more than thirty years ago, learning to play on a shared acoustic guitar in their childhood home in the Morris Park section of the Bronx in New York City. After cutting his musical teeth with a local group called The Kingsbridge Armoury (with Flip DeGaetano, Joe Saraco, Marco Gardini and Jeff DeMatte), Bill (now with Rob in tow) formed the band Pariah. A staple on the New York club circuit for nearly a decade, Pariah evolved through a number of line-ups that, at various points, included Metro area musicians Tony Spatarella, Bob Miller (who left to play George Harrison in the road company of Broadway's Beatlemania!), Bill Gentsch, Ray Miranda, Frank Squillante, Marco Gardini, Peter Maine, Ken Turtoro, Paul Sattler, Tony Traina, Russ Velazquez and the late Steve Altaville. Guided by managers like Julio Vitolo and the team of Bruce Bass, Jay Goldstein and Jimmy Scudder, and with the aid of seasoned recording engineers like Ed Solan (Backstreet Studios) and Ray Janos (Mediasound), Pariah (which also briefly toured as The Eyes during the new wave Eighties) recorded dozens of original songs, capturing the attention of, among others, the brothers' high school music teacher, Victor Tallarico (father of Aerosmith front man Steven Tyler), Mediasound's Expo Records and Columbia Records producer Don Puluse. In 1982, the group enjoyed a brief but exhilarating flurry of radio airplay on several progressive radio stations with songwriter Bob Coulehan's "It Happened Last Night." (Veteran New York deejay Vin Scelsa was particularly enthused, exclaiming "That one had me dancing

around the room!" the first time he played the record on his WNEW-FM "Prisoners of Rock'n'Roll" show.)

That same year, Bill forged a songwriting coalition with former Rascals' keyboardist and vocalist Felix Cavaliere, who mentored Bill and encouraged him to record his increasingly diverse original songs outside the borders of Pariah. Frustrated by big record label politics and the fact that they were "starting to feel like short order cooks," pitching new songs to mercurial record executives on a weekly basis, Pariah split up in the mid-Eighties. Bill and Rob each immediately began separate solo projects with producer Carter Cathcart (a former member of The Laughing Dogs, New Heavenly Blue, Two Generations of Brubeck and the Rupert Holmes Band, and producer of, among others, The Roches and John Tesh). After spending another year on the cusp of big-time success (Meat Loaf reportedly expressed serious interest in recording Bill's anthemic "Kids Know How To Dance"), Bill decided to abandon his rock'n'roll dreams to practice law. But the music biz wasn't done with him yet. Law school introduced Bill to Richard Marasse, a.k.a. Rich Mars, whose blues band, The Martians, was already something of a legend on the New York bar circuit. Bill's soulful tenor vocals proved the perfect foil for Mars' deep bass voice, and so he became a regular member of a revolving roster that read like a "who's who" of Metro area musical talent, including luminaries like Drew Zingg (Steely Dan guitarist), John Leventhal (Shawn Colvin guitarist producer), the late Joel "Bishop" O'Brien (Carole King Tapestry drummer), Huey McDonald (Bon Jovi bassist) and Tommy "T-Bone" Wolk (Hall Oates bassist). Then, in 1987, while singing at a law school talent show, Bill was "discovered" by the late Gene Schwartz, the apocryphal head of Laurie Records who, decades before, had introduced Dion The Belmonts and various other early rock'n'roll artists to America. Under Schwartz's quirky direction, Bill recorded a number of singles for Laurie, but disagreements over producers and material, combined with the mounting demands of Bill's fledgling legal career, eventually led to an amicable parting of the ways. During his law school days, Bill also served as a frequent contributor to FACES Magazine, penning numerous record reviews and feature articles, and conducting artist interviews (ranging from Roger Glover of Deep Purple to Daryl Hall and John Oates) for the publication. Meanwhile, Rob continued to hone his songwriting, instrumental and vocal talents, enjoying a brief stint as bassist for The Ronnie Crooks Band before retreating to his home studio in Westchester in the early Nineties, where, for the first time, he wrote, arranged, performed and produced music in solitude. After sharpening his chops on a variety of pet projects like The Beatles Get "Robbed" (which, notwithstanding its cheeky title, was an homage to Rob's

biggest musical influence, Sir Paul McCartney), Rob refocused his attention on writing and recording new original songs. Around the same time, Bill, unable to satisfy his desire to play his original music with The Martians (although a lovely version of Bill's atmospheric R&B ballad "Missed Opportunity" closes that band's first and only studio album, *Blues Alien*) or its offshoot, the "roots rock" oriented Plan B (featuring guitarist Lowell Perlman, bassist Bill Walker and drummer Dennis Carpenter), and blown away by the increasingly complex vocal harmonies featured on his brother's recordings, asked Rob to join him in high school buddy and well-known sound engineer Carl Casella's Stonehouse Studio to record five new original songs with Dave Fields (guitar), the late George Spehar (acoustic guitar), Josh Schneider (sax), Bill Warfield (trumpet, flugelhorn) and Rich "Spiro" Shapiro (drums). Rob's vocal and instrumental contributions to those five tracks soon became so significant that the project changed conceptually in midstream, and what was initially planned as a Bill Sunkel solo EP morphed gracefully into the very first Sunkel Brothers collection. The follow-up to the Stonehouse sessions didn't come until five years later, with 1999's homegrown *Diamonds in the Rough*, an unreleased collection that contained the first fruits of an official Bill Sunkel/Rob Sunkel songwriting partnership. "We recorded *Diamonds* on TASCAM four-track cassette, in a basement studio we came to refer to as 'the Museum of Broadcasting' because all the equipment was so ancient," recalls Rob. "The tracks were initially just meant to be song demos, but the 'album' eventually grew to include fifteen songs. I'm still very proud of the songs on that collection." While pleased with their new songs, Bill and Rob were less than thrilled with the sound quality of the primitive cassette tapes, or with the constraints of four-track recording. With their next home studio effort in 2001, *True Confessions*, the duo finally went modern, trading their old TASCAM for the joys of digital recording, and ditching the Sunkel Brothers moniker ("Sounds like an accordion band!" smirked one wag) to record under the name *Desperate Measures*. The brothers say that this is the time for *Desperate Measures*. "There are a lot of people out there like us, who love classic rock, pop, soul and R&B, and will never grow tired of the old records, but want to hear new songs, and new artists. That's our audience." And, yes, it's all about the songs. Among their songwriting influences, the brothers list Lennon McCartney, Brian Wilson, Donald Fagen, Walter Becker, Elvis Costello, Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Billy Joel, Todd Rundgren, Harry Nilsson, Randy Newman and Burt Bacharach. "We want to create songs that have a shelf life, that won't be forgotten even before the record has faded," says Bill. "We write songs for listeners who don't need or necessarily even want video accompaniment, who don't

approach music as fashion statement or background buzz. We're not looking to change the entertainment industry, or even to replace any of what's already there. We just want to provide listeners with another option, which we call 'alternative pop.'" Two Can Play is the brothers' first CD available directly to the public. Its fourteen tracks were recorded in late 2002 and 2003, in New York as well as in Rob's new home state, Florida, where Rob recently rejoined former Pariah guitarist Tony Spatarella in the latter's newest project, Changes (also available on CD Baby). Bill and Rob perform all vocals, and, with a little help from their friends (including Tony and New York metal axeman Chris O'Loughlin) play all the instruments on Two Can Play. The songs on the CD defy easy categorization, covering territory that spans the rock, pop, jazz and R&B genres, and revealing roots and influences as diverse and eclectic as The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Elvis Costello, Sam Dave, Steely Dan, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Al Green, Bob Marley, Fountains of Wayne, The Mavericks and The Pretenders. Although stylistically diverse, each of the songs is unmistakably "Desperate Measures," with memorable melodies and brilliant harmonies. The lyrics are intensely personal, yet speak to desires, joys, fears and doubts that are universal. The performances are passionate, powerful and committed; they convey an energy that is exciting and uplifting. And, as if more than fifty minutes of great original music weren't enough, each Two Can Play CD includes an eight-page booklet with lyrics and photos, new and old, as well as exciting original cover art by Rick Ferrell. In August 2003, its first month of release, the Two Can Play CD soared to number 18 on CD Baby's sales charts, and garnered great listener reviews (some of which are printed below). We hope that, after listening, you'll agree that, in fact, now is the time for Desperate Measures.

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