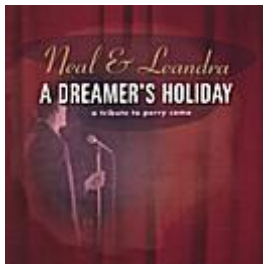


# Mp3 Neal And Leandra - A Dreamer's Holiday: A Tribute To Perry Como



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Rosemary Clooney once said of Perry Como, "He sang perfectly in tune, had great timing and chose good material. Mr. Sinatra could be kind of crazy. Bing was kind of stand-offish. Perry was always there and always good." 14 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Jazz Vocals, EASY LISTENING: Crooners/Vocals Details: "I wish I could capture every dubious glance, every incredulous laugh, or even every blank stare that we have gotten when we've announced our intention to make a Perry Como tribute CD, and then keep them in some sort of "scrapbook of the misled." We have spent 15 years writing and singing our own songs and have tried to ply our craft with integrity and a sense of the enormous power music can wield in a person's life. So perhaps jumping into a project of cover songs by an artist who seems to be mostly remembered for his cardigans appears slightly less than a serious musical endeavor. As far as Perry Como is concerned that is exactly where a person could be misled, so here are a few things about him that should be remembered... Mr. Como had 14 #1 songs, was the first artist to break the million selling mark, had 27 gold records, sold over 100 million records, and hosted one of the most successful TV shows of all time (the third longest running show in TV history). Rosemary Clooney said, "He sang perfectly in tune, had great timing and chose good material. Mr. Sinatra could be kind of crazy. Bing was kind of stand-offish. Perry was always there and always good. " It doesn't matter what he wore, Perry Como represents the kind of artist we aspire to be - a hard worker singing great songs and entertaining people without gimmicks or artifice. He had an astoundingly beautiful voice, a wealth of good material and a respect for his audience. Dubbed "Mr. Casual" and at times parodied for his laid-back style, he found that it always worked best to be himself. "They were always telling me to use my hands, my body... But that was never me. I just breathe, and sometimes it doesn't look as if I'm doing that!" he laughingly recalled during an

interview in 1990. People who know me will recognize some of that spirit of "relaxation." Plus he sounded just like my dad. How could I help but love him? So this is really a "roots" album. And if that causes some raised eyebrows, so be it. It'll just give me a good laugh when I page through 'my scrapbook.'" - Leandra

"I will be honest. This Perry Como tribute was never on any wish list of projects I felt compelled to finish in my lifetime. I went along with Leandra as a spectator at first. A willing, but bemused, spectator. As it turns out, I didn't know what I was talking about. At every turn, as we were researching this project and picking songs, I fell in love with the music and the man who made it. The only excuse I had not to like him was that I had never really listened to his songs before. Then, I started listening, and this is what I discovered. Perry Como's voice doesn't beat you over the head or force you to submit to its will, but stands as an invitation. A confident, God-given instrument that doesn't have to resort to tricks. It is remarkable in its simplicity and its beauty. Both of these, I think, are qualities of great art that are under appreciated in our current age of overproduction and vocal histrionics. Mr. Como let a song sing itself and got his ego out of the way so his voice could work its magic. I am a huge fan now, late on the bandwagon, but banging my drum as loudly as I can so people will not only, perhaps, enjoy this album, but like the music enough to go out and buy everything of Mr. Como's they can get their hands on. It would be a worthwhile expenditure. A few more explanatory notes - one, when I first met Leandra and was at her parents' house for dinner, I encountered a family who loved singing for the sake of just singing. Doing the dishes became a three part harmony Perryfest or barbershop extravaganza. I could see why Leandra was already singing harmony by age four. They loved making music. That is why when we found that Mr. Como had covered "Let a Smile be Your Umbrella", I wanted to put it on the CD, even though it was a minor tune for him and never charted. It was one of the first songs I heard Leandra sing in that kitchen. It is also one of the reasons we are together. A second note - we did not choose the songs on this recording because of their popularity, but because we loved them. We sifted through hits and non-hits and our only criteria for selecting a song was that it had to be chosen separately by each of us (except for "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo" which was chosen by our four year old). We gradually whittled the list down to what you have before you. All of the songs we agreed upon happened to be recorded by Como between 1948-1961. A plus for us was how often Perry Como charted with singles where he collaborated with Betty Hutton or the Fontane Sisters. The songs were already set up for what we do as a duo. Some songs we kept as faithfully to Como's original as we could without hiring an entire orchestra. Others, we took our own liberties with, while, hopefully,

maintaining the integrity of the song. In the end, we have rarely, if ever, had more fun in the studio. We even had the serendipitous pleasure of working with two musicians (Dave Karr and Jim TenBensel) who played with Perry Como when he toured through Minneapolis years ago. We hope you enjoy this recording as much as we enjoyed making it." - Neal BIO: Neal Hagberg and Leandra Peak ended up on the road to music mostly by accident... Hagberg was on his way to medical school and Peak to a career in international business when the road veered. Since then they have found themselves singing to sold out thousand seat venues in some towns and four people and a sick dog (true story) in others. Leandra - private by nature - was dragged kicking and screaming into the spotlight. Even though she had acted in a professional theater group as a teenager, she had no desire to make a career out of it, and refused even to take solos in the high school choir. As a little girl, all she ever wanted was to be on Johnny Carson. Not for her voice, not for her writing or stage presence, but because she thought Johnny would simply find her funny. Neal thought a career in professional sports sounded good. Being a small college wishbone quarterback did not exactly prepare him for the NFL. It didn't prepare him for the folk world either, but he figured at least in music he wouldn't get landed on by 300 lb. noseguards. So, he wrote some songs, some people liked them, and he quit his med school plans to go on the road. He somehow convinced Leandra to go along. That is the story in a nutshell. Leandra grew up in Louisville, KY, Neal in Montevideo, MN. Leandra was raised on Perry Como and barbershop, Neal on The Mamas and the Papas and Swedish hymns. They met at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota in 1981. Off-again, on-again dating, excursions into graduate school (Leandra in Spanish, Neal receiving a Masters of Divinity) only resulted in a postponement of careers as singer/songwriters. Hagberg and Peak married in 1989 and began touring as a duo full time. Signed by Columbia Artists Management and recording on one of the country's preeminent singer-songwriter labels (Red House Records), Neal Leandra have since performed in nearly every state in the country. The Washington Post says "as songwriters, Neal Leandra have clearly mastered the art of saying more with less." The Minneapolis StarTribune says "listening to Leandra Peak's distinctively husky and lustrous voice might be as heavenly as listening to angels" and "Neal Hagberg writes inspired originals." And the Victory Review of Seattle writes that Neal Leandra have "one of the most sensuous mix of voices I've heard." Sometimes people have to work to find them or their six cds: Old Love, Hearts Hammers, Accidental Dreams, Stranger to my Kin, and Listen to the Angels. bridge rail But, tens of thousands of fans have found them nonetheless, and their audience is

fiercely loyal. The simplicity and directness of their songs is both disarming and elegant. The songs are layered with textures of everyday life and love. This - combined with their remarkable blend and funny stories - connects with people's own experiences in a way that keeps them coming back for more and bringing friends the next time around. When they are not touring or recording, Neal Leandra reside in Minneapolis, MN with their daughter, Madeline, where Neal plays a lot of basketball and Leandra reads many books.

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