

Mp3 Byron Zanos - Somewhere In The Middle



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Byron Zanos is a NY based singer/songwriter combining pop, rock, jazz, and funk elements to his original, yet radio friendly style. His lyrical wit and sheer emotionality permeate his music. 10 MP3 Songs

POP: Today's Top 40, ROCK: Acoustic Details: Byron Zanos' lifelong love of music began in his parents' living room, listening to his father's opera collection. As a kid, Zanos had a more classical bent, with his first instrument being the piano. That all changed though, when he bought his first album: Guns 'N' Roses Appetite for Destruction. "It was like a bowl of Lucky Charms after eating oatmeal my whole life," Zanos says. "It made me want to get off the piano and pick up the guitar, so I did." His turn towards rock wasn't a rebellion so much as a revelation. Interestingly enough, the first song Zanos learned to play on guitar was the Cat Stevens classic, "Father and Son", a touching dialogue between parent and child ending with the son's decision, despite his father's wishes, to make his own way in the world. Native New Yorker Zanos went on to college at Fordham University. "The original plan was to go into the financial services," he recalls, "but I found that my textbooks served me far better in an amp tilting capacity." So, in keeping with his character (performance driving and poker are among his favorite hobbies), Zanos decided to take the risk and gamble on a career in music. Despite his early love of hard rock, when it came time to craft his own sound, Zanos' influences were more diverse. His songwriting idols span many musical styles. "Dave Matthews Band has a certain big band musicality to it that I love," Zanos explains, "and Dave's guitar playing really changed the way people viewed the acoustic. He's a big influence in guitar style. The band Live has always had a certain energy in their songs and the writing was always kind of dark, always in minor keys. I was a huge fan of theirs growing up. They, along with Jeff Buckley and Sting, are also major vocal influences. Sting has this ability to constantly reinvent himself," Zanos continues. "His staying power is what I like, and The Police, Billy Joel, and especially the Beatles have just written incredible songs,

which are timeless." Song craft is the common thread that runs through all of Zanos' influences and is the talent he most hopes to emulate. Great songwriting often begins with emotional turmoil, and Zanos' tunes are no exception. "Most of the songs...were written about my relationship with one particular girl that I was with for 4 years," he confides. "She gave me a lot to write about. I should probably start dating her again for the next record-or at least let her yell at me some more." Zanos' wit permeates his music. With lyrics like "You bought 'Happiness for Dummies' and you/you think you're gonna teach me something" ("Pandora's Box"), "You want everything to come the easy way/...money without all the working/weight loss on pasta and chips" ("Better Days"), "Pack your bags/looks like we're going on a guilt trip again" ("Sleeping Sally") and "Everyday life version 4.0/tech support is no help at all/answers in the next hot reality show - or in the drug that keeps grandfather's love tall" (21st Century Boy), it's hard not to laugh (as well as sing) along. However, songs like "Blind Today" show a softer, more vulnerable side and when Zanos sings "I never knew a foot so good to fit your shoes" in the aptly-named "Sweet Melancholy," you're bound to be touched. Zanos' dynamic songs found a home after his college graduation, when he assembled a great team of musicians and producers to take his music to the next level. His debut CD *Somewhere in the Middle* was engineered, mixed and mastered by Grammy Award winning engineer/producer Daegal Bennett (Tony's son). Zanos completed the album under the tutelage of producer Drew Yowell (Phoebe Snow, Sophie B. Hawkins, Herb Alpert), who he met at a New Jersey bar. "He came in for a drink and somewhere between our third and fourth scotch, we started talking about music," Zanos recalls. "He showed up at one of my shows and a few days later asked to produce the record." "What he didn't know," Yowell confides, "was that I already had some ideas about certain songs and how I would produce them. Byron has an ability to weave melody around his percussive guitar playing style, so there was something there I knew I could work with." Although Zanos' guitar playing got Yowell's attention initially, it was another aspect of his talent that intrigued his sage producer. "What's inherent in Byron is his voice," Yowell explains, "which sounds very strong on the record." Yowell believes Zanos is ready to make his mark. "On *Somewhere in the Middle*, the goal was to make it last in your memory long after you listen to it," Yowell explains. Zanos is just one of many who believes the goal was achieved. "After seeing what I've done, I'm much more confident in myself and my music. Every day, I grow as a singer/songwriter," he enthuses. "I can't wait to see what happens tomorrow."

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