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This Lounge Is Cool- David McLeod opens up to Michael Smith.

“It was an idea my record company, La Brava had, to bring together a selection of songs that create an ambience of lounge music, with the additional element of teaming me with Col Nolan, one of the finest exponents of the Hammond organ in the country.”

The whole Lounge phenomenon is something that has, like World Music, grown enormously in popularity over the last decade, and is a difficult one, because it is a loose aggregate of styles that can seem as much parody as it does legitimate. So it embraces both Harry Connick Jr. and Frank Bennett. For McLeod, it was important to tip the album towards the legitimate end of the spectrum.

‘This is definitely about respect. For example, I haven’t done a version of Soundgarden’s *Black Hole Sun* to be funny. I still listen to the original version and it touches something in me and felt wouldn’t it be great to do a version. My record label had a lot of ideas for songs, but *Black Hole Sun* I took to them, sitting down and playing the piano and singing it, and they thought it would really suit the album and where it had come from, because it sounded to them like a standard. So I took a cassette of the original and popped it into the player and out came the power and guitars of Soundgarden – and they fell over their stools – they’d never heard the original.

“So with great reverence we put that on, and at the other extreme with something like *Crazy*, that people have done amazing versions of, that have ruined or done joke versions of, it’s just one of those songs. I’d always loved it and I thought here was my chance to do it in this context being serious about it. The Lounge thing for me is a bit cheesy, but with respect, and nostalgic, and a large dose of coolness, and to bring all those elements together.

“And I didn’t want to sound like any other singer either. I wanted to sound like myself, so I sang these songs the way I wanted to sing them. But then, because Col is so fabulous as a musician, because he’s earned that respect for his talent, then I would, for a good half of the album just be taken along by his music, which would tell me how to sing it. Other times I’d think how I could come up against it in my own vocal thing, not to make it clash but to mesh in another way.”

Between the extremes of *Black Hole Sun* and *Crazy* is a selection of songs from writers as diverse as Count Basie and Michael Franks, Ray Charles and Mose Allison, but none of them the obvious songs, the standards.

“What’s ended up being one of my personal favourites is the opening track, *My Love Is*, which ABC Radio National has picked up for its playlist. The record company brought it to me on an old tape. I don’t know where they found it, done by a female singer with this really deep voice and it was unaccompanied. It was so sparse and it hooked me immediately.”

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