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Reviews

AM I BLUE

David McLeod (La Brava/ Polygram)

Local musician David McLeod has made his way performing other people's songs in piano bars, all the while working up to this debut album. The opener, *Get Over It*, is a swinging pop with a nod to Van Morrison, Harry Connick Jnr and Matt Bianco.

The rest of the album veers between easy listening soul and Joe Jackson-style ivory pop, slinky double bass grooves, new-age nature noises and lounge music with a twist, while McLeod challenges the listener with his unorthodox phrasing.***

Peter Holmes
The Sun-Herald - Tempo

"McLeod has a light, malleable voice reminiscent of Michael Franks and his program of all original songs is supple and lightweight, sung over a small group featuring piano and vibes."

CADENCE – USA

"McLeod's singing draws upon several admitted influences in the worlds of jazz, pop and R&B. His singing is persuasive and he admirably textures his interpretations of lyrics. His own compositions offer intriguing hints of his continuing interest in the musical and lyrical aspects of nature."

Virgin Encyclopaedia of Jazz – London

David McLeod

'AM I BLUE'

Despite the title, this is not a Blues album. Sydney singer/pianist David McLeod is a Jazz vocalist whose debut CD reveals a superbly well-rounded, mature, assured and absolutely original voice. The 12 songs, all McLeod compositions, make compelling listening. The backing, David's own lyrical piano, bass, drums, plus vibes and percussion on some tracks, is surprisingly lush and smooth. Natural sounds, the sea, weather, animals, are used to open or close some songs with pleasing results. There is little instrumental improvisation. The song, the voice, and the arrangement is the focus. Vocal Jazz is not usually my cup of tea, but this is a refreshing and satisfying brew.

Mark D. - RHYTHMS

David McLeod

Am I Blue

(La Brava Music LB9512)

This is the debut album for talented singer/songwriter, David McLeod. Comprising 12 original tracks, *Am I Blue* reflects the composer's intimate observations of life. The result is an album which, though seemingly familiar to us, is fresh in its outlook, and professional in its execution. David's voice certainly suits this genre, soft yet retaining character. In fact, David has sung with the likes of Renee Geyer, and made regular TV appearances, such is his appeal. *Am I Blue* is not strictly jazz, or blues, but is a hybrid of David's making. The opening track, 'Get Over It' is sensational, and is a perfect example of his vocal style.

AMBIENCE

With jazz and jazz-based musical forms coming in for more grassroots youth interest than at any time since the forties and fifties, jazz vocals seems to have been somewhat ignored or relegated to a rap chant.

This balance is redressed by the recent release of young Sydney pianist/singer-songwriter David McLeod.

Comparisons with our only other prominent jazz *chanteur* Vince Jones, are inevitable – but not wholly appropriate.

McLeod's voice, though not quite as self-assured and pitch-perfect as Jones', incorporates more of the demanding melismatic acrobatics of a Stevie Wonder, harnessed to decidedly jazz-flavoured changes.

On occasion, he evokes the complex progressions and neat phrasing of Elvis Costello and there are distant but audible echoes of Mose Allison and Ramsey Lewis. The songs are David's own, compiled over several years and illustrating his ambitious approach to chords and melody.

The changes are unpredictable (sometimes annoyingly discursive) and the tunes seldom conventionally melodic, though in his explorations he unearths many a highly original gem of hook and many a memorable tune.

Surprises include David's own overdubbed CSNY vocal harmonies and the odd ambient owl-noise, cricket-chirp and thunderclap spliced in to charge the mood.

Though the all-important swing sometimes gets lost in the effort to put lyrics across, McLeod's thoughtful and decidedly '90s lyrics repay the trade-off.

McLeod is a strong writer and performer whose voice, with experience, will doubtless firm up to match the creativity and assurance of his considerable talent.

SOUND and IMAGE

BLUE LOUNGE SESSIONS

You've broken out the olives, gin and vermouth.... Now for the right music. Enter David McLeod and Col Nolan. To sit and listen to, some may find McLeod's approach a little insipid when there are recordings by Billie Holiday, Guiseppe Di Stefano, Ray Charles or Judi Connelli around. But as something comfortable and relaxing – like...well, like stretching out on the couch – this is more than pleasant. The very hip accompaniment is led by the creeping, swirling sounds of Nolan's mighty Hammond organ, supported by drummers Ron Lemke and Hamish Stuart, David Seidel on bass and guitar, and both Nolan and Maree Steinway on piano.

Over this cool, spacious, well-recorded backdrop, McLeod croons tunes ranging from Count Basie's *Blue and Sentimental* to Willie Nelson's *Crazy*. Ahhh... ***

Sydney Morning Herald – The Guide

I doubt whether David could argue that this CD consists of middle of the road jazz. Lounge is the hip term for it, of course. But those into jazz with a twist should not stop reading. In fact *Blue Lounge* offers quite a few endearing surprises. There is a tender soulfulness apparent on David's rendering of the classic tunes featured here that elevates the recording far above what one would assume is his competition. He is able to do this due to his ensemble's comprehensively engaging musicality and the ease with which they embrace the material. A little bit funky at times, always composed and pulsing with wit, this is cool jazz rather than lounge, as long as you don't get hung up on the connotations of the word 'cool'. David certainly hasn't. Oh yeah, and the guy can sing. Or should that be swing? Whatever.

Blow CD Reviews – with Craig N. Pearce
THE DRUM MEDIA

Now here's a cover album done the right way. Aussie jazz singer David McLeod has a stellar voice, and he takes this fantastic collection of songs and nurtures them like little babies with the combination of restraint and passion in his vocals.

The album opens with *My Love Is*, and it's this track that lets you know that you're in for a cruisy, jazzy, smoky lounge kind of ride. Songs like *Just For A Thrill* will make you want to slow dance, and McLeod's unique interpretation of *Black Hole Sun* will make you want to lie down on the lounge with the CD player on repeat and some cold cucumbers over your eyes. You'll want to take up smoking while listening to *Blue and Sentimental*.

This album is a whole body experience, but don't be scared. It's worth the trip.

Julie Catt
Sydney Star Observer

BLUE LOUNGE SESSIONS

David McLeod
(La Brava Music)

What is the lounge phenomenon? Retro '90s rehashed camp – to quote the perhaps foolhardy words of the booklet here – or something else? In David McLeod's case it's fairer to say it's a vehicle for a very accomplished and enjoyable jazz singer. Not least of the pleasures is the consistency of the Australian accompanists – keyboarder Col Nolan, drummer Hamish Stuart and others.

Mood: Schmooze.

Best track: Black Hole Sun

7 out of 10

Australian Table

David McLeod, one of today's most engaging contemporary vocalists, has released his second CD, Blue Lounge Sessions on the La Brava label.

McLeod released his debut CD, Am I Blue, on the label four years ago.

That time saw him composing all the tunes, penning the lyrics and playing piano on twelve of the thirteen tracks.

This time David has surrounded himself with some stellar performers, Col Nolan, Maree Steinway, Ron Lemke, David Seidel and Hamish Stuart, and has chosen to showcase his talents as a gifted vocal interpreter.

The thirteen track contemporary CD incorporates a unique blend of R&B, pop and jazz with numbers from the pens of Michael Franks, Lil Armstrong, Count Basie, George Shearing, Willie Nelson, Mose Allison, one imagines, each selected for melody, lyric and mood.

A hip, laid-back stylist, with strong colouring of contemporary, McLeod has a mature sense of interpretation, an inventive musical mind and most importantly a remarkable interpretive empathy that brings out the best in melodic line and lyric thus enabling him to create and sustain the mood.

Tunes include **Blue and Sentimental; Crazy; Lullaby of Birdland; Just For the Thrill;** and **Maryanne.**

The icing on the already rich cake is the one McLeod original, You and Me Always.

As the liner notes say '*On Blue Lounge Sessions, veteran Aussie jazzman Col Nolan does for the Hammond organ what Lionel Hampton did for the vibraphone leaving David McLeod's delicately impassioned vocals to shine out like a good deed in a naughty world.*

Nolan plays the Hammond organ on twelve of the tracks.

If this CD doesn't inspire you to hear a 'live' McLeod performance, nothing will.

David McLeod – Blue Lounge Sessions (La Brava LB 9901).

JILL MORRIS – Sydney Jazz Action Society News Letter