

Member's CD Review

The artwork on SSA member Steve McNaughton's new CD album,

"*Stormchaser*" is very impressive. Apart from great lightning, storm and tornado shots there is a page booklet of the lyrics of the songs. I'm interested to hear this album for quite a few reasons. Firstly Steve is a former Committee member of the SSA and it's always good to hear new product of those who have contributed time to the Society. Secondly I haven't heard any of Steve's material since I reviewed his "*Hardlysoftlyrock*" a few years back so it will be interesting to see his development as an artist. Thirdly he recorded with Jeff Cripps at A# Studios and Jeff used to contribute to the Songsmith and I wanted to hear recent material he has worked on (The Vines did some of their early work through him) Lastly, it was mastered at Turtle Rock where my band Velvet Road's "*Saturday Morning*" CD was mastered so it will be interesting to hear recent mastering from this studio.

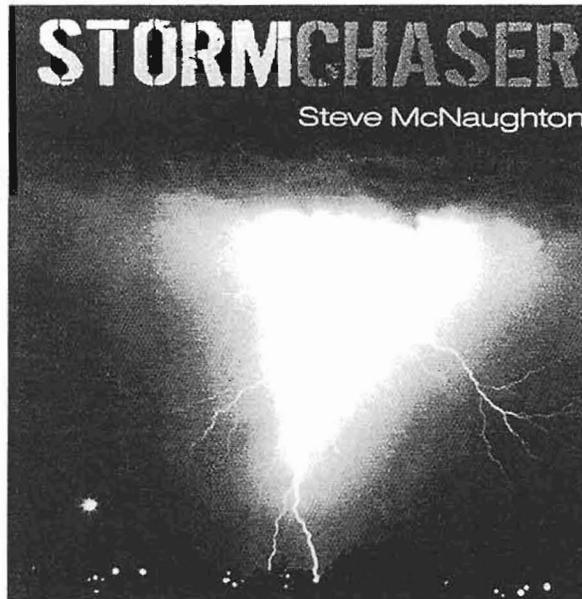
First up on the CD is the title track, "*Stormchaser*", with it's swirling synth and crash cymbals is very storm evocative. There's a heighten sense of something big coming. Very 80's in it's approach, almost Hall & Oates in tones, it grooves along nicely. Very well produced it evokes thoughts of Toto at their best. A very hooky chorus begs you to sing along. This will be a good one for when the news, or documentaries feature storms, etc. I like the synth hook as it really grips the memory. Good melodies, especially against the back-beat jazz guitar riff. Still felt it needed to go somewhere really different to make the outro chorus make me happy for it to come back. Then it would be the perfect pop song ready for the markets.

The staccato over-driven rock guitar start of "*Gimme Something*" grabs the listener already. It's an insistent chordal riff that fits nicely beneath the lyrical journey. Suits Steve's vocal well. The pre-chorus is great lift, guiding the listener's emotions into the chorus. A definitely well crafted song in a rocky New Wave Elvis Costello vein. The

by Gavin Fitzgerald

chorus is very hooky and singalongable. Some nice tasty lead guitar in the solo, which leads well into the pre-chorus, chorus outro. You can imagine a whole crowd singing along with this great song!

"*The Devil's In The Detail*" has a



Who like start with rolling drums and driven guitar. The lyrics flow nicely over the rock rhythm. Laid back in a laconic rock way the song has Dylanesque story lines, with a Tom Petty feel to it. I say Dylanesque as the images of reading contracts is very graphical and has many messages in it. A song for a busy businessman! Or for anyone about to make a big decision, even marriage! Great hook chorus, which I keep on singing. I like the line "It's always buyer beware." Top song!

I like the groove at the start of "*Don't Tell Mama*" as it really kicks along with a blues rock feel, which really cooks! Head nodding, toe tappin'

stuff as the guitar riff and horns do their stuff. Almost 50's do-wop feel to the verses, then the chorus is once again singalongable making you want to join in with "*Don't Tell Mama*". I'd love to hear this live, although it would be hard with the sax and horns. Cool, really rocks, one of the best blues rock songs I've heard in ages, absolute classic. Although the re-

peat of the "Sometimes in my bedroom..." section seems a bit too much twice.

Maybe the second time pull right back and double up the "*Don't Tell Mama*" as an outro. Lots of good stuff in this song.

Once again the brass kicks arse in the start of "*Crawl Before You Walk*" which then breaks into a ska bluebeat feel. Once again a top pre-chorus

(Something Steve seems particularly good at!) leading into a superbly hooky chorus. You've definitely got the goods here, Steve! Think The Travellin' Wilburys, when Roy Orbison sang to get an idea of the tone. Sax solo is great and a good break to lead into the chorus. I feel the third verse needs something else behind it, maybe an organ swell to differentiate it. But that could be a personal thing in the perfect soul pop song. If this is not a hit, or if someone doesn't cover it, then the world is definitely nuts! One of the best I've ever heard on an SSA member's CD. I'd buy this album just for this song!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Brilliant and stunning, I'm np dancing to it.

There's a heavier rock edge to "*Can't Rock Any Harder*" with an overdriven drive. However, Steve vocal is much more laid back, which is funny as it's a passionate song? Almost Dave Edmunds in tone and feel, but more direct in story. I like the backing rhythm as it sets up a good drive, but the lyrics seem to be trying too hard to fit into the song structure. Once again some tasty lead guitar that kicks. Very country in lyrics, although the chorus obviously has a crunch background. I just went and made lunch (Ham & cheese in lavish bread then in a sandwich press, yum!) and I kept singing the chorus along, so this I feel has an "Achy Breaky Heart" edge to it. Not perfect, but it's it's imperfections that make it even more memorable.

Santana doing blues was the feel I had to the start of "*Dreaming*". Laid back, cool, breezy, chill out rock flow. Hmmm, nice, in an almost Savoy Brown undertone. Love the rolling bass. Then the lyrics come and fit perfectly with ideas espoused well in the song structure. A song for dreamers who need no drugs,

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nor booze, but get high on the possibilities. The piano solo has a Doors like approach, which is really cool. Love this song also, especially the really flavoursome blues guitar. Hmm, nice! I'll dream along as well mate, this one is a good one to have some whiskey to. Another brilliant album cut that's up and world class. Way cool, Steve.

A more modern musical theme with "The Third Wave", with an almost Indian drive. The lyrics are mantra like, persuasive and perceptive. Maybe the closest comparison is George Harrison's religious material. However, Steve's

song is a lot more encompassing as it rides the themes of striving for goals and how you have ups and downs before you reach your destination. I love the idea as it reflects some of my philosophies of life and how goals are reached. The perfect song for the positive, goal oriented

person. The "Rising, falling" pre-chorus is great, before the really memorable chorus. Love it, as well the song builds as the waves hits as the verses. A good idea mixing the pre-chorus and chorus in the outro as it grabs the best of both worlds. A top song, especially for those who believe they can achieve in any field of endeavour. I keep singing the outro mix, great! I'll have to keep this one in mind when I'm a bit down as a pick up tonic!

"Ode To Odette" has a funky beat to it, before the great sax cascade envelops the eardrums. It then slides easily into a ska dance that UB40 would be proud of. I dare you not to feel the rhythm of this one in your body! As well, the "Oh, Odette" hook is intensely persuasive and hooky! The lyrical and vocal feel once again has that Roy Orbison tone to it. I like the little sax bits, before the almost rap-like staccato verses jump in perfectly. Then it's back to the easy flow of the pre-chorus to chorus, with a really soulful essence that suits Steve's vocal perfectly. Get up and dance once again! I love reggae and this has that feel along with the ska edge. "Oh, Odette" really cooks, with an almost African harmony a la Paul Simon, who'd have been proud to have done this one. Even has flavours of Chris Isaacs in there as well.

Another definite hit, or the world has no taste! I'm still bouncing along to this!

"Free" hits so suddenly that I wish it had a musical intro to settle you down before the lyrics starts as it's a bit startling. Country rock when the music all finally comes in. An unexpected chord change in the chorus on the line "I had it coming", which takes you out of the complacent. A driving song that would work for someone on the road. Once that unexpected chord change occurs more than once you get used to it and want to hear it, making it a very good hook. Think the Eagles, but with a Nirvana like chord change. A good album track that's easy listening and laid back.

Steve has a cover on his CD, and it's a good one. Eagle-Eye Cherry's "Save Tonight" (I think of the TV add for Brisbane). It's covered fairly faithfully,

but Steve's vibrato vocal gives it a distinctive edge and uniqueness. It's good that he has kept the backing harmonies and I love the slide guitar. Very atmospheric.

Almost military drumming in the vein of the theme

for "Top Gun" starts off "Eyes Of A Child". Foot stomping rhythm with a message. Great chorus that could be sung by a multitude, which the backing harmonies allude to. Could be a great theme song for a world wide charity. Universal ideas and thoughts encapsulated in one song. The juxtaposition of innocence against the real world. Brilliant chorus, especially in the outro repeats, which nails it into your subconscious.

So "Wow!", what a killer album and an extreme pleasure to review. This must be one of the best I have reviewed in my fifteen years as editor, if not the best. Most of the material is world class, the production is stunning and overall I suggest that you buy it! I do a lot of reviews and some can be a grind, but not "Stormchaser", which I feel privileged to be able to review! Songs like "Crawl Before You Walk", "Dreaming", "Ode To Odette" and "Eyes Of A Child", very definitely stand out and shine light spotlights. Some of these deserve to be hits!! It's also great to hear what A# Studios can do as well as how Turtle Rock is mastering. So many thanks, Steve, for allowing me to be able to review such a killer album!



The President's Report

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and international markets.

Australia's major national and international songwriting organizations: Australian Songwriters Association, Songsalive and The Songwriting Society of Australia have combined forces to develop an organization to be the voice and pathway of Australian songwriters nationally and internationally.

The new representative songwriters' organisation is called Australian Songwriters Official National Organisation: ASONG. The name spells its core business. ASONG will lead the way in making Australian songwriters original work soar. ASONG promises to explore every avenue to develop, nurture, promote Australian songwriting and singer/songwriters and develop new pathways and productive alliances that will open many new opportunities. See their website to get a taste of the passion, their stories thus far and the commitment and support they bring including APRA's great support.

This is exciting news for the many talented Australians being denied the opportunities to access audiences and markets where they must and will be heard. Australian songwriters have consistently been the best in the world but are not able to access the markets that will come to value the strength of Australian songwriters even more through the leadership and critical work of ASONG.

ASONG will be officially launched on April 21st at APRA's new headquarters in Mountain Street at Ultimo. It is going to be an exciting event but more importantly marks a most significant time in the history of Australian songwriting. ASONG will lead the way in working across sectors and government to make Australian original music more accessible across the globe. Let the work begin!

Petersham Kicks

Russ and Brian have done an awesome job in getting The Petersham Hotel as a new gigging place and the opening night was magnificent. This gig is a killer to quote Gav it was like the SSA of old so "Wow" that says it all. It's got a great vibe so come have a gig.