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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND GEAR

OPINION

Browse: Home / 2014 / October / The Tripping Souls deliver fine, fun 1960s inspired rock and roll on Don't Waste Your Life album

The Tripping Souls deliver fine, fun 1960s inspired rock and roll on Don't Waste Your Life album

By Bill Copeland on October 23, 2014



The Tripping Souls is the name of the studio project in which songwriter Paul Makris creates songs around his compositions. He plays all of the guitars and keyboards and sings all of the vocals. He employs bass player Wayne Whittaker and drummers Steve Chaggarris and Harrison Seller for his rhythm section. But what's in a name? Music this cool would sound just as good by any other title.

Sounding like classic and modern rock at once, The Tripping Souls open their new

full length CD with "I Want To Tell You," a rocker with a 1960s vibe and a George Harrison influenced guitar running through it. It gives the listener an idea what it might have felt like when young people growing up in the 1960s were hearing that new sound for the first time. A backbeat to die for and a guitar line that percolates with pop charm make this winsome number a fine introduction to the rest of the album.

"Sunny Afternoon" has a thick, juicy, bopping drum beat that makes one want to move to it. This motivational gravity pulls one right into the swirling rhythm guitar phrase. Makris's voice is like the low key presence of a likable friend, charming without even trying, pulling the listener in deeper when he unleashes a more incisive pierce with his lead guitar phrase. It also comes at you in waves of embraceable guitar chords.

Makris offers a twisty rhythmic ride on "Narrow Road," another built solidly around his rhythm guitar yet offering more as it unfurls. The listener is soon treated to a sweet, tender mellotron melody that acts as icing on the cake, especially for a listener who grew up in an era when the classic rock bands were using mellotrons as a matter of course. Makris offers another tasteful, unique touch with his lead guitar. It's all so infectious and likable.

"Soul Sister" offers more of a guitar weave, a lot of electric six string magic, working those lead and rhythm phrases beautifully around a keyboard sounding progression. This makes for a tuft of cool, rocking material. A rainy day might suddenly feel sunny when one gets into all that is going on in this piece. Makris creates an emotional resonance in his vocal work without trying. He keeps it rock and roll indifferent, letting his hipster lyrics create the attitude.

Makris is at it again on "A Piece Of Paper," a seemingly simple piece with just guitar, bass, and drums offering up a quaint melodic charm. Yet, a closer listen reveals a depth of feeling in the instrumentation. A guitar seems to be crying out the forlorn sense of loss

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that will come if one doesn't sign some sort of legally binding paperwork. The listener can feel the sense of one being on a precipice, a damned if you do, damned if you don't neurosis developed in the guitar while Makris continually refers to "a piece of paper."

"Come On" mellows things out and slows them down a bit. The listener can hear more of the emotive and musical resonance at this take-your-time pace. Makris sings in the most pleasant, Beatlesque manner, with Brit-rock charm oozing out of his every word. His piano, organ, and acoustic guitar build a heft of 1960s style melodies before meshing well with Steve Chaggarris's eventual marching beat. Bass player Wayne Whittaker pushes his smooth, effective low end line through this with such ease that it becomes another strong point. He carries so much above while keeping his line of prettiness going on.

"Raspberry Love" might remind older married couples of the pop rock songs that they fell in love to back in the 1960s.. This could be something The Young Rascals might have written and recorded during their heyday. You can picture a hippie couple starting to touch hands in the back of a Volkswagen bus on their way to a protest rally as this sweet pop ditty plays on the radio. Makris has such a sweet richness in his vocal that he often makes the listener feel he's listening to harmony vocals. It doesn't sound overdubbed, so somebody in Brighton's Zippah Studios has an especially adept touch.

Like all of his 1960s idols, Makris sings an ode to his favorite drug, marijuana on "Mary Jane." Makris's rich vocal is full of so much affection you might think he's actually singing about a woman before he references wanting to laugh and sleep a lot and the ability to be whatever one wants to be under her influence. There is a lot of motion in the heft of sound Makris builds, every instrument moving in the one purposeful direction. He keeps the fancy phrasing to a minimum so the strong ensemble work can carry it with momentum.

Drummer Steve Chaggarris puts an almost swing beat underneath Makris's lilting pop-rock glide "So Much Love." Vocals flow over a rhythm guitar in a pure late 1960s style while the groove sounds more modern. The contrast between easeful voice and brisk rhythm guitar is a powerful allure. Nice touches on electric guitar and piano soon entice the listener further. Makris seems to be making something as quaint as balloon animals out of his twisting lead guitar lines.

"September" is a brisk pop rocker with romantic overtones in Makris's warm delivery of the lyrics. He's coming home to his beloved in the fall, and the change in weather and outdoor life becomes the perfect setting for his fiery love, expressed with intense lead and rhythm guitar phrasing. He's burning with passion and the colder temperatures have got nothing on him.

Makris and his rhythm boys close out with "Reprise (Don't Waste Your Life)," a brief instrumental that encapsulates some of the tracks that preceded it. He says goodbye to the listener with this brisk outro that suggests his musical soul will be smoldering until he gets another chance to record. Hopefully, he'll still be working with Zippah's dynamic duo, producer Brian Charles and engineer Annie Hoffman.

The Tripping Souls is definitely a recording project that one would like to see turned into a live band. It would require more musicians to bring this music to life in front of a live audience, and it would be worth the effort. Makris, through his project The Tripping Souls, is definitely recording some of the best local music around these days.

<http://thetrippingsouls.com>

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