

## Review: Thunderclap, "Pick 'n' Tell"

Bringing a genre forged several decades ago into the present day without sounding dated or desperate can be hit-or-miss. All too often artists either stubbornly hold to the same formula they used from the beginning, with a once-fresh style sounding stale and predictable several years later, or they attempt to jump on prevailing fads in an effort to sound current--with dismal results. Thunderclap brings the blues-rock-jazz-soul tradition forward with a combination of warm nostalgia and contemporary sensibilities, showcasing some of the finest artists in popular music. Echoes of the prime members' previous experience with such bands as Cream, Thunderclap Newman, Graham Bond Organisation and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers never compromise the originality of the new compositions, but only serve to underscore the musicians' ability to rework a trend into a tradition.

"Pick and Tell" brings together the talents of Pete Goodall (who also plays guitars on the tracks), Pete Brown, Tex Makins, Dick Heckstall-Smith (in what would be his final recording) on sax, Zoot Money's vocals and keyboards, Richard Bailey on drums, Mike Bailey and Dave Hadley on bass,, Nick Payn's horn arrangements, Noel Norris on trumpet and flugelhorn, Dave "Munch" Moore on keyboards, and the superb backing vocals of Siggie Josiah and Lynn Jackaman. All perform to perfection; the arrangements are seamless and there's not a single "filler" track in the collection.

The album covers all aspects of the genre, beginning with a fresh reworking of "Something in the Air". It flows on to feel-good jazz-rock numbers "Sunshine in My Life", "Thunder", and "Don't Come Down" to name a few. In the desolately beautiful "Own Way Home" and spooky number "The Mask", Money diverges from his usual easygoing offhand style to the kind of uncanny blues-wailing only a seasoned vocalist of the form can accomplish. The blending of the instrumental arrangements and vocals are smooth and unified without sounding "glossy" or overproduced.

The lyrics chronicle the story of a musician's journey through a half-century, from the early, heady days of England's music scene of the '60's when it was all beginning, to the bewilderment of middle age and finding a place among the changes in musical trends and the business itself; the wistfulness of "How did I get from there, to here?" defines the album's narrative. In the final songs, "The Old Soul Singer" and "No Shape, No Form", the veteran musician arrives at a resigned resolve to face what the future holds...after looking back on years, people and experiences that disappeared in a thunderclap.

--Sally Jane Sharp-Paulsen