

Nostalgia 77 – Songs For My Funeral (2004)

Written by bluesever

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Metamorphosis 6 The Mirror 7 The Gates Parts 1 & 2 8 Dirge 9 The Funeral 10
The Beginning
Performer [All Instruments] – Benedic Lamdin

Jazz and electronica are uneasy bedfellows. One is unpredictable, concerned with the moment, while the other is deterministic, concerned with texture and the extraction of emotions from binary code and varying voltages. Well, sort of.

While there are many who are managing to broker some kind of alliance between the two forms, the temptation for a lot of bedroom boffins is simply to fire up their samplers and nick what they want from some obscure jazz records. It's the easy way out; all the blood and fire (plus a spot of cultural cred) without the pain of actually having to deal with real musicians (though of course, you might have to deal with their lawyers if you're unlucky)...

As ever though it's the exceptions that prove the rule, and here's one. Nostalgia 77 is one of the few to buck the trend and come up with something rich and strange. Like early Broadway Project or some of Four Tet's output, Songs For My Funeral manages to graft a personal vision from whirring hard disks and the frozen contributions of long dead or forgotten saxophonists and funky drummers.

Unlike many of his peers, Nostalgia 77 spurns the blissed-out ecstasies of Alice Coltrane or Pharoah Sanders in favour of a darker muse. Gloomy, impassioned blasts of tenor snake their way over dread-full, slo-mo beats; dark, thrumming bass lines; wisps of guitar; clouds of vibes

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or a roomful of forlorn pianos ripple away miserably to themselves. Imagine a New Orleans funeral procession headed up by Albert Ayler or David Murray, with a heavily sedated funk rhythm section marking out time in the rear, and you'll be close.

Songs for my Funeral's bruised, sometimes angry sound offers more than the easy listening fusions of much Ninja Tune output, for example. Even when upbeat soul jazz grooves are hinted at (as on "The Beginning"), there's a humid, oppressive vibe to the proceedings which unsettles rather than reassures. You're unlikely to hear it in your local Starbucks on a Saturday afternoon, which can only be a good thing in my humble opinion. Good stuff. ---Peter Marsh, bbc.co.uk

There comes that time in ones life as a music listener when all your personal favorite albums seem grossly inappropriate for that golden moment of hook up. How many of us have built our music collections around obscure and intimidating artists that most music listeners find...well difficult at first. Nostalgia 77 has come to our rescue with the latest album titled "Songs For My Funeral" on Tru Thoughts Records. Drawing upon familiar genres such as Jazz, Hip Hop, Gospel and Funk Nostalgia 77 brings these diverse music forms together into a sensual and relaxing album that is so refined and accessible that you could listen to this music with your mother or the priest down the road in good conscious.

Every song is a unique mixture of jazz and funk with slight influences of hip hop and gospel mixed in to increase the soulful feeling of the music. The real delight is in the artists controlled use of these elements. "Songs For My Funeral" weaves its way in and out of freestyle jams that are clear and crystalline. Feelings and emotions are easily communicated through simple bass lines, piano and even guitar and horns. The experience is one of a balance between musical jam and clarity. Definitely music to play when the lights are set low or when enjoying your favorite *censored*tail as the sun sets. Each song has a distinct emotive feeling and with the right friend by your side listening to this music could easily turn into slipping into something a bit more comfortable...

If you are an established fan of funk, jazz or other soul music this little gem may prove quite the delight for you. If you have flirted with these musical forms and would like to catch up with a modern artist Nostalgia 77 is your band. The music is equally accessible to the established Soul / Hip Hop listener or the neophyte. Persons who have shied away from Jazz in the past due to

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its open and free song forms will find this album to be a nice starting point. Though the songs meander about in a soulful bliss the song structures are defined enough that the listener is easily lead forward never left wondering what exactly they are supposed to be following in the music.

Tru Thoughts Records remains a strong force in modern soul music and with the release of Nostalgia 77 they prove that they remain open to passing on to us the listeners the very best in the new progressive jazz and soul music field. Mixing classic techniques with current and modern grooves has never proven so invigorating and engaging as Nostalgia 77. Buy this album and feel the insignificant stress and worries of your life peel away in the face of the oncoming waves of funk and soul. Let the grooves move you. --- Malahki Horn

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