



NATURE • Dave's True Story

Trying to find a lyric on Nature that best represents the level of wit, intelligence, and craftsmanship that songwriter/guitarist Dave Cantor brings to the Dave's True Story party is a daunting task--not because examples are rare but because they are ubiquitous. Should I quote "Gunmetal sunrise / Sweet sight for these shunned eyes" or "Naked ambition / Underage edition" (from "Chasing The White Line Down") or maybe "I had breakfast with my father, in a downtown luncheonette / and we sat and eyed each other, with suspicion and regret" (from "The Everlasting No")?

The other problem with Dave's tunes is that they point up the unfinished quality of so much of what passes for great songwriting these days. Where else do you find the kind of un-showy alliteration, internal rhymes, and rhythmic strength that makes his work musical before a note of actual music is added? As with all the greats from Cole Porter to Chuck Berry, you can dance to a mere recitation of the words in a Dave's True Story song. And speaking of Cole Porter, pop music hasn't heard words this offhandedly literate since the forties. Though Nature doesn't sport anything like earlier Cantor titles "I'll Never Read Trollope Again" and "When Kafka Was The Rage," a man who references (and rhymes) Nepal and the Transvaal obviously reads more than Billboard.

All this is before we even get to DTS's singer, Kelly Flint, whose genius derives from her recognition that songs this well-constructed require little more than a beautiful, knowing voice with a perfect sense of pitch and rhythm to bring out the best in both singer and song. Like Mary Ford (of Les Paul &), Keely Smith, the under-appreciated Molly Felder (of Swan Dive), and Karen Carpenter, Kelly is one of those singers who becomes one with the song, needing no melismatic shenanigans to shore up a weak tune or iffy pipes. Given the quality of the irresistible, jazz-pop material and trusting the seductively gorgeous sound of her instrument she merely presents the tunes with quiet conviction.

Lest we forget, bassist Jeff Eyrich completes the basic (no pun intended) trio. And given the production chores, he has realized the first DTS record on which you can understand every finely-honed line. Less overtly jazzy and more serious than their earlier work (which is none the less essential for anyone who appreciates great songwriting and singing), Nature will hopefully expose the band to a worldwide audience, raising the musical bar for the benefit of all of us.

• Michael Ross • Pure Music