

September 12, 2013

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It's a Beautiful Day: Live at the Fillmore '68

When looking back at all the San Francisco bands who toiled the psychedelic scene of the late '60s/early '70s, *It's a Beautiful Day* seems to have taken a backseat to other more popular acts like the Grateful Dead, Santana, and Jefferson Airplane. Listening to their music here in 2013, it's kind of hard to imagine why this band didn't achieve superstar status. Led by the powerful vocals & soaring electric violin of David LaFlamme, *It's a Beautiful Day* combined pop, psychedelia, jazz, prog, folk, rock, and classical into a unique sound that peaked with their hit single "White Bird" in 1969, but by 1974 the band had all but split up, reforming in various incarnations from time to time before fully reuniting in 2000 with LaFlamme, his current wife Linda Baker LaFlamme, original drummer Val Fuentes, Gary Thomas on keyboards, guitarist Rob Espinosa, bassist Toby Gray, and percussionist Michael Prichard.



This particular concert was recorded at the famous Fillmore West in San Francisco in 1968, and captured them at the peak of their powers. Along with LaFlamme & Fuentes were vocalist Patti Santos, Linda Neska LaFlamme on keyboards (David's first wife...apparently he likes the name Linda), and bassist Mitchell Holman. As there was no guitar player in the band at this time, their music is rich with the dual female/male vocal attack, LaFlamme's energetic violin, and Linda's insistent organ textures. Psychedelic pop tracks like "Love For You" and "White Bird" contain some really great melodies and vocal harmonies, but here in the live setting all these songs are pushed to epic length and feature some spectacular violin & organ passages. "Wasted Union Blues" is like a meeting of Vanilla Fudge and Jefferson Airplane, while "Bombay Calling" is a moody anti-war piece whose main musical theme was borrowed by Deep Purple for their

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legendary song "Child in Time" which appeared on their *In Rock* album less than 2 years later. The epic, near 10-minute "Time Is" is littered with sizzling guitar & organ lines, a real treat for all the prog lovers in the house, and has a bass lick like the classic Animals track "We Gotta Get Out of This Place". Other highlights include the mysterious, gypsy/blues of "Changes" and the atmospheric rocker "Hot Summer Day", another song with addicting organ from Linda and soaring vocal interplay between David and Patti.

The sound quality on this vintage concert is quite good, and the informative DVD documentary contains plenty of interview segments with David LaFlamme & Fuentes, as well as some notable journalists, who talk about the history of the band and the San Francisco music scene back at the end of the '60s. Filled with some vintage live clips as well as more recent footage of the band, it's a nice little companion piece to the live CD. It's a shame that the booklet is somewhat bare bones other than two short essays and three photos, but overall this is a nice package documenting a fascinating band who never got the attention they deserved.

Track Listing

- 1) Love For You
- 2) Bulgaria (with Love For You reprise)
- 3) White Bird
- 4) Wasted Union Blues
- 5) Time Is
- 6) Countryside
- 7) Bombay Calling
- 8) Changes
- 9) Girl With No Eyes
- 10) Hot Summer Day

Bonus DVD-Documentary "The David LaFamme Story", which includes rare vintage live clips as well as more recent live footage of the band & interviews

Added: August 1st 2013

Reviewer: Pete Pardo

Score: ★★★★★

Related Link: David LaFlamme Website

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