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CD Review

Nils Lofgren

Old School

By Shawn Donohue

January 02, 2012



Grumpy-Old-Pissed-Off-Man might have been a more apt title for Nils Lofgren's newest solo album, *Old School*. He bluntly comes out and says as much via the title tracks first verse:

"Teens are hooked on drugs and the internet/cry life is rough we must forget/ Dad I'm going to the Mall dressed like a whore/Mama everyone is doing it and there's more/I need a 24/7 sexting cell/or I'll kill myself and see you in hell/Dad it's all your fault that my life sucks/oh and by the way I need a hundred bucks/Oh No ain't no old school anymore!"

Ignoring the fact Nils forgot completely what it means to be young and rebellious, who exactly is this song for? White suburban rich dads who just watched the latest Tim Allen debacle and are feeling their Viagra fueled oats? This opener is laughably bad and gets worse because after this verse it descends into a plea for the death penalty, no joke.

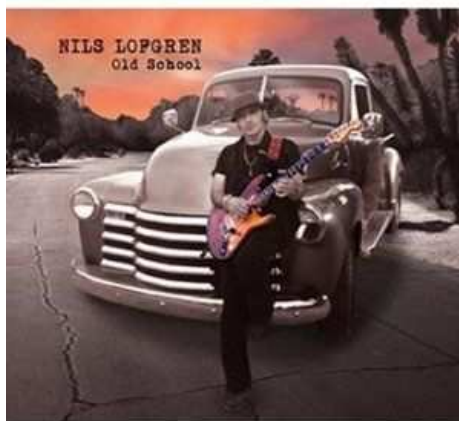
The sideman who has played with Neil Young and much more famously Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band, Nils has had mixed success with his solo ventures and nothing changes here.

When he goes into ballad land ("Love Stumbles On" "Irish Angel" and "Let Her Get Away") the singer gains levity and his off kilter voice sounds sincere and passionate. Yet when he is trying to rebel against those young whippersnappers ("Old School" "Ain't To Many Of Us Left" and "60 Is the New 18") he sounds like the psychotic neighbor who lost touch with reality about a decade ago.

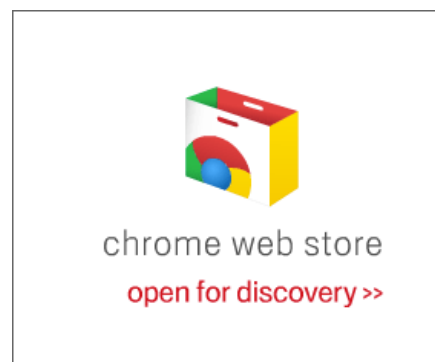
The albums blues workouts fall somewhere in-between those two levels, acting as a nice touch but nothing particularly engaging. What should be noted is the A+ production on this record, instruments sound lush and full, guitars ring in every channel. Pristine sound helps smooth over the abrasive lyrics of his old man "rockers" and help accentuate the delicate picking of his slower efforts, but a good studio sound can't save things completely.

Sure Nils may be decidedly *Old School*, but if you are looking for a new school way of hearing him in 2012, wait for the next E-Street tour as his sideman guitar work is still his best asset.

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I own every Nils album/CD he every put out (I think!) and I find this album not near his best certainly but in the top third! I'm not sure why your are put off by his opionated songs.....an old rocker can't express himself? Would you only approve of him if he wrote songs from the perspective of a 25 year old!

Maybe because I'm close to his age I appreciate it.

The bottom line he still rocks! He has the most unmistakable guitar tone...one of a kind. Ain't Too Many of us Left, Love Stumbles On, Why Me are my favorite tunes on this cd. Unlike you, I prefer to see Nils w/ his own band where he can shine as opposed to being in bubble wrap w/ Bruce (although he has gotten the chance to unleash more spectacular solo's on recent tours).....Craig.

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