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Nils Lofgren - 'Old School' (Vision Music)

CD Reviews

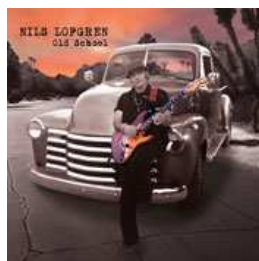
Written by Russ P

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Is there any word other than veteran to describe Nils Lofgren? Probably best known for being part of Bruce Springsteen's E-Street Band he's also worked with Lou Reed and Neil Young - most notably on Young's classic album 'After The Gold Rush'. But, rather than inferring that Nils is a little long in the tooth, the word veteran also springs to mind when listening to this album - who else but a veteran could write these world-wise lyrics? And who else but a veteran can play the guitar the way this guy can?

The title track 'Old School' has Nils in a feisty mood ranting at a world going down the tubes - thoughts that we all have as we get older - that things were better in the old days, standards are going downhill, manners are in short supply and the youth have no respect for their elders. And I'm with him for the most part. So the theme of getting older is set and carries on throughout this album. By turns the album is a love letter to the good old days and a piece of hate mail to the modern world. There are songs for past loves lost and songs of gratitude for the present.

The lack of humour in the opening track is balanced by its inclusion in the second track "...got STDs from group hot tubs". This is "60 is the new 18" and indeed Mr Lofgren is 60 so he knows what he's talking about and he tells us that, apart from his "titanium hips" he is still basically the same guy that he ever was and none the wiser.

'Miss You Ray' is a real heartfelt goodbye to another old school member - Ray Charles. Nils sounds in old voice himself channeling Keith Richards and Johnny Cash, which imbues the song with a lived-in character. In the same vein 'Ain't Too Many Of Us Left' are the healing words from a friend that enable Nils to literally get back up on his feet. Both lyrically and musically one can safely say that Neil Young is the inspiration here.

One of the highlights on the album is 'Just Because You Love Me' - an uplifting uptempo song with a dark underbelly - making it nowhere near as sappy as it sounds.

Nils' reflective mood continues on the following three tracks, which wrap up the album. 'Dream Big' is a parental guide on how to live life and has a feel that reminds me of Grace Jones and of David Bowie's 'Let's Dance'. 'Let Her Get Away' is a disconcertingly frank song to a loved one about a previous love - some thoughts you normally keep to yourself but Nils - he puts them in song. And finally 'Why Me' asks that eternal and unanswerable question - it's true - no one knows why the fuck we're here so, in the meantime, rewind back a couple of songs and heed the words of Nils "Dream big, work hard, stay humble".

<http://www.nilslofgren.com/>