



SECRET FRIEND: *Time Machine*

Steven Fox, who wrote these songs while working in PR in the Far East, doesn't really have a band. He's a compulsive songwriter. He got Willie Wisely, Kelly Jones and Linus of Hollywood to fill the group and record these songs which, by his own admission, were inspired by the Beach Boys, Beatles, Burt Bacharach and ELO. Fox has a David Myhr-like talent for lush pop melodies, and Wisely sings them with heart and soul. "Something About the Girl" begins with a Ben Folds like piano intro then raises the game with a Burt Bacharach by way of Explorers Club arrangement and Reade Pryor's deeply musical drums.

"Starting Today," which the Four Seasons might have sung, is the best song about inspiration since "25 or 6 to 4" and another mini-suite of imaginative beauty. "Never" finds Wisely using a surprising falsetto before Kelly breaks in like a ray of sunshine. Boy/girl harmony prevails. Kelly's "He'll Never Know" sounds like something she might have written. "Killing Time" is a Police-like stomper about murdering his girlfriend. It's all good.

Five stars.

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