

Mp3 William Hart Strecker - All This Dreaming

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Great Band, Great Vocals, Great Original Music.. 13 MP3 Songs ROCK: Roots Rock, POP: with Live-band Production Details: Welcome to Act II of William Hart Strecker's life. Sure, F. Scott Fitzgerald once famously said, "There are no second acts in American lives." In grinning defiance of that notion, Bill invites you to discover his latest CD, All This Dreaming, a work informed by a love of life...no matter how it is played out. Strictly speaking, if you're keeping score, this is the third act of Bill's life, the one in which an epiphany triggered by a near-death experience returns him to his earliest passion, music. As a youngster growing up on Long Island, Bill, the fifth of seven boys and girls, was persuaded to learn to play a musical instrument - a family tradition. (Bill's father was deaf and perhaps, Bill speculates, because he was unable to pursue his musical dreams, he wanted his kids to be musicians.) Unfortunately, the trombone was chosen for Bill, and he proved particularly inept at playing it. Turning to his vocal instrument, he began classical training and, by his teens, earning awards, including being named New York State's best high school tenor. A full scholarship for voice brought him to Baylor University. But as it did to an entire generation, rock and roll stole Bill's heart. "Roll Over Beethoven," and "Do You Want to be a Rock Roll Star?" would be the appropriate sound track selections at this juncture. Bill's 1972 band, New Hope (on Laurie Records, home of The Chiffons and Dion and the Belmonts) released a Strecker-penned single, "Green Green Grass/Oh My Lady" and embarked on a nationwide tour. Fame, however, remained beyond the band's grasp. Bill continued to perform, sharing the stage with the likes of Tom Rush, Steve Goodman, and Richie Havens. He recorded in sessions with Noel Paul Stooky of Peter, Paul and Mary. Stooky turned legendary manager Albert Grossman (Bob Dylan, Joan Baez) on to Bill and he holed up near Woodstock to record under Grossman's aegis but the relationship dissolved. Bill performed with Pure Prairie League, Commander Cody and his Lost Planet Airmen with Nicolette Larson, and the Dixie Diesels, an Austin, TX band fronted by Shawn Colvin. By the mid-1980's the demands of raising a family and the rigors of the bar-gig life of a musician began to wear on him. And so, the curtain came down on the first act. Landscape design became Bill's occupation in 1989 and his design and construction firm grew into a success. His music went to seed, one is tempted to say. But in fact, he never

stopped writing songs. And while he may not have realized it, he never lost the thirst for performing his music. It was simply not possible to design gardens, tend to growing offspring and be a working musician at the same time. The plot turn that closes out this second stanza of William Hart Stecker's life is the one that almost took his life. In October of 1998, returning in the evening from a meeting with a client, Bill's car left the road and hit a tree. He remembers being cut out of the wreckage and then...nothing. Twenty days or so later, he awoke from a coma in a hospital with broken bones, a destroyed lung and other internal injuries. He was unable to walk, or eat, or talk. A long and painful regimen of physical therapy lay ahead. It was during this arduous process that someone gave him a CD player and a couple of CDs to listen to during his therapy sessions. Inside the jewel case of one of them, BB King's *Deuces Wild*, he spotted a photograph of some of the musicians on the album, including Keith Richards and Mick Jagger. And there alongside them was Tommy Eyre, the keyboardist from Bill's old band. Not only did it bring tears to his eyes to see that after all those years his friend had persevered and built a successful career for himself, but it struck Bill as a sign. A sign that he was going to listen to the voice inside himself that had begun to tell him he had to give music one more try. Drew Zingg was the first of the new bandmates recruited by William Hart Strecker. The phenomenally talented guitarist who has recorded and toured with Steely Dan, Boz Scaggs, Michael McDonald and Lucy Kaplansky, among others, brought Bill together with the two musicians who form the songwriting and producing core of the band behind *All This Dreaming*, Chris Eminizer and Ken Rich. Eminizer, equally skilled on saxophone, guitar, keyboards and fleshing out Bill's lyrical inspirations, has recorded with Janet Jackson, Paul Simon and Julia Darling, and lately has been performing in Billy Joel and Twyla Tharp's "Movin' Out" on Broadway. Ken Rich (Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Julia Darling), originally brought in to play bass, evolved into the producer as well. On drums: Frank Vilardi, who has played with Rosanne Cash, Suzanne Vega, Rod Stewart, the Roches, Freedy Johnston, and many more. Rounding out this endowed ensemble is keyboardist George Laks, a longtime member of Lenny Kravitz's band who's worked with Joan Osborne and Natalie Merchant. So what sort of music emerged from the two weeks these kindred spirits spent writing and recording at Long View Farms in Massachusetts? "In this day and age, it would be called 'Americana,'" says Bill. "That's what I'm gathering." An amalgam of all the rock, blues, folk, alt-country, and pop William Hart Strecker has heard and sung over the years, *All This Dreaming* will trigger frissons of recognition: You may hear echoes of Boz Scaggs in "Don't Look Now," with its brass highlights and searing Drew Zingg solo "Hey Loretta"

might put you in mind of a "Rosalita"-like rave-up Bruce Springsteen could have assayed. Bill's vocal on "Ancient Lullaby," may have you thinking of a soulful Keith Richards ballad...with the rough edges planed. Can that be a pro-peace sentiment couched in the Weil/Brechtian cabaret arrangement of "Same Old Story?" Is that a little of the feel of "Lay Down Sally" in Bill's "Believe in You?" (Bill says he's sometimes compared to Eric Clapton. Or Tom Petty. Which is pleasing, since they're among his favorites.) "I'm a singer first and I write for my voice," says Bill. "I write for a singer. It's popular music, I'm trying to write popular music. Meaning I'm trying to get the thing out that's going to hit as many ears as it can." "Chris and I are meant for each other," he says of his collaborator. "There's a balance between lyrics and music. We each give the other something. We're trying to take a fresh approach to songwriting in today's market." Says Chris of Bill, "His voice is just amazing. You have to identify with it the first time you hear it. Full of heart, full of emotion. And he's a very nice person, a very sweet guy. He's a gas to be around. He's funny, He's a maniac. A lot of times in a business like this, it's more about getting along with people. Because there's tons of fabulous musicians out there. But not all of them are nice people. And these two guys (Bill and Ken) are nice people to be with and that's what keeps me coming back to work with them." "I respond to Bill's heart," says Ken Rich. "Consistently, especially vocally, every performance has something magical. It's astonishing to me. It's something you can't really teach to somebody or try and cultivate if it's just not there." "The charm of the record," Ken says, "is we went up to a barn for a couple of weeks and played as a band. We lived together for a couple of weeks and ate together. All the lead vocals on the record are vocals that Bill cut with the band, which is really exceptional these days." These days, with music lovers over thirty driving the music business, magazines like Tracks emerging to celebrate the "music built to last," and organically-grown phenomena like Norah Jones setting sales records, the time could not be more right for William Hart Strecker. The curtain rises on his third act when you break the seal on All This Dreaming. Standing ovations are sure to follow...

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