

REVIEW OF "MAGNOLIA" SEPIACHORD.COM

Either there's a secret underground of vintage Jazz acts (and the people who love them) in Portland, Oregon or that city is blessed to have two great bands. First we were lucky enough to hear the CD by The Stolen Sweets, now the Rose City gives us The Midnight Serenaders.

I'm no expert on jazz from the 1920's and 1930's. I'm not going to be able to catalogue how these versions of the venerable songs found on the CD "Magnolia" compare with earlier recordings. I choose to see this as a positive. Yes, all of these songs are venerable period compositions. But if we spend our time comparing contemporary bands to previous artists aren't we dooming them to being seen as nothing but dustier versions of earlier artists? This may be the best news about The Midnight Serenaders: you don't have to be an encyclopedia of jazz to love this recording. **All you have to do to love "Magnolia" is put it on.**

So put aside your preconceptions. Forget what you know or think you know. Don't get trapped in the petty game of categorizing every style you'll hear on this album. Sure there's hot jazz, western swing, crooners, and tin pan alley tunes... but do those labels really help you enjoy the music any more? Because if you're listening to these well crafted numbers you know that they're great no matter what you call them. That's what we should call this CD. Artist: The Midnight Serenaders. CD: "Magnolia" Category: Great.

It doesn't hurt that they start with such wonderful compositions, all of which date back to those years between the two World Wars. But many a great melody has had the life strangled out of it by clumsy performance. Have no fear. The Midnight Serenaders are blue ribbon musicians. They do these songs justice making each

one sparkle and shine. There's nothing stuffy or old fashioned about this collection. It's alive and radiant.

It's delightful to put on a CD that's so upbeat. This is the perfect recording to put on when you're feeling down. "Magnolia" is so upbeat it's positively buoyant. Putting it on is like going for a pleasant journey with old friends. You may know your destination but it's your companions that make the trip worthwhile. The band may have "midnight" in their name, but don't be fooled. These songs are less about smoky, late night dives than they are about bright, carefree summer Sundays. There's no particular place to go so you might as well enjoy yourself getting there, and The Midnight Serenaders are the perfect soundtrack for your journey.

If you're not a fan of vintage jazz but only a dabbler you may wonder why you should add another recording to your small collection. There are two reasons. First this is just a damn fine recording. Secondly the greatest sin of rock and roll was the codification of instrumentation. Rock prescribed the basic set up for what makes a band. This stipulation means that most rock bands are coming from the exact same place when they record a song. So rock covers all tend to sound the same. The glorious thing about bands exploring pre-rock music is that each one is like an orchestra in miniature. The musicians were all multi-instrumentalists so you never knew what you were in for. Each band can bring different instruments and arrangements to the table so that every song becomes their own. You may have heard other performers working with songs from the 20's and 30's but none of them will sound exactly like The Midnight Serenaders. The Hawaiian steel guitar alone sets this apart from most anything you listen too. To pull off this variety you have to be good. This band is better than good, they're skilled, talented and tight as a drum. You can't be sloppy and make music this good.