

ERIC VAN ARO – FRIENDS – “REVIEWS”

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CD REVIEW: Eric Van Aro - Friends

By [Francesco Emmanuele](#) - 04/26/06 - 07:12 PM EST

So, once again, never judge a book, or in this case a Cd by it's cover. The artwork on Eric Van Aro's latest release , 'Friends' is a drawing of a man, so I honestly thought it was classical music (don't ask me why!).

It turned out to be a pre/post-modern jazz album, with a latin influence, a funk song or two, some old jazz standard favourites, oh and a pop song here and there and wait a minute, a blues number as well.

So just what category should we put this guy in? How about just great adult contemporary music.

Eric is a certified jazz crooner, his mid-range voice is smooth, soft and heavy. He does great renditions of Stevie Wonder's 'He's Misstra Know-it-all'. He sings the entire horns section (and I mean the entire section!) of 'Pick up the pieces', that 70s funk classic written by R. Ball, H. Stuart and crew.

Track # 8, is 'Friends' by the Gods of Rock 'n Roll Led Zeppelin, however, it's completely funkied up. You can always tell an accomplished musician, when they can take a song and do it 'justice' by making that piece of music sound like their very own creation.

Van Aro also does songs by Gino Vannelli and Paula Cole. His own song 'The Painting in my heart' appears on this album as well, the groove is solid, jazzed up and funky. The lyrics are printed inside the CD jacket.

Van Aro also has a vast array of talented musicians who appear on this album (check out the sweet, blistering solo on 'Be Somebody'). It is clear to see that Eric is a seasoned musician, who knows how to make a song come alive, can interpret any artists' material in his own fashion, and sing it!

The album ends with a soft piano number, why is it that nothing gets the romance going as a jazz piano song? oh well, Eric's 'Friends' will be taking up a permanent spot in my CD player, so thanks Eric, you're a friend of mine.



www.jazzdimensions.de

Eric van Aro - "Friends"

Eric van Aro ist ein Gesangsinterpret mit ungeheurer Bandbreite. Von Pop über Jazz und Latin bis hin zu Rock reicht das Repertoire des aus einer namhaften italienisch-deutschen Künstlerfamilie stammenden Sängers mit der weichen Stimme.

Und so schwingt sich van Aro auf, seine Gesangsqualitäten unter Beweis zu stellen. Auf "Friends", seiner zweiten CD, widmet er sich mit seinen Musikerfreunden Flaviano Cuffari (dr), Massimo Scoca (b), Tony Casucelli (keys) und zahlreichen Gästen einem gediegenen Songmaterial, das Stevie Wonders "He's Misstra Know-It-All" ebenso umfasst, wie Paula Coles "Be Somebody" oder Gino Vannellis "Put Weight on my Shoulders".

Stets hört man van Aro seinen Jazzhintergrund an. Und singen kann er, und zwar ganz phantastisch – was er singt, erscheint nahezu egal, denn: stets hat er einen klaren, starken Ausdruck, springt in den jeweiligen Song hinein und macht ihn sich zu eigen. Es müssen also nicht immer Sängerinnen sein – hier ist die Alternative: Ein neuer männlicher Gesangstar mit einer ausgezeichneten Band.

Carina Prange



ARTICLE HANGOUT

musicNerve.com

USA

Italian/German Artist Eric Van Aro takes some well-known classics and originals and comes up with an appealing new album titled Friends.

Van Aro is a veteran in the entertainment business, working in several different facets over the years. All of his experience pays off on this collection of 12 jazz infused tracks. He has a great voice, filled with warmth and melody.

"He's Misstra Know-it-All" is a lively tune that has an intoxicating rhythm and rhyme to it while "Gershwin-King-Taylor Medley" is one of the more interesting adaptations of a pop medley turned into a jazz groove that you would ever hope to hear. Either you will love it or move on to the next track, there is no in between. "The Painting In My Heart" plays to the singer's strengths quite well; I found it to be one of the best tracks on the CD, and its quickly becoming one of my favorites and I think its one of his as well because it's the only song listed with the words in the CD sleeve. "Not The Boy Next Door" is superb as well, it has a nice rolling Latin flavoring punctuated by the signature Van Aro vocal stamp, at times he sounds as if he is ready to break into a scat (he saves that style of vocalization for "Pick Up The Pieces"), but stops and the tempo of the song changes. The title track is also a showcase for the singer and the band's musical prowess. The bass line drives the song along while the keyboards get down and funky. He sounds so relaxed and natural throughout the track, no doubt the soundtrack he sets the vocals to create that comfort zone. Speaking of highlights, the most prolific track on the album is "Be Somebody." The words are aimed straight for the heart; it's a slice of life and reality in between musical notes and the voice of an inspired artist. This one song really put the icing on the proverbial cake for me.

This kind of album requires a few listens before a concrete opinion emerges. For me, I liked it on the first spin but only after the third spin did it really hit home entirely. I 'heard' everything that made the recording what it is; I guess three really is the charm. Who ever said a jazz album was easy to interpret any way? You will not hear this writer ever say that. Van Aro has a fine group of musicians from Italy to accompany him, which besides his innate musical sense, makes this entire project such a success.

© Keith "MuzikMan" Hannaleck November 18, 2005

JAZZ

CD jazz

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Eric van Aro is a man with a multitude of talents. He has worked actively in theatre arts, been a producer and is familiar with working in mass media. But above all Eric is a singer. And how he can sing! Although van Aro lives in Switzerland he is Italian-German by birth. Eric's father is a German producer and his mother an Italian singer. And not just a singer but an actual star of the Italian stage for 60 years, Caterina Valente.

This record - and it's not the first in van Aro's discography, was made with the help of his own company, ERAKI Entertainment. The name of Eric's new album means a lot of different things. First of all, Friends - this is the name of the famous composition by the group, Led Zeppelin, which van Aro is performing in this project. Secondly, friends for Eric are both musicians whom he has invited to take part in the recording (notable amongst them the outstanding Swiss trumpeter, Franco Ambrosetti) and favourite melodies, some of which he has selected for recording in this project.

The titles on the album may even seem eclectic to some people. Besides Led Zeppelin there is also Stevie Wonder and Gino Vanelli, and songs from Chaka Khan's repertoire. The Gershwin fantasy, The Gershwin Taylor King Medley, carries us off to the Swing era of the 30's (exceptional work by Bruno de Filippi on the harmonica), and with Peter Allen's composition, Not The Boy Next Door, you are transported to Brazil. But this doesn't embarrass Eric: he has selected his

favourite music in spite of the styles and trends and performs it with love, feeling completely free in the music of whatever style and time his heart and mind respond to. I think that listeners' hearts and minds will also respond to this music and its interpretation by Eric van Aro and this means that the singer will gain new friends - and this is one more meaning of the name of this project.



Friends - Eric van Aro

Hier kommt einiges zusammen – die Schweiz und Italien; Gino Vannelli, Led Zeppelin und Stephen Sondheim; Catarina Valente und Chaka Khan...Eric van Aro, direkter Nachkomme der großen Entertainerin Catarina Valente, seines Zeichens Vokal-Akrobat und Songschreiber mit Heimstatt in der Schweiz und einem weitverzweigten italienischem Freundeskreis, stellte sich für seine neue Compact Disc ein wohlfeiles Sortiment diverser Fremd-Songs zusammen, deren schier grenzenloser Rahmen u.a. „Friends“ von den Led Zeppelin, „He´s Misstra Know It All“ von Stevie Wonder, Stephen Sondheim´s „Water Under The Bridge“, das schon von Chaka Khan vorgestellte „Miles Blowin´“, sowie (und natürlich ganz besonders...) „Put The Weight On My Shoulder“ des unvergleichlichen Gino Vannelli (dessen „Storm At Sunup“ Schallplatte immer noch das Ultimatum des weissen U-Musik-Schaffens darstellt) ein- und umschließt. Eric macht daraus sein ganz eigenes Programm – immer mit einer Portion des geschmeidigen Jazz, der mal mit ein wenig Latin („He´s Misstra...“ oder „Not The Boy Next Door“) oder Funk („Pick Up The Pieces“) angereichert wird, und so in jedem Moment seinen Swing behält. Das Hör-Ergebnis wirkt erquickend und bezieht zudem spannende Kurzweil durch die immer originellen Bearbeitungen – tauglich für die Advanced-Buzz-Buzzer-Version für ganz große Experten.

jms@soulsite.de 10.12.2005



Connecticut, USA

Gi Dussault Co-Host & Co-Producer Upper Room Radio Show: **You need to have this CD in your collection. For all music lovers, no excuse to not have it right now on your CD players. Thanks for the great CD**



Arkansas State University

Marty Scarbrough KASU Program Director **Great, unique and diverse selection of material!**



Warmambool , Victoria , Australia

MARK O'NEILL: **LOVE IT, FROM START TO FINISH. I GATHER THAT THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH WHAT WAS DONE TO THEIR MUSIC, VERY CREATIVE.**

RADIO RPM_FM Palafrugell , Spain

Rafel Corbi: **EXCEPCIONAL RELEASE. ERIC'S VOICE IS WITH NO DOUBT WONDERFUL AND FITS PERFECTLY INTO THE SONGS.**



Canberra, AUSTRALIA

Rob Robinson: **SO GOOD TO GET SOMETHING FRESH AND INNOVATIVE!**



AUSTRALIA

Michael Criddle: **THIS IS A GREAT CD!**

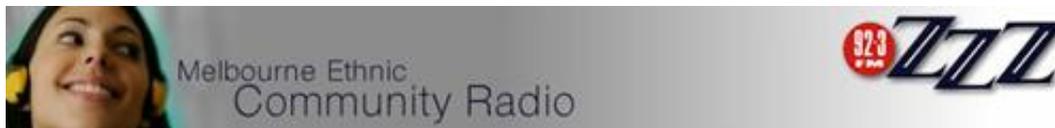


USA

J.Otis Williams: **ERIC VAN ARO'S "FRIENDS" IS TRULY A WINNER!**

2CX – AUSTRALIA

Sheril Berkovitch: **THIS MAN HAS A REALLY GOOD JAZZ VOICE, GREAT TIMING. THE SONGS ARE EXCELLENT CHOICES. CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS CD.**



Australia

Martin Wright: **A FASCINATING MIXTURE OF JAZZ, JAZZ LIKE AND CONTEMPORARY ADULT MUSIC; ALL PRESENTED IN A LUSH, RICH FORMAT, HIGHLIGHTING THE TALENTS OF ERIC VAN ARO AND HIS MUSICIANS. SOME OF THESE TRACKS ARE NEW, SOME FAMILIAR; OF THE LATTER MANY, SUCH AS WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE AND NOT THE BOY NEXT DOOR, HAVE HAD NEW LIFE BREATHED INTO THEM. I ENJOYED THEM ALL - FAVOURITES - DEFINITELY THE PAINTING IN MY HEART, GERSHWIN MEDLEY AND THE LATIN APPROACH TO PETER ALLEN'S NOT THE BOY NEXT BOY. AFTER ALL I AM AN AUSSIE.**



THOMAS FEIST: Eine echte Neuentdeckung für mich ist der Wahlschweizer Eric van Aro, Sohn der sicher ungleich bekannteren Caterina Valente und eines deutschen Musikproduzenten. Bereits in vielen künstlerischen Projekten aktiv, ist er vor allem als Sänger einem illustren Kreis von Jazz-Kennern bekannt. Und das nicht grundlos. Seine Stimme braucht keine Vergleiche zu scheuen. Ausdrucksstark wie flexibel hört man doch jederzeit als Grundton den des jazzbegeisterten Musikers heraus. Kein Wunder, sind doch die Arrangements zwischen Blues, Swing, Jazz und Funk angesiedelt, edel arrangiert und treffsicher instrumentalisiert. Neben dem Painting-Song (Nr. 4) aus van Aros Feder, der mich nicht wirklich ausflippen lässt, gibt es einen wilden Ritt durch Coverversionen zwischen Gershwin und Led Zeppelin. Gerade bei den sehr bekannten Stücken wie denen Gershwins fällt die durchaus als innovativ zu bezeichnende musikalische Umsetzung auf. So klingen diese Songs in heutigem Sound. Etwas Reminiszenz an die Altmeister des Genres - etwa die Thielmann'sche Art des Mundharmonikaspiels - kombiniert mit dem urbanen und zurückgelehnten Groove weltstädtischer Lounges und dem Funk in heutiger Soundgestalt. Dem Künstler hört man an, dass er den Spaß am Singen mit der notwendigen Ernsthaftigkeit verbindet. Gute Voraussetzungen für Kunst, die im besten Sinne Unterhaltung sein will. Fazit: Crossover der bisher ungehörten Sorte. Prädikat: Empfehlenswert.



Australia

Steve Morgan: **VERY SMOOTH AND SOME INTERESTING COVERS. SOME MAY SAY ADVENTUROUS. THE OPENING TRACK IS A STAND OUT!**



Netherlands

Alex Pijnen: **GREAT STUFF!**



USA

Bob Parzych: **LOVE THOSE VOCALS... UNIQUE VOICE, GREAT BACKING AND GREAT CHOICE OF TUNES!!!**



Luxemburg

Pascal Dorban: **THE SINGER IS AT EASE EITHER WITH A JAZZ TUNE OR A MORE POP ORIENTED TUNE , THE ALBUM IS SOMEWHAT THE RESULT OF A MIX BETWEEN POP AND JAZZ WHICH BETTER QUALIFIES THE ALBUM AS ' JAZZY'**



California USA

Keith West: **ERIC VAN ARO'S MUSIC FROM HIS LATEST CD "FRIENDS" IS REALLY ENJOYABLE!**

Keith Community Radio Scotland
United Kingdom

John Reid : **THIS IS A HIGHLY POLISHED C.D. VERY PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED, WITH SLICK, UNIQUE ARRANGEMENTS WITH JUST THE RIGHT NUANCES IN THE INTERPRETATION. HIGHLY ORIGINAL AND REFRESHING TO SAY THE LEAST. I CERTAINLY HOPE MR VAN ARO ASSEMBLES HIS "FRIENDS " A.S.A.P. AS HE ALLUDES TO IN HIS SLEEVE NOTES. AN EXCELLENT RECORDING!**