

## Force For Good Passions



Imagine if you will a recording of warm, uplifting, harmonious music dedicated to the happiness and encouragement of the human spirit. Let's give it a name; **Passions** by the duo **Force For Good**. The album is a 16 track collaboration between 12-string guitarist **Jonathan Sprout** and multi-instrumentalist **Joe Mennonna**. Each song's title is a trait or a state of being. Sprout is also a self-taught piano player while Mennonna is a widely known keyboard, wind, and acoustic multi-instrumentalist. But frankly, there are a lot of instruments being played by both. You can hear a bagpipe on one track and a brass band on another. Lots of surprises here. Their heartening music results in a peaceful, spiritual music experience.

The album begins with the track **Force**, as in an unseen One. It is eighteen seconds worth of flourish to get your attention, and it does. Next comes **Safe**, which I particularly liked during the time I write this when the world is quite a bit topsy turvy. The medium tempo tune is a comfort as is the simple melody of piano and acoustic guitar. The music has flow and the main theme swells with positive energies.

**Community** opens with the understated intro from a muted brass band. Mennonna is credited with playing a tuba on the cut. Then Mennonna's piano comes ahead and gently softens the music. I'm not big on brass, but somehow they make it work and the sound is melancholic as well as memorable. The brass band comes on full tilt in the introduction to **Refuge**, probably the best track on *Passions*. Joe's piano is heartfelt as it combines with beneficent brass instrumentation. There is a hopeful sound to it all. It is going to be okay. You can take heart in family, friends, and faith.

The optimistic voice of a cello opens the track **Happiness**. Unexpectedly, there are bagpipes on the song, but so appropriate. They don't appear until the end, but meanwhile the tune is harmonically rich in instrumentation and full of passion. The track called **Organic** seems to live up to its name. It is a march of sorts, bold, serious, and with a bit of pomp added to it.

**Mountains** is an obvious favorite for me as I live just at the foot of the Smoky Mountains. While I listened I could imagine the misty layers of white clouds, the tall black and green hemlocks and the gray limestone outcroppings as I traveled in my mind. This song was so entrancing I was surprised I wasn't covered in dew.

**Courage** is another remarkable tune with a great piano theme and added in is skilled electric guitar by **Leslie Chew**. There is a martial essence to the music. You might just want to get up and march along. The overall message is positivity and frankly, you can hear it throughout the entire album. Even if you travel to the beat of a different drum, you can perceive in this tune a sense that the world is on your side. Just for once.

**Hope** is, if anything, eponymous. If ever there was a time for hope, it is now. Joe and Jonathan's music never gets past the lively stage, but it does have a meaningful cadence kissed with a Celtic flavor. There is a hint of pennywhistle and Bodhran mixed with a refined piano theme that gives the piece an uplifting aire.

Sprout admits that although he is the main composer, or sketch artist of the duo, it is Mennonna that adds the primary colors. The album begins with the track *Force* and ends with the 33 second cue called *Good*. Yeah, I caught that. I could hear the accordion flourishes and the perhaps even the notes of Il Silencio inside the quick tune. Overall however, there is a subtlety to all the compositions. They don't yell to you "Come On!" as much as they say "Join us is creating a better, positive world." Force For Good's music apparently does its job without you even realizing it. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews