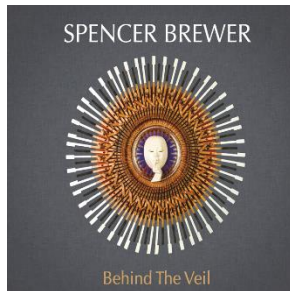


Spencer Brewer

Behind the Veil

Spencerbrewer.com



I went down to the basement and dug up a box of cassettes and found the ones I was looking for. They were pianist **Spencer Brewer's** albums. Late eighties. One called *Emerald* and the other *Portraits*. Both are New Age and reflective, including *Emerald*, that had friends Nancy Rumbel and Eric Tingstad on it for accompaniment. More on *Portraits* later. His latest release **Behind the Veil** is not that Spencer Brewer.

Rainy French weather is challenged by Spencer's opening number **Parasols in Paris**. What is used to conceal a timid smile and keep off the sun is hastily opened and the walk along the Seine continues in the pouring rain. Luckily, monsieur has to hold on close to the lady. This turn of the century waltz is an almost shy example of what is to come. Brewer throws his genres into a big bag and picks them out with his eyes closed. Jazz, New Age, contemporary. They are all here. Fortunately, the dozen tracks he renders are more than enjoyable and enduring. They are thought provoking.

Spencer reimagines his 1987 album and its title tune **Portraits** on this album. There seems to be a renewed splendor in the new version. The middle section revels in a bassy interlude that you can't ignore. Listening to this rendition makes it quite obvious that Brewer's music is timeless.

Myths and Legends sounds like Brewer searched for and found an old upright piano to honor his heroes. No Charge of the Light Brigade in this one, but a steady triumph of champions of the every day. Instead of the good guys riding off into the sunset, this anthem conjures up images of the nurse on the midnight shift, the teacher preparing lessons online and off. And the soldier that watches and waits. Listening to **Behind the Veil**, the title tune is a ponderous experience as we hear a time of changes, get a large book of experiences, and witness a midnight jazz theme that makes us wonder what's next. This is a chilly, nuanced piece of after dark music that starts out with, "Let me tell you a story". And then it takes a lifetime to convey.

Brewer takes on one of the Gershwin Brothers' more notable tunes, **Summertime**, and frankly, the living is easy. **Paul McCandless** uses a soprano sax to beat back the heat as Brewer's smoky piano score swelters on this early age jazz standard. This is time travel at its best people. Play it again, Spencer. **Remember When** is a nostalgic piece in his amiable style of jazz flirtations with contemporary influences. This is a private tune, one played for an old friend or a lost love, and most assuredly, a time gone by.

From Spencer's double disc album *Cinematic* come the last tune, **Walls that Move**. A tiny quartet of notes gets your attention. What is this all about? It is another dark, moody piece that changes the view just about the time you focus in. Yes, the tune lulls you for a bit, but then your eyes get opened wide. An infinity mirror has the same affect. What the music does is make you

think, re-evaluate, and ponder. It was another of my favorites. There are eleven more on the album just like it.

If you've never heard of Spencer Brewer, then take this album as an opportunity to get acquainted. All of my cassettes were painstakingly relegated to CD status some time ago. I knew I could find the cassettes quicker, but the music was never "put away". Great music just gets played and played. Spencer Brewer's *Behind the Veil* will stand out in the collection of musicians that have been there and back and made some memorable music along the way. The album is contemplative without being totally broody. Highly listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews