

REVIEW

written by Kelly O'Neil

ARTIST: Peter Woolston

ALBUM TITLE: **Hope On My Horizon**

RATING: ★★★★★ (out of 5)

New Zealander and globe trekker Peter Woolston adequately embodies his credo: Music With A Mission to Rock Your World. All of the songs featured on **Hope On My Horizon** are well written and professionally produced. Curiously though, to the casual listener only the title track and the closer are overtly spiritual in nature.

"Better Man Someday" holds potential to be a song of repentance, however this nicely developed rocker with great lyrical descriptions is instead about the mundane subject of punctuality – or lack thereof. The piece opens with dark minimalist accompaniment, like U2 in its heyday, before opening up with the entire band. One curious point is the obscurity of the first line, "I crawl in homebound treacle". Unless there is another slang definition that is completely foreign to the western hemisphere, the lyric is obtuse regardless of whether it describes a girlfriend or the pace of the evening commute. The same formula opening of quiet evolving into big occurs in "I Believe in You". This piece, while also a kicking rock number, is quite mechanical especially in the bridge with its heavy downbeats. The lyrics are exceptionally vague and universalist where the praiseworthy "you" could be a significant other, an athletic underdog or God.

Woolston writes and sings all of the songs on the album as well as plays guitar. He may want to consider a collaborator for his lyrics so that the true essence of his music and message is conveyed. "Dead Man Walking" boasts excellent vocals, grand and confident like early Sting, and nicely layered guitars. It is a catchy tune, but unlike the successful allusion in Jars of Clay's "Dead Man (Carry Me)" the connection between materialism, riches, fame and spiritualism in Woolston's song needs to be strengthened.

The title track starts with a medium tempo piano and acoustic guitar riff. The modern electric guitars embody a similar timbre to Switchfoot's production. After a humble beginning the song gradually crescendos and successfully conveys the message of hope by believing in something greater. The epitome of this uplifting tune is the wonderfully clever line, "I might crash and burn but I can stumble from the wreck / When nothing's ventured then that's just what I'll get". The hands down highlight of **Hope On My Horizon** is "Obsession". This bright, welcoming song is also unquestioningly about God but goes so far as to name-drop Jesus. Woolston's awesome vocals relate this personal piece with vitality about the man's calling and commitment to the Christ. A surge of excitement swells at his heartfelt outpouring with the underlying buzz guitar as Woolston expertly jumps into the falsetto range. His genuine love and soul purpose is perfectly captured in this final number.

Hope On My Horizon is an enjoyable modern rock album that will easily attract listeners worldwide. Woolston's songwriting talents are commendable as far as structure and adequate lyrical illustrations. He has the rock and roll part down; however, if he wishes to inject a deeper Christian message into his work without sounding preachy he may want to practice this art so the music truly conveys his mission.

Kelly O'Neil began her career in Public Relations in NYC with a diverse clientele including Foreigner, Jessica Simpson, Kevin Max, Jaci Velasquez and Sir James Galway. Her journalism career launched when she moved to Nashville and wrote for CCM, U and CrossWalk magazines. Kelly's freelancing credits include Reader's Digest, Pan Pipes, christianmusicplanet.com and christrock.com. In addition to contemporary Christian music, Kelly is well versed in classical and jazz, having played in numerous ensembles, most notably the Nashville Philharmonic.