

PAUL BEZOoyEN – “Today is the Day” (The Hermit’s Music, 2020)

By David Morrison

As he would readily admit – and indeed does so in the sleeve-notes of this new CD - Nanaimo folkie **Paul Bezooyen** is his own worst critic, and has frequently been prone to beating himself up over his craft, questioning his abilities as a songwriter, dissecting his songs to the Nth degree, and overdoing self-scrutiny in respect of his creative processes. Officially and logically known as ‘analysis paralysis,’ this is a genuine problem, especially for creative types, leading directly to such such as writer’s block. However, he appears to have gotten over it, hopefully permanently, at least judging by the extremely relaxed mood of *Today is the Day*.

Whether he wrote it about finally beating his analysis paralysis, or the breakthrough came because of it, I don’t know, but perhaps a clue lies in the title track? A song about attempting to not waste precious time, thereby containing the lyric *Today is the day to make the minutes count*, the line *Today is the day I take a second to see just what this life means to me* appears as a legend in the CD packaging, which in the context of Paul overcoming his insecurities appears to speak volumes.

So, what of the ‘freer’ Paul’s new offering? Well, not that he’s ever sounded anything but laidback sonically - so it’s still acoustic, gentle, and a tad whimsical – there does seem to be a slightly new compositional approach at play. For the first time, whether intentional or not there are echoes of Laurel Canyon influences – Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, James Taylor; Crosby, Stills & Nash et al – dwelling in the dreamy, sun-kissed arrangements. This is particularly evident on the opening cut, *Dreaming*, and – Paul is ever the romantic – on *My Lady and Me*. Extraordinarily, although knowing him as I do I doubt he’ll have heard it, the latter is reflective of the hazy grooviness of Black Sabbath’s *Planet Caravan*, being one of their very few acoustic or quieter tracks. *My lady and me go together like the shore and the sea*, Paul croons, sounding for all the world like classic America (the band), and later adding a really neat 95-second keyboard solo to add to the mellow vibes.

Other highlights include a nice, though brief shuffle of an instrumental entitled *How We Used to Dance*, the cheeky *Heart Song* with its irresistible *Doot doot doot doot doot-doo-doo* chorus, and the unabashedly romantic, though openly honest lyric of *I Lean on You*, where Paul admits to certain failings that definitely bear aspects of the dreaded analysis paralysis of which he speaks.

One element of the creation of *Today is the Day* that’ll have put Paul’s mind at ease is that he was surrounded by regular collaborators, friends all and principally stablemates from his label, **The Hermit’s Music**. The presence of his frequent creative partner, **Dave Kilbank**, looms large with various instruments on all but three tracks, and it’s Dave that Paul credits for helping him get out of his funk. Also present are bassist **Joe Spinelli**; percussionist **Jim Powell**; **Bob Enns** on bass, rhythm guitar, and vocals, plus the backing voices of **Megan Keene**, **Cali Massey**, **Lorraine Baron**, **Linda McCauley**, **Abby Grace** and **Brent Boehler**.

A lovely collection of songs, then, promoting the overarching theme of not letting life pass you by. Now that Paul has embraced that philosophy and seems to have stopped listening to his negative inner voice, more sweet tunes like these will presumably burst forth unhindered!