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The Doobie Brothers - The Captain And Me - Speakers Corner Records

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by Audiophile Audition | Nov 6, 2019 | Pop/Rock/World CD Reviews, SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews | 0 comments

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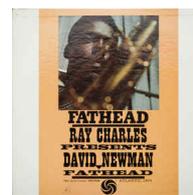


The Doobie Brothers - The Captain And Me - Warners Music BS 2694 (1973)/Speakers Corner Records (2019) 180-gram stereo vinyl 42:04 *****:



(Ton Johnston - guitar, ARP, vocals; Pat Simmons - guitar, ARP vocals; John Hartman - guitar, vocals, percussion; Tiran Porter - bass, vocals;

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Michael Hossack – dums, congas, percussion)

The Doobie Brothers began as a San Jose, California biker band. Their hard driving boogie rock made them the unofficial “house” band for Santa Cruz Hells Angels. Co-founder Tom Johnston’s rhythmic guitar and crystalline voice became a signature for the band. Pat Simmons’ finger-picking guitar technique and country-flavored vocals complemented Johnston. Their self-titled debut (1971) was more acoustic and failed to generate significant attention. But they continued to build a following as a live act. *Toulouse Street* (1972) was a breakthrough with two charting singles, “Listen To The Music” and “Jesus Is Just Alright”. The Doobie Brothers have endured several lineup changes, beginning with their second album. It did not slow the momentum of this hard rockin’ outfit. *The Captain And Me* (1973) represented a crescendo. The album was certified double platinum. Two memorable hits, “Long Train Runnin’” and “China Grove” garnered substantial radio play. Throughout the decade, the band released a new album nearly every year. With Johnston and Simmons as anchors, The Doobie Brothers became an ongoing rock institution and still tour.

Speakers Corner Records has released a re-mastered 180-gram vinyl of *The Captain And Me*. It is abundantly clear that The Doobie Brothers are on a creative roll. Additionally, they have cultivated a polished studio sound. Side One opens with a melodic country rocker, “Natural Thing”. The addition of ARP synthesizers (programmed by Malcolm Cecil and Robert Margoueff) counter the gritty drumming and percussion. This effect can be felt on the layered bridge. If there is a quintessential Doobies song, “Long Train Runnin’” may be it. Johnston’s formidable voice frames the cool rocking attitude with hard strumming guitars, funky tight drum and conga rhythm with jaunty bass. The arrangement is flawless, it defines what a hit song should be. A harmonica solo adds a touch of rawness to the jam. Incredibly, another classic number, “China Grove” follows. An infectious opening rock guitar is countered by muscular piano riffs by Bill Payne (Little Feat). Anyone listening to this tune will jump out of their seat. It has a Southern rock-boogie template that resonates. There is a terrific bridge with ethereal, wordless backup vocals. In an appealing change-of-pace, “Dark Eyed Cajun Woman” is a medium-tempo blues piece that feels like a tribute to B.B. King. An electric piano helps to shape the groove and Johnston executes a nimble solo. Strings (arranged by Nick DeCaro) offer a lush ambience. After four Johnstone compositions, Simmons gets the spotlight on “Clear As The Driven Snow”. His adroit finger picking guitar style and clear tenor distill a backyard mellow vibe. Instrumentally, there is a distinct up tempo transition to a rock inflection that is compelling. The band returns to the opening chords and another gritty



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shift.

Side Two explodes with another signature percussive rocking cut, “Without You”. All of the Doobie elements are present, tempo-driven guitars (including a nice solo on the bridge), stirring lead vocals, harmonies and a general feeling of a live performance. It is a formula that simply works every time. “South City Midnight Lady” is a lyrical, flowing country reflection. Johnston’s vocals are relaxed and the romantic context is different. Jeff “Skunk” Baxter (who would be a member of the band for a period) adds some pedal steel accents. The ending features a flexible chord progression. On “Evil Woman”, there is an edgier blues rock prominence with almost heavy-metal guitar. Johnston’s howling vocals tell a cautionary love tale. Before “Ukiah” begins there is a lively 0:48 acoustic guitar instrumental by Simmons. Then the band transitions into a toe-tapping arrangement with distorted electric guitars and aggressive tempos. The title track is familiar counter-flavored rock with soaring vocals and trademark percussive Doobie jamming.

Speakers Corner Records has done a stellar job in re-mastering *The Captain And Me* to 180-gram vinyl. All of Ted Templeton’s rich production is captured with excellent stereo separation and precise mixing levels. Johnston’s voice has a balance of smooth and raw elements. There is a live energy to the recording that aptly showcases early Doobies. The hi-gloss gatefold is top-notch. Rock aficionados will really enjoy this vinyl release.

TrackList:

Side One:

Natural Thing

Log Train Runnin’

China Grove

Dark Eyed Cajun Woman

Clear As The Driven Snow

Side Two:

Without You

South City Midnight Lady

Evil Woman

Ukiah

The Captain And Me

—Robbie Gerson

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