

Lucky To Be Me Liner Notes – Tom Rust

If this is the first time you've heard Tom Rust, here are the things you'll discover, and even love, after listening to this CD.

For one, his voice. He has a voice from another world ago in music. It's not a voice that requires auto-tuning or audio tricks; it's not a voice you want to bury in the background. It's a voice that can move effortlessly from avuncular to vulnerable, from reflective to assertive.

For another, a song he wants to sing is a song he has lived. And his instincts for finding those songs are as keen as his process for singing them. He says that both have sharpened with age. "I have to believe what I'm singing about and then it's a case of understanding the melody, timing, and intonation, where you can breathe, and figuring what key."

And now, here are some things you won't learn about Tom Rust from listening to this CD, but they might help complete the picture of this singer. (I didn't know most of this until recently, and I've been featuring him for more than a decade on my radio program.)

He plays the tenor sax.

He lives on a 57-foot traditional narrow boat on the Regents Canal.

He is a Laurel and Hardy fan.

Tom Rust's previous two CD's (*Are We There Yet?* and *Saints & Singers*) were piano trio albums that gave him plenty of space to swing, croon, and pluck songs from almost every popular music category. This new CD is more personal, intimate, and a lot more risky. This CD is just Tom and one of the UK's veteran jazz pianists. No bass riffs,

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no drum solos, no place to hide. And as much as we think of this as a new Tom Rust CD, in Tom's mind it's also very much his homage to the two revered, iconic Tony Bennett/Bill Evans albums.

If you set the bar and the stakes that high, you'd better find a damned good pianist and put together a damned good selection of songs.

Let's deal with the former first. "I was looking for a pianist but one with a keen sense of harmony," Tom says. "And John Horler is often referred to as the UK's Bill Evans." (A very handy comparison under the circumstances.) Horler's resume is long, and CD liner notes have to fit in a very small space, so I'm just going to namedrop a few from his stellar career: Sir John Dankworth and Dame Cleo Laine. John was their pianist for a couple of decades. And how about a few recognizable musicians on my side of the pond? Maynard Ferguson, Chet Baker, Bob Brookmyer, Clark Terry, Pepper Adams, and on and on.

Now for the songs, songs Tom has lived in. The first, the title song, tells you a lot about this man. His rendition of *Lucky to Be Me* made me imagine Tom in a street scene tracking-shot from an old MGM musical, greeting passers by, dancing with children, all the while declaring he's open for business, the business of spreading lyrics and music and joy.

Milestones is Tom's loving tribute to Mark Murphy, a major influence on Tom. He admires the fact that Murphy's "playfulness, his interpretation, and authenticity are a real joy." Singing and scatting the propulsive Mark Murphy lyrics, Tom and John turn this Miles Davis classic into an exultant anthem.

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Tom turns from torrid to tender with the sweet, fatherly advice of *Try Your Wings*.” Tom has two kids, so I get a sense of direct address in this song. I personally am crazy about John’s here-and-there re-harmonizing piano under Tom’s first chorus. John’s solo is as tender as the moment.

Stolen Moments is a classic Oliver Nelson tune which a number of singers have recorded using Mark Murphy’s lyrics. Tom is the only vocalist in the world to sing the lyrics on this CD – because he wrote them. He was circumspect with me about this song. “It’s definitely a case of ‘sing what you know.’” We left it there.

This is not a Mark Murphy album per se but I’ve got to mention his name again. Tom explained, when he heard Murphy sing Billy Eckstine’s *Blues, You’re The Mother of Sin*, he knew he had to sing it. And he sings the hell out of it.

I played Tom’s version of *We’ve Got A World That Swings* on my show one week and afterwards all I could say was, “Yeah, he definitely does.”

We’ve all heard a million versions of *Just One of Those Things*. I urge you to listen to one more – this version. In under three minutes, he moves fluidly from wounded heartbreak to a Cole Porter insouciant shrug. And Horler’s solo could lift anyone’s drooping spirits.

Man In The Looking Glass is one of those reflective (excuse the pun) songs a singer has to grow into. It’s a matter of age and experience and perspective. We get to eavesdrop on Tom’s inner life here. And we, too, come away with a smile.

Tom recorded *I Keep Going Back To Joe’s* on his second CD. And now here’s that song again. He says it’s a song he keeps rediscovering, adding, “Never sing a song

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the same way twice.” On this trip to Joe’s, it’s a sadder but wiser Tom, still hopeful, yes, but even more painfully resigned to the fact that, “Chances are you’ll never show.”

Horler’s solo is something out of a noir film; I could imagine a smoky room, the click of glasses, the murmurs of low voices.

The CD ends with *Dreams Are All I Have Of You*, a song John Horler has played for years and brought to Tom. It’s a curious, seldom-recorded song dappled with illusions, fantasies, hopes, and regret all bound by a dark and spare melody. A daring choice. A mature artist.

More than ever this world is in need of artists – singers and musicians – of distinct voices and positive spirits. It has been a continual pleasure to play Tom Rust’s music for my radio audience. They’re in for a new treat. So are you.

H. William Stine
Host, *Turntable For One*
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