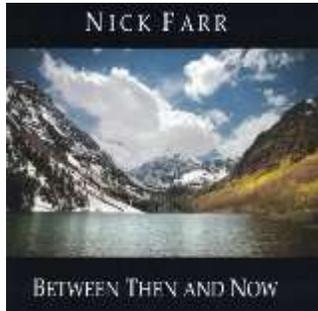


Nick Farr
Between Now and Then
Riverboy Records

The Thousand Tune Journey



I wonder how difficult the choices were for pianist and composer **Nick Farr** when he chose what tracks to put on his latest offering **Between Then and Now**. The album is a musical chronology of Nick's travels and accomplishments to date. I've listened and reviewed a number of Nick's albums and he never disappoints. On this particular album of twelve stylistic tunes using more than a dozen talented cohorts, he has no choice but to mix his genres in order to tell the story. There is plenty of jazzy tunes, one of Nick's specialties, but there is also some cinematic, Celtic and what I can only categorize as MOR. That is "Middle of the Road" for you younger listeners. But then again, there are a lot of roads.

Thinking of You started the album out on a bright note and it reminded me of something I might have heard in the sixties. A TV theme song perhaps, but a memorable tune nonetheless. Once you hear it, it stays with you. It's lighthearted and sunny. Nick offers up some moody piano and cohesive horn in the tune **Late Night Rendezvous**. The tune suggests that somewhere there is a silver moon reflecting on water, wine is shared, and hearts are uniting. The atmosphere is sultry and sensual.

A New Beginning is a gentle contemporary/jazz tune that has a lot of verve and joy. This is the anthem for a change in one's life. A turn of the page, a fresh start is the only objective. Farr's piano is focused and energizing. Perhaps this is a halfway point in the journey.

There are a couple of tunes that Nick positions in the Celtic bracket, namely **Celtic Shores** and **Whip-poor-will**. In the eighteenth century a quarter of a million Irish sailed west in search of a better life, landing in America and Canada. Every single one yearned for the return to Celtic Shores. Nick's gentle tune is an echo of hearts that ached to see those green hills just one more time. Whip-poor-will is a sweet ballad that speaks of hot summer nights, sparkling stars, and the call of the whip-poor-will, a voice that is ever hopeful. Rare is the call ever answered.

Two of the more poignant tunes on *Between Then and Now* are **Trail of Tears** and **Snow Soldiers**. Both feature strong orchestration and bold melodies. Trail of Tears of course, is the commemoration of a decade where Native Americans from the south east were driven from their lands and forced to march west to Oklahoma. Along the way thousands perished. Farr's orchestration reminds me of the work of John Williams on his Cowboys soundtrack for the motion picture of the same name. The movement is strong, gallant, and passionate, but with an obvious sense of sorrow. Snow Soldiers was penned by Farr during a bout with illness, maybe even delirium. It opens with the snappy resonance of the snare drum. It evokes the scenario of a battle in winter between two great armies, their clash, and their outcome, all chronicled on this thrilling, textured encounter where snow and emotion swirl about like a northern flurry.

The final cut, **Aurora Green** has sort of an edgy, urban opening to it, but there's nothing wrong with that. The upbeat song segues into a pensive refrain and then back to more energy. Is it the magic of the northern lights or the positive ending to a miraculous journey? The song is a celebration, but it's not the end.

For this native of South Carolina that started on piano at the age of five, he's come a long way, but the music on *Between Then and Now* assures me that the journey of this talented song writer and musician is far from over. His composition skills are off the charts with this retrospective into the life of a fortunate, if not blessed existence. I can't wait to hear where he goes next. Highly recommended.

Rating: Very good+