



Band:Raz  
Band  
Title:[Madison Park](#)  
Reviewed  
By:[Lisa Torem](#)  
Date  
Published  
:23/12/2015  
Label:[Gonzo Multimedia](#)  
Format:CD  
Release  
Year:2015

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The Raz Band consists of: drummer Jeff Hutchinson, guitarists Michael Raz Rescigno and Joey Molland on guitars, Jim Manzo on bass, Joe Vitale on keys and the whole shebang on vocals. Rescigno penned nine of the sixteen tracks; the remaining ones are co-written by various band members (including Rescigno) and 'Love Me Do' was written solely by Molland. The songwriting is one of the most outstanding characteristics of 'Madison Park' because the varied structures allow for much ingenuity and freedom, from which the entire band benefits.

'Madison Park' is a phenomenal album from start to finish and one in which the Raz Band shines in terms of performance and originality and even as they veer off in a variety of musical directions, the ideas always remain strong.

The second longest song, '\$1.50 For Your Love' takes off like gangbusters and soon harmonious horns flirt with classic rock riffs. You get introduced early to a smart collection of male voices and the call and response between vocals and horns keeps the pace engaging and solid. "Time is short, time is swift/It doesn't wait for a kiss..." you get the picture, it's guy speak for, "so I guess we're in a relationship?" The outro ties it up like a neat pair of suspenders.

'What Love Can Do' features twin guitars, 1960's style beats and catchy phrases. You have been hijacked to pop heaven. 'The Road of Love' has contagious punk overtones, yet recalls the spirit and chord progressions of the Dave Clark Five. "You hold me tight and kiss me deep." This is another story told concisely. No fillers here.

Life toughens up a bit as they bite into 'Say Ya Love Me'. "You think I can't see through your eyes/You don't even know I'm alive." You'll remember the deep, passionate riffery and how it finely offsets the bittersweet theme.

'Time Marches On' intelligently pays respect to the late George Harrison. You'll hear spoken and instrumental references some of his best and most unforgettable work, so listen up and pay your respects. You may recall that Joey Molland, of Badfinger, was signed to the Beatles' Apple Record Label. Although he is not listed as the songwriter, perhaps Molland pulled from some precious memories during the inspirational stage...

Embrace the tenderness of 'You're My Love'- "When you wrap your arms around me, I can see the sky," a plaintive voice croons on top of a folk guitar. This is a simple but deeply romantic tune. In contrast, 'Searching Forever' is an intriguing fusion of classic rock and new wave.

You may find yourself swaying to the lovely meter and heartfelt theme of 'You're the Magic', which was a cow-rite by Molland and Rescigno. Then the Zydeco-infused 'The

Paths That We Take' drives home its own brand of philosophy with a "Big Easy" wisdom.

As you're careening down that path, adjust your mirrors and buckle up. 'Start Your Engines' will accelerate your pulse rate. The thrashing guitars and rambling keyboards work together to celebrate fast cars, white flags and Mario Andretti and will attempt to answer the main question: "Whatcha gonna do when you kiss the wall?" Ouch!

"You tell me that you love me, but you're losing your brain..." Love is a touch more complicated than parallel parking at the speedway. Some of the best electric guitar work appears here on 'You Don't Know a Thing' but there's plenty of room for rumination, too. You'll be mouthing the acerbic lyrics in no time.

It may be the longest tune, but 'Barbara Operator' keeps the message clear and focused right away. The poor guy tries in vain to grab the attention of his love interest, but technology or perhaps basic indifference block his moves. The terrific West Indies flavour adds to the unrequited substance.

Horns are on full force for 'High School Reunion' where the men discover "grown up versions of kids I once knew." The bright non-sequitors: "He burned down his house; he's got five kids as well..." paint dynamic word pictures. This is a great example of how the band works so well together, too, with every player giving his all.

Molland's 'Love Me Do' features exciting drum fills and raw vocals. It looks like the Raz Band will find any excuse to jam, but songwriter Molland really nailed the format and genre here. He hits the bull's eye with solid lyrics and life-affirming riffs.

Vitale's use of metaphor blows the most cerebral mind on 'Shoot Em Up'. "When my guitar's burning" is one example of how he focuses in on truly primal emotion. It's time for the children to speak up on the closer, 'When Dogs Fly South'. This song about the ups and downs of rock and roll life is equal parts comical, cynical and riveting: "Joey Molland showed us some stuff/Even that wasn't enough..." It's sort of a tribute to all musicians out there that remain committed to their craft despite

obstacles that may befall them.

Next year the Raz Band with Joey Molland and Joe Vitale will perform in England and will return to the studio to record another album, but 'Madison Park' will keep you very entertained until the next one. Keep them on your radar.