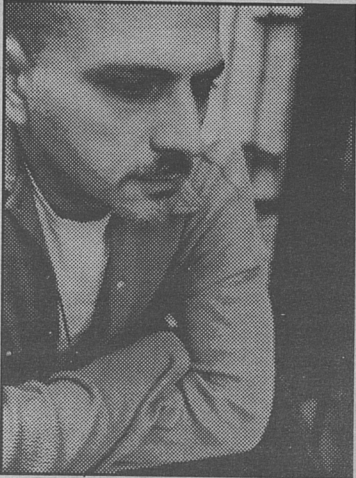


Positively Not Quite

REVIEW BY WALTER I. ZEICHNER



Self-described writer, actor, singer and master juggler Paul Lockwood grew up writing stories and plays in Chicago, then lived in New York for 19 years before leaving for Pittsburgh. Lockwood's musical background ranges from off-off-Broadway to dance music, his days jobs from radio DJ to screenwriter on a Sundance semifinalist project.

Positive, his first solo CD, reflects a little of that diversity, but generally, the songs are about life as a gay man and as an HIV+ gay man coming to terms with his situation. His personal experience of gay culture is evident in the lyrics and in the musical style on *Positive*.

I wanted to like this CD. In fact, I wanted to love it... but I don't. I respect the work that went into it, the heart, but musically, it just doesn't do it for me.

As a whole, the work brings many adjectives to mind: funk, mechanical, cliché, trite, predictable, sincere. There is definitely a funk/drum machine groove thang going on here. It works for moments, but becomes repetitive and loses oomph pretty fast. I must admit to a bias against drum machines; I think they are great for composing, but when it comes to actual performance, a real live drummer moves me more.

Musically, *Positive* is competent, with good production values. We are reminded often, however, that this is a small-scale production and a lot of electronic equipment has been involved in processing these sounds.

The vocals are frustrating for me. Paul's voice is nice enough, but somehow, there is no transcendent musical quality. Neither the beat nor the words hooked me. There is a very George Michael quality to the vocals, which, along with the New York accent, did not draw me into the music. Rather, it

kept me feeling distant from the lyrics. He also uses just enough reverb to remind me of Elton John's work in the 1970s.

The lyrics are cliché. I listened to each song hoping for more originality but I found the same formulaic quality throughout. "It's been hard for you to get beyond the pain, now baby. And giving time's all I can do to open up your shutdown heart now, baby."

Lockwood is sincere in wanting to communicate things that matter to him, pieces of his life experience, but that sincerity is lost in lackluster rhythms and lyrics.

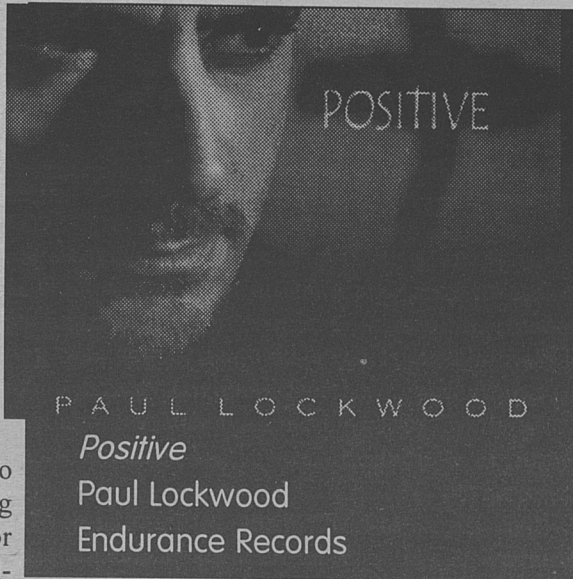
The title song, "Positive," is about being HIV+. "One word, given new meaning, has taken me, and changed all my feelings about life. About love. About time." Being HIV+ is a huge part of the artist's life, but this song doesn't take us deeply into his life or feelings—it just repeats clichés. Even cliché can work, occasionally, but in this instance, it doesn't.

There is a good piano riff in "You Know The Way," although it dissolves into synthesized dreck. There are also some good rhythm hooks throughout the album, but they

are repetitious rather than leading into something tasty.

I did like "Found a Cure." Musically, it is the most interesting on the CD, and lyrically, it is the most engaging. "Ooh, for loneliness, I promise this, I promise this. For all your hopes and all your empty dreams, coming at you is a sure thing." It's still cliché, but this time around, the lyric and the musical groove work.

All this being said about the CD, I would love to see Lockwood perform in a small venue with just his guitar and a microphone. I imagine that, without the pressure of "trying to be meaningful" that I detect on the CD, he is probably quite an engaging performer: the kind who can noodle around on his guitar, with no one listening, and sound pretty good. ▼



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The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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Feel free to contact us anytime to find out more about the community center project and how you can support our cause!

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