

Tony McLaren's New CD has More Chops Than the Local Carneceria

CD Review by Jimi Yamagishi
Music Reporter

Back when I was a kid, McLaren meant fast, powerful, legendary sports cars. Tony McLaren spells his name a little differently, but the attitude is the same: fast, powerful GUITAR tones. The perfect soundtrack for a sporting drive up Mulholland, or a quick jaunt on PCH.

"Digital Domain," "Big Bang," "Back in the Big City" and "Quantum Leap" all qualify for full-throttle 5-speed fun, but "Spontaneous Combustion" could almost be a tribute to "Freeway Jam" (from the ORIGINAL Beck) and has the same classic vibe and rich soaring tone. The steady, solid drive of "Hail Bop" feels like a wind-in-your-hair-kick-it-into-cruise-control ride up I-5.

But Tony's no one trick pony. The funky groove and guitar-induced animal sounds of "Guitar Safari" are a showcase of McLaren's broad palette of texture and color with his instrument. "Forever Yours" and "When Worlds Collide" provide a light pop touch to this collection, while "Hold On" is reminiscent of the great 70's progressive rock ballads, with a contemporary touch. Of special interest (and incidentally very clearly stated on the liner notes) is the fact that no keyboards or synthesizers were used on this project. The wide range of sounds come from Tony's mastery of the instrument and his use of effects. From the bright voice of his acoustic guitar work to the overdriven power of full-tilt electric guitar, his sonic vocabulary speaks from a place of understanding both the language and heart of the guitar itself.

Overall, "Big Bang" is a very well-produced disc, featuring some of the best session players in L.A. contributing to McLaren's vision.

Songs that are primarily a vehicle to deliver great instrumental work are not for everyone. Nevertheless, being one of the thousands of six-string slingers in this city alone, you can be sure "Big Bang" will be in my CD player for a long time as I try to capture some of his magic for myself! In this town overflowing with guitar players, Tony McLaren's "Big Bang" is a fine collection with more chops than the local carneceria. Pick one up at cdbaby.com.

