

TONY DESARE TUNES IN TO THE GOLDEN ERA OF RADIO ON NEW TELARC RELEASE

Radio Show captures the magic of the 20th century wave

For most of the 20th century, well before the dawn of the digital age, radio was the primary channel for popular music of every kind. More than just a means to transmit sound on a wave to remote locations, radio created an intimate entertainment experience, a fraternal atmosphere wherein the music and everyone associated with it became a friend to the listener.

Singer-pianist Tony DeSare, a child of the '80s and a member of what is perhaps the last generation to witness the direct and powerful influence of radio on 20th century popular culture, recaptures that golden age on his new Telarc recording, *Radio Show*. The album is set for release on January 20, 2009.

Radio Show embraces a variety of eras in American popular music, all tied together by the voices of radio announcers who set the tone for each individual track and the recording as a whole. Most prominent and diverse among the announcers is former *Saturday Night Live* comic and longtime radio personality Joe Piscopo. "He has an amazing, dynamic voice, and he understands all of these radio eras and styles so well," says DeSare. "He gave me a 1950s rock and roll DJ, a late-night jazz DJ, a 1970s AM radio DJ and a talk radio host. He's immensely talented in his ability to change his voice and move in and out of different characters."

More than just a collection of period songs with clever intros, though, *Radio Show* offers up a historical retrospective of the intimate relationship between the music, the listener and the magic medium that brought them together.

The idea came from some old Frank Sinatra recordings in DeSare's collection that captured the iconic singer in his early years, performing for radio broadcasts during World War II. "Radio created an atmosphere in which to frame the songs," says DeSare. "You'd hear Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Judy Garland or any other prominent singer of the day, all singing each others songs, whatever was the hit of the week. In that same way, I wanted to create my own modern-day radio show on a record, where I could sing any song from any artist or any generation, and do it with my own arrangement. I've included songs from the '30s all the way through the '80s. I wanted to make a statement about pop music as a whole, and more specifically, about 20th century pop music."

The album opens with a World War II-era orchestral fanfare and voiceover intro, followed by a big band rendition of the Harold Arlen/Ted Koehler classic, "Get Happy," a track loaded with punchy horn riffs and Hammond B3 organ. "By putting the verse in front of the chorus, I've reframed the song a bit," says DeSare. "It almost comes across like the opening number in a gospel revival."

The following track, the smooth and easygoing "A Little Bit Closer," is one of five tunes penned by DeSare – all of which fit seamlessly with the generational touchstones throughout the recording.

He injects a bossa vibe into “Bizarre Love Triangle,” a piece originally recorded by New Order in 1986 and rearranged here to include jazz chanteuse Jane Monheit (both she and DeSare deliver one of the verses in Portuguese). “I always thought this song would make a great duet,” says DeSare. “It wasn’t written that way originally, but I had this thought that if the lines were swapped within the song, like a real conversation about a relationship, it could work really well.”

DeSare’s upbeat take on the Hoagy Carmichael/Sidney Arodin 1930 chestnut, “Lazy River,” is based on an arrangement recorded by Bobby Darin in 1961. “Darin basically rewrote the melody,” says DeSare. “Part of that song is a nod to his style, and the ending sounds a bit like ‘Mack the Knife,’ so you could say this track is a tribute to both the song itself and to Bobby Darin.”

The swing version of “Easy Lover,” the 1984 pop duet between Genesis frontman Phil Collins and Earth Wind & Fire alum Phillip Bailey, presented a stylistic challenge, says DeSare. “When you listen to the original, it’s just not designed to be a swing song, really,” he says. “I just took the original melody and the lyric, and I had to reinvent everything else. My goal was to make it like a Count Basie-type swing tune.”

One of the most powerful moments on *Radio Show* is DeSare’s stirring rendition of Bob Dylan’s seminal protest song, “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” prefaced by a montage of quick sound bites from the decades leading up to the 1960s. “I had played that song live a few times, and it’s a really powerful statement,” says DeSare. “Dylan’s original version – one guitar, one harmonica, one voice – is very much of the ‘60s. But if you reframe the tune with piano and sing it in a different way in a different key, it sounds like an entirely new song.”

While much of DeSare’s career to date has been about doing his part to preserve the Great American Songbook, he maintains that that canon could be more broadly defined as the 20th century grows smaller in the rearview mirror. “Most of the great singers of the 20th century are gone,” he says. “But there’s a new generation of people, including myself, who are writing and recording in this genre that has just as much to do with a particular style as a particular song catalog. With *Radio Show*, I wanted to open this style up to songs that are not just limited to the Great American Songbook. The idea is to look at this style of music, but from the perspective of a new generation.”

Tune in to yesteryear and hear the future. Tony DeSare’s *Radio Show* is on the air.

Tony DeSare’s *Radio Show* (CD-83689) is due at retail on January 20, 2009.

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