



STEVE COLE *PULSE*

In the 15 years since the release of his debut record, saxophonist **Steve Cole** has traveled full-circle creatively and arrived back home on ***Pulse***, the 10-song set mixing R&B, contemporary jazz, gospel, blues and pop that he produced with fellow saxman David Mann. The new collection surveying Cole's musical passions showcases the artist's affinity for infectious melodies, a wall of horns and soulful grooves. It also displays a musician comfortable in his own artistic skin.

"***Pulse*** is about finding an audience and really honoring them. I have a voice and an instrument, but my job is to entertain. It's simple in a way: if you focus on those people right in front of you and what excites them, you win every time. My work is about moving people. If you can figure out how to do that, the rest falls into place," explains Cole, who has consistently delivered chart-topping hits and won fans via entertaining live performances.

2011's elegant *Moonlight* placed the classically trained tenor saxophonist in an orchestral setting. "The last album was transformative and it is certainly one of the highlights of my career. It was a massive undertaking and I am incredibly proud of the record and the live show where I presented the album backed by a full orchestra and incredible musicians like Steve Rodby [Pat Metheny Group]. As an artist, sometimes I take left turns and it helps me find out who I am creatively. We, as people and as artists, tend to circle back to where we really live and I found my way home 15 years later on ***Pulse***."

As a player, Cole describes his sound with one emphatic word: "BIG! My sound is warm and I strive to communicate effectively through my horn. I've heard it said that my sound is like a big warm blanket. I kind of like that description," he chuckles.

His inspired sax play throughout ***Pulse*** is poured with passion and precision, enriched with genuine soul power. There is feverish urgency and muscle along with harnessed control, grace and gentility.

The Chicago native exploded onto the scene in 1998 with the album *Stay Awhile* that was produced by fellow Chicagoan Brian Culbertson. The disc scored two #1 hits and earned Cole the Oasis Smooth Jazz Award for best new artist shortly before his sophomore set, *Between Us*, was released in 2000. His catchy singles made him an instant radio favorite and he cranked them out with regularity on subsequent albums *NY LA* (2003), *Spin* (2005) and *True* (2006).

In between leading his own band on the road, Cole utilized high-profile sideman gigs with Culbertson, Boz Scaggs, Peter White, Jeff Lorber and Rick Braun as a platform to build a national fan base. Today, he tours as a headline performer, and for the past 10 years as a member of Sax Pack, a stellar sax trio completed by Marcus Anderson and Jeff Kashiwa.

As a young musician, Cole's first pivotal gig came at the side of Richard Patterson, who was the bass player in Miles Davis' band. "Playing with Richard Patterson, who had just come from playing with Miles Davis, taught me to push myself—to reach far beyond what I thought possible."

Touring in Scaggs' band also proved to be a valuable learning opportunity. "Performing with Boz Scaggs was an incredible experience. I learned so much about listening to the band and how dramatic dynamics can be. It was a bit intimidating to be honest, but it was a thrill to perform with such an amazing artist."

Cole and Mann co-wrote the tunes for ***Pulse***. "I enjoy the [songwriting] process although I am constantly amazed and baffled by it. It's always a great surprise writing music."

He's been collaborating with Mann since *Between Us*. "It's very natural working with David and we make a great team. He is great at writing and arranging horn section parts and there's a lot of that on ***Pulse***. We both respect each other so much. David creates lovely textures, colors and countermelodies. He weaves these beautiful fabrics throughout the track and has a unique ability to get inside the song," says Cole of Mann, who plays horn section saxes, keyboards, flute, synth bass and programming on ***Pulse***.

The title track gets the beat going from the gun with plenty of horns and a funky mid-tempo groove. Cole composed the cut with whiz kid Nicholas Cole (no relation). "(Nicholas) is one of the new artists that I'd actually pay to see. His talent is incredible. He's 19 and already so mature as a producer, writer and musician."

Soaring brightly over a monsoon of melody, the hook on "Do Your Thing" packs a punch from the opening notes and fondly recalls the late 1960s and '70s. "I'm a big Curtis Mayfield fan and this is another wall of horns track that is fun from the start. I could play it for hours and hours," says Cole about the invigorating number.

The album's first radio single, "With You All The Way," provides a warm, empowering hook that embraces as Cole's sax pledges devotion. "If I have a style, this one sounds like a 'Steve Cole' tune, whatever that is," he says.

Cole covers Mann's "Slinky," which uncoils amongst complex beats and an edgy funk groove armed with old-school guitar riffs from Bernd Schoenhart, while Ricky Peterson dispenses gusts of roof-raising organ. "The tune is timeless. I'm fortunate to have worked with Ricky for years. It's great to have the support of a musician of his magnitude."

Cole always wanted to record the soul classic "Going In Circles," which he used to play in Chicago clubs. Backing vocals from Nicki Richards add heavenly touches while plush horn section swatches provide the ideal backdrop for Cole's impassioned, show-stopping sax that seemingly pleads for mercy.

Sunny, optimistic and brimful of hope, "Looking Up" is another big and buoyant hook that connects instantly. Peterson's gospel-like Hammond B3 organ paves the way for a triumphant, throw-your-arms-in-the-air-in-praise sax solo. Cole says, "It's slightly different and is a blast to play."

Head-bobbing hip-hop rhythms introduce an entirely different dimension on "Maximum Cool." The chill groove with slamming beats reeks of the streets. "I love the vibe of it. Recording it was an interesting challenge because there are so many different ways to go with the harmony."

With a title inspired by R&B band Mint Condition, Cole's lively sax sparks the flavor on "Minty Fresh." The mighty horn section provides a combustive burst while surfing a skintight rhythm.

On "Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City," gritty lead vocals from guitarist Rico McFarland add ambience and street cred to a track packed with horns and a choir of background voices; McFarland's guitar shreds before Cole's tenor counters with a wall-shaking guttural growl. "I'm a Bobby 'Blue' Bland fan and I had been dying to record it," says Cole about covering the soul anthem.

The retro riff on "Believe" is familiar and friendly offering a gospel jazz confirmation reminiscent of the '70s. Peterson's organ blasts testifies and sanctifies the album closer. "I love gospel music and had the opportunity to perform with some great gospel musicians over the years. Gospel just comes naturally to me," shares Cole.

Authenticity is important to Cole. **Pulse** represents what he calls a "return to the basics." Long-time fans and those about to discover the works of this accomplished musician/songwriter/producer will find a bounty to feast upon. The record is teeming with potential radio favorites and crowd pleasers crafted by a confident, self-assured artist who, after exploring an array of sounds and styles, has reclaimed his roots. The music on the album is the music that rhythmically throbs within Cole's spirit. There's nothing contrived about it. It's honest, natural, and all heart and soul. Can you feel its pulse?

STEVE COLE • PULSE

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