

# REVIEW

## WHITE RIVER, *White River* – Snug Island Records

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Sometimes there can be no better compliment than to simply say something's "comfortable," and that may be the perfect description for White River's self-titled debut album. Untroubled and relaxed, this duo has created a peaceful world where harmonies and well-tempered beats bring to mind folk songs of another era – reminiscent of Dan Fogelberg with keyboards, a blues tinge, a little classical guitar and some congas.

White River is fronted by Dan Mishkit and Juliet Wright, both veterans of the Southern California club circuit. And they've got a good core of people on this take, including members of the group Hiroshima and a tune penned by up and coming L.A. songwriter, Kevin Fisher. But don't let that sway you because they carry their own musical package well enough. Although these songs may be led by the vocals, the use of keyboards, different guitar sounds and extra percussion show that White River wants to create a personal flavor within more a traditional, folksy pop sound.

The album starts off with "Free at Last," a mid-tempo song that gives you just a taste of their more ethereal side. Once you get deeper into the album, the musicality comes out in subtle ways. Songs like "Secretly " and "Somewhere" immediately jump out as catchy, semi-romantic ballads that speak everyone's language, a little guitar, a little groove. "Colors" could be a mellow version of Hall and Oates. But it's songs like "I Will" that allow White River's strengths to come out. Clean and simple, it's got good harmonies backed by a little jazzy piano, percussion and some spright guitar strumming.

Despite the wholesome vein of the songs, White River is not a Carpenter's sanctuary. Mishkit's vocals steer well clear of any syrup-leanings and help keep the lofty energy rooted on the ground. And one senses an urge in Wright to grovel down and belt it out. I almost wished she would, but then she scores big points for the ballad, "Tenderly," clearly the sweetest and most lyrical song here.

Although the barrage of music in the last three years has been more in-your-face, there's still a place in the soul for some humility. White River helps tap that without being too sappy along the way. If these two got some major label attention and were give the chance to explore some more of the musical terrain from this release, I don't doubt that we'd be hearing more of this stuff alongside Sade and Sting. Check it out.

*Maria Sundeen*