



LUCKY OCEANS SECRET STEEL

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Just as a pedal steel guitar can slide between the conventional notes of Western music, so Lucky Oceans' music slides effortlessly between genres. He cruises from African groove to country ballads via reggae, zydeco, swing, blues and more. The remarkable thing is that it never sounds like someone constantly changing stations on the radio. It all just seems part of the broad, natural flow of Lucky's music.

In the 1970s he was part of the acclaimed country/jazz crossover band, Asleep at the Wheel (with whom he won two Grammy Awards). In 1981 he moved from the US to Perth, the most isolated city on Earth. Since then he has probably become best known in Australia as the presenter of "The Planet", on ABC Radio National. In this role he has opened countless hearts and minds to all sorts of music which otherwise might never have been encountered by his listeners. Lucky says presenting the show has also served to broaden his own tastes. "This experience, and living in Perth's isolation - which lessened the influence of other players on my style - led me to start composing pieces that would take the pedal steel into new directions," he enthuses.

The result is an enthralling new CD called "Secret Steel", for which he pulled together a purpose-built band that crosses the generations as much as it does musical styles. Lucky (now in his 50s) is joined by ex-Catholics and Mighty Reapers guitarist Dave Brewer (40s), drummer Ric Eastman (30s) and bassist Matt Willis (20s). Together they head off on a musical adventure that at a stroke redefines the pedal steel as one of the most versatile and expressive of all instruments, shaking off its type-casting as a strictly country sound.

The album needs to be heard in its entirety to appreciate the full scope and brilliance of what has been achieved, but highlights include the funky New Orleans feel and slinky melody of "Earl Grey's Magnificent Tickle" and the impossibly liquid essence of the drifting "Neptune's Dream". Always there is the joyous warmth of Lucky's pedal steel playing, glistening on the sadder and dreamier pieces, as well as glowing on the "up" ones. The work of the other musicians is consistently exceptional, and the appeal should be as broad as the music itself.

Secret Steel is out now on Head Records.

