

CD REVIEW

Mayasich's first solo effort is well worth waiting for

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Eveleth's Paul Mayasich has been a solid member of the Twin Cities musical community for more than two decades.

In the '80s and '90s, together with peers like Charlie Bingham, Billy Franze, John Della Selva, Jimmy Smith and Jon Gundvaldson, he was one of a number of stunningly good blues-based guitarists who collectively were as exciting and accomplished an aggregation of musicians as any city boasted.

As a member of groups like the Rhythm Doctors, Big John Dickerson & Blue Chamber, the Dough Bros., the Mick Sterling Band and others, Mayasich has always been a consummate band member. His solid rhythm skills, searing rides, writing ability and expressive vocals have added immensely to any group fortunate enough to have his

amp onstage.

It was really just a matter of time till he put himself front and center. With the release of his brand-new disc "Solitary Soul," his debut solo project, the results show it's been worth waiting for. It contains all the ingredients I've admired through the years but with more of everything.

The great Fred "I Do Not Play No Rock 'n' Roll" McDowell's "Jesus Is on the Mainline" features a repetitive (almost hypnotic) vocal over solid chunked-out rhythm. It builds tension leading to a blitzkrieg of compressed-sounding slide with some of the hottest, most exciting electric bottleneck lines this side of Sonny Landreth.

Velvety and acrobatic and with perfect intonation, they rip apart the haze like an aerial bombardment. Stunning! It sounds a bit like the guitar and vocals were recorded very sepa-

rately, which gives the slightly lopsided feel of jet-fueled guitar and slightly relaxed voice, but it's a small complaint in light of the feast of majestic guitar contained within.

Dan Newton's accordion intro on J.J. Cale's "Sensitive Kind" creates the feel of '70s Neil Young

"Tonight's the Night" pipe organ. It's the perfect vehicle for Mayasich's solo style: acoustic guitar and accordion laying down the brooding, simmering vibe, while the electric national steel picks its spots to dig in and add fills that light it up. The accordion is just no match, solo for solo, with the smokin' guitar. The squeezebox solo sounds anemic coming in front of the rip-roaring slide extravaganza that follows.

It's sometimes tough to keep biographical story-songs from veering into the sappy, but Mayasich's affectionate portrait of the

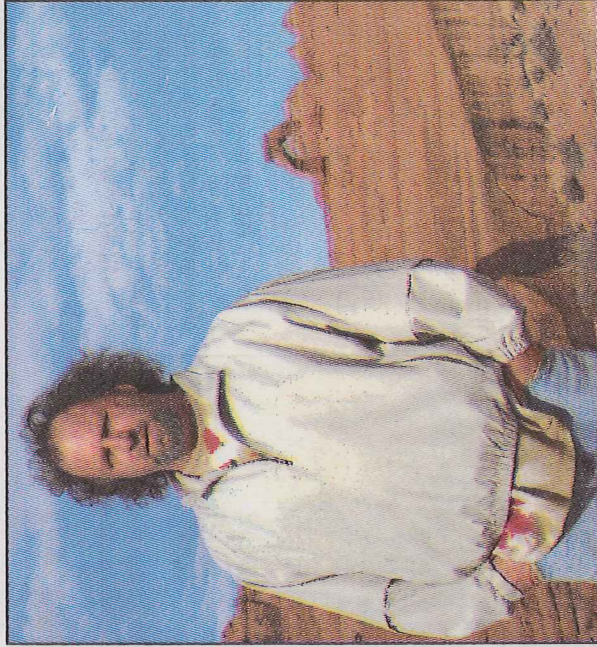


Photo courtesy GoldiRox Productions

Eveleth homestead with "three daughters and five sons" and "the sign over the stoop door reading Mayasich Mayhem" is tender and clear-eyed with just a hint of melancholy.

The Carter family classic "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" has acoustic guitars ringing and Mayasich's expressive vocals bringing us home both literally and figuratively.

This little disc contains some of the very finest slide guitar playing I have heard in years. Arlen Roth, Sonny Landreth, Warren Haynes, Ry Cooder and Derek Trucks would all stand up

and applaud the musician-ship on this record ... then they'd all huddle together and discuss the finer points of string gauges and open tunings.

Some musicians fit well into a band context but suffer on their own. Paul Mayasich is adept at both. "Solitary Soul" is a treasure that you should obtain via his Web site — or better yet, stop by the Fitger's

Brewhouse on Friday night (no cover) or the Gunflint Tavern on Saturday and hear one of the finest musicians northern Minnesota has ever produced.



Artist: Paul Mayasich
CD title: "Solitary Soul"
Genre: Traditional/contemporary blues
Recommended if you like: Ry Cooder, Warren Haynes, Derek Trucks, Sonny Landreth

Recorded at: Shady Deals Studio (White Bear Lake)
Produced by: Paul Mayasich & Todd Olson

Web site: www.paulmayasich.com

Personnel: Paul Mayasich (guitar, vocals), Dan Newton (accordion), Neil Bacon (background vocals)

Upcoming gig: Plays Friday at Fitger's Brewhouse, 10 p.m.-1 a.m. (no cover), and Saturday at the Gunflint Tavern in Grand Marais, 8:30 p.m.

Listen to: "Jesus Is on the Mainline" at duluthnewstribune.com