

Review ~ The Book of Ragas Volume II

Composer & Pianist ~ Charu Suri

Umer Piracha ~ Sufi Vocals

Jesse Gerbasi ~ Vibraphone & Drums

Review by Mary Wood @BreconReviews

I was honored to have been approached by Charu Suri, who presented a fantastic opportunity for the team and myself to review, 'The Book of Ragas Volume II.'

One of the most remarkable human traits, despite all that divides us around the world, is the smile, born in us all. It is profound, meaningful and sadly overlooked as the beautiful phenomenon it is.

I love the range of sounds gifted by piano, within any genre or standing alone. There are many technically elite pianists, who smile often in a way that is expected; scripted, as it were. The pianists such as Charu Suri, who represent the one percent, smile unabashedly and genuinely reflect on their very being. These few speak to the ivories from a place that has been within them always, needing only the fostering of skills that was laid out to be before they were born. These Artists allow the listener to feel that which is in their souls.

The Book of Ragas Volume II contains composition, piano and a Band that combine to make hypnotic, entertaining and multi-genre music. This is all lead by the lovely heart of Charu Suri with her piano in clouds that no one else can shape.

I am fortunate to have developed a Brecon Indie Reviewer Team with members who have vast knowledge and experience in all genres of music.

Each of their reviews of 'The Book of Ragas Volume II,' have exceeded all my expectations by providing detailed information about each component within this album, as well as heartfelt opinions and feelings about these four majestic creations.

This leaves me with the pleasure of writing what I heard and felt from the music, ear to chakra. Hopefully this shall prepare states of mind prior to others listening.

Charu sent me to a much more peaceful place than is my day-to-day ungrounding. I heard so many different, transcendent sounds from her playing, which was both invigorating and totally chilled me out.

I love the chord sequences that float lighter and lighter and visualizing them traveling into a 'jazzful', star flushed night sky. Classical, contemporary classical, jazz and soul threads in these tracks are performed in the most creative ways. Charu plays and flourishes in music, within her fine compositions and true to soul piano playing; alongside wonderful, skilled artists who play and sing with her.

Music in a foreign language, to me, matters not; it's like a smile, anyone from anywhere is able to feel and enjoy this. For me, Umer Piracha is an operatic soul singer with additional stretch within the soul genre. I didn't need to know the words in my language, I felt his emotion.

Jesse Gerbasi on the vibraphone and drums is brilliant. Straight up, I had no idea what a vibraphone was. Here is what I found on Britannica.com, for others who don't know:

"Vibraphone, also called Vibraharp, or Vibes is a percussion instrument that has tuned metal bars and is similar in shape to a xylophone. Felt or wool beaters are used to strike the bars, giving a soft, mellow tone quality."

Based upon what I read, it was invented in the US in 1921 and quickly used by jazz and dance bands and by 1930 some orchestras.

Jesse really adds to each composition's density. The vibraphone's detailed sounds are perfectly balanced, jazz-cool brass. The drums caught the light Jazz early on, coming in with skilled subtlety, while yielding an influential stick.

Anyone who loves profound sound, emotive music and culture shall enjoy all four of the tracks!

I shall conclude by sharing my experience thus far with Charu Suri. She has been wonderful, truly lovely, cool, kind, fun and so humble for someone with such incredible talents and accomplishments. Charu heads to Carnegie Hall for the second time in November.

The team loved reviewing the album, loved listening and writing free.