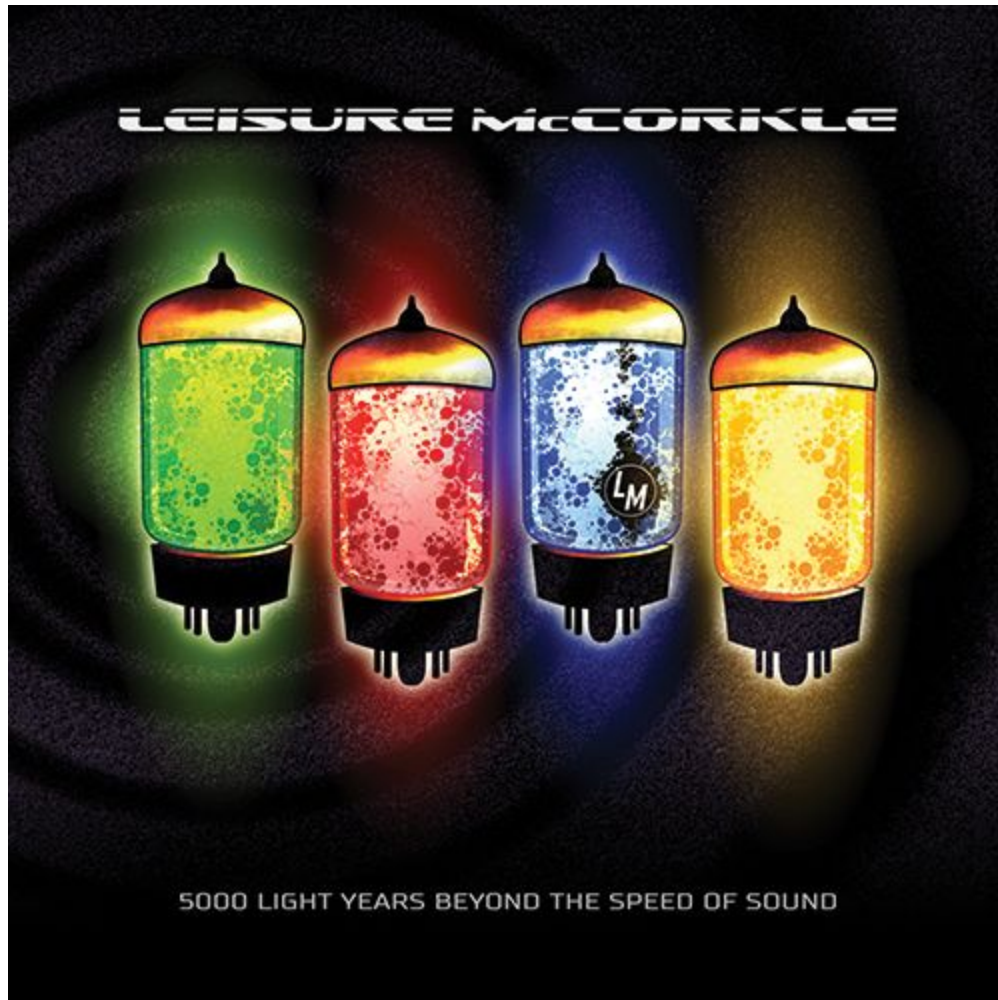


5000 Light Years Beyond the Speed of Sound: Leisure McCorkle
review: Becky Huskins



It's early morning in the country, about 6:30. It's still dark outside and cold in late November. You will be hard-pressed to be excited about anything this early in the morning with a 35 mile commute ahead of you, but I've decided to take a ride with Leisure McCorkle this morning. I pop in the CD of the new record (this isn't even the fully mastered version - I'm a lucky girl) and begin a beautiful morning drive.

The first track, "Warehouse", begins with just the light opening I need: catchy, smooth, and perfect to shake off my sleepy cobwebs. Next is "Transmission" with dreamy guitars and beautiful melodies bringing me to life as the traffic gathers and I leave the rural country behind me. The mood for the ride is set.

By the time I reach "From Up in the Stars" I'm pretty much asking all of my recent musical crushes to kindly exit the vehicle. The guys repeating "do it all the time" was a nod to the Violent Femmes. This track also has the added kick from John Cates on percussion and drums. Track four, "And.....Anne", reminds me that I'm not what we would call a "musical

person". I don't know chords, signature, or tempo. I experience music through feelings, emotions, and memories... and boy does this one take me back to being a college girl in the 90's.

Next song is "Our Love". I might be in my forties, but do we ever stop breaking our own hearts? This song tells me... no, we don't. (Also, side note, for those of you lucky enough to be playing the vinyl which is due out later this spring, here's where you flip the record, but I'm driving and will continue my love fest without missing a beat.) I keep hearing the influences I so love: Elvis Costello, The Cure, The Smiths, and local favorites like Hardsoul Poets, Jolene, and The Avett Brothers. The use of layered guitars that shimmer and chime definitely create a signature sound for this band and an immediate adoration for anyone that appreciates dream pop.

Oh, sheesh, "Acting Like a Friend". How did Leisure know the details of my divorce? Sure to be a new favorite lyric in my head forever: "Why you acting like a friend of mine when you've been busy drawing battle lines? Trading secrets with the other side. You ain't no friend of mine....."

It takes us 7 tracks to get to what I think is the crown jewel of the record: "Why You Wanna Do Me Like That?" I definitely hear the ELO influence and make note to tell my friend who idolizes Jeff Lynne. The addition of Justin Faircloth on piano really clinches this song. On my drive, the sun is finally breaking the horizon and this song is my huge dose of caffeine. I'm awake now, Leisure!

"Turn it Up" is a love letter to all of us either right in the middle or even standing on the periphery of the business of music. Here's a good place to mention the talented personnel at work on 5000 Light Years. There's Lee "Leisure" McCorkle on vocals and songwriting, "Big Mike" Mitschele on bass, lead and backing vocals, songwriting and also producing the record, Grainger Gilbert on guitars, and Gary Guthrie on drums and percussion. Also credit to Chris Gargis for engineering this masterpiece recorded at Old House Studio here in Charlotte and Ben Moss for the awesome cover art. The sound achieved here is definitely one of guys who've been playing a long time both with and without each other. The end product is a tapestry of experience, world travel, and multitudes of stages we're all lucky enough to stand on the edge of just listening.

By the time I reach "Ghost Angeles" I'm on Arrowood Road leading myself to the site of my establishment livelihood. This song is so full of what-if's and maybes that I can almost believe anything is possible even in this ugly industrial park. "Maybe I'll move to Charlotte before they tear it all down." My feelings exactly.

In the final track, "The Loneliest I've Ever Been", Leisure manages something that not every band can grasp... the catchy, dreamy quality of palpable pain. Heartbreak never felt so free, I tell you. It's the perfect time and place to park the Scion and get on with my day, but I feel like Jack Black walking into Championship Vinyl still blasting the last track I heard before punching the clock. Just like the Energizer Bunny™, the sound on 5000 Light Years keeps going and stays with you. I'm guessing these guys knew just what they were doing and we're all lucky to get taken along for the ride.

*** The album is available at Lunchbox Records, Repo Record, and online at <https://goo.gl/A9NDWY> and on iTunes.**