

## Jeff Cascaro

### Soul of a Singer

CD out in may

Jeff Cascaro is a singer. "Soul of a Singer" is his definitive album. That is really all you need to know, before you start to listen to these exceptional songs. Of course, any further curiosity shall be rewarded: Jeff Cascaro was born in 1968 and has been singing ever since. For and with stars and stadium-fillers like Joe Sample or Die Fantastischen Vier (Germany's most successful Hip Hop-outfit), pop-singer Sasha, rockers like Guano Apes or H-Blockx, plus all major German Radio-Big Bands and a few more international stars. Born and bred in the industrial town of Bochum, he is now a steady and welcome guest on all major networks, from ZDF to MTV, and can be seen as a coach on Germany's most successful casting-show "Deutschland sucht den Superstar". He recently toured as the featured soloist of the Ray Charles-program with the HR-Big Band. But even though this very vocal emotionalist is almost ubiquitous on radio and television, and has put his vocals to more than a dozen album-productions, "Soul of a Singer" is his debut under his own name and direction. Fortunately, because with this album he finally and maturely presents himself from all possible angles, showing all and only his best sides. "Soul of a Singer" earns its title and bares the soul of an exceptional singer, a mature entertainer and well-versed educator on the peak of his emotional and vocal possibilities. It does so in collaboration with some truly great and understanding musicians. The eleven songs on this album touch and thrill, from the funky "Holler", a heartfelt tribute to Cascaro's idol Johnny Guitar Watson, via the sensually moving "Waiting" and the physically stirring "Summer Love", to his incredible version of Lionel Richie's "Love Will Find A Way". Almost more importantly: The music grabs the listener again and again, thanks to the multi-faceted voice of Jeff Cascaro, as deeply relaxed by Jazz and full of Soul as it is, and through the worldclass production by Christian von Kaphengst (Till Brönner, Charlie Mariano).

"I am this album", says Jeff Cascaro. "I do not only sing the songs, I feel them. They are my experiences – and it's exactly my music, of course. I was ten years old, sitting in short pants and sandals in a bumper car, when Diana Ross "Upside down" really blew my mind. Twenty years on I was singing Kurt Weill songs with the HR- Big Band and then found myself singing Ray Charles songs with the same outfit last year. All that and everything in between is "Soul of a Singer"!" Jeff Cascaro has every right to be proud of this album. It convinces and excites with ten new and highly original compositions, by Cascaro himself, as well as by Kaphengst and Kleiner, with lyrics by Henning Wehland of H-Blockx or the American pianist and poetess Robin Goldsby. "Love will find a way" by Lionel Richie and Curtis Mayfield's "Trippin' Out", the two cover-versions, are in a class by themselves and still fit in perfectly, because Jeff Cascaro devotes himself to these beautiful melodies and grooves so personally and in such a profound manner – really making them his own – that you almost forget where the songs came from originally. "It took us no more than eight days for these recordings", says Jeff Cascaro. "There were hardly any arrangements, but we really took care in selecting just the right musicians. They understand this music and play it as if they'd never played anything else in their life. We started by really talking about what we wanted to achieve with these songs, then we sat down and recorded them in one take – the way it should be." Jeff Cascaro and his friend and producer Christian von Kaphengst, who also plays all basses on this album, hired the musical crème de la crème for the recording of "Soul of a Singer". The pianist and keyboarder Ulf

Kleiner could be called Cascaro's favourite collaborator, as the man from Mainz accompanies the singer whenever possible. Guitarist Bruno Müller, known from his work with legendary German entertainers and bands like Udo Jürgens, Stefan Raab, Till Brönner and „Café du Sport“, is another one of Cascaro's long-standing musical friends. “My connection with all these musicians, also with the drummer Peter Lübke, percussionist Roland Peil and the flute-player Michael Heupel, is very close”, explains Jeff Cascaro. “But I also share a lot of common ground with Florian Dauner, for instance, the second drummer on these sessions, with whom I played the wonderful “Unplugged”-tour of “Die Fantastischen Vier” in 2003. We all grew up with Soul and Funk, from Marvin Gaye and George Benson to Johnny Guitar Watson and the Crusaders – and we all have played a lot of Jazz since then. We really share the same tastes. And we know what we like.” A famous German trumpeter was dying to get into this mix when he heard the first recordings – within days he added some beautiful solos and harmonies to “Waiting” and “Holler”. “These are of course, and not just by chance, the most personal songs on this album”, admits Jeff Cascaro. ““Holler“ is my personal hymn to Johnny Guitar Watson, the „Superman Lover“, whom I've always admired and who really taught me a lot through his music. I always liked this song by India.Arie, which she sings to all the people who influenced her. I am doing the same thing, but taking my time and doing it one by one – and I just had to start with Johnny! I wrote „Waiting“ for my son, because I'd really like to see more of him.” The stories and backgrounds of this music may ease the overall understanding of this music and maybe even explain a lyrical line here or there. To really understand “Soul of a Singer” you just have to listen.