Poetry in Motion

Artist: SOJA
Non-Airable Tracks: NONE
Label: ATO Records, LLC

If I do say so myself, I admit I've been off my game as a fellow CD reviewer of KAMP Student Radio. However, I figured doubling up on genres that I enjoy (one of which being this CD review of SOJA: Poetry in Motion being a world-jazz selection) would get me back into the groove of things. I even got mentioned on the "Wall of Shame" for being off my game, but nevertheless I return like I never left with this presentation and analysis of the American reggae band SOJA with their latest album Poetry in Motion, released as of last year on October 19th. For one, Poetry in Motion does well in painting the picture of this day and age in the society we live in with songs regarding overconsumption, separations, and even our own President. They are able to paint a very vivid observation of global affairs by way of their country-vibing reggae-influenced musicality. However, I am perhaps one of the one million plus listeners that has never heard a mix of reggae and country nor do I ever want to hear it again in the future.

With a little bit of research, I discovered that SOJA originally formed in Arlington, Virginia over 20 years ago as Soldier of Jah Army. Over many years and created albums, Poetry in Motion assumes the role of their 7th studio album, and mixes elements of rock, country, folk, and reggae into one presumably "cohesive" sound of their own. The opening song "Moving Stones" really doesn't do much to separate itself from the following song "I Can't Stop Dreaming" as they seem to have the similar beat of "ska" drumming, reggae tone, and wind instruments providing background instrumentals. Honestly this same formula seems to run rampant up until the 7th track being "Life Support", which seems to find its own sound by way of a more Latin vibe that survives only in this song. For one, a good song should paint a picture solely by the instruments, and lyrics to back that up. The entirety of this album seems to do well in the facet of lyrics, however the music does not seem to match the tone of what the album is trying to portray.

Overall it seems to be that SOJA has an element that works for them and their fan base, but not for everyone. If you're into a mix of "ska", reggae, country, rock, and folk, then by all means this is the perfect album for you. Don't get me wrong, I love my fair share of reggae, folk and rock, but separately. For me, it seemed as though SOJA was trying to mix all elements of music, and although their lyrics are powerful, the music does not seem to match up with their message they are about. Maybe it was the idea of mixing all elements of music to show that everything should be appreciated, as we know that not to be the case in these tumultuous times. Although it seems that SOJA had the elements to create an album for the times, they came up short in these 11 tracks that try to make their own respective sound, each of which ends up being drowned by an eerily similar structure that resonates throughout.

Sounds Like: I really couldn't put my finger on it even if I had to
Recommended Tracks: 7 "Life Support" - It offered me a getaway from the rest of the album (5:06)
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- Country & Folk Rock [1]
- Reggae [2]
- Ska [3]
- World-Jazz [4]