

A Piece of Work
Wizard & Oz.
Ind. Rec. – Written by Ron Spain from Jazz Scene - 2009

Personnel: Andrew Farrell – pno/org/vcls; David McMillan – vcls/ac gtr. With special guests Ashley Gaudion – saxes; George Washingmachine – vln; and featuring (in alphabetical order): Peter Baylor – gtr; Phil Manning – gtr; Sarah Busuttil – vln; Dave Butler – bs; Marshall Clarke – dms; Andy Cowan – Hammond org; Delilah – vcl; David Hedges – tpt/tmb; Tia Hunter – vcl; Juvita – vcl; Cathy Maloney – vcl; Laura Mc Millan – ‘the hostess’; Kailen McMillan – vcl; Meggamac – choir; Daniel Palamara – acdn; Jim Richardson – bs; Rachel Snow – vln; Chris Trotman- flt; Suran Wiggins – bs.

Over several years, Wizard & Oz have travelled the hard roads, busking and appearing at venues of various dimensions and reputation, even being thrown out of a certain Festival for pulling audiences away from the marquees! Now they are firmly established as one of Australia’s unique talents, with venues to match their reputation in this country and also New Zealand. They have been prolific in their recording, but this CD is their finest hour to date, in content, packaging and quality. Twelve of the tunes are written by David (Oz) McMillan, with two by Andrew (The Wizard) Farrell and they are all strong in both lyric and music content. Andrew takes the lead vocal on three songs and contributes his extraordinary piano skill on most, going to the Wurlitzer on one and Rhodes on another, to equal effect. David’s voice is at one moment raw and drenched in Stax soul, while on ballads he sometimes shows the influence of Billy Joel and even Nat ‘King’ Cole. He can sing jazz, Blues, or Rock ‘n’ Roll, all with that distinctive Oz voice that induces a weakening in the knees for the fair sex!

All of the tracks have something different to offer and on *A Piece of Work* we hear a lyric that could become a modern Blues classic with a bass intro reminiscent of Peggy Lee’s Black Coffee and Dave’s whiskey ruined voice. *That’s Not the Half of It* opens with his only appearance on acoustic guitar, a Solomon Burke soul sound, jazz inflected Hammond organ solo and backing vocals in the Ikettes vein. Get the picture? Two songs right out of the box are firstly, *As Old as the Hills* with a sad story of passing years, multi-tracked symphonic brass by David Hedges and typically brilliant piano solo in the bridge. On *How Many Days*, Dave’s 6 year-old son Kailen joins his Dad in an environmental hymn that is both topical and apposite. Lyrical inspiration on other songs ranges from the English fleet sailing into the Bristol Channel to wage war on those Continentals, to some great rolling boogie/jump jazz on one of the Wizard’s three vocals, *Smokin’ the Piano*, presented as a three part operetta. That vibrato voice does justice also to Another Day with ethereal violin by Sarah Busuttil. George Washingmachine’s borrowed violin on *Let’s go see my Analyst* sounds like Ray Nance. 18 months in the making, this CD marks a major step in a new direction for Dave and Andrew and you’ll enjoy sharing the journey with them.