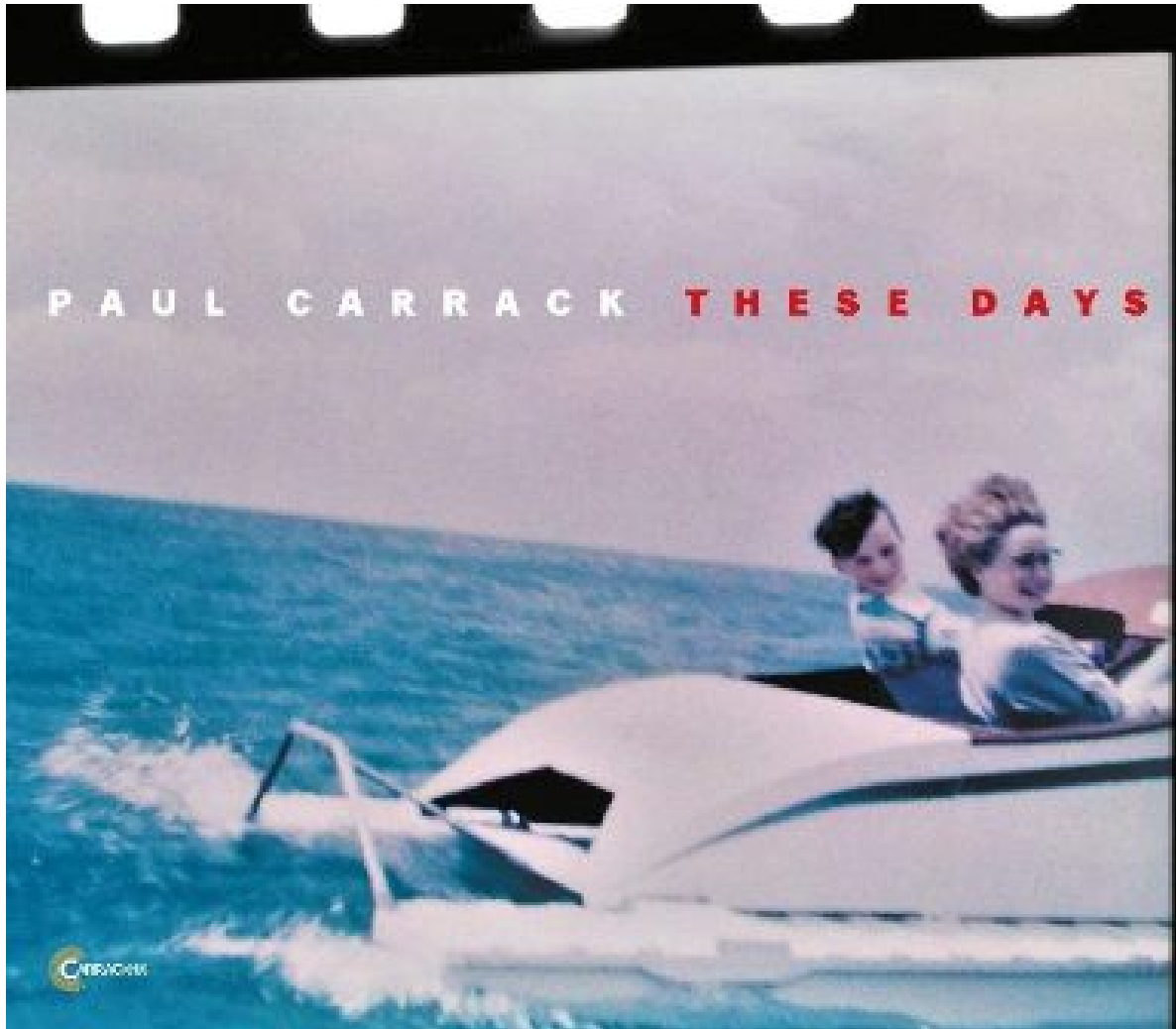


## PAUL CARRACK: These Days (Carrack)

Written by Bill B

Friday, 24 August 2018 18:45 - Last Updated Friday, 24 August 2018 18:52

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'These Days' is Paul Carrack's 17th solo album and though the 11 tracker is unmistakably the "sound of Carrack" that sound is a wee bit different. The first difference that long-time followers will notice is that there are no covers here. Unlike Paul's more recent album outings which featured fab versions of stuff like 'When My Little Girl Is Smiling', 'I'm Losing You' (the Brenda Lee song, not the Temptations), 'If Loving You Is Wrong', 'You Don't Know Me' and 'Share Your Love With Me', everything on 'These Days' is original. Secondly, for five of those originals, Paul has collaborated with Chris Difford. The pair, of course, have history. They worked together in prime time Squeeze and on a number of the tunes here there's a definite Squeezy flavour – most notably on 'Life In A Bubble' – a reflective piece that wonders why so many of us become preoccupied with our trivial "first world" problems while the "second" and "third" worlds face monumental issues and problems.

'In The Cold Light Of Day' is a little different too. Here the soundscape is country-rock... more Nashville than the cities (Chicago, Detroit?) that spawned Paul's early influences. On the LP title track the musical mood has a gentle Caribbean flavour... not quite reggae, but going in that direction. The musical message here, by the way, is to appreciate what we have while we have

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it. Mr C is becoming more and more philosophical in old age! (Whisper it – he's 67!)

'You Make Me Feel Good' takes us back to what Paul's best-known for - "blue-eyed" soul – the southern variety on this one. Brash and bold, the track features top flight brass, marshalled by no less a horn man than Pee Wee Ellis. Ellis' brass arrangements are a highlight throughout the album. They grace the opening, 'Amazing'... a classic slice of Paul Carrack; melodic, harmonic, polished, thoughtful, proper grown-up music. The gentler 'Dig Deep', 'The Best I Could' (Celtic echoes on this?) and 'Where Does The Time Go' merit the same adjectives as too does the swinging, Steely Dan-flavoured 'Perfect Storm'. Maybe it's a coincidence but the drummer on this one (and throughout the album) is Becker/Fagen alumnus, Steve Gadd.

So yes, 'These Days' has plenty of what you'd expect from a Paul Carrack album yet also offers some subtle surprises. As ever, what holds it all together is the Carrack voice (little wonder he's dubbed "the man with the Golden Voice") and the obvious joy and love with which Paul works. Share that joy and love when he takes to the road again in the new year. His annual tour begins on 18th January in Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall, and ends on 24th March at The Lowry in Salford. 'These Days' is released on 7th September on Carrack-UK.

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