

COOL MILLION: Stronger (Cool Million Records 2019)

Written by Bill B

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Well, we've been waiting for this album for quite some time. It seems a long time ago when the Cool Million team (Rob Hardt and Frank Ryle) announced they were working on a very special collection to celebrate their tenth year in the crazy world of modern soul. Finally, it's here and, yes, the waiting has been worth it. 'Stronger', the boys' sixth long player, is stuffed with classy, modern soul grooves – all harking back to the great 'Weekender' days of the 80s but all offered with a distinct 21st century twist.

The arrival of this album was signalled by the single 'Stronger' which featured a typically powerhouse vocal from James D Train Williams... and that's the track that kicks off the album. A mighty fine opening gambit and, yes, groan at the cliché, things then get even stronger!

The long player offers plenty more big, danceable modern soul grooves – stuff like 'Skin Tight' (featuring the Boogie Back team), 'Keep On' and the fine clipped beater 'Share The Light' are all drenched in the classic "Cool Million dance sound". But Rob and Frank can do much more than provide fodder for the feet. 'Stronger' has some great slow jams – the semi-whispered 'No Matter What', the slinky 'Slow Burn Love' (D Train proves he can "*do slowies*" too) and – best of the bunch – 'Come Back Home'. This one derives its inspiration from people like Teddy P and Barry White – and a great lyric... our protagonist gets out the massage oil, turns down the lights and lights the candles in the hope that the love of his life will "

come back home

". The cut features some ultra slinky sax work from Alexander Hartmann and a sensual vocal from David A. Tobin.

And that's why this album is so damn good. Cool Million's standing is such that they can call on the top session players and the very best vocalists to help them flesh out their ideas. So, amongst those featured here are guitarist Maic Burkhardt and vocalists Seest, Kevin East, Yolonda Lavender and Matthew Winchester. And let's not forget that Mr Hardt is no mean keyboardist while Frank has a great ear for that special sound.

So, ten years down the line; five LPs; sixty singles – and Cool Million are still getting stronger.

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Here's to the next ten years!

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