

SING OUT!

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Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino, who are Magpie, celebrate 25 years together making music with Give Light. I can't think of a more appropriately titled release. This recording absolutely radiates light, glowing with great songs in radiant performances. Produced by Leonino and engineer Ronnie Freeland, Magpie serves up an ample helping of 16 songs, a combination of originals and covers. Don't let the first two tracks mislead you. Magpie opens with a couple of old-time, light-hearted tunes by the Boswell Sisters, and Lewis and Waring. These percolating numbers lower your defenses for the powerful songs that follow, such as Bob Franke's masterpiece "For Real," Betsy Rose's mesmerizing "Water, Fire and Smoke," and Phil Ochs' "There But for Fortune." The instrumental accompaniment to "For Real," Artzner's guitar and Leonino's mandolin, along with Ralph Gordon's bass is perfect. Artzner and Leonino once again prove they are first rate songwriters, too, with songs such as "Kent" about the 1970 Kent State massacre, to which Leonino was a witness, "From the Heart," which sums up what this CD is all about, and the anthemic title song "Give Light," based on the words of Ella Baker. There's even a loving ode to the Cuyahoga River to counteract Randy Newman's ridicule of the once dead and burning river. Several of the songs deal with civil rights, such as "Mary Brown, Abolitionist," [by Peggy Eyres] the second wife of John Brown, and Pat Humphries' superb "Bound for Freedom." Artzner and Leonino prove over and over they are people who feel the music from their hearts, and have the talent to convey their sincerity and love through voice and instruments. This is the kind of CD for which the repeat button on your player was designed. It remains fresh and vital no matter how many times you listen. The reason that Magpie is not more famous is that Artzner and Leonino refuse to sell out. Their music is their religion, and Give Light comes very close to the divine.

—Rich Warren