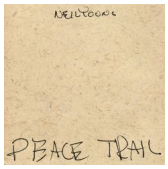
Neil Young - Peace Trail (2016)



01. Peace Trail 5:32 02. Can't Stop Workin' 2:45 03. Indian Givers 5:41 04. Show Me 4:02 05. Texas Rangers 2:30 06. Terrorist Suicide Hang Gliders 3:17 07. John Oaks 5:12 08. My Pledge 3:54 09. Glass Accident 2:53 10. My New Robot 2:33 Paul Bushnell - Bass, Vocals Jim Keltner - Drums Micah Nelson - Vocals Bob Rice - Keyboard Technician, Vocoder Joe Yankee - Electric Harp, Pump Organ Neil Young - Guitar, Vocals

The 21st century revived Neil Young's radical spirit and, along with it, his sense of musical adventure. These two strands converge on Peace Trail, a rickety record written and cut in the wake of his 2016 live album, Earth. Neil wrote Peace Trail quickly and recorded it even faster, pushing through ten songs in four days with the support of ace drummer Jim Keltner and bassist Paul Bushnell. According to Bushnell, most of the album consists of first or second takes but Peace Trail sounds like it entirely comprises rehearsal tapes, with the rhythm section lagging behind as they follow Young's basic chord changes. In form, almost all of the ten songs are folky protest numbers but Neil slashes through his hippie haze with shards of overamplified harmonica, guitar squalls, and vocoders, the modern world intruding on his melancholy reveries and subdued anger. It's interesting aesthetically, but the problem with Peace Trail isn't the concept, it's the execution. Intended as a musical bulletin à la "Ohio" or Living with War, Peace Trail is filled with songs about its precise moment in time -- "Indian Givers" is about the protests at the Dakota Access Pipeline, "Terrorist Suicide Hang Gliders" concerns rampant xenophobia -- but the execution is so artless it veers toward indifference. Young's songs are so simple they feel jejune and the performances are intentionally ragged, with Keltner and Bushnell stumbling through rhythms as if they're learning the songs as they're being recorded. To compound the oddness, the production by Young and John Hanlon is deliberately scattered with sound effects, displaying a flair assembled with more care than either the album's composition or recording. All this adds up to one of Neil Young's genuinely strange albums, a record that's compelling in its series of increasingly bad decisions. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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