

Incognito - Who Needs Love (2002)

Written by bluesever

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01 - Who Needs Love 02 - Can't Get You Out Of My Head 03 - People At The Top 04 - Morning Sun 05 - Stone Cold Heart 06 - Cada Dia (Day By Day) 07 - If You Want My Love 08 - Don't Be A Fool 09 - Byrd Plays 10 - Where Love Shines 11 - Did We Really Ever Try 12 - Blue (I'm Still Here With You) 13 - Fly

The cool and bouncy retro-soul vibe of the veteran British acid jazz ensemble Incognito isn't really retro at all -- it's just that they've been doing it since the early '80s, when that sound was still a new thing. Despite its vast array of personnel changes over the course of eight previous albums, the band has stayed true to the original vision of frontman/guitarist Jean-Paul "Bluey" Maunick, and that means, even post-millennium, a liberal mix of jazz, house, groovalicious funk, worldbeat, colorful female vocals, and most of the times, snazzy horn sections. The band's Narada Jazz debut, *Who Needs Love* also includes spicy touches of soaring Brazilian energy (think whimsical, Sergio Mendes circa mid-'60s), with guest vocalist Ed Motta singing both words and scat over punchy horns, and a thumping disco beat. Gentle samba grooves infuse "Stone Cold Heart" and the feisty, Braz-funk gem "Cada Dia (Day by Day)" as well. Most of the other material is a bit less exotic, from the moody romantic R&B-flavored lament "Can't Get You Out of My Head" to the thumping, wah-wah- and horn-inflected anthem "People at the Top," which has "Welcome to the '70s" written all over its infectious grooves. The trippiest track of the bunch is "Byrd Plays," which blends an odd nature soundscaping ambience, a distant horn, and subtle African percussion with hypnotic low register piano chords. Maunick is always seeking new collaborators mixed with former cohorts, and here he has British troubadour Paul Weller and vocalists Kelli Sae, Joy Rose, and former group member Joy Malcolm. ---Jonathan Widran, AllMusic Review

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With their eclectic vibes and dancefloor grooves, for the past two decades Incognito have consistently put UK soul on the map. This brand new collection moves away from the straightforward Talking Loud dance anthems of the 90s to explore subtler territory. Featuring key names including Brazilian impresario Ed Motta on the opening track "Who Needs Love?", and Paul Weller playing guitar on the warm, acoustic number "Blue", this album is a confident blend of jazz, funk and "conscious" soul. As ever, mainman Jean-Paul Maunick (aka Bluey) dares to take stylistic risks, as on "Cada Dia", the sound of Stevie Wonder meets the Barrio, or the melifluous, jazz-tinged "Can't Get You out of My Head" (a song that has nothing to do with the Kylie hit!), where Joy Rose sings about a delicious obsession. ---Lucy O'Brien, incognito.london

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