

Sound Advice
Music Mix For Mid-May:
This And That



[RUSS LORENSON](#)
[A LITTLE TRAVELIN' MUSIC](#)
LML Records

For this musical trip around the world, Russ Lorenson makes a pretty good host and traveling companion. The inspiration for *A Little Travelin' Music* (also the name of his cabaret show) is that he had a long career away from music and it involved journeys to various far-flung places. Russ hasn't logged too many frequent flyer miles as a cabaret singer yet, and he's still finding his way and his style. He has come up with a CD that has engaging moments, personality and musicality. More than anything, there is a desire to entertain and a likeability factor that will win points and fans. I enjoyed his act in person when he came to New York from San Francisco where he is based, also working in musical theater. You can both see and hear him in clips on his website, www.russlorenson.com.

Collections of songs about the joys and sights of different spots in the world have come out over the years from artists such as Frank Sinatra, Pearl Bailey, Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney, and last but not most probably least, The Chipmunks. Russ makes some of the same stops, such as "I Love Paris" and "Come Fly With Me," two that are sung with ebullience but could use more originality to make them more convincing and engaging. Some of the more impressive presentations are the more sincere ones, where he just relaxes and sings. I like his "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," heard here in combination with "A Foggy Day (in London Town)." Likewise, "Christmas in San Francisco" is evocative and warmly nostalgic, with the singer doing honor to his home.

Russ kibbitzes and clowns on two duets with talented singing friends. He and Shawn Ryan have a ball with Noel Coward's wickedly sarcastic "Why Do the Wrong People Travel?" as they bemoan the habits of tourists. The ever-delightful Klea Blackhurst is on board for "A Slow Boat to China" with her spunk and brassy voice bringing up the energy level. The many side comments and quips on both tracks would be more appropriate and thus funnier in a live situation, feeling a little forced on a recording. But both guests are fun to hear as is the camaraderie.

Pianist Kelly Park leads a jazz band and these arrangements have flair and provide a solid and tasty backing that often cooks and kicks. Russ works hard with a good spirit and congeniality that come through and inform his work. He's also determined to entertain, perhaps best illustrated by his "Rhode Island Is Famous for You" (Schwartz/ Dietz) where he charms by adopting the accents of people in the various U.S. states mentioned in the lyrics as he sings them. He loves what he's doing and it becomes quite infectious.

- [Rob Lester](#)