



Hmm. After listening to *Life So Far*, the 23-song CD by Wheaton's Michael Droste, you get the feeling that he spends a lot of time in his room. Not Brian Wilson's (famous) room, either. It's smaller, bleaker, and much less a hater than a hideout.

Droste is on the one hand consumed by fits of brilliance, such as in the folksy, precious vocal pop of "The Old Mill Pond," which follows the equally brilliant lone trumpet of "Body and Soul" (sans accompaniment of any sort). But more often, this album sounds like "The Plastic Cow Goes Moo" meets John Tesh. Uck! At his best, he sparkles like a rare mountain gem, but at his unfortunate worst his music is plodding, tedious, and uninspired. At times, there are upbeat, vibrant, and cheerful (though basic) renditions of a Bach prelude and Yngue. But these are followed by a correspondingly lifeless recital of baroque horns called "Brass and Percussion." This combination produces about the same effect as I would if I sat at an old Hammond organ, pressed the "Rumba" switch, and rattled off a group of my favorite Clementi sonatas. I could surely do it, but would anyone want to hear it?

To make matters worse, between the soothing vocals, the classical re-hash, and the endless synth-fluff, there are really three different albums here. "The Chinless Man" you get the picture of a truly gifted songwriter, keyboardist, horn player, and vocalist who really needs to do no more than simply focus on what he does best. His original vocals exude charm, humor, and sensitivity, and demonstrate an incredible range of emotion. His horn playing is top notch. Some, but not all, of his instrumental efforts (such as the 50's B-movie jingle-thumping of "It's A Table Thing") show a shade of the same spontaneity and humor.

"15 years and four hundred songs later," to quote from Droste's liner notes, is how you'll feel after the last cut is over. And you'll just want to chant, "Fo-cus, Fo-cus, FOOOOO-CUS!!!" Bottom line? His talents are considerable, but it remains to be seen how he'll choose to use them. Droste is certainly worth watching, and future efforts may hopefully yield greater rewards.



This is really special music. *Special Music by Special People* is a Chicago Park District music program for people with developmental disabilities (such as Down Syndrome). Composed and performed by the Special Musicians, this is a great children's record with an emphasis on self-esteem, teamwork, accomplishment, and fun. It is music for your whole family. Your kids will love the music and you will too! This is the second CD & cassette and is the follow up to *What's for Lunch!*. I liked all the songs including "Rain Song," "Fire Fighter," "Friends," and "Smokin' Bermin' Blues."

The musicians include Tony Gentile, Ellen Kobernik, Kathleen Cole, Bill Kurian, Wayne Debnar, Ryan Tarvin, Bill McGann, David Krueger, John Alfaro, David Miceli, Kathy Merkel, Jose Rekes, Angie Soto, Signe Smolin, Dorothy Rhinehart, Judy Gurler, Lupe Pina, Arturo Rosario, Josh Fracek, Leshe and Nick Gerald, and Chris Kelb. They have a special friend named Joe Yost the program's founder. He has been a music instructor with the Chicago Park District since 1989 and is currently performing with rock acts The Voodoo Kings and The Twigs. Yost gives countless hours to the program and recruits other professional musicians who also lend their talents to the program. God Bless all of them.

I also like these songs: "Sleigh Bells," "This Old Man Rock," "Having a Ball," "The Thank You Song," "The Pumpkin King," "Living Beyond," "Hundelai-de-he-oh" (which is like "Rain Song") and "Jingle Bells."

Thank you Joe. Real good job everyone!

The *We're All Stars!* and *What's for Lunch!* CDs and cassettes can be ordered by calling 312.742.7311. Or write to: Special Music by Special People, Chicago Park District c/o Joe Yost, 2333 W. Sunnyside, Chicago, IL 60625. The CDs are only \$7.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling. The cassettes are \$7.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling. Order both CDs for only \$15 or both cassettes for only \$12, plus \$2 shipping and handling.

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