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**Rock** (2008-08-08)

## New Jefferson Starship Album Of Formative Folk Treasures: Jefferson's Tree Of Liberty

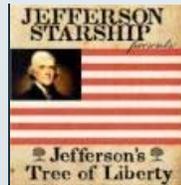


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NEW YORK (Top40 Charts/ [Fuel](#) 2000) - The legendary Jefferson Starship is at it again. Moving forward by reaching back, and in doing so, daringly casting a light for a new generation of change-makers riveted by the group's first new studio album in a decade, Jeffersons' Tree Of Liberty. The 18 song CD finds the group harnessing rare gems from the great folk tradition that inspired [the rock](#) n' roll hall of fame band more than 4 decades ago. The brainchild of singer/songwriter/band co-founder Paul Kantner (and co-produced by band manager Michael Gaiman, recurring Jefferson Airplane/ Jefferson Starship fixture and Quicksilver Messenger Service founder [David](#) Freiberg and Paul Kantner), the album mixes it up with Jefferson's trademark knack for defying fans' expectations as well as their own, introducing a soaring new female voice on many of the songs, Cathy Richardson, and tapping rock icon and original Jefferson treasure Grace Slick to appear on the album's mesmerizing 'Easter Egg' bonus track.



The album includes immortal compositions by folk trailblazers such as Woody Guthrie, "Pastures Of Plenty," (with a memorable Freiberg arrangement first heard in 1963) [Bob Dylan](#), "Chimes Of Freedom", Phil Ochs, "I Ain't Marching Anymore," (with additional lyrics added by Richardson), and a deeply moving acoustic mashup of [John Lennon's](#) "Imagine" and [Bob Marley's](#) "Redemption" faithfully delivered by Richardson. Kantner also shares his lifelong affinity for The Weavers, the revered folk quartet founded by Pete Seeger whose insightful and harmonic stylings were topped off by lone female Ronnie Gilbert. "It's no accident that we have three female singers on this album," says Paul. "The Weavers were one of the reasons I ever wanted to sing with a woman in the first place." Originally envisioning a folk-inspired/Weavers' laced album years ago, the disc includes heartfelt interpretations of Weavers classics like the warm-hearted "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine" and a rollicking "Wasn't That [A](#) Time."

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As to the timing of the release, Kantner is quick to point out that the legendary Jefferson Airplane / Jefferson Starship counter-intuitive approach to standard music business operating procedure was in full-throttle when it came to turning the concept behind Jeffersons' Tree Of [Liberty](#) a reality. "The truth of the matter is, I was first pushing the idea for an album like this [19](#) years ago when I first left Starship," he laughs. "I wanted to do it again about ten years ago. What's amazing is, that when we did finally get around to recording, the album itself only took two weeks of rehearsal, two weeks to record." As for

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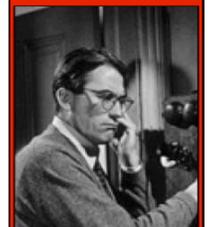


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releasing it now, with what some might call more fortuitous political circumstances in the air, Kantner shrugs: "The current climate certainly agrees with us, but we're always moved more by the band's own compass than anything external," says Kantner. To put it another way: "This is the kind of music we loved and were doing 40 years ago about the same time we discovered LSD and electric guitars-needless to say, we got distracted."

In fact, Kantner credits the band's constant state of flux as being more of a factor in their ability to remain relevant, than anything else. "I always tell people much of this band's history has been shaped when our best laid plans go south on us and we go with the chaos and the happy accidents. We try to make five year plans, but it always seems to go better when stuff just happens."

'Stuff' is indeed happening in the current Jefferson wheelhouse, with Kantner and band co-founder Marty Balin even deliver two fresh originals on the album, Kantner's inspiring "On The Threshold Of Fire" (which he put together from three separate new songs he'd written) and Marty Balin's "Maybe For You."

Jefferson Starship Manager Michael Gaiman (who helped select tracks and created the Lennon/Marley acoustic mosh) says the chemistry between original band members, newcomers and featured players made Jefferson's Tree of [Liberty](#) one of the more flowing Jefferson concoctions. The inclusion of Slick, who lends her voice to such a memorable collaborative effort, was the icing on the cake. "Sometimes it all just works," says Gaiman. "Maybe the classic themes of these songs set the tone. The [Lab](#) was great too. (the record company releasing JTOL) and embraced the concept wholeheartedly." The project came to fruition at Renegade Studios in San Rafael, California, which in a previous incarnation was the Grateful Dead's rehearsal space. "It was just an incredible experience. Everybody came early and stayed late," says Michael. "Everybody contributed."

In addition to Kantner, whose 12-string acoustic guitar graces many selections (he plays banjo on a handful), key group members on the set include multi-instrumentalist [David](#) Freiberg, co-founder of another legendary Bay [Area](#) band, Quicksilver Messenger Service, that shared many a Fillmore bill with Jefferson Airplane and the Dead; vocalist Cathy Richardson, former star of the Off Broadway hit production Love, Janis - "I saw her do Janis and it just blew me away," says Kantner. "She is an incredible vocalist." Keyboardist/bassist Chris Smith (a Jefferson Starship stalwart since 1998) is also aboard, as is lead guitarist [Mark](#) "[Slick](#)" Aguilar, another longtime Kantner musical cohort.

Balin's magnificent pipes are front and center on "Maybe For You" (Jack Casady plays bass on the track). Also appearing on the disc are the band's former lead vocalists Darby Gould and Diana Mangano. Darby is featured on Richard Thompson's "Genesis Hall," World [Entertainment](#) War's "In A Crisis", and an a cappella take of "The Quiet Joys Of Brotherhood" inspired by [Sandy](#) Denny that closes the album. Other featured musicians on Jefferson's Tree of [Liberty](#) include mandolin wizard [David](#) Grisman, pedal steel guitarist Barry Sless, violinist [David](#) LaFlamme and drummer Prairie Prince.

"I loved this project so much we're even thinking of doing another one in a similar vein," says Kantner. "It's been extremely satisfying to get such a positive reaction to songs that first resonated with us all those years ago. I knew we were right about something."

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