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## THE Arts

### *Just an Ordinary Guy, Reflecting on Middle Age*

Steven Page doesn't fit the image of a pop performer. Stocky, in his mid-40s, with a cherubic face and graying hair, he is a founding member of Barenaked Ladies, the boisterous Canadian pop band with a fervent cult following, which he left in 2009 after two decades.

**STEPHEN HOLDEN**

**MUSIC REVIEW**

On Tuesday night, he opened an engagement at Café Carlyle that coincides with the release of

*Steven Page continues through April 2 at Café Carlyle, 35 East 76th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-1600, thecarlyle.com.*

his newest album, "Heal Thyself Pt. 1: Instinct," a serious but jolly sounding collection of original songs about taking stock of his life. It displays a disarming honesty, buoyed by a sense of humor. Mr. Page, who alternated between the guitar and piano, was joined onstage by his main writing partner, Craig Northey, on electric guitar and Kevin Fox on cello. The set concentrated on material from the new record.

Mr. Page's recent songs are verbally effusive, midtempo numbers composed in a style that suggests a third- or fourth-generation Beatles descendant with lyrics that dive right into

the muck of experience. Mr. Page doesn't affect a prophetic grandiosity — he is just an ordinary guy blundering along with the rest of us. With his bellowing voice, he doesn't try to sound pretty. His singing is as unvarnished as the blunt, deceptively offhanded lyrics that tumble out of him.

But for all their apparent spontaneity, Mr. Page's songs are candid reflections on mistakes made and lessons learned with the passing of the years. "You know we'll never be the same/As we used to be/You don't love me anymore/The way you did before when you first laid eyes on me,"

concludes his song "Linda Ronstadt in the 70s." In the cheerfully self-lacerating "Manchild," a stay-at-home songwriter, supported by his wife's day job, begs her to be patient while he waits for inspiration.

"No Song Left to Save Me" explores the essence of the creative process and the continuing anxiety about whether the well is dry. That process is described as a complicated blend of "instinct and discipline." The artist has to "keep pushing through," and it isn't easy, but Mr. Page has the talent to make that effort worthwhile.



MICHELLE V. AGINS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Steven Page at Café Carlyle, where he focused on new songs.