

FUNK OFF : « Things change »



FUNK OFF

Via Veneto Jazz – Jando
Music

Derrière cet intitulé on ne peut plus explicite, **Funk Off**, se cache un brass-band italien emmené avec une grande énergie par le saxophoniste baryton **Dario Cecchini**. Quelques invités apportent leur contribution à certaines plages du disque pour renforcer la couleur funk sans que ce soit vraiment nécessaire car ces 12 plages (+ un remix à l'intérêt discutable) sont arrangées avec soin et efficacité. Ça déménage !

> Via Veneto Jazz – Jando Music VVJ099 / www.viavenetोजazz.it/funk-off-things-change

Dario Cecchini : saxophone baryton, direction / Paolo Bini, Mirco Rubegni, Emiliano Bassi : trompettes / Sergio Santelli, Tiziano Panchetti, Andrea Pasi, Claudio Giovagnoli, Giacomo Bassi, Nicola Cipriani : saxophones /

Giordano Geroni : sousaphone / Francesco Bassi, Alessandro Suggelli, Luca Bassani, Daniele Bassi : percussions /+ Raul Midón : voix et guitare sur 6 / Avery*Sunshine : voix sur 3 / Fred Wesley : trombone sur 2

01. *Things Change* / 02. *Bill & the Sweet Fairy feat. Fred Wesley* / 03. *Dance with Me feat. Avery Sunshine* / 04. *Groovy Day* / 05. *Inner City Soul* / 06. *Deja Vu feat. Raul Midón* / 07. *Talking Pictures* / 08. *The Certain Doubt* / 09. *Yin & Yang* / 10. *To Bits* / 11. *Soulmates* / 12. *A Breath of Fresh Air* / 13. *Dance with Me (Remix)*
// Enregistré en Italie vers 2014 ?

- www.jandomusic.com/Funk-Off
- www.funkoff.it



Sammy Figueroa

**John Fedchock
New York Big Band**

Like It Is

Mama Records MAA 1048 ★★★

John Fedchock (ldr, arr, tb), Tony Kadleck 4 (t), Keith O'Quinn 3 (tbn), Mark Vinci 5 (s), Allen Farnham (p), Dick Sarpola (b), Dave Rataczak (d) and Bobby Sanabria (perc). Rec. 1-2 June 2014

It only took a couple of bars of the opener, 'You and the Night and the Music' to conjure the well-drilled big bands that featured in the film *Whiplash*. Leader Fedchock's arrangement signposts the melody while showing off the band's chops with shaded dischords and counterpoint riffs and lines. The title track, one of five originals, delivers similar antics over a latin boogaloo while the leader's smoothest of smooth trombones wafts you to a high-end formal-dress function on the smoocher 'Never Let Me Go'. Fedchock cut his teeth arranging for Woody Herman in the 1980s and this, his fifth big-band album, oozes competence at every pore. Solo strength is solid, the rhythm section swings and not a note seems out of place. And while no new ground is broken, Fedchock's arrangements give the band a definite sound, while the varied programme makes for both a balanced CD and a tasty album for big-band fans. Best track, a cover of Cedar Walton's 'Ojos de Rojo'.

Mike Hobart

**Sammy Figueroa
Imaginary World**

Savant SCD 2151 ★★★★★

Sammy Figueroa (perc), Alex Pope Norris, Cisco Dimas (t), Troy Roberts (ts, ss), Silvano Monasterios (p), Chico Pinheiro (g), Gabriel Vivas (b) and David Chiverton (d). Rec. March 2015

Sammy Figueroa is still one of the most striking percussionists to grace the jazz scene. Formerly a sideman with both Miles and Rollins, he's gone on to become such a successful leader that two out of his three CDs have been nominated for a Grammy. *Imaginary World* is his best yet. It may not make many Top Ten lists in December, but this is a consistently absorbing album

which introduces two exceptionally talented composer/arrangers – pianist Silvano Monasterios and bassist Gabriel Vivas (both excellent soloists too) – each with a distinctively individual approach to creating a melodic jazz concept underscored by Figueroa's constantly swinging, always interesting African-based rhythms and the striking jazz-meets-latin drumming of David Chiverton. The Monasterios tunes are all of interest with 'Flow of the Universe', with its broken-up-rhythm and building ensembles having probably the most originality. Vivas utilises soprano saxophone a lot in his orchestral patterns – especially on 'The Jumping Blue Jay' and 'Mysterious Energy', which is probably the best cut here. M. Shellar's 'Cubado' completes the session. Nice trumpet by Alex Norris throughout, incidentally. He also has a recent leader-album worth checking out on Brooklyn Jazz Underground called *Extension Deadline* featuring Gary Thomas, George Colligan and Rudy Royston. If you buy it, you'll play it a lot. It's extremely good of its kind.

Tony Hall

**Mitchel Forman Trio
Puzzle**

BFM Jazz 302 062 431 2 ★★★

Mitchel Forman (p, org, synth, melodica), Kevin Axt (b) and Steve Hass (d). Rec. 25-26 August 2014

Turning 60 in a few months' time, Forman has had a distinguished sideman career, with John McLaughlin and Wayne Shorter among others, as well as recording several albums in his own right. This latest is an acoustic piano trio, with minimally audible overdubbing of his three other instruments on a single track each, and it conveys a rather mixed impression. Opening with a rather somewhat dour version of Jarrett's 'Death And The Flower', Forman goes on to cover pop material from Cole Porter to Cyndi Lauper and Jonatha Brooke, but there's also a straight ballad interpretation of Bacharach's 'Alfie' and a routinely funky 'Nostalgia In Times Square' by Mingus. One of Forman's six originals ('Bounce') is even a 340bpm rewrite of 'I Got Rhythm', but his preferred territory seems to be the straight-eights feel with more oblique chording. All very presentable and professional, but not consistently memorable.

Brian Priestley

**Funk Off
Things Change**

Jando VVJ099 ★★

Dario Cecchini (bari s, fl), Paolo Bini, Mirco Rubegni, Emiliano Bassi (t), Sergio Santelli, Tiziano Panchetti (as), Andrea Pasi,

Claudio Giovagnoli (ts), Giacomo Bassi, Nicola Cipriani (bari s), Giordano Geroni (saxophone), Francesco Bassi, Daniele Bassi, Luca Bassani, Alessandro Suggell (d/perc), Fred Wesley (tb), Avery Sunshine (v) and Raul Midon (v, g). Rec. 2014

As the likes of Hot 8, Hypnotic and Youngblood have shown over the past decade or so, the brass band is still a vital fixture on the landscape of black music in the 21st century. This Italian ensemble, led with impressive brio by baritone saxophonist Dario Cecchini, is a notable addition to the pack and, as the name *Funk Off* suggests, it is no by no means coy about its raison d'être. A guest appearance by JB's legend Fred Wesley simply underlines that. Being a 15-piece ensemble they generate a fair amount of power and there are several arrangements on this lively album where the seven reeds come into their own, especially when the scores lean more to a big band aesthetic rather than a purely marching band/street parade vocabulary. Having said that, a lot of the material is a touch on the pedestrian side and the interplay between the sections could have shown greater ambition. So, enjoyable as the music is, there is a lingering feeling that more could have been made of the substantial resources that the band has at its disposal. *Funk Off* would no doubt make a rabble-rousing live act, but how they translate the energy of the stage to the studio and effectively nuance it to ensure repeat listening remains to be seen.

Kevin Le Gendre

**Chico Freeman/Heiri
Kanzig**

The Arrival

Intakt CD 251 ★★★

Chico Freeman (ts) and Heiri Kanzig (db). Rec. 2014

A very welcome return for the Chicagoan multi-reed player who was one of the key figures on Elektra Musician, a pivotal label of the 1980s. Setting aside the bass clarinet and flute to focus solely on the tenor saxophone Freeman is on good form and has a very

simpatico partner in German double bassist Heiri Kanzig. As the recent release by Oliver Lake and William Parker showed there is much to be gained from this relatively uncommon pairing of instruments, and the Freeman-Kanzig duet has comparable strength of character. Freeman's tone is lithe and sensual, with a spacious phrasing that is as effective on the pastoral ballads as it is on the more dance-oriented pieces such as the funky 'One For Eddie Who 2'. As for Kanzig his comping is very good, and his ability to enhance his ostinatos with the most subtle melodic fills or chordal colours brings a lot to the performance, the highlight of which is a quite sumptuous Freeman original 'The Essence Of Silence', which is practically a segue of Coltrane's 'Equinox' and McCoy Tyner's 'Contemplation'. Lastly, major props must go to soundman Andy Neresheimer whose mix is such that at times both instruments seem to glow out of the speakers and radiate right into your front room.

**Paolo Fresu & Daniele di
Bonaventura**

In Maggiore

ECM 471 0051 ★★★

Paolo Fresu (t, flhn) and Daniele di Bonaventura (bandoneon). Rec. 15-16 May 2014



It's all about the grain of the sound on this disc from trumpeter Paolo Fresu

and bandoneonist Daniele di Bonaventura. The Italian pair have performed together often enough before but this is their first outing as a duo, and the results – produced by ECM boss Manfred Eicher – are abundant in textural details: though quiet in volume and small of gesture, the proceedings have a rich physicality about them. Both human breath and touch are to the fore as the duo weave their way through a series of original compositions and borrowed tunes,

Paolo Fresu & Daniele di Bonaventura

