



Expression
Javon Jackson (Smoke Sessions)
 by Sean O'Connell

At the close of this live set from New York's Smoke jazz club, tenor saxophonist Javon Jackson announces that this is his first live album as a leader. Hard to believe he's made it through a 25+-year career without doing one but all that practice has helped to make him a charming frontman. Throughout the set he runs a streak of intricate lines and swinging turns-of-phrase, no doubt inspired by his audience and driven by a solid band.

His quartet opens with one of the great tunes from the book of his former employer Art Blakey, Wayne Shorter's "One By One". That tune made its premiere 50 years earlier on Blakey's live album *Ugetsu*, recorded at Birdland. Drummer McClenty Hunter is initially a little modest wielding a Blakey-esque wrecking ball but his driving swing gradually builds to a muscular pace as Jackson soars ahead. The stomping enthusiasm happily peaks with Orrin Evans' pounding piano solo.

Stevie Wonder's "Don't You Worry About A Thing" carries the momentum further. The tune has been a modern standard in Jackson's repertoire at least since he recorded it for his 1999 Blue Note release *Pleasant Valley* and he is faithful in his reading of the

melody. A forceful intensity is heaped on top of the arrangement. Hunter wallops the tune until he's granted some space to solo over Jackson and Evans' repeated closing riff to great effect.

The band addresses two amorous pleas with "Where is the Love?" and "When I Fall In Love", Evans delivering a bluesy stab on the former while offering a more contemplative stroll through the latter. Jackson follows with a gentle melodic solo that moves with the expected confidence of a veteran.

The Smoke Sessions label aims to roll out these dynamic live sets by road-tested veterans steadily. It's an ambitious trend for business owners who don't think the stress of running a jazz club is enough. So far, so good.

For more information, visit smokesessionsrecords.com. Jackson is at Blue Note Feb. 18th-20th. See Calendar.



CYO3
Craig Yaremko (Origin)
 by Elliott Simon

Sax players who can realize each of the distinctly gorgeous tones within the soprano, alto and tenor are tough to find. One horn, usually the soprano, suffers. If you add to this a weighty sound on flute and alto flute

Craig Yaremko may be the only player left standing. This brawny sound is perfect for going toe to toe with Matt King's meaty B3 and is the spirit of the diverse CYO3. With drummer Jonathan Peretz deftly navigating a variety of rhythms, the trio tackles Fats Waller, Thelonious Monk, Billy Strayhorn, Freddie Hubbard and six varied originals.

CYO3 showcases the B3 sound but not in a traditional greasy manner. Well, sometimes it does that too, such as on the gospel-infused closer "The Light" but here the organ's muscularity is wide-ranging. The opener is King's drunken arrangement of Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz". It presages the session with its changing rhythms and styles. King's arrangement of Hubbard's "Little Sunflower" is, by contrast, a brilliantly-put-together take on this classic, pairing rich alto flute with King's thick chords and thumping bass.

Yaremko's originals are cohesive modern jazz statements. "Blue Fontaine" is a mysterious spy-versus-spy blues while "Oil Slick" is a smooth bop excursion benefiting greatly from the crisp clean lines of guest guitarist Vic Juris. The beautiful ballad structure of "Simply Stated" is elegantly served on a delicate percussive platter and "Sprung" has Yaremko using his flute to summon a breezy samba. King's two originals, presented back-to-back, are lighter fare: "Beach Blanket Bebop", though neither surfy or bop, has Peretz and Yaremko trading against the odd melody while "Three's A Crowd" is an equally quirky setting for some smart sax work. Monk's "Bye-Ya" rounds out this wide-ranging session with another stellar Juris/Yaremko joint effort.

For more information, visit originarts.com. This group is at Somethin' Jazz Club Feb. 19th. See Calendar.

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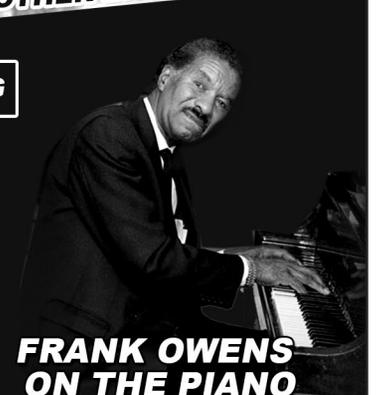
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