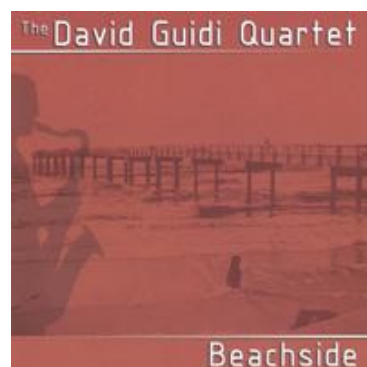


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David Guidi Quartet "Beachside"

(David Guidi)



Review by Brad Walseth

With a title like “Beachside” you might be fooled into thinking you are getting a smooth jazz album from the David Guidi Quartet, but from the moment the opener “I-90 West” kicks in, you discover you are in for some burning hot jazz in the tradition of Coltrane, Hank Mobley, Wayne Shorter and others. Guidi’s tenor sound is deep and full, and he brings IT. The band backing him is solid and fiery. Kevin Bales handles the piano, and his playing is a perfect complement to the saxophonist, while the rhythm section of Leon Anderson on drums and Rodney Jordon on bass is smoking. This is pretty straightforward (in the best sense) sounding melodic jazz with a late ‘50s early ‘60s feel to it, but Guidi has given it interesting changes and unusual harmonic elements and the band plays it with a welcome edgy attitude.

The mid-tempo “It Could...But it Hasn’t Yet!!!” is a clever reworking of “It Could Happen to You” that allows Bales an opportunity to sparkle on his bluesy solo, over Jordan’s stair-stepper bass line. Guidi employs an appealing rough edge to his tone that should endear him to many tenor fans.

As much as I enjoy the first two numbers, the band was merely warming up and the album really kicks into gear for me starting with the title track. The sunny theme is delightful, while the driving rhythm and quick changes quicken the heart rate. Meanwhile, Guidi wraps his tenor around long lines that surprise and provoke joy. Bales again throws his tasty McCoy Tyner-influenced riffs into the mix, while the rhythm section again is superb.

The ballad “Lady’s Tune” follows and would not have seemed out of place on a ‘50s Coltrane session. The swinging shifts and changes elevate this tune to more than just a simple ballad. Building on the great songwriting of the past, Guidi adds modern tonalities and directions that make the music seem utterly fresh and modern, while maintaining the connection to the central core of hard bop and jazz in general.

Another example is “Erica’s and Mai Tais” – a song so lovely and exciting in

its various metamorphoses that it can nearly bring chills. Credit must also go to the band, especially drummer Anderson, who must somehow keep the song together, just when it seems on the verge of flying into a million pieces. Bales builds some tasteful architecture, while Trane himself would be proud of Guidi's penetrating solos.

"Winter Sunrise" is a slow, sultry piece that never slides into cliché, thanks to the smoldering arrangement and the combined efforts of this group of sensitive players. Jordan's solo is tough and melodic, and Anderson's drumming on the outro takes the song into the stratosphere. "I-10 East" ends the album on a high note, with the band and their leader simply burning it up.

Dr. Guidi was a student of one of Chicago's favorite son's - Bunky Green, and is currently teaching and playing live in the Austin, TX area. "Beachside" is his first release and is a compelling document of a very talented young man displaying a great deal of promise as a songwriter, band leader and player who deserves greater notice. I am already looking forward to hearing what this young talent has in store for us in the future!

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