

The Stryker/Slagle Band

Contributed by Rick Culver

Latest Outlook
Zoho Music
by: Rick Culver

Personnel: Personnel: Dave Stryker (guitar); Steve Slagle (saxophone); Bill Moring (ba
Tracks: Nothin' & Wrong With It; Child's Play; Every Dark Street; Highlife; Tudo Muda; I
Sculptress; Long Gone. The Stryker/Slagle Band Latest Outlook

Anthony Braxton, Eric Dolphy, Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders, Dewey Redman. Do these great jazz avant gardists bring back memories? If so, you'll thoroughly enjoy this group. Stryker on guitar and Slagle on sax, with Billy Hart on drums and Jay Anderson on bass, have an individuality and uniqueness quite different from so much of the more or less retro-jazz heard today. Not that there's anything wrong with retro, but how different a path these musicians have taken in this CD.

The intro to the first tune, "Knew Hold," does not immediately lead one to think there's anything that much different about what is about to happen, other than their noticeable competence. Then they hit the theme and you suddenly realize that this is not ordinary thematic material.

Using a long string of notes, they weave their way through the 32 bar melody of this first tune and into the solos. The long association between Steve Slagle on alto & soprano sax and Dave Stryker on guitar make the empathetic connection between the two most obvious. Their unison lines work together like the resin composition surrounding an electric wire, with the added benefit of flawless contrapuntal creativity that telepaths between the two of them on every level.

After the first tune, one would think to reflect on what has just been heard. Before you have that chance, tune number two, "Latest Outlook," boosts the energy to another level with even longer lines.

The ensembles and solos are superbly rhythmic, which isn't surprising considering Billy Hart is the drummer. But in most of the tunes, the use of great time does not obligate the soloists to be confined to set chordal structures. There will be times, as in "Latest Outlook," and during Billy Hart's delicately tasteful yet forcefully stated solo, that Stryker on guitar, will add a chordal rhythmic vamp going for added intensity, but in most of the tunes, you will very often not hear a known chordal structure behind the soloist.

Tune three, "Bird Flew," is an example of a somewhat asymmetrical form, yet takes nothing away enjoying the piece; especially when Joe Lovano, guest tenor saxophonist, solos with his unique blend of insanity and intelligence that has made him one of the legends of modern jazz.

Tune number four, "Hartland," has a fast latin feel. As a change of pace, Jay Anderson doubles the melody line on bass, not surprisingly a completely compatible match with Steve's soprano sax line. This piece reminds me of the music of the great jazz fusion bassist Eberhard Weber.

From the straight ahead swing of "Dear Mr. Hicks," followed by the swing ballad "Portrait in three Colors," with Steve Slagle's fantastic alto solo, then through "Turning Point," a complex tune in various ramifications of three, to the final tune, a furiously fast paraphrase of "Just In Time," which they call "In Just Time," with Steve smoking through various recognizable quotes during his solo, this CD is a must to own.

For more info: www.zohomusic.com or www.davestryker.com or www.steveslagle.com