

Real Life Real Live: The Tony Inzalaco Quintet by Skoot Larson

Drummer and composer Tony Inzalaco is one of the most unique and competent jazzmen on the scene today. Tony is a purist, as well as a perfectionist, and it shows in his writing and in his choice of sidemen to perform his music.

Its nice to know that when an artist like Tony Inzalaco seeks a location to record a live CD where he can find an appreciative and responsive audience, he chooses Rosalie & Alva's Performance Gallery in San Pedro. The Performance Gallery, aside from being one of those special places where true jazz aficionados tend to congregate, boasts remarkable studio-like acoustics that give recorded tones a natural quality and clarity of sound.

Your ears will tell you that the musicians in The Tony Inzalaco Quintet have been working together for some time. Pianist Theo Saunders and bass man Chris Colangelo work hard with Tony in setting down the impeccable rhythmic and harmonic background behind a frontline that should by all rights be listed in the history of this marvelous art form: Nolan Shaheed on trumpet and Ben Clatworthy on tenor saxophone.

Ben Clatworthy is undoubtedly the greatest tenor man to ever come out of the British Isles! Maybe all of Europe. One can sense the influence of John Coltrane and Charles Lloyd, but Ben has taken the saxophone beyond these giants to create an individual and recognizable sound all his own. Ben covers the horn with such facility that it amazes to hear the precision lyrical constructions his mind and hands bring forth. Mr. Clatworthy makes his statements even more profound with his understanding of the pause. His phrases employ open space that emphasizes each new idea. Ben's tone has a hard brilliance, sounding as a diamond might if a diamond had a voice.

Speaking of phrasing, trumpeter Nolan Shaheed is another master. His long and well-thought-out ideas bring to mind the old master of phraseology Theodore "Fats" Navarro. On the up tunes, Nolan can fire off a salvo of quick notes from all over the horn, both his high notes and his low have a brilliant polish about them, or at times he uses a sparse collection of tones just behind the beat to catch one off guard just before he explodes into

rapid fire genius. On a ballad, Nolan can keep it romantic and pretty without sacrificing any of his technical wizardry.

With sticks or brushes in hand, Tony Inzalaco is carrying the Olympic Torch passed by legendary cats like Art Blakey, Elvin Jones and Kenny “Klook” Clarke. Tony is an excellent timekeeper, and he keeps the beat with a drive that pushes his partners on to excellence. Taking pen in hand, Tony dazzles with a creative flare that puts his concepts of harmonics right up there with his sense of time. All the melodies on this disc are originals penned by Tony Inzalaco’s, and all his songs are individual and interesting, as well as memorable and swinging.

One of the most remarkable performances on this disc, Tony’s “If Your Hot, You’re Hot, If Your Not, You’re Not,” is a good case in point. The riff began with some tasty drum work that covered every skin and cymbal in the percussionist’s arsenal. When the horns came in, they were walking a narrow line that jumped back and forth between standard and double time, with about sixteen bars of each on the trade. This time-jump became especially interesting when it came to the individual solos.

Another extremely cool piece of Tony Inzalaco music was “The Cloud Dancers,” which jumps from waltz time to 4/4 and back as the tune progresses. Every one of this artist’s compositions has all the ingredients of a jazz standard!

I know we’ve all experienced buy a recording because we heard one or two memorable lines then been disappointed because other cuts didn’t measure up. In this case you’ll have no such worries. The eight tracks on Tony Inzalaco’s Real Life Real Live are all amazing creations of equal value and worth, from ballades like “You’ll Know Just How I Feel” to the up burners like “Moon Spider.” When you ad this CD to your collection, you’ll have no regrets, only hours of pleasurable listening!