

The B-3 of Vince Seneri

by Skoot Larson

Vince Seneri is one of those rare organ players that becomes one with his complex and bulky instrument, hands and feet moving in an independent frenzy like a man rubbing his head while he pats his midriff. Many of the great names of the Hammond B-3 simply use the upper keyboards, ignoring the rack of pedals



that create the true low register. Seneri is up there with Joey DeFrancisco, Rhoda Scott, Groove Holms, Jack McDuff and his first major influence, Jimmy Smith, true masters of the B-3 that use *all* the Hammond's features to the fullest.

Seneri has just released his fifth recording, "The Prince's Groove," on Prince V Records. The nine tracks there-in find Seneri surrounded by stellar instrumentalists like Randy Brecker playing trumpet and flugel, the fast flying flute of Dave Valentin, Houston Person's mellow tenor and Paul Bollenback providing the guitar fireworks. Latin percussion from Richie Flores and Gary Fritz augments Bobby William's drum kit.

Five of the nine titles are Seneri creations that attest to his musical abilities as a fine composer of straight ahead jazz with a slight R and B feel to it. His tunes, like his band, remind one of the Blue Note Record's sound of the 50s and 60s, a benchmark for the measure of true jazz!

The listener is drawn in right from the first call-and-response notes of "Renegade Man," Brecker's trumpet answering Seneri's repeated phrase with short, tumbling lip glissandos. "Renegade Man," an original, mid-tempo slice of blue funk augments the organ trio of Seneri, Bollenback and Williams with Brecker and conguero Fritz.

The Prince heats up the musical pot to a slow boil as Bollenback and Brecker pour out very soulful ideas over Seneri's rock-solid walking bass line. This well-chosen opener is guaranteed to draw in any appreciative listener with its captivating groove.

The CD's title track, "Prince's Groove," is a comfortable blue riff with a gentle push by Fritz's congas. With the same line-up as the opener, this mellow groove is a true *garden gate* with a captivating swing. The subdued push of Fritz's congas on this number are reminiscent of the work of Candido and Barreto's feel on so many 50's jams with Gene Ammons.

A definite favorite is "Overdrive," a true burner in spite of its slow and meditative eight-bar trumpet intro. Seneri's B-3 hits the ninth bar flying like a deranged humming bird on speed. Bollenback, an experienced master in organ-based groups, leads the solo pack with a trail of quick, enchanting hemi-demi-semi quavers. Guitarist Bollenback know how to shine and make himself heard as he adds sauce to the B-3 pot!

Seneri follows, turning up the heat to kick his composition into its namesake overdrive. Brecker's horn takes the baton from The Prince to race along just ahead of the firm and fleet bass pedal steps. The trumpet cat, as the melody reaches its destination, draws their brakes with a sweetly punctuating octave jump.

Dave Valentin's flute guests on only two tracks, "Sway" and "Passion Dance," leaving listeners craving more of his winging waves of bountiful creation. This flautist's rich, well-cultivated tone adds soring flames to any group. While the flute is not often heard in the context of a B-3 Hammond ensemble, Valentin's signature sound strongly enhances Seneri's organ while accentuating the Latin feel of the two melodies in which he appears.

On "Passion Dance," Brecker's flugelhorn balances Valentin's flute for a mellifluous sonic experience – the fatness of the flugel a perfect fit with the flute's ringing tone. Valentin has the spotlight for the opening and closing melody, stating the line in both mid and high octaves, while Brecker's large brass sound answers for the song's bridge.

Another tasty and memorable track, Houston Person's tenor works his ballad magic on the standard, "The Nearness of You."

Vince Seneri shouts out the stuff of a potential jazz legend. His Hammond sound is to super-star Joey DeFrancisco as Captain Jack McDuff's sound was to Jimmy Smith in the old days. Vince Seneri knows his way around the B-3's triple keyboards, fingers artfully covering a full range of lead voices while his left foot never misses a beat of bass! When Seneri turns up the burn, his 122XB Leslie's spin with a dizzying swing. As further

testimony to Seneri's skill, the Suzuki Hammond Company has chosen him as one of their official American representatives.

This is one organist that you need to hear to believe. "The Prince's Groove," along with Vince Seneri's four previous discs can be purchased on line at www.vinceseneri.com. Whether or not you're a fan of the B-3 organ burners, you're sure to enjoy "The Prince's Groove," one of the voutiest organ offerings in some time. Every jammin' track is a winner.