



By Don Henke

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Pete Mills

Art and Architecture

Columbus saxophonist Pete Mills has released his second CD on the Summit Label and it's a real winner. His cohorts on the record include guitarist Pete McCann, bassist Dennis Irwin and drummer Matt Wilson — all in-demand New York players, along with Columbus piano legend Bobby Floyd.

The album is comprised of seven Mills originals, two Billy Strayhorn covers and one Thelonious Monk cover.

The opening tune, "Dot Com," has a definite high-tech feel to it. It's a good one for those who are unsure whether they like jazz to get their feet wet. McCann has an excellent guitar solo in the Pat Martino style.

Next up is "Seven Shades of Blue." Mills played this the last time he played in Dayton and it's really beautiful. It's a bossa nova and McCann's solo is completely different from the first tune; it has more of a Brazilian feel. Mills then plays a solo that is a recognizably "Pete Mills-style" solo. If you've ever caught him live, you know what that means.

Monk's "In Walked Bud" gets a pretty straight reading. Mills takes a nice solo here, complemented by Wilson's drum shots. Irwin also has a good bass solo.

"Spin Dri" is one of Mills' quirky compositions, a nice up-tempo tune with saxophone and guitar solos.

The two Strayhorn pieces are the shortest on the album. "Chelsea Bridge" is a saxophone-guitar duet with a lot of counterpoint. It's taken at a slow pace with McCann underscoring Mills' solo with more counterpoint. "Isfahan," which closes the CD, is another duet — this time between saxophone and bass.

"April Tune" is a nice medium tempo piece with an intricate piano solo by Bobby Floyd. "Pumpkin Shoes" is another of the many tunes based on "rhythm changes" (what hath Gershwin wrought?) Mills hits several low notes on the head, then breaks into a nice solo. McCann takes a solo on guitar, Irwin walks his bass for a chorus and then they go back to the head. "Remembrance," as the title would suggest, is a ballad but not a dirge. Irwin takes a respectful bass solo and Mills has a pretty one.

Shifting gears, "Clubfoot" has a nice funk feel to it with Wilson playing a shuffle beat. (Is it politically correct to say clubfoot and shuffle in the same sentence? Who cares?) Floyd plays a soulful piano solo, ditto Mills on tenor and then McCann brings out his wah-wah pedal for his solo and plays it through to the end.

Pete Mills is one tenor player who doesn't bring a rack to the gig. No soprano, alto, clarinet or flute. He probably plays them all because he teaches at Denison University, but it's nice to hear somebody just play the tenor and investigate all the various sounds he can get out of that instrument. This album is a keeper.

For more information on Pete Mills, visit www.petemills.com.

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