



Donna Lee Quartet

Mellow

iTunes

In 1999 Zdenko Ivanusic and Andrej Henigman, two classically trained altoists from Croatia crossed paths while playing in the Croatian Army Symphonic Wind Orchestra in 1992. They then formed the Donna Lee Saxophone Quartet. By 2001 the band jelled and found permanent members Vanja Ilekovic (tenor-saxophonist) and Ales Susa (baritonist from Slovenia).

The quartet has performed regularly including several appearances on television and a major concert at the Lisinski Hall in Zagreb. As a strong follow up to their debut, *Four Odd*, *Mellow* reasserts their prominence as one of the most admired active quartets worldwide.

The title is a bit deceiving at times, they roll out some "kick your heels up" post bop that requires endless energy and adept skill to perform then they can scale it back with equal precision like subtleties while in the same instance turn around and play what borders on progressive acid jazz. The best case in point would have to be their different adaptation of "La Cucaracha". I was most intrigued with the cat like quickness that each band member changed his timing and melody in this track. Trust me, you will never hear this classic song again the same after taking in this track. My affinity for progressive rock and fusion (heavily influenced by classical music) came through quite obviously on that musical joy ride.

Ivanusic is the established leader bringing forth six of his originals, three standards and the Macedonian traditional piece "U Krusevo Ogin Gori", which they all must feel a personal enduring inspiration for, and it plays out as such. With Ivanusic's pragmatic reeds (alto and soprano) setting the pace, Henigman (alto), Ilekovic (tenor) and Susa (baritone) which purposefully comes in very heavy serving as the band's bass line, effortlessly follow him through the 10 improvisational compositions. Ivanusic also throws in the title of his last solo album "Lost In HTML" just to see what it would sound like within this particular musical configuration.

Yet again Ivanusic triumphs with the most difficult pieces in the realm of instrumental music and with the additional onus of having no other musical instruments to enhance and flavor the mix besides the saxophone, it set the bar even higher for a successful venture. The Donna Lee Quartet creates a recording that will indeed receive rave reviews and deserved accolades in the jazz community.

★★★★★

Keith "MuzikMan" Hannaleck

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Genre: Jazz
Label: Zivaldo Records
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Tracks

1. When the Saints Go Marching In
2. Little Brown Jug
3. Lost in HTML
4. Four to Go
5. Always My Love
6. U Krusevo Ogin Gori
7. Blues No.18 Freedom Piece
8. Mellow
9. La Cucaracha

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