

Review "Open Up"

John Barron

AllAboutJazz.com

Dec. 2, 2008

[Read Online](#)

With ample chops and a firm grasp on tradition, New York-based jazz guitarist Jeff Barone proves a capable leader, bringing fresh ideas to the straight-ahead realm. *Open Up* showcases the Syracuse native's relaxed approach on a hard-swinging set of standards and originals.

Barone displays strong compositional skills on the up-tempo modal opener "Duban's Groove," the Brazilian flavored "New Samba," the funky title track and the lovely ballad "Jenna's Song," one of two duets with guest guitarist Jack Wilkins. The guitarist has a penchant for writing catchy melodic phrases and solo-friendly harmonic progressions.

A standout moment on the disc is Barone's solo guitar interpretation of the Rodgers and Hart staple "My Funny Valentine." The free-flowing arrangement is reminiscent of how the late Joe Pass would exhaust the instrument's possibilities while maintaining a swinging directive. The second duet with Wilkins, Danny Zeitlin's "Quiet Now," is a wonderful representation of communicative skills between two like-minded associates.

Trumpeter Joe Magnarelli and alto saxophonist Mike Dubaniewicz contribute inventive, flowing lines throughout. Dubaniewicz bebop prowess on "I Hear Music" and Magnarelli's fiery display on Herbie Hancock's "Toys" are disc highlights. Organist Ron Oswanski (Maynard Ferguson, Blood, Sweat & Tears) holds down the groove with strong bass lines and greasy voicings. Drummer Rudy Petschauer keeps the pace flowing with rock-solid time. All in all, *Open Up* is a strong release with inspired performances, worthy of repeated listening.