

Review "Open Up"

Jazz.com
Bill Barnes
2008

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I Hear Music RATING: 85/100

There's a guilty pleasure in listening to a swingin' B-3 combo, that stylistic poor relation long relegated to the back bays of jazz respectability. Most listeners fall into two categories: those who dig the sound and those who don't. Either way, this particular group sails well through these waters on Ron Oswanski's solid Leslie-hulled vessel, the perfect vehicle for Jeff Barone's decidedly old school, in-the-pocket technique. Jack Wilkins, renowned for his eruptive, free-flowing guitar work, produced this effort, and that alone would intimidate most up-and-coming guitarists. In spite of that, Barone sounds comfortable in his own skin, rolling out a series of potent, tasty bop phrases that fit the groove like well-worn gloves, saying more in a few droplets of notes than many others could say with tsunamis of sound. Plus he definitely swings, with flawless timing and a strong, precise attack. Yet for me, his playing is almost too reserved and disciplined. It would be nice to hear this guy go wild and spread a bit more sail, but perhaps that's not his way ... or he may just be holding back. Captain Jack, would you mind leaving the bridge for a few minutes?