

Review "Open Up"

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What happens when a classical guitar player goes jazz? If it's Jeff Barone, the answer is he brings a classical sensibility to the jazz and creates one of the most listenable and accessible CD's of this decade.

There's no real secret here. Barone surrounds himself with a cream-of-the-crop list of studio vets who have played with the likes of Maynard Ferguson, Blood, Sweat & Tears, Herb Ellis, and Herbie Hancock. Then, he writes fine original compositions and mixes tasteful covers. Most of all, though, he brings a startling, effortless guitar style.

While much jazz is a little busy, the tracks here offer instrumentation that is complex, yet easy on the ears-melodic rather than fast notes, grooving and tasteful. Some of the best tunes are Barone's originals that show a maturity that belies his age and experience. Of course, an education at the Manhattan School of Music (and the city's clubs and bars!) doesn't hurt. This is a guitarist on the rise!