

Review "Open Up"

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Scott Albin
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Open Up **RATING: 92/100**

Jeff Barone has played with jazz organists such as Reuben Wilson, Jimmy "Preacher" Robins, Mel Davis, and Rahn Burton around New York since the 1990s, which may explain why he appears most comfortable and proficient when performing in a soulful, funky vein. This CD's title cut is a case in point. While he sometimes sounds tentative and reserved elsewhere, on "Open Up" Barone is relaxed and in the groove, as are his capable bandmates. Trumpet and then alto chime in first before organ, bass and drums lay down a funky beat and atmosphere to set the stage for the catchy "soul jazz" theme played by Magnarelli and Dubaniewicz, with Barone and Oswanski now providing chordal and riff support to go with Petschauer's steadfast backbeat. The solos that follow by Oswanski, Magnarelli and Dubaniewicz are all well constructed, technically assured, and full of crisp and attractive melodic lines. Barone's concluding improvisation contains soul-drenched single-note runs, amidst a varied attack that includes expressive strummed passages and expertly picked tremolos. The guitarist also adds some effective fills during the band's jaunty replay of the head. Barone is truly in his element on this top-notch toe-tapper.