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**Jazz Promo Services**

**ES2**

**(Erick Storckman and Eliot Smith)**

**"AlgoRhythms"**

**(Twin Rivers Records TR227)**

**Street Date April 29, 2014**

**Eliot Smith – Keyboards, Erick Storckman – Trombone, Cliff Lyons – Tenor Sax,**

**Pete McCann – Guitar, Andy Eulau – Bass, Scott Neumann – Drums**

For those who fear that jazz is taking itself too “seriously” and losing its sense of fun and abandon, ES2’s new CD *AlgoRhythms* (on Twin Rivers Recordings) will bring a sigh of relief – followed by a big smile. The brainchild of trombonist Erick Storckman and keyboardist Eliot Smith, ES2 makes the kind of music that turns a club into a party and a concert hall into a revival meeting. With no pretension, and a focus on jubilant expression and rollicking swing, *AlgoRhythms* takes an unfettered approach in the spirit of the Mingus small groups - with a great big sound, infectious compositions and explosive energy.

Outstanding composers as well as extraordinary players, Storckman and Smith have been playing together for a number of years and recently decided to assemble a group of kindred spirits to bring the pair’s collaborative efforts into a group context. Tenor saxophonist Cliff Lyons, guitarist Pete McCann plus the bass and drums tandem of Andy Eulau and Scott Neumann prove to be ideal choices in making ES2 a most cohesive and potent unit.

The eight outstanding compositions include four by Smith, two by Storckman and a pair credited to both. But the collaborative effort infuses the entire album as all eight pieces were arranged by both men, with Erick focusing on the horn parts and Eliot handling the rhythm. The result is a clear-cut musical vision, totally united in its personal identity and fully integrated into the ensemble character.

The music encompasses a broad spectrum of the jazz vernacular, including soul jazz, bluesy hard bop, funk, straight-ahead and gospel. The musicians are exemplary in their skills and totally fluent in all the dialects of the extensive palette used in the fascinating tales told through the music. All of them employ a take-no-prisoners approach of throwing themselves entirely into the music fearlessly and without hesitation.

Storckman’s trombone echoes the vibrant history of the instrument, using the horn’s entire range in a vigorously spirited style with the smoothness of J.J Johnson and the swagger of Jimmy Knepper. Lyons is fiercely impassioned, combining the fluid approach of hard bop with the smoldering fire of the big-horn soul style best exemplified by Stanley Turrentine. McCann is a flawless rhythm guitarist and audacious soloist with the full-bodied influence of rock consistently at play, but totally tasteful and always in the music. Eulau (who plays electric bass throughout with the depth of an acoustic) combines with the impeccable drumming of Neumann for stunning interplay whether throbbing and rocking or crisply swinging. And Smith’s mastery of a variety of keyboards provides the webbing that holds it all together, creating aural canvasses for the soloists, prodding, spurring and soloing brilliantly.

All of the melodic lines are catchy, lyrical and so singable that the listener can actually imagine words, giving the narrative of each story that much more contextual impact. From the opening strains of the album’s first cut, Smith’s *Orange Peel*, that feeling is front and center, with a vehemently lyrical line launched by hard left hand piano that could be played by Dr. John by way of Professor Longhair. Virile guitar, trombone and tenor solos set the tone that permeates the entire album.

*Job Search*, also by Smith, is an all-out funkfest colored by “real life” elements like newscast snippets and sirens added to the funky, up-tempo piece in a sumptuous atmosphere of electronic keyboards, driving bass and a rocking backbeat. Hollering tenor in a syncopated groove, a Smith acoustic piano solo in a Bobby Timmons-ish explosion and wide-open screaming guitar highlight this in-your-face cut.

*Our Man in Verona* is another soul-drenched smoker written by Storckman. A fluidly energetic and raunchy tenor solo is followed by a tremendously exciting and powerfully swinging trombone turn. A sprawling, rock-hard guitar excursion over rip-roaring rhythm section takes us back to the melody, which almost sounds like it could be a James Bond theme.

A boppish vibe is set by *Midnight, Michigan Avenue* (by both composers). A straightforward swinger stoked by the relentless pulse of the rhythm section - snapping electric piano, flawless rhythm guitar, fervid bass and sizzling drums - lays the groundwork for Storckman and Lyons to demonstrate how fully conversant they are in the language of hard bop.

A most entrancing atmosphere is created on *Poor as Food*, also co-composed by Storckman and Smith. There is a gentler, more subdued tone that quickly escalates with an aura of salient edge that gives the piece a most compelling and evocative gravitas. Excellent solos by Storckman, Lyons and Smith further contribute to the spirited nature of the piece, painting such a vivid picture that you can almost see the movie it should accompany – a most stunning work.

*Swanky*, an ongoing persona in Smith’s imaginative array of ideas, is the central figure in a pair of pieces. *Swanky Goes Shopping* is a jauntily strutting, rhythmically insistent, deeply grooved piece that is enhanced by a talking wah-wah guitar solo in the manner of Sly & the Family Stone’s classic instrumental *Sex Machine*, and a delicious gospel blues piano solo. *Swanky Goes Uptown* is a richly syncopated, more straight-ahead item with injections of funkiness. Episodic in nature, it sets a fine framework for Lyons’ sparkling tenor solo, deep in Turrentine territory, howling, barking and rocking furiously.

This remarkable album concludes on a powerfully uplifting note with Storckman’s *At Long Last*. Deep in the gospel mode, this opulent, deeply emotive piece is highlighted by Lyons exhorting the spirit of Gene Ammons’ *Preachin’* with Smith’s organ stirring up the congregation and McCann wailing soulfully. One can easily envision a white-cloaked choir swaying and smiling with Shirley Caesar expected to join in at any moment. A most stirring and profusely spiritual ending to a truly wonderful album.

For more information, visit www.ErickStorckman.com

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