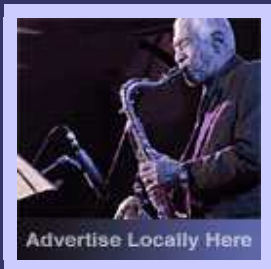




JAZZ NEAR YOU

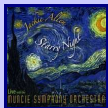


SHOWCASE ADS



Timoka

Walter Beltram



Starry Night

Jackie Allen



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Vector Trio



Mighty Long Way

Alvin Queen



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JuliousBass

My Backyard

Mike Lee | OmniTone

December 1st, 2000

By Glenn Astarita

You can add multi-reedman Mike Lee’s name to the lineage of notable jazz musicians who hail from Cleveland, Ohio. Yet these days, the saxophonist spends much of his time in the New York area, where he leads a productive life, performing with Maria Schneider and piloting his own bands along with a seemingly hectic schedule as an educator/clinician. Equally important is that the saxophonist has been gaining a reputation as one of the – baddest – improvisers on the scene which was evidenced on his fine 1997 effort, *Above The Battleground* and here on his brand new release, titled *My Backyard*.

Lee engages in some – tenor madness – on the fervent hard bop-ish opener, “Just North of Normal”, featuring the artist’s diffusing lines along with crisp support from a hustling and bustling rhythm section while guitarist John Hart serves as an incomparable foil for the leader. Lee’s “Sidewalk Seven” features a trace of samba amid linear movements and inviting motifs as the leader steers the ensemble through a few variations of the primary theme. However, the band alters the peppery flow with an enticing blues ballad, titled “Sinuosity” where the musicians incorporate a loosely swinging vibe in accordance with some affably suggestive call and response dialogue between Lee and Hart, augmented by solid rhythmic accompaniment here and throughout.

Violinist Rebecca Harris-Lee (Mike Lee’s better half) and Hart render sonorous unison choruses in conjunction with a memorably melodic motif atop a 4 bar blues interlude on the enchanting, “Crooked Halo”. Here, pianist Matt Ray counterbalances the richly thematic proceedings with daintily executed voicings and progressions as the band finalizes the set with a series of vicious alternating fours on their brisk version of Charlie Parker’s, “Relaxin’ at Camarillo”.....Recommended!