

03/04/16 Albums By Nick Mondello

Next Stop

The Gianni Bardaro/Pierluigi Villani Group

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The Gianni Bardaro/Pierluigi Villani Group Next Stop, offered by the Gianni Bardaro/Pierluigi Villani Group merits accolades as it delivers a uniquely evocative and musically genuine performance. This effort, one which spews marvelously intricate compositions of varied textures, meters and grooves, and, is played by a dynamic and highly-energized ensemble represents what could be – should be? – the proverbial next stop in the evolution of contemporary jazz.

The catchy melody of the opener, “Blue Sun” sets the stage (and acts as preface for terrific improvisational explorations by all) with a rollicking lead line over a shuffling bass/piano. As on other tracks, there are extemporaneous shouts of joy, encouragement and release from the personnel on the session. The fact that these remain on the mix only adds to the superlative expressive nature of this material, as well as the superior interplay between this group. One can easily ascertain (and hear!) that this quintet relished in this effort and the

material. The funk-rock genre is explored by way of “Bogo.” Outstanding trumpeter Giovanni Falzone growls and plunges heartily and Bardaro – as he does throughout the recording is highly facile, exploring timbres and wringing the most emotionally out of what his saxophone states. Pianist Francesco Villani rips across keys with a magician’s flair and fire. Drummer Pierluigi Villani positively thrives in this environment and these textures, flailing away and extracting every possible rhythmic statement from his set. “Draftorn” is a straight-ahead burner which has Bardaro “Peppering” across the melody and ensuing fine solo. Electric bassist Viz Maurogiovanni resembles a “Spiderman” as he slithers. The cut is a cooker in the classic sense.”Italian Blur” is a smoky, slower and darker modal piece with muted Falzone and Bardaro beautifully expressive. Obviously, reflective of the classic Miles Davis, the cut is indeed “kind of blue.” That track in addition to “Hipster” and the beautiful “Morning Star” are the higher highlights of an album that is a cornucopia bountiful with them. “Square” contrasts a quirky-jerky melodic bass line under Bardaro and Falzone’s lyrical duet. “Wild Banky” is Weather Report-flavored funk-fest where all, especially Team Villani, shine. “Next Stop” is a joy. It’s representative and indicative of a group of musicians who not only know where they emanated from musically, but also, presciently have their respective sights dead-ahead on the future. For Bardaro/Villani and this outstanding crew, that future is bright with no blur, Italian or otherwise on the horizon.

by Nick Mondello