



I'M STICKING WITH YOU, BABY

THE
STEVE
SANDNER
BAND

FEATURING
MARCUS BELGRAVE

Big City Sound

Life is composed of many reflections. There is the fleeting glance of potential romance, the sparkling glimmer of a stream on a relaxed summer day, the deep sigh as you wonder how to repair a botched friendship, the resolute gaze into your mate's eyes and your own daily changing image. The best music helps us deal with these differing reflections. Steve Sandner, his trio and trumpeter Marcus Belgrave make the music for reflection and contemplation. I have truly enjoyed listening to Steve and Marcus' newest offering, "I'm Sticking With You, Baby" as I reflect on life.

The disc begins with the title tune, "Sticking With You, Baby." It has an easy, unhurried, Ray Charles blues feel. (Is that because Marcus Belgrave was once Ray Charles' lead trumpet player?) I am sure Steve was grinning from ear to ear as he belted this baby out. And, I am sure, the smile bounced back from face to face in the studio. I can also imagine a couple preparing to go to dinner facing each other in the mirror and the compliments as each completes their "look" humming this little gem.

The great ballads by Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley and Bill Evans all made the listener stop, think, feel and reflect. "Autumn Serenade," "Ginger's Lament" and "September Winds" are touching ballads, setting Steve Sandner apart from mere accompanist and establishing him as serious jazz leader. Listening with open ears, you will discern that Steve has lived both up and down moments of life. As a real jazz musician, he is unafraid to expose the depth of his emotion. These songs are more than reflection. "Autumn

Serenade," "Ginger's Lament" and "September Winds" are direct, one-to-one communication. "September Winds" is especially moving. Marcus Belgrave's burnished trumpet passages are quietly arresting. Sandner provides the counterpoint of ascending and descending chords and single note passages, as leaves begin to fall and winds begin to stir. You will remember a past September and the mixed emotions of the month.

One reflection of a person is the company he keeps. In Marcus Belgrave, Steve Sandner has discovered a soul mate, a mentor, and a perfect musical foil. Today Steve is known as an outstanding pianist, but he played trumpet throughout high school, college and the early years of his career. With this experience, it must be difficult to leave the trumpet parts to someone else, but Marcus Belgrave makes it easy on Steve. He knows to reflect upon musical statements made by all members of the quartet. Marcus Belgrave is an Arts Midwest Jazz Master, a former member of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Charles Mingus Big Band, the Ray Charles Orchestra and veteran of many recording sessions by Geri Allen, Regina Carter, James Carter and others. On "Don't Be That Way," Marcus places the perfect high notes on muted trumpet. The song swings, has an unmistakable lilting feel and genuinely lifts spirits.

Swing is that "something" in jazz, which is impossible to define, but if a group swings, you know it. For an ensemble to swing, all members have to be reading the right page and reacting

unconsciously to one another. In bassist Stewart Miller and drummer Charles McFarlan, Steve Sandner and Marcus Belgrave have found sympathetic support that swings with a vengeance. While I'd lay odds that Miller and McFarlan are instinctive musicians like Sandner and Belgrave, the bassist and drummer have been part of Sandner's trio for years, forming a solid, swinging unit. They joined him in the studio on his previous CD, "Goin' To Chicago." Check out their tight interplay on "Liquid Jump."

Steve Sandner swings mighty on piano, but moreover, he swings a singer and effortlessly accomplishes both charges simultaneously. This is no small feat. Years of study at The Berklee College of Music, University of Illinois in Champaign/ Urbana, Wayne State University and Eastern Michigan University enhanced Sandner's natural musical abilities and understanding of call-and-response, so important to establish that pure feeling of swing. This call-and-response is a big part of the blues and the blues is a big part of Steve Sandner's sound. Again, Sandner is an intuitive musician. He knows that the only way to lift the blues is to sing them as he does with "Rocks In My Bed." If you're feeling the blues, you'll soon know you're not alone.

Sandner can sing, but so can Marcus Belgrave! Marcus' phrasing, gravelly vocal quality and undeniable joie-de-vivre immediately recall images of Louis Armstrong. Rather than aping "Pops," Belgrave adds his own perfect pregnant pauses in the songs to establish his unique

vocal identity. Marcus' two vocal selections "With A Song In My Heart" and "Just One Of Those Things," are not to be sung an ingenue. These songs require an understanding of relationships and the time necessary to grow real ones. Marcus shares his comprehension of the vagaries of life and love in his two numbers.

As you listen and reflect, you will agree. The best jazz recordings are those that make us feel and reflect upon our lives and loves. The best jazz recordings are those that bear repeated listening and investigation beneath the first layers of the music. "I'm Sticking With You, Baby" is one of the best jazz recordings I have heard in a long time. The melodies will stick in my memory for months to come. The recording quality is on par with anything out of a big New York music factory thanks to the talents of recording engineer Scott Steinman. This bodes well for airplay on WEMU and every other real jazz station in the nation. When someone asks me to recommend a new jazz record for quiet reflection or relaxation, without hesitation, I will stick this one in their hand.

- Linda Yohn

Linda Yohn is Music Director for WEMU, Ypsilanti, the Public Radio station from Eastern Michigan University serving Ann Arbor and Southeastern Michigan. She is heard Monday through Friday from nine a.m. to noon on 89.1-FM and on the world wide web at www.wemu.org.

1. I'M STICKING WITH YOU, BABY 3:38
(w/m Henry Glover, Rudolph Toombs) Fort Knox Music, Inc. - BMI
2. AUTUMN SERENADE 6:35
(w. Sammy Gallop, m. Peter De Rose) EMI Robbins Catalogue, Inc. - ASCAP
3. DON'T BE THAT WAY 3:35
(w. Mitchell Paris, m. Edgar Sampson and Benny Goodman) EMI Robbins Catalogue, Inc. - ASCAP
4. GINGER'S LAMENT 5:08
(Steve Sandner) Air-Lee Music - ASCAP
5. ROCKS IN MY BED 4:59
(w/m Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) Famous Music Corp. - ASCAP
6. WITH A SONG IN MY HEART 6:41
(w. Lorenz Hart, m. Richard Rogers) Harms Music, Inc. - ASCAP
7. SEPTEMBER WINDS 4:50
(Steve Sandner) Air-Lee Music - ASCAP
8. LIQUID JUMP 3:31
(Steve Sandner) Air-Lee Music - ASCAP
9. YOU'D BE SO NICE TO COME HOME TO 4:20
(w/m Cole Porter) Chappell Music, Inc. - ASCAP
10. JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS 5:02
(w/m Cole Porter) Warner Brothers, Inc. - ASCAP

Steve Sandner: piano & vocals
Marcus Belgrave: trumpet, flugelhorn & vocals
Stewart Miller: bass
Charles McFarlan: drums

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* after photos of dancers provided by Big City Swing, Chicago



THE STEVE SANDNER BAND I'M STICKING WITH YOU, BABY

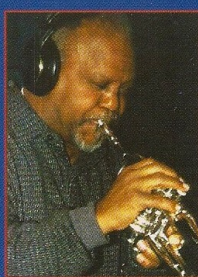
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