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CD/LP/Track Review

Kikoski Carpenter Novak Sheppard: From The Hip (2013)

By [DAN BILAWSKY](#), Published: July 12, 2013

In 2006, pianist David Kikoski was invited to perform and record in front of a live audience at the private Beverly Hills studio of George Klabin, President of the Rising Jazz Stars Foundation. Kikoski brought in some of his first-call friends for the occasion and, with nary a rehearsal to be had, put on a stunner of a standards-based show; the nine tracks that make up *From The Hip* were recorded at that gathering.



Kikoski, saxophonist [Bob Sheppard](#), drummer [Gary Novak](#), and bassist Dave Carpenter, who passed away shortly after this recording took place, form a compelling unit that injects new life into these old gems. The eyebrow-raising bass riff that ushers in the album-opening "Star Eyes" makes it clear that this isn't a case of a group of pros simply phoning it in. This quartet invests its creative energy into this music and that investment pays off in artistically satisfying dividends.

The aforementioned "Star Eyes" proves to be a winner right out of the gate, but that's only the beginning. The band follows that up with a visit to Brazil, via [Toninho Horta's](#) "From Ton To Tom," and a trip to [Cedar Walton's](#) "Bolivia," which takes flight on the wings of Novak's full throttle drumming. Sheppard shines all by his lonesome at the outset of "My One And Only Love" while Kikoski captures the most attention on the pair of tunes that follow; his introduction and solo on "How Deep Is The Ocean" are the clear highlights there, and he's the focal point on a sans-Sheppard trio take of "If You Could See Me Now." That number opens with sparkling pianisms and ends with a piano cadenza of note, but the joyous music that takes place in between is a testament to the communicative force(s) at play between Kikoski, Novak and Carpenter.

From The Hip is terrific, but it isn't perfect. Carpenter's intonation, for example, could be called into question in a few spots, but that's beside the point. Little issues like that do little to diminish the overall experience of hearing music like this performed by musicians who are this well-studied in the art of marrying the structured with the spontaneous.

Track Listing: Star Eyes; From Ton To Tom; Bolivia; My One And Only Love; How Deep Is The Ocean; If You Could See Me Now; Autumn Leaves; Tones For Joan's Bones; Mr. PC

Personnel: David Kikoski: piano; Dave Carpenter: bass; Gary Novak: drums; Bob Sheppard: saxophones.

Record Label: BFM Jazz

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