

Steve Gadd

GADDITUDE – BFM 302 062 418 2 Web: bfmjazz.com, DRSTEVEGADD.com. Africa; Ask Me; Country; Cavaliero; Green Foam; The Mountain; Who Knows Blues; The Windup; Scatterbrain

PERSONNEL: Steve Gadd, drums; Walt Fowler, trumpet, flugelhorn; Larry Goldings, keyboards; Jimmy Johnson, bass; Michael Landau, guitars; Arnold McCuller, background vocals; David Lasley, background vocals.

By Jeff Potter

Steve Gadd's star began to rise in the early '70s and by mid-decade, his high demand in the studio and enormous influence on drummers led admirers to humorously dub him, "Steve God." Yet if one is to be "a God," they must possess not only great powers but, more importantly, great wisdom. And that's what makes this release – Gadd's tenth as a leader – so richly rewarding.

Surrounded by musicians with similarly long careers and massive discographies, Gadd's

Scott Neumann's Neu3 Trio

Presents "Blessed"
Featuring Michael Blake and Mark Helias

Saturday, October 5th
Two Sets at 7:30pm and 9pm
CD Release Show | Smalls Jazz Club (NYC)

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warm, melodic, heartfelt, and frequently fun CD stresses ensemble sound and interplay over soloing and embraces the power of lean, judiciously played phrases. In one of his most organic discs as a leader, Gadd has chosen to gather friends with deep musical/personal connections and it's paid off grandly. This quintet has long performed and recorded together with James Taylor and the ease and trust between the comrades is palpable.

Supporting the disc's relaxed, homespun ethos, it was recorded in a single week at the home studio of band member guitarist Michael Landau. Also gracing the disc are electric bassist Jimmy Johnson, multi-keyboardist Larry Goldings, and trumpeter Walt Fowler. Like Gadd, all the musicians are armed with extraordinary chops yet are masters of restraint.

As a drummer, Gadd proved to be equally comfortable with jazz notables such as Chick Corea, Eddie Gomez, and Maynard Ferguson as well as pop/rockers such as Paul Simon and Eric Clapton. In any genre, his contention has remained that the "pocket" moves all. Gadd brings a subtle current of R&B into his swing and a sense of "swing" into his rock.

In this CD's mix of band-penned tracks and covers, this quality is especially apparent on the number, "Africa" in which Gadd plays with a legato, light touch, yet still manages to radiate an irresistible funkiness. And on the even sparser, open breathing of "Ask Me," Gadd's pulse hums through still.

Landau's masterfully placed shimmering chords offer a sweeping breadth to the sound. The variety of timbre — shaping attacks he coaxes from single notes leaves listeners hung up on every note of his "story-telling," as heard on the track, "Who Knows Blues." Likewise, Goldings' solos —even when unraveling denser phrases— are always alluring and concise in their elegant arcs. This artist never "just blows." Favoring vintage sounds such as Rhodes, Wurlitzer, and the hardy Hammond B-3, Goldings also skillfully complements Landau's lush timbres.

The solid, fat-noted Johnson gives a sneak peek of his nimbler bass chops on the devilishly humorous, "Cavaliero," with some fun faux-flamenco licks and out-sized glisses. The number's New Orleans/tango hybrid also gives Gadd a chance to throw down his trademark swinging street beat grooves, firing up the swampy party.

Fowler's trumpet and flugelhorn sounds are round and warm throughout, gracing the groove with over-the-bar-line freedom. The trumpet's use in the ensemble is deftly selective, giving the sound tiers elevated drama upon each effective entrance.

On the handful of cover tunes, the quintet offers fresh angles. Keith Jarrett's "The Windup" is treated as a rousing, irresistible driver, including a surprising mid-tune shift into a pumping Gospel/country "train" groove. Not surprisingly, the band's guffaws can be heard at the tail of the rollicking track. In contrast, via subtle altered harmonies, the band brings a beautiful, poignant sense of hope to the unsettling mystery of Radiohead's "Scatterbrain."

Gadditude is the sound of five Wise Ones who have nothing to prove and thereby prove much. The title's pun perhaps suggests "attitude"

as in "confidence." More appropriately, it may also suggest "gratitude," as reflected by the grace of these musicians who revere and respect the sharing heart of collaborative playing.



Scott Neumann

BLESSED — www.scottneumannmusic.com. Blessed; Ama Dablam; Keep Your Heart Right; Clamba; Blues For RQ; Hymn For Bob; Ebb and Flow; Garbanzo; Brothers; The Syracusian. PERSONNEL: Scott Neumann, drums; Michael Blake, tenor & soprano saxophones, melodica; Mark Helias, acoustic bass.

By Mark Keresman

Once prominent in the rock music sphere was the "power trio" format—with the lineup of guitar, bass, and drums, combos such as the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Cream were major trendsetters. (And both were in varying degrees influenced by jazz—in fact, Cream bassist Jack Bruce stated that Cream was an attempt to "channel" the Ornette Coleman Trio, "...but we didn't tell Eric [Clapton, Cream guitarist] he was Ornette Coleman.") Jazz too has its counterpart to the power trio, only it was never referred to as such—namely, the mighty trio of tenor sax, bass, and drums. The trios of Sonny Rollins (especially), Albert Ayler, and David Murray, among others, had a massive impact on jazz.

Add to that list Scott Neumann's Neu3 Trio. Hyperbole? Not exactly—this threesome has so much going on, many listeners won't miss a chordal instrument (i.e., piano, guitar). Neu3 have a hearty fullness of sound, a heft many other similar trios do not have—and it's not overtly "busy," excessive, or defined by volume. Each player—drummer Neumann, sax-fellow Michael Blake, and bassist Mark Helias each have a huge presence on their instruments. Moreover, Neumann's compositions are well-thought, pointed but melodious, and substantial—no "blowing vehicles" here, nor over-reliance on sparse, self-absorbed "interplay."

The witty, blues-laced "Hymn For Bob" is like unto a tip of the fedora to Thelonious Monk, a master at saying lots in a extremely economical fashion. It's got a jagged, angular theme, after which Blake swings with the rough-hewn, throaty elegance of Ike Quebec and Ben Webster with some of the witty obliqueness of Monk's longtime foil, the underrated tenor whiz Charlie Rouse. Helias throbs in a pointed fashion similar to Charlie Haden albeit with his own inimitable approach, and Neumann taps the tubs with an ever-swinging self-effacing mode evoking Kenny Clarke (who, incidentally, was quoted as