

JOE MCBRIDE IS *LOOKIN' FOR A CHANGE*

Versatile Singer/Pianist Recasts Contemporary Pop Tunes In Straightahead Jazz Arrangements

In the digitally-driven 21st century, the landscape of American popular music exists in a constant state of metamorphosis. At any given moment, the lines between jazz, R&B, soul, funk, pop, hip-hop and countless other styles can become indistinguishable, and sometimes disappear altogether. Singer/pianist Joe McBride, an innovator since his first recordings in the early '90s, understands this phenomenon on a first-hand level. And like any versatile artist who's in it for the long haul, he's learned to not only roll with the changes, but actively seek them out and explore their maximum artistic potential.

A longtime stalwart of the contemporary jazz scene, McBride takes a detour from his usual path for an intriguing new recording that reinterprets a dozen contemporary pop songs via straightahead jazz arrangements. His new CD, *Lookin' For A Change* (HUCD 3144), is set for worldwide release on Heads Up International, a division of Concord Music Group, on July 28, 2009.

Fleshed out with the help of a live trio – guitarist Dan Wilson, bassist Roger Hines and drummer Elijah Gilmore – *Lookin' For A Change* is a collection of songs originally written and recorded by a range of pop luminaries, including Gnarls Barkley, Coldplay, John Mayer, Seal and several others. These reinterpretations, along with three original compositions from McBride's own inspirational well, make for an engaging juxtaposition of the best elements of contemporary pop and traditional jazz.

"The majority of my releases in the past have been primarily electronic," says McBride, "with an acoustic piano playing over the top of arrangements that were primarily put together with drum machines and other technology. I've loved contemporary jazz. It's been a lot of fun playing that kind of music. But I wanted to move forward a little bit, demonstrate a little growth, try something new."

The set opens with a buoyant take on Gnarls Barkley's "Crazy," wherein McBride augments his energetic piano work with a vocal line reminiscent of Al Jarreau. The followup track, a syncopated reading of Vanessa Carlton's yearning "1000 Miles," is a bit more down to earth and pensive. "I like how easily the Vanessa Carlton tune translated to jazz," says McBride. "It swings very easily. It was very easy to put into a straightahead bag."

Further into the set, McBride injects Corrine Bailey Rae's "Like a Star" with a Latin groove that's full of energy without being overbearing. "I like the samba feel on that track," says McBride. "There's a really great acoustic guitar solo in there by Dan Wilson."

In the home stretch, McBride's rendition of Seal's "Kiss From a Rose" puts a gentler jazz spin on this passionate ode without sacrificing any of the emotional impact of the source material.

The set closes with the infectiously rhythmic title track, an appeal for greater tolerance and understanding in a rapidly evolving society. Written by McBride, the song is laced with subtle but unmistakable hints of R&B and funk amid the predominantly jazz-flavored arrangement. This is McBride at his best – sending a clear and positive message without delivering a heavy-handed sermon.

More than just pure musical entertainment, McBride sees *Lookin' for a Change* as a learning experience for listeners from different generations – himself included. As is so often the case, creating something new required a reacquaintance with the old stuff.

"As the project came together, the process became very educational – for me as much as anyone else who heard some of the early tracks," says McBride. "I had forgotten some of the jazz roots of my youth, the straightahead stuff that I had learned back in high school and college – the Miles and the Coltrane and the Charlie Parker. So this project kind of took me back a little bit too. I had to really do my homework on some of the theory in this music."

But McBride has no reservations about digging in and doing the hard work for the sake of his craft. "I wouldn't trade now for any of the other years of my life," he says. "I feel very good about this record. I feel like I'm in a fresh spot. I'm ready to broaden my horizons, and maybe broaden the horizons of some of my listeners as well. It's all about the love for the music, and the willingness to try something new. Anyone who knows me knows that I'm trying something new every day."