

The Nashville Musician

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Jay Patten
Crystal Nights
Flamingo Records

“Blue” Jay Patten has been a respected member of the Nashville music scene for many years, and this multi-talented Local 257 member wears many hats on his latest album, *Crystal Nights*. His trademark alto sax and mellow vocals are at the forefront as usual, but he also plays soprano and tenor saxes, guitar, mandolin, keyboards, and flutes.

He wrote or cowrote eight tunes on this project, which he coproduced with Rick Lonow and Christos. This diverse record is a mix of jazz, rock and pop influenced instrumentals, sentimental vocal ballads, and reworkings of classic songs from various genres and, as Patten says in the liner notes, a couple of more “far-out” tunes.

Patten moved to Nashville in 1978 and became a fixture in the local scene and on the road as longtime bandleader for Crystal Gayle. This record is dedicated to her and she makes a guest appearance as Patten’s duet partner on “Memories Are Made Of This,” which features Tony Newman on drums, Jim Ferguson on bass, Mike Holten on trumpet and Bob Patin on keys.

The album’s opener is a creative remake of Allen Reynolds’ classic song, “Ready For The

Times To Get Better,” with a ghostly vocal by Christos that enters at the end of the eloquent instrumental version, which features Andy Reiss’ supple acoustic guitar interwoven with Patten’s stacked saxophones.

His original instrumentals have an accessible, friendly feel and combine Blue Note grooves, contemporary jazz stylings, and memorable melodies.

Patten’s roots as a classic jazz singer come out in lush originals like “Finally” which sounds like it could have been written back in the day. He also has a way with standards, and both “Can’t Help Falling In Love” and “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” get unusual rhythmic and harmonic treatments that remain fresh with repeated listenings.

Lonow’s drums and percussion are funky and tasteful in every style, as is the bass work by Toni Schulster, long one of Nashville’s underappreciated gems. Catherine Marx plays keyboards with her trademark flair. In addition to Patten’s solid arch top rhythm guitar playing, Andy Reiss is featured on the title track playing burning Carlton-esque leads, and long-time Patten collaborator Mike Loudermilk also contributes some brilliant acoustic playing on “Little Friend.”

“One More Goodbye” has an atmospheric “ECM meets David Sanborn” sound. As for Patten’s more far-out numbers, “True and Tried” features Native American flutes and a passionate vocal that expresses the need for peace and understanding between peoples, and the vibey “Freedom Song” rounds out the stylistic journey with a street-wise hip hop beat and a ‘60s style lyric that celebrates the universal need for all types of freedom.

This album takes the listener to many satisfying places, and Patten and friends once again demonstrate the varied talents of the Nashville music community to great effect. For more information go to www.jaypatten.com.

— Roy Montana