

## **CADENCE MAGAZINE, DECEMBER 2006**

### **THE BRIAN PASTOR BIG BAND, COMMON MEN, BPO MUSIC**

*It's All Right with Me / T.S.C. Blues or a Night at the Rat / Fanfare for the Common Man / You Don't Know What Love Is / Little Henry / L.A. Expression / Ballad for Ben / Midnight Buffet / Son of Feelings / A Foggy Day / Isle of the Pale Eye / My Hard Luck Story / Seven Mile Bridge / Make Someone Happy. 71:04.*

Pastor, comp, arr, cond, tbn; Kevin Rodgers, Chuck Gottesman, Peter Neu, Rick Gazda, Tony Bonsera, tpt; Alan Kirschner, Andrew Neu, Kaj Hansen, Bob Apgar, Ed Etkins, rds; Mike Purdy, Paul Morris, Jay Shanman, Glenn Dodson, tbn; Dave Kenney, p; Greg Kettinger, g; Rob Cochran, b; Tony Vigilante, d; Grant Garfuss (14), vcl. Philadelphia, PA; no dates or venue given.

If there were an award for most impressive big-band debut album, trombonist Brian Pastor's superb Philadelphia-based ensemble would be a clear frontrunner for that honor. I've heard a number of first-time ventures lately, and this is beyond a doubt the best one yet. The reasons could fill a book but must certainly include inspired blowing by the band, fabulous charts by Pastor, Andrew Neu, Paul Morris, Kaj Hansen, Chuck Gottesman and Jeff Darrohn, a dauntless rhythm section supervised by ace drummer Tony Vigilante, and admirable solos by everyone who takes a turn. And we shouldn't overlook the immaculate sound and lavish 71-minute playing time, which serve to amplify one's pleasure. Pastor, who wrote the groovy "T.S.C. Blues or a Night at the Rat" and romantic "Ballad for Ben" and arranged five other numbers, is a resourceful improviser who is featured on Morris' burnished arrangement of "You Don't Know What Love Is" and the scurrying "Son of Feelings." Tenor saxophonist Andrew Neu (brother Peter is in the trumpet section), who arranged and solos with Vigilante and trumpeter Rick Gazda on Cole Porter's "It's All Right with Me," also prepared a delicious "Midnight Buffet" and built a sturdy "Seven Mile Bridge." Darrohn composed the charming "Little Henry," saxophonist Hansen the shimmering "Isle of the Pale Eye," trumpeter Gottesman the persuasive "Hard Luck Story" (based on "Bye Bye Blackbird"). Pastor's charts, all of them impressive, include Max Bennett's funky "L.A. Expression," the Gershwin brothers' temperate "Foggy Day," Jule Styne's "Make Someone Happy" (vocal by Grant Garfuss), "Son of Feelings" and Aaron Copland's towering "Fanfare for the Common Man." Gottesman (flugel) is front and center on "Ballad for Ben," with strapping solos elsewhere by Hansen (alto and flute), Peter Neu, pianist Dave Kenney, tenor Ed Etkins and bassist Rob Cochran. "Make Someone Happy" is followed by Pastor's unaccompanied (and unannounced) riff on "Bill Bailey" and a soft "I love you, dad," which lowers the curtain on one of the year's most refreshing big-band albums.

Jack Bowers

©Cadence Magazine December 2006