

Larry Vuckovich Trio



STREET SCENE – Tetrachord Music 684. www.larryvuckovich.com *Dexter's Mode, Street Scene, News for Lulu, As Time Goes By Mambo, I'll Wait and Pray, I Ain't Got Nobody, Blue in Green, Come Rain or Come Shine, Oh, You Crazy Moon, Blue Bohemia Suite, Scandinavian Waltz, It Could Happen to You, Under Paris Skies Impressions.*

PERSONNEL: Larry Vuckovich, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Akira Tana, drum; Hector Lugo, congas; Vince Delgado, bongos and tabla.

By Gilbert Mathieu

Yugoslavian-born and West Coast-based Larry Vuckovich, a true musician's musician, has been on the scene for many years, with at least ten solo albums to his credit and musical partnerships with a host of stellar artists, from Cab Calloway to Tom Harrell, from Mel Torme and Helen Humes to Irene Kral and Tony Bennett!

Street Scene finds Vuckovich in the company of Larry Grenadier and Akira Tana and two impressive percussionists, Hector Lugo and Vince Delgado. The leader's versatility and the ease with which he shines in varied styles and repertoire are well in evidence throughout this very enjoyable CD.

This is happy jazz at its best, be it in the leader's own compositions or in standards like *It Could Happen to You* or *As Time Goes By*.

Dexter's Mode sets up the CD's swinging groove with a very fluid piano solo (which shows the influence of Red Garland, Sonny Clark and Bill Evans) and a call-and-response "trilogue" by Vuckovich, Grenadier and Tana, reminiscent of the Jazz Messengers of yore.

A strong bass solo by Grenadier and a great overall rhythmic support successfully set the pace to what is to follow.

From the very first bars of *Street Scene*, a Hollywood film noir theme penned by Alfred Newman, one is reminded of Charlie Haden's opus in the same genre. The bluesy, wee hour feeling of the song, Grenadier's haunting bass lines, and an understated Red Garland-like solo by Vuckovich are very touching indeed. The mood soon shifts, however, with a very swinging *News for Lulu* and a *Night in Tunisia*-inspired introduction. The pianist adeptly manages to blend a minor blues feel, a bop beat and a Latin pulse. Soul is generously dispensed in this track! A nice piano solo (nod to Sonny Clark, may be?), a coherent and well-structured bass solo, and a "trading of fours" with drummer Tana round up the proceedings with brio.

Fever pitch is reached with *As Time Goes By Mambo*, with Hector Lugo's congas, Akira Tana's montuno and the leader at the keyboard. Bringing down the pace one notch, Vuckovich offers us a sultry and romantic bebop treatment of George Treadwell and Jerry Valentine's *I'll Wait and Pray*, staple of Sarah Vaughan and John Coltrane's early repertoires. Vuckovich enhances his light touch by using mostly the upper reaches of the keyboard and subtly doubling the tempo on the bridge. A Red Garland-like *Oh, You Crazy Moon* reverts to the Latin pace of *Street Scene*, enabling Vince Delgado to let loose on his bongos and Larry Grenadier to "go Latin" and turn his solos into little gems of simplicity and coherence. Acknowledging his Slavic roots, Vuckovich switches into a Balkano-Slavic jazz blues fusion, based on Dvorak's *Slavonic Dances #22* and entitled *Blue Bohemia Suite*. A haunting piano introduction is followed by a minor blues section giving Hector Lugo a chance to show his amazing chops. This gives way to a lovely jazz waltz pitting Vince Delgado's tabla against Akira Tana's drums, with eastern overtones and a minor blues feeling leading the way to a lovely statement of the theme and a bass solo by Grenadier, with subtle shades of Miles Davis' *All Blues*.

After this musical visit to Bohemia, we are taken to Northern Europe, by way of a Vuckovich original, *Scandinavian Waltz*, dedicated to Bill Evans. The piece is very much in keeping with the trio format made famous by the late master, whilst putting well in evidence the personal style of its composer.

Other pieces like *Blue in Green*, *I Ain't Got Nobody*, *Come Rain or Come Shine*, and *Under Paris Skies Impressions*, attest to Larry Vuckovich's originality, elegance, dexterity and most of all...great sense of swing, time, space and phrasing. For those who are keen on a superior piano jazz trio, *Street Scene* is highly recommended.