



TONY JEFFERSON Sings!

TONY JEFFERSON Sings! • Jazz Forum Series – Blue Chip Jazz • www.1201music.com
I Just Found Out About Love; Time After Time; It Could Happen To You; You Stepped Out Of A Dream; In The Wee Small Hours; My Shining Hour; When Your Lover Has Gone; On A Clear Day; I Cover The Waterfront; Dindi; Soon; There's A Lull In My Life; Pick Yourself Up.
PERSONNEL: Tony Jefferson, Vocals; John Hart, Guitar; Don Falzone, Bass; Alvester Garnett, Drums

By: Nora McCarthy

Many singers can accompany themselves on piano, guitar or bass but few of them actually double on a second instrument well enough to have a dual career as both singer and instrumentalist. I have always believed that all musicians were in their heart of hearts singers and that it was important for them to know the lyrics and the melodies of the songs they play in order to blow over the changes on a deeper level. In the same token, all singers should be musicians and approach their voices as instruments – the two are not mutually exclusive. More and more musicians are nurturing the singer within and taking to the mic. One such musician is Tony Jefferson, an abundantly talented, swinging and established drummer who has broadened his musical scope to include singing and doing so quite remarkably. Tony Jefferson has just joined an elite group of singers who can do it all with the release of his first vocal CD aptly named *Tony Jefferson Sings!*.

Singing is not something Tony embarked upon frivolously—he is a serious singer who has put forth a great deal of thought and hard work in honing his vocal skills having backed some of the best singers in the business like Freddy Cole, Sheila Jordan, and Annie Ross—Ross has invited Tony to share her stage numerous times. This experience gave Tony an invaluable perspective into what great singing is all about and he applies this knowledge together with his innate

musicianship and honey coated voice on a truly wonderful first CD.

Tony Jefferson Sings! was recorded in a single 3 ½ hour long session and was done without any over dubs, with the band in one room, adding to the warmth and presence of this lovely CD. Credit is given to the excellent engineering of Neal Miner who recorded and mixed the project and Fred Gillen who did the mastering. The fact that it was recorded in this fashion is in and of itself a statement these days. It is clearly a testament to the music. But then again, Tony is coming from a place when singing was honest; when it came from the heart, from the moment of inspiration, and not from technology which is what also makes it so refreshing. There are absolutely no bells and whistles on this CD; only music for music's sake.

Jefferson chose for his debut thirteen standards among which are staples in any self respecting jazz vocalist's repertoire. A sweet discovery for me was the obscure beauty, "There's A Lull In My Life," from the film "Wake Up And Live" (1937) (Mack Gordon / Harry Revel), my personal favorite. It has been performed and recorded by many notable singers over the years including Nat King Cole. Tony's voice has a texture and tonal quality quite naturally similar to Nat King Cole's but Tony makes it his own with his sparse acoustic duo rendition with guitarist John Hart giving it a fresh more personal quality.

Tony respects the melody of every song on the album and includes the verse on "In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning" and, "When Your Lover Has Gone," which is always a nice touch but he saves his secret weapon—his astute scatting ability—for a bopping translation of Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer's "My Shining Hour" which was matched by swinging solos from John Hart and Alvester Garnett whose expert cymbal work was shining throughout.

The overall CD captures the feeling of catching a live set at your favorite jazz club. The quality of musicianship is superb as one would expect from these veteran players who have worked with the best of the best singers in jazz. They took their time with every piece thoughtfully and unhurriedly allowing for Tony to work his vocal magic. Tony's mellow, easy flowing interpretation of, "It Could Happen to You," is the epitome of understatement and his tender delivery of, "In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning," reflects a deep affinity to the song's underlying sentiment in keeping with Bird's philosophy that "if you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."

The beautiful songs on *Tony Jefferson Sings* are songs most have us have heard a million times before but what sets them apart is that they are sung by a voice whose time has finally come. It has emerged on the scene quite humbly, quite naturally, quite honestly...but not by accident. It isn't hiding behind slick arrangements, electronic effects, studio enhancements or unusual instrumentation. Tony Jefferson has put forth his

first effort as a jazz singer on more than worthy footing and I for one am looking forward to watching his star soar.