

## Mp3 Michael Webster - Leading Lines



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An "extraordinarily gifted composer, arranger orchestrator...his saxophone solos would stand alone powerfully even without the beautiful orchestrations behind him." - Garry Dial, NYC pianist

9 MP3 Songs

JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Big Band Details: Through the years Hollywood has tried to make films about famous jazz musicians -- Bird, Ray, Billy Holiday, Frank Sinatra to name a few. So often they have fallen short as a result of focusing on the personal life of the musician rather than on the music itself. The movies also fictionalized stories such as Round Midnight and The Fabulous Baker Boys. The latter tells of two brothers who made their living as performers: one is portrayed as a shallow, publicity seeking nerd, while the other is seen as a deep, brooding jazz pianist. The requisite blonde bombshell crawling around on the piano furthers the stereotype of female jazz vocalist as ditzy bimbo. Unfortunately such movies portray an unflattering picture of the art of Jazz, which in reality has had a rich tradition of brothers who not only performed together, but contributed to the advancement of the music as individual players and composers. Some notable examples are Hank, Thad and Elvin Jones; Bud and Richie Powell; Percy and Jimmy Heath; Cannonball and Nat Adderley; and of course the famous Marsalis Brothers. Following in this tradition is saxophonist and composer Michael Webster's debut CD Leading Lines. Michael's story is steeped in his family's musical tradition. His father Peter is a violist with the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada, conducted by Pinchas Zukerman. His mother Sandra is an excellent pianist and teacher who taught at the University of Ottawa. Her private studio consistently produces provincial and national finalists in the Canadian Music Competition. Michael's brother, Gordon, who performs on the CD, is also a highly accomplished jazz pianist. I've had the honor of having Michael as an improvisation and composition student at Manhattan School of Music. In two short years I witnessed his explosive growth as a composer, arranger and player. When one listens with a critical ear to a musical project there are many

aspects that one must address. Does the artist have a unique and personal voice? Who is the composer, the arranger, the orchestrator and the producer? How did these elements come together as a whole? It is rare to find a musical project where the artist has taken on all of these functions, and done it well. In all of these areas Michael Webster is indeed extraordinarily gifted. Each generation makes its mark on the jazz world by adding something new into the mix. One of the contributions of Michael's generation is the use of odd meters. Although explored in other eras by composers like Dave Brubeck and Don Ellis, these concepts have become an integral part of the musical fabric with today's young players. Take a good listen to "Seven Seas," which was influenced by the great Latin jazz bass player John Benitez. During Michael and John's years at MSM, we were all influenced by John's own exploration, extending traditional clave rhythms into odd meters. As an arranger Michael skillfully doubles John Benitez's bass line with brother Gordon's left hand. This ties many of the tunes together such as "Seven Seas," "New Moon," "Oneman's Blues," "Horizons" and title track "Leading Lines." Adding to the intensity of this rhythm section is Obed Calvaire's deep grooving pocket. The orchestrations are exquisite. The use of strings, woodwinds and brass evokes the genius of Gil Evans and Maria Schneider, while remaining true to a unique and personal voice. It is difficult to make a fully orchestrated and arranged large ensemble CD without losing the essence of the jazz soloist's improvisation. Once again, here Michael hits a home run. His saxophone solos would stand alone powerfully in the jazz quartet even without the beautiful orchestrations behind him. Adding to the true jazz aesthetic, trumpet player Michael Rodriguez plays with a beautiful tone, a keen sense of space, and unfailing respect for the integrity of the compositions. I must mention the closing tune, "Reverence," in which the Webster brothers exhibit their family's powerful musical legacy. The tune is a perfect vehicle for Gordon's beautiful pianist tone and sensitivity. It is a wonderful way to bring this intense musical experience to a calm spiritual ending. Garry Dial, November 2005

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