

Mp3 Benito Gonzalez - Starting Point



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Forward-thinking, Latin-infused original jazz from the "DEBUT" album of 2005 winner of the Great American Jazz Piano Competition, Benito Gonzalez. featuring:CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE / ANTONIO SANCHEZ / RON BLAKE / RENE MCLEAN / PERNEL SATURNINO ... 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Latin Jazz Details: BIO: Born into a musical family from Maracaibo, Venezuela, Benito first played the accordion that his father bought for him when he was 5 years old. At age 10 he played percussion in a band consisting of uncles and older cousins. They later taught Benito to play the cuatro (traditional Venezuelan stringed instrument) with which he accompanied the church choir. It was at the church where Benito first learned to play the organ from his godfather, the church organist. By age 14 Benito had taught himself enough keyboard to play with professional Latin bands touring in the regional area, but after hearing Chick Corea's "Return to Forever" he fell in love with jazz. Benito moved to Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, at age 17 to study jazz. He began a rigorous practice schedule and studied closely with leading Venezuelan jazz musicians: Pepe Valdez (cousin of Chucho Valdez), Julio Mendoza and Francisco Morales. For over three years, Benito played six nights a week in Caracas' best jazz club, Juan Sebastian-Bar. During this time he played straight-ahead jazz, Dixieland, Brazilian and traditional Latin music. This opportunity led to work with established and touring Venezuelan artists (Maria Rivas, Biella Da'Costa, Alfredo Naranjo, Frank Quintero) and to a recording project with master African percussionist Okyerema Asante (who performed with Paul Simon, Jack DeJohnette and Miles Davis) A few months later, Asante invited Benito to the U.S. to tour with his band. Upon his arrival in the U.S. Benito was invited to play a concert at the National Press Club of Washington D.C and record an album with Joe Ford and Asante. His collaboration with Asante also led him to play with Rene McLean. Rene invited Benito to teach a master class in the New Haven Conservatory, after which he auditioned for

legendary jazz master and Grammy winner Jackie McLean. As soon as Benito finished playing his composition, "Starting Point," Jackie told him that he was in the band. Since that time, Benito has performed with Gary Thomas, Christian McBride, Rene McLean, Antonio Hart, Antonio Parker, Don Braden, Mark Gross, Jim Snidero, Hamiet Bluiett, Okyerema Asante, Antonio Sanchez, T.K. Blue, Joe Ford, Ron Blake, and also presently with Jackie McLean. His performance credits include several national and international jazz festivals (Montreux Jazz Festival, North Sea Jazz Festival, the Opera Theatre in Vienna, Festival Latino Americano in Italy, JVC Jazz Festival, East Coast Jazz Festival, Jacksonville Jazz Festival, Atlanta Jazz Festival) and jazz clubs throughout the U.S. (Iridium, Village Vanguard, Sweet Rhythm, Blues Alley, Ortlieb's, Zanzibar Blue, Jazz Alley) among others. In 2004, Benito released his debut album as a leader, "Starting Point", featuring world-class musicians Christian McBride on bass, Antonio Sanchez on drums, Ron Blake and Rene McLean on reeds and Pernell Saturnino on percussion. "Starting Point" was ranked #6 by Washington D.C.'s jazz radio programmers placing this independent release in the company of jazz legends and record company giants. In April of this year, Benito competed at the Jacksonville Jazz Festival and defeated four of the country's best pianists to become the winner of the 2005 Great American Jazz Piano Competition. Presently, Benito is being recognized as an exciting composer and vibrant performing virtuoso. His sound, a wealth of diverse musical ideas, represents the next generation of great performers and composers. He is currently leading a jazz/Latin project that incorporates world rhythms and classical concepts. 2005 marks a year of touring with his working band to promote his new release. Later this year Benito returns to the studio to record his second album featuring Jack DeJohnette on drums, Christian McBride on bass and Gary Thomas on sax.

JAZZIZ REVIEW [MAY 2005]: Venezuela has produced more than its share of top-flight pianists. Ed Simon, Silvano Monasterios, and Otmaro Ruiz have been established members of the U.S. jazz scene for more than a decade. Now two impressive new talents have joined them. The sessions of Luis Perdomo and Benito Gonzalez demonstrate many similarities: Both dates feature a mix of well-known Latin and non-Latin sidemen, both spotlight a saxophone as the primary improvisational foil to the leader's piano, and both engage in unaccompanied solo forays. But they emerge as wholly individual voices... ..Gonzalez's approach is generally more deliberate and reflective. The character of such works as "Plaza Bolivar" evolves slowly. Here, the pianist's unflinching ostinato line allows his right hand to fly fancifully before Ron Blake's clarinet enters and ushers in a somber mood. When Rene McLean's tenor sax joins the procession, with bassist

Christian McBride and drummer Antonio Sanchez pitching in, the piece morphs into a free-leaning blowing vehicle. Impressively, the groove never strays too far from the threads of melodic beauty he weaves throughout. The long form of most of the pianist's arrangements allow the listener to get lost in suite-like structure of his works, the crescendos of ensemble fireworks, and the often bluesy musings he intersperses throughout. If this represents Gonzalez's Starting Point, I can't wait to hear what follows.

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