

## Mp3 David Bixler - Call It A Good Deal



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Contemporary straightahead New York instrumental quintet jazz with hard grooves, edgy originals, and a solid sense of swing 7 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Bebop, JAZZ: Jazz Fusion Details: So, Bixxie - as we call him in the Chico O'Farrill Afro Cuban Jazz Orchestra - hands me his disc to check out. This happens to me all the time. Usually it takes me a "minute" to get to it. But David Bixler is my front line guy (first alto sax) in the trenches, fighting for the music, so I listen to it right away. Immediately, I think it's a wonderful record, that was my initial reaction and still is upon repeated listening. The thing grooves hard, the playing on it is superb, the writing is unique and most interestingly, it achieves what so many of us are trying to do, it reflects who David is as an artist and as a human being. David is a modernist, he's also deeply humorous, you can hear his mind in his improvisations and in his writing. Even though he's established as a great player, he's still trying new stuff. Wow! And without that insufferable self-importance that so many jazzers tend to have. He's also assembled a great band that seems to share his sense of adventure. They play leanly, reflecting the wide openness of David's compositions. Ugonna Okegwo, a highly sought-after bassist, has played with legends like Clark Terry, Benny Golson and Pharaoh Sanders. There's a lightness to his touch that never betrays the gravity of his swing. Scott Wendholt, one of the premier soloists in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra (no small feat filling in for Thad Jones!) delivers a fluid, improvisational prowess and a respect for the idiomatic possibilities of the trumpet. John Hart swings hard, without disregarding the basic rule of jazz, tell a story, don't just flex your finger muscles. In addition to being a great jazz player, he's also in demand as a studio player. John served with the great organist Brother Jack McDuff. Shape shifting the swing from funk to straight ahead and all the flavors in between, Andy Watson has played with some of my favorite musical minds, including the great Tom Harrell, Bill Frisell and guitar hero Jim Hall. And then there's David. His playing is like an Escher painting, impossible

angles, infinite possibilities, and yet always rational, clear and succinct. I sometimes joke on the bandstand about the lead alto player being "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness", but in David's case, his is a unique voice, truly an original soloist with a clear cut case of intellect and a good dose of passion. The CD opens with "Aiding and Abetting". Written mostly in seven (with a bridge in four), the piece has a feeling of macabre humor. A highly enjoyable interlude before the guitar solo has a meandering, sinuous counterpoint that contributes to the mysteriousness of the vibe. In "Unraveled", I enjoyed John Hart's guitar work for its colors and textures which are understated and elegant, a perfect backdrop for the melodies, a descending series of sequences which have a gentle falling quality. The Interlude between solos is jarring for its simpleness and brevity. "Game Face" begins with a simple repeated figure against which there are an evolving series of counterpoints and melodic lines. There is an alto/guitar duel in which David shows his slippery harmonic sensibility, creating a beautiful high wire act of tension and resolution. "Gemenlie" has this beautiful gentle vibe in the beginning, making it sound like a lullaby. It gives way to some of the most serious swing on the album. This is where the pure jazz comes to the forefront. I particularly enjoy Ugonna's playing which is hard core swing without ever becoming heavy handed. That's hard to pull off. His solo is outstanding. "Scratch and Sniff the Jive" is one of those rhythmic displacement exercises that look great on paper but are hard to pull off. You need to keep a strong sense of four, but a loose sense of phrasing. The section after the guitar solo, especially when the drums switch to a more sixteenth note funk style, is a great example of this idea of tension and fluidity. Check out Bixie's solo, he plays razor sharp streams of sixteenths and stops on a dime. By the way the whole thing is a cleverly disguised drum feature, which Andy pulls off magically. I imagine that "He Cries Every Day" is written about his youngest child, or maybe about himself, or maybe about anyone who is a human being in a world that has become harsher and harsher every day. In any case, it's somehow very reassuring. Maybe David is a closet optimist. The closer "Good Deal?" is a perfect example of Davids compositional process. Every melodic statement in the head has a chance to breathe before the next phrase. This is what contributes to the great sense of openness in his work. You feel as if there's thinking behind each note, as opposed to reacting. And that's what David is, an observer, a thinker. I love watching him on the bandstand, he's always aware of what's going on around him. Frequently, I catch him smiling and chuckling at someones great playing or something inane that just happened. In any case that's how this record feels, the observations of a great musician, documented with humor and lots of care

and thought, truly a major "voice in the wilderness". Arturo OFarrill Recorded at The Studio, New York City, on May 24, 2005. Engineer: Katherine Miller. Assistant Engineer: Eiji Takasugi. Mixed at Annandale Recording by Katherine Miller on June 1, 2005. Producer : David Bixler. Photography : Jack Frisch. Package Design: 3+Co. (threeandco.com) Executive Producer: Joachim Becker. David Bixler Management : Steven M. Gates (914) 309 1560. [steven@stevenmgates.com](mailto:steven@stevenmgates.com) [stevenmgates.com](http://stevenmgates.com)

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