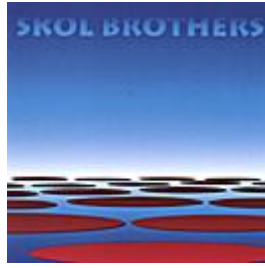


## Mp3 Skol Brothers - Jazz: Jazz Fusion



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An old-skool mix of jazz, blues, and pop tunes by Christofferson, using Hammond M3, guitar, E bass, piano, melodica and saxophone - with percussion, a storm, a train, and a striptease 7 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Jazz Fusion, JAZZ: Smooth Jazz Details: "This is low-down, funky modern jazz with a high-concept pop-inspired soul." Joseph Blake/Victoria Times-Colonist A Standout Blends In from The Oregonian 03/05/04 by MARTY HUGHLEY Steve Christofferson excels at one of the most valuable, but not the most glamorous, jobs in music: accompanying singers. He plays piano with exemplary depth and warmth, and creates his signature sound by doubling on melodica, which he makes a surprisingly poignant tool for improvisation as well as for lead lines. You can hear him around town regularly, most often serving as both harmonic foundation and lyrical foil for the great, idiosyncratic Nancy King. But Christofferson has other skills, which he puts to good use with Skol Brothers, a group that brings together several other unassumingly excellent Portland-area musicians on contemporary-jazz ground that's smooth in execution but solid in substance. Skol Brothers is an outlet for Christofferson the composer, highlighting his lovely, liquid melodic sense in a supple ensemble sound that recalls the accessibility of the Pat Metheny Group. These are much more than mere blowing vehicles; Christofferson and the other players get their say improvisationally, but the solos always sound fully integrated into the structure and narrative flow of the compositions. At the core of the musical brotherhood here are bassist Tom Wakeling and drummer Jeff Cumpston, who give the music a confident, comfortable feel that sounds relaxed whether it's doing a lazy-day glide on "Mississippi" (reminiscent of Bill Frisell's tender jazz Americana), driving to the energetic peak of "El Paso Expreso" or getting in the mood for the pulchritudinous blues of "Full Figured." For the band's guitar-and-saxophone front line, Christofferson shuffles four players, for the most part teaming Tod Carver with John Gross or Jay Koder with Jeff Homan. Gross is the most assertive and unpredictable

improviser of the bunch (and he also adds flute), but all are expert technicians and team players, and the personnel shifts don't diminish the album's cohesiveness. And Christofferson -- laying down graceful chord structures on piano, filling in atmospheric washes or subtly funky solos on organ, thickening the tonal palette with the melodica's distinctive blend of innocence and yearning -- is the artful thread running through it all. Both leader and accompanist, star and supporting cast, first among brothers.

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