

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

Armenian born Arthur Satyan, in Lebanon since 7 years, is so active and visible in the Lebanese music scene playing with 3WD, Perfect Match, Gros Bras, Charbel Rouhana, Julia Butros and his own AST (Arthur Satyan Trio) that there is a danger of taking him for granted. This is the almost inevitable fate of a musician who becomes "local". In AS's case it would be tragic because he is a World Class pianist and composer. Listening to him recently was a smiling, approving and applauding Ahmad Jamal. Debut albums are a tricky venture. There is a temptation to overwhelm and show the audience everything the artist can do. Happily Satyan showed his good taste and maturity and gave us a relaxed ego-less performance. The genius of Art For Art's Sake lies in the open uncluttered sound and feeling of the overall concept. The decision to use only Afra's single conga drum for rhythm was brilliant and combined with Satyan's restrained virtuosity ensures a disc that can be listened to repeatedly with increasing pleasure

In the opening original "Shades Of Blue" AST demonstrates how to be super calm and intense at the same time. The empathy between three longtime friends and band mates is complete. Composed with Wayne Shorter's sound in mind "Shades" is a perfect little gem.

On Kenny Dorham's classic "Blue Bossa", almost an anthem for Lebanese bands, Satyan has composed a bass concerto for Abboud Saadi to perform with his usual sensitive musicality. This solo piece is worthy of transcription as a study of effortlessly moving melodic invention. In keeping with the "less is more" philosophy of "Art For Art's Sake" the leader's piano is silent leaving Arakelian to play simultaneously the bass line and chords. Kids, try this at home.

Arthur's original concept of "Summertime" has become the standard way of playing that tune by Beirut musicians. Future generations may not even be aware that there were other options before!

"Art's Minor Blues" is a tour de force of Satyan's piano vocabulary. He gives us deep funk, percussive hits, Bebop and Beyond excursions, all in 6 minutes of Mysterioso suspense. "Art For Art's Sake" is a great accomplishment for the leading light of Jazz in Lebanon today.

Jack Gregg