

“Music”, some would define it as the art of arranging or combining frequencies ( in vertical and horizontal directions) respecting a precise rhythm... sounds very simple, but what are the odds of getting all of those elements in harmony in the purpose to move the inner space of the listeners? I do not think it’s simple at all... It deals with soul and music where if you would find the good match you can call it “Art”.

Recently the Lebanese Jazz scene was marked by the release of a new album which in my opinion succeeds to combine the above mentioned elements where the music is in permanent contact with the soul...

Talking about the general musical characteristics in the album, the most relevant thing that you can notice is the variety of the repertoire which is cool and exciting, every tune gives a different impression that drags you and keeps you excited to listen and discover what is coming next. Setting it in defined words I would precise the excitement as a consequence of the variation concerning the musical notion of “Release” and “Tension”, for an example this notional difference is obvious in Shades of Blues and Confirmation (the released atmosphere that you get in Satyan’s composition is replaced by a bopish tension in Parker’s Confirmation which is in my opinion one of the major element to keep the musical excitement flowing continuously inside of the listeners).

Second important thing to notice is “SPACE”, there’s space for everyone to play and space in everyone’s playing (in spite that the repertoire varies from Satyan’s compositions to busy structured Latin and Bop tunes) which is so important to give the soulful musical push that most of the listeners are enjoying.

Next to the spacey performance in the recording the arrangements and rearrangements are beautiful and interesting marked by Satyan’s original finger prints where I notice mostly the absence of the drums in eight tunes which somehow helped more to put the emphasis on the solid rhythm groove through the light percussive instrumentation. Of course not forgetting the groovy side of the ninth tune where the drums drove me to a different mood.

“Shades of Blues”, in addition of the amazing Satyan’s melody and mood the tune serves as a prelude to the rest of the tunes. The building up structure starts with a rhythmic pattern on bass where the harmonics are resonating to give the perfect support to the piano to get in along with percussions to lead to the theme in a free mood but in a tight way of playing. The free mood of the tune persists during all the tune and especially in Arthur’s spacey piano solo.

Parker’s “Confirmation” was rearranged for piano, bass guitar and congas. After a piano solo prelude, the melody is played by piano and bass simultaneously in a very swingy way in spite of the absence of the swing pattern on the ride cymbal (which usually helps to emphasis the swing in a tune), after a solo played following the painistic bop school, the trades are amazing where Vartan, Fouad and Arthur established a very cool instrumental questions and answers to conclude with the main theme again.

The reduced arrangement of “Mambo Influenciado” kept the Latin feel respecting the rhythmic syncopated patterns where the main melody is played on bass. After the melody

the piano solo is building up from chords played in a Latin-like rhythmic patterns continuing in a melodic stream solo to end up mixing both melodic and chordal musical patterns to conclude the tune with the theme played on the piano. The space is accenting the value of each note in the solo beside the Latin feel in the solo which is marked by Satyan's musical perspective.

Following the same trend in rearranging, "On Green Dolphin Street" starts with a vague clave pattern played on piano mixed with the bass' harmonics and the percussive interferences. The "A" part of the theme is always played over this mysterious atmosphere while the "B" part is played over a songo like determined rhythmic pattern. This contrast is giving the tune a beautiful original modern feel which got the tune out of its standard shell. The mentioned contrast continues during the first played choruses beneath the piano solo where after the rhythm section continue following a basic songo rhythmic pattern to conclude the solo with the same vague beginning to end the tune in playing the theme and fading out with the same mysterious beginning.

"Blue Bossa", the tune that we are all used to hear, is orchestrated for two basses and congas. Although we are not used to hear the bass soloing over chords played by another bass, the idea is good and it reflected another side of Blue Bossa that we never heard before.

"Art's Minor Blues", my favorite tune in the album it combines a free melodic line in a well built twelve bars structure which reminds us of the melodic style of Brecker Brothers. The rhythm of the tune stands between normal four over four beat and a Latin cha-cha beat, in other words it's a free beat which is supporting the music fully. The piano is also swinging, touching in a way a Latin feel which is felt in different parts especially during the solo. In other words a fantastic tune!

"Garun a", an Armenian folk song played as an introduction to Gershwin's "Summer Time" where the arrangement is different from what had preceded. It includes written parts for violins and cello beside the trio (piano, bass and percussions). It is a new arrangement that you can add to the catalogue of different versions of the tune. And as usual Arthur is letting some fingers go through the black and white keyboard to give us another solid melodic solo which ends with marked accents on the strings and piano fill-ins, to repeat the "A" part of the melody to finish with an original ending similar to a signature to identify the arranger of the tune.

"Back To Bop", as the title says it's a Bop based tune and it is obvious harmonically and melodically. The intro starts and after a one measure break the congas gets in action to support the bass and piano playing the theme. As in "Confirmation", swing is all over the tune based on walking bass and on Satyan's swingy pianistic performance. The tune took us back to stop and enjoy a smooth melody and a super solo. The tune ends after repeating the same Chordal rhythmic pattern as in the melody.

“Super Movies” featuring Steve Philips introducing the tune. As the prelude is weird the tune is breaking the impression that the listener is getting from the first eight tunes. In spite of the existing contrast between the tunes it kept the range of variety within limits but “Super Movies” is something else. Using the Electric piano, the groovy feel of the drums, and the slapping bass leaves definitely another impression in the soul. Different but still pushes you to move your head or snap a finger or tap with your foot, which is a proof that the music succeeded to breakthrough to your inner space leaving again different impressions...

At the end I would like to thank all of the musicians who contributed to accomplish “Art for Art’s Sake” especially Abboud, Fouad, Vartan (whom I do not know yet) and Arthur. Guys, you did a wonderful job!!!

“Art for Art’s Sake” is only the beginning, now we are waiting to see how would be the next album, no one knows but it will be for sue oriented for Art’s Sake I guess we will be enjoying it too.

Ron Afif.