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disc-ussion

Hometown boy makes good

Haven
Don Latarski
Inner City Records

When "Haven" was released earlier this month, Don Latarski breathed a sigh of relief. Years of writing, touring, and dealing with debt have been finally reduced to 40 minutes of marketable vinyl.

The product of Latarski's efforts are eight cuts of truly pleasurable jazz, rock, and fusion.

He has taken some of the best elements of Lon Guitarsky (his band, which plays a parody on his name) and filled an album full of rich, melodic tunes.

Don Ross and the Triad Recording Studio can take much of the credit for the quality sounds that have been reproduced. The sax solos are clean, the drums are crisp, and Latarski's acoustic guitar pieces sound as if he were

playing them live. Not bad at all for a local group of studio engineers.

But the album's best quality is in the music itself. The songs are cleverly written and performed by people who have something a lot of local musicians lack — talent.

The cut "Varenka" is an example of the quality music Latarski can produce. The song progresses through a variety of



moods, each building to a nice, natural climax. "Varenka" also shows some of the good stuff Latarski can do on the guitar. He inserts an imaginative electric solo in the middle of the piece that is one of his best on the album.

Another cut to look for is "Amalia." Mark Schneider plays mellow, underlying bass licks that aptly compliment Latarski's witty guitar solos. Rhythmic clapping helps to give this song a touch of funk. "Amalia" gives us a preview of what to expect on some of Latarski's future work — a move to a more upbeat, rhythm and blues-type jazz.

The title cut "Haven" lets Latarski strut his stuff as a songwriter and a musician. "Haven" is a dreamy type of song that begins with a soft acoustic guitar piece by Latarski and a smooth, flowing sax solo by Jeff Homan. Jack Buddeke, a former member of Lon Guitarsky, adds some nice keyboard work to the piece. One of Latarski's George Benson-like guitar solos gently adds class to "Haven," which may be the best cut on the album.

"Jennifer Anne's Samba," one of the two songs on the album not written by Latarski, is a tight piece of musicianship. Another one of Latarski's acoustic guitar solos helps make the cut delightful. The not-too-heavy samba beat is a nice change, and Buddeke, the song's author, uses a good selection of sax and guitar pieces.

While "Haven" may not break a lot of new ground in the jazz world, it certainly reflects what the concept of good jazz is all about. It is a classy, quality album made by a group of very talented individuals. "Haven" is Latarski's first venture into the recording industry, and it gives indication of a fresh and encouraging start for the local guitarist.

by chris courtnier

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