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Camwell's album 'Flip Side' demands appreciation of jazz

The local jazz musician and graduate student recorded his first solo album, a somber winter soundtrack

CD review

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

Unless you're a student in the University's School of Music, it's unlikely the name Dave Camwell will ring a bell. However, the local jazz musician and graduate student has put out his own solo disc, "Flip Side of the Coin."

Camwell recorded the album during his master's degree work at the University of Northern Colorado. He spent about 50 hours in the studio, although the recording and mixing process took about a year. He discussed details about

his album through e-mail.

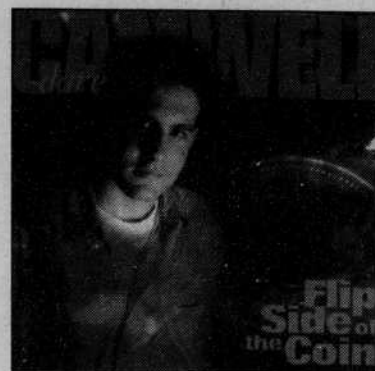
"It took much longer than I thought it would, and was much harder as well," Camwell wrote. "When you're so intimately involved with a project, getting everything just right on the rehearsals, arrangements and mixes takes a long time."

The musicians on "Flip Side of the Coin" were mostly friends and fellow GTFs that Camwell hand-picked for their musicianship. He said working with friends contributed to an enjoyable recording environment.

To an untrained ear, some of these tunes might strike listeners as elevator music. This analogy isn't meant as an insult, but rather is based on the fact that jazz takes time to really hear. Sometimes the greatest part of a given tune won't be heard without patience and a willingness to be — to just be — with the music. Jazz is one of the most technical and complicated forms of music performed today. Generally, this is because it combines the best of improvisation with the best of technical theory into a cohesive whole.

This makes "Flip Side of the Coin" difficult to criticize, because, on one hand, there is really nothing wrong with this disc. It consists of covers, or reinterpretations of other jazz tunes by John Coltrane, Pat Metheny and Andy Nevala. Camwell also provides three of his own compositions, including the album title track and one called "Jessica Rabbit." He is clearly a talented saxophone player, performing alto, tenor and soprano versions of the instrument on the album.

On the other hand, the mood of "Flip Side" is rather somber. It might be perfect as a soundtrack for this wintery time of the year —



Courtesy

Graduate student Dave Camwell's first solo album can be found online at www.davecamwell.8k.com.

these gray, overcast (but somewhat light) afternoons. Still, there's nothing really exciting here for people who don't already jive with jazz. Anyone who is just starting to listen to the genre might want to check out some less contemporary jazz before moving on to Camwell's style. However, considering this is Camwell's first album, it's easier to forgive his music for not being revolutionary.

Camwell plans to work on a cruise ship in Alaska this summer and work on writing and arranging new material in his free time.

"I have a list of new stuff that I'd like to record. First though, I will be finishing my doctorate and getting a job. I literally will not have the time to do another CD until I'm done (with) school or days have 37 hours in them," he wrote.

As far as this reviewer is aware, the album isn't available in stores. However, it can be found (along with MP3s and an interesting paper on classical violinist Niccolò Paganini) on the musician's Web site at www.davecamwell.8k.com.

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailyemerald.com.

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