



Featured Artist: The Sean J. Kennedy Quartet

CD Title: Queen Anne's Revenge

Year: 2007

Record Label: Lost World Music

Style: Straight-Ahead / Classic

Musicians: Sean J. Kennedy (drums and marimba), Erin Stroup (Tenor, Soprano Saxophone), Raymond Clemens (Acoustic and Electric Bass), John Stenger (Piano, Ganza), Bob Mintzer (Tenor Saxophone), Liberty Devitto (Drums track 12, right channel), Frank Dibussolo (Guitar), Heather High Kennedy (Congas, Mazhar Track 12), Jim Verdeur (Baritone and Alto Saxophone Track 4), Anthony Viscounte (Gong, Frasco da Capsula, Large Frog, track 12) Bryan Graber (Windchimes, Shekere track 12)

Review:

Sean J. Kennedy and his Quartet (SJK4) have done it again! They have taken a mixture of the old and the new and through creative arrangements and just some down-right fine playing, have delivered yet another solid piece of work. Queen Anne's Revenge is a collection of excellent compositions, arrangements and collaborations by the Sean J. Kennedy Quartet with some very special guest musicians brought in to add texture and color to the collection.

My first reaction to the opening cut "Priceless" was this is not going to be just another SJK4 collection of works aimed at finding a place for them to make their sound. They were pushing it, right from the opening bar. I loved Erin Stroup's composition and the soloing that he laid down was the hook that kept me on the line for the rest of the CD.

Solid jazz playing and collaboration by the four members of SJK4 makes this CD a Jazz must have among the contemporary works that available. There are two songs treated especially well, "Theme from the Munsters" and "Cookin' at the Continental." Coming from opposite ends of the spectrum, it goes to show you the versatility of SJK4. The Munsters theme was a treat, that old familiar groove, with a new twist, it is addictive! The Horace Silver standard, on the other hand, right from the vault of premium jazz music, gives the band a piece to stretch it out on and really wail, old school style and wail they do. It is fun to hear a band take two distinctly different genres and sew them up into one tidy package of great entertainment.

A pleasant surprise for me was a re-work of "Boogaloo Sub," this 12-bar blues piece is at the top of my Most Played list on my iPod. The song is from SJK4's debut album Road to Wailea. I can't get through a session of listening without revisiting the "Sub Song," and the new version is everything the old one was and more.

For a real treat check out "Candy Sticks at the Palm Court," a Kennedy composition that is just as relaxed as a jazz song can get. It paints a picture of a cool Sunday brunch at any sea-side luxury hotel, the mood of a warm sunny morning, and everything going right, for the band, and you!

The track "Wipe My Cry," is as personal as any composition I have ever heard, Kennedy takes you inside his angst of fatherhood, and shares the rollercoaster of emotions that accompanies that hardest of jobs. Music is a channel for the soul to deal with conflict, Kennedy and the band resolve that conflict beautifully in this piece.

Prepare yourself for track 8 it takes off at one-hundred miles an hour and never slows down!! This modal piece inspired by Coltrane's "Impressions," left an impression on me! Great sax work and the rhythm section is tight and pushes hard. Great solo turns by all involved.

"Steng, Stang, Stung" while reputedly written as a reminder of a fopar Sean was guilty of, he is not guilty of screwing up this composition! This piece is what the SJK4 is all about to me. Solid, in the pocket execution of creative new pieces of jazz for everybody.

Another favorite of mine is Erin Stroup's composition "Sweetie Pie." It is a New Orleans second-line groove that demonstrates the bands command of all the classical forms. This song swings and does not mind getting down there in the steamy heat of NOLA for some fun and games. If you can sit still for this one, have them pull the respirator out!

The title song "Queen Anne's Revenge" is the only song that I had to listen to more than once to get a taste for. The composition is complex, the number of guests and extra instruments tells me it is a studio song not to be heard by the quartet themselves. It is unique, and creative, and well, different. I commend Kennedy for exploring the topic, and he captures the chaos of the pirate's life well. A new dimension for Sean and the band, perhaps illuminating the future of the band.

I look forward to their next effort. Kennedy and the band take some new compositions, arrangements and interpretations of time honored standards and deliver a great new CD to keep the SJK4 band at the top of my playlist. I am a fan, plain and simple. I looked forward to their second work, and was not disappointed. Believe me, if you hear it, you will not be disappointed either. I can only imagine that their live shows as the quartet have evolved into some tight and kickin' sessions. For those lucky enough to be in the Philly area to catch this band, good for you, for the rest of us, we will have to depend on CDBaby for our fix!

Tracks: Priceless, Theme to the Munsters, Candy Sticks at the Palm Court, Cookin' at the Continental, Wipe My Cry, Boogaloo Sub, Chim Chim Cheree, Twins of Spirit, Stranger on the Shore, Steng Stang Stung, Sweetie Pie, Queen Anne's Revenge

Record Label Website: <http://www.lostworldmusic.com>

Artist's Website: <http://www.seanjkenedy.com>

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