

Review of "Memoire" appearing on www.jazzguitarlife.com

Joshua Breakstone : "Memoire - The French Sessions, vol. 2"

The release of his latest CD Memoire - The French Sessions, vol. 2 finds Joshua Breakstone in top form as he revisits the "French Sessions"* with a set of eight tunes (four originals and four standards) that pays tribute to the wonderful contributions made to the Jazz art form by French Composers such as Michel LeGrand (Chanson De Delphine), Prevert (Autumn Leaves), Hornez (C'est Si Bon), and of course Django Reinhardt (Nuages). Beautiful melodies all, these tunes are not merely vehicles to blow over but rather, enduring tunes that are to be played with as much integrity and musicality as one can offer.

Fortunately for us all Joshua Breakstone offers such musicality as he lays claim to the harmonic/melodic content of each tune as if it were his own composition, accentuating the already captivating melodies with lush chordal work, accomplished improvisational ability, and a warm, fat tone that is both intimate and forceful.

Just listen to his unique arrangement of the very popular "Autumn Leaves", with its cool-jazz intro, to hear how Breakstone maintains the original charm of the tune while building on the harmonic and melodic potential that only a dedicated artist can. There's no "running the scales" here. His improvisation is seamless as he plays through the changes with taste and well-played maturity. And his take on "Nuages" is a warm, delicate and soulfully played homage to not only its composer Django Reinhardt, but to the late great jazz guitarist Harry Leahey who introduced the tune to Breakstone, and thankfully so. With Breakstone, each note seems to have a purpose, which is to create music, pure and simple. His lines reflect a thoughtful outlook to improvisation that reminds me of Jim Hall's compositional approach to the single line.

Speaking of compositional approaches, alongside such timely classics are Breakstone's own outstanding compositions ("Airegla", "A Little Thing I Wrote", "Frere Louis", "Memoire") that are sure to place him at the forefront of Jazz composers for years to come. Like his guitar playing, Breakstone's writing is vibrant and expressive and it is no wonder that his original work stands on its own next to each of the featured composers on this CD.

Of particular note is the dynamic and upbeat "A Little Thing I Wrote" which had me smiling from the first measure on. This is a joyous tune that has some wonderful up-tempo guitar playing from Joshua and some inspiring drumming from Christian Ton Ton Salut. In direct contrast to this tune is Breakstone's "Frere Louis". A dramatic composition that combines both straight-ahead and free playing featuring exceptional playing from both Christian Ton Ton Salut and bassist extraordinaire Louis Petrucciani who handles a bow like it's nobody's business. It is no wonder that Breakstone traveled across waters to play with these two outstanding musicians. It is this musical camaraderie, alongside Breakstone's masterful guitar playing that makes this CD such a pleasure to listen to.

When I originally received this CD I was expecting a lot of up-tempo guitar playing with blistering single line excitement and bop infused tunes. But as I

listened more, I began to realize that not only was there some very serious playing going on, but more importantly, what I was hearing was the heartfelt creation of a musician who has the envious ability to take a beautiful song and make it that much more endearing. For that I say, merci Joshua Breakstone, merci.

Lyle Robinson

* First visited on the album A Jamais