

# THE JAZZ WORD

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### Planet Flippo, Dedications – Jazz From Planet Flippo Review

WIDE-RANGING MUSICAL INTERESTS

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by Nolan DeBuke



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Dr. Dave Flippo is a Chicago-based jazz pianist, composer, vocalist, bandleader, and educator who created his ensemble, Planet Flippo, after completing his Doctorate and Masters in Music Composition/Piano at the University of Michigan and Masters at the Eastman School of Music. Planet Flippo has released six albums. His current album is *Dedications – Jazz From Planet Flippo* and is a series of compositions and arrangements for each ensemble member. The ensemble members are Donn De Santo – acoustic and electric bass, Heath Chappell – drum set, and Dan Hesler- saxophones and flute. Aras Biskis joins on percussion for two songs (tracks 3 and 7). When Flippo asked what

elements they wanted him to include, he found their answers surprising and challenging — like writing a waltz in four or a song about a giraffe. The final set of tunes includes eight original songs and three arrangements by well-known pop artists. Each piece is dedicated to a member of the ensemble and/or friends, family, and other artists he admires.

“Giraffe Trek” is a groove-based Flippo original dedicated to Hesler. The quasi Afro-Cuban groove is meant to depict a giraffe loping across the savanna. The solo section begins with Flippo playing a melodic solo with confidence. Hesler’s saxophone solo builds the excitement as the rhythm section increases in activity and intensity. His phrasing is refined, and his melodic movement and articulations match the groove perfectly. A catchy ostinato serves as a background for Chappell’s and Biskis’ interactive solo, which is fluid and in the pocket.

“Rehab” is an arrangement of Amy Winehouse’s melody dedicated to her and inspired by Hesler. The arrangement incorporated Latin sounds with a steady straight-eight groove that yields to swing for the bridge. Hesler’s solo is first, with a bright sound; he digs into the groove and keeps the melody clear as he darts through the harmonic changes. Next, Flippo’s solo is an exciting interaction of left- and right-hand rhythms and melodic phrases. An excellent arrangement of this well-known pop tune.

*Dedications – Jazz From Planet Flippo* continues the musical journey of Flippo’s wide-ranging musical interests, and the personal dedications reveal Flippo’s aptitude and emotion as a composer and arranger. Audiophiles will find the mix and mastering a bit harsh, but the musical merit is still worth a serious listen. As the music on *Dedications – Jazz From Planet Flippo* is a well-balanced set of styles and playing, strong melodies and exciting solos, and an overall presentation that will appeal to contemporary jazz listeners.

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