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Dave Flippo's Dedications – Jazz from Planet Flippo

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Here was an interesting idea. Pianist, composer, and vocalist Dave Flippo told his bandmates that he wanted to write a song for each of them on his new album, *Dedications—Jazz from Planet Flippo*. He took their answers to heart, whether it was writing a 4/4 waltz or a song about a giraffe or making some barbeque or about house finches in the bird feeders. The results, as you might guess, are both fascinating and fun. This is *Dedications – Jazz from Planet Flippo*.

Dedications is Flippo's sixth CD as a leader, following a five-year interlude since his last album *Life on Mars* in 2016. As with every band, there have been lineup changes over the years but that does not keep Flippo from pursuing his prolific musical interests. The band he now plays with is called Jazz from Planet Flippo and features top-flight Jazz artists from Chicago including bassist Donn De Santo, saxophone and flute man Dan Hesler, drummer Heath

Chappell with a guest performance from percussionist Aras Biskis.

Of the 11 tracks on the album, eight are originals from Flippo and three are covers that have undergone the distinctive Flippo arrangement. Those three covers are from, respectively, Stevie Wonder, Amy Winehouse, and Radiohead. See what I mean about prolific musical interests?

The album opens with *Too High* by Stevie Wonder with Flippo adding his own twists and reharmonizations with Jazz chords. Amy Winehouse's *Rehab* features a hot New Orleans groove and Radiohead's *Karma Police* was requested by one of Flippo's students. The results are fascinating and breathe new life or, I should say, Jazz life into these popular songs. *Rehab* is a fine turn of a Jazz phrase. Hesler takes ownership of the piece and the bridge is described by bassist Donn De Santo as "*Makin' some barbecue.*" Tasty.

As brilliant as the new arrangements are, it is Flippo's own compositions that draw the most attention. Whether it is *Finch House*—which describes in very vivid terms the fluttering finches and was dedicated to his daughter in law Anh Pham—or *Giraffe Trek* dedicated to Dan Hesler and features Afro-Cuban rhythms that evoke images of galloping giraffes across open savannahs, Flippo delivers well on his promises to his bandmates, students, and loved ones. Hesler's saxophone on that track is brilliant and the rhythms from Chappell and Biskis are mesmerizing. Flippo's piano is rich and cool.

Third Eye Open is dedicated to Donn De Santo and features the long, but not tortured, development “*toward the goal of completing a full harmonic circle.*” It is a brilliant piece that has won a place in my heart. *Freewheelin’* was dedicated to Flippo’s son, Gabriel. It is another fascinating piece with gorgeous harmonic excursions.

Syrtotic is for Aras Biskis who requested a “Greek jig” and Flippo responded wrote the tune in 14 with a palindromic beat of 1,2-1,2-1,2,3-1,2,3-1,2-1,2. The piano and soprano sax passages are so cool against such a hot rhythm. The strange meters continue with *Four-Four Waltz*, dedicated to Alan Swain. You’ve got to love the sax and piano solos. Donn De Santo gets a cool bass solo along the way.

Melissa Leeb, Flippo’s wife, is the inspiration for *Spring Joy*. It is bouncy and lively, like Spring after a northern Winter. A swinging number that features great rhythms from Heath Chappell and he carries that right into *Metamorphosis*, the album’s closer. Chappell opens with great cymbal work before being joined by Flippo’s melodica. Flippo explains, Heath “*wanted to be out of time with the band and explore different meters. The resulting piece has a somewhat epic story line with the drummer as the central character.*” Beginning with rebellious youth, the story moves into a stage of learning from masters, who follow the youth with constant conversation. The song and album end with simple and sweet conversation.

Dedications—Jazz from Planet Flippo is a marvel. The instrumental artistry is exemplary and the composing and arranging is brilliant. Dave Flippo is a wonder and the music tells you everything you need to know.

~Travis Rogers, Jr. is *The Jazz Owl*