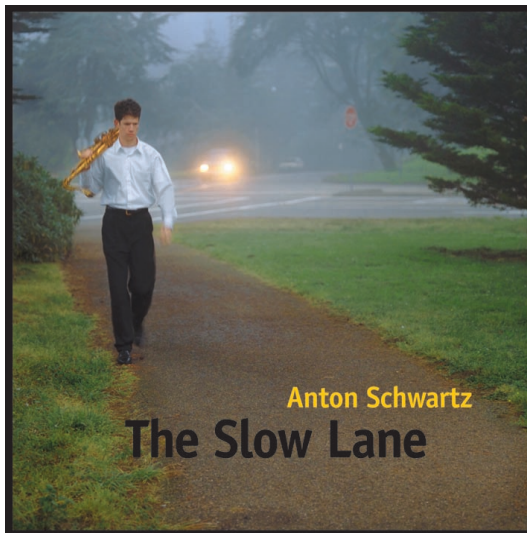


DOWNBEAT

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

October 2000



Anton Schwartz

The Slow Lane
Anton Jazz 1002

★★★

San Francisco Bay Area tenor saxophonist Anton Schwartz commits to the bluesy, expressive side of jazz on *The Slow Lane*, his second CD. To do an album like this properly, an artist needs to focus on tone and pacing, lest he sink into lazy habits or go manic with brainless space-filling. There's no coasting, nor racing, allowed in Schwartz's car: It's a steady cruise all the way.

Schwartz is clearly in no hurry here. He and his bandmates stretch out on every tune, taking all the time they need to complete their ideas.

But Schwartz and band aren't stuck in low gear, either. Tunes like his own "The Curve Of The Earth," with a Latin backbeat, and Benny Golson's "Along Came Betty," with its ostinato rock groove, move along at medium tempi that give soloists the freedom to shift smoothly between half-time and double-time feels.

Harmonically speaking, Schwartz and pianist Paul Nagel pivot off the third in a down-home bluesy manner that smacks of gospel. Check out their solos on "Then Again," where they sound like the same guy on two different instruments.

The cohesion of this ensemble aside, Schwartz's playing is the highlight. Saving his vibrato for just the right moments, he's strong in his expressiveness. His tone is remarkably consistent, making his command of the instrument come across as second nature. With so many tenor players out there still trying to tackle "Giant Steps," it's nice to listen to someone who sounds more like Trane doing "Naima."

— Ed Enright

The Slow Lane: Miyako; The Curve Of The Earth; Don't Ask; Then Again; Along Came Betty; Chelsea Bridge; Come Rain or Come Shine; Peace Dollar; Born To Be Blue; The Slow Lane; The Curve Of The Earth (reprise). (70:00)
Personnel: Anton Schwartz, tenor saxophone; Paul Nagel, piano; John Shifflett, bass; Jason Lewis, drums.



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