

Les Sabler - Bridge The Gap (2003)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Bridge the Gap*
02. *Midnight Reflections*
03. *Reasons*
04. *Before the Fall*
05. *Dog Pound*
06. *Clouds*
07. *Saku's Blues*
08. *Crystal Heart*
09. *Chaser, The*
10. *Wish, The*

Personnel:

Les Sabler (guitar);
Gene Cannon (saxophone);
Phil Brown (flute);
Tony Campell (keyboards, guitar, programming);
Allon Sams (keyboards, programming);
Ruben Drake (bass);
Joe Renda (drums);
Iraj Lashkary (percussion).

This versatile Canadian-born guitarist helped open Disney World's Pleasure Island Jazz Company and continues to perform there, so it's no surprise that his debut recording is mostly chipper musical optimism in the smooth-jazz vein. Though he could benefit from more live drums, Sabler wins both heart and feet with easy on the ears, lighthearted melodies mixed with solid rock/jazz playing skills. The opening title track captures this vibe perfectly, with crisp playing, a bouncing groove and bright soloing. Allon Sams, one of the producers, is also aces on a lush keyboard solo, and it's a blast hearing them jam towards the end of the tune.

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"Midnight Reflections" shows the other side of Sabler's scope, a more heartfelt acoustic side; the ambient tune is less compelling but still agreeable. "Crystal Heart" displays his sweet acoustic wares even better. Still, many of the songs have a "geared towards smooth jazz radio" quality to them, which makes for a great listen but not much innovation. It's nice to see that Sabler breaks from all this playing it safe right in the middle with the edgy, explosive pop-fusion jam "Dog Pound." ---Jonathan Widran, Rovi

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