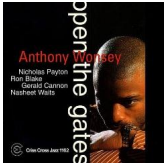


Anthony Wonsey - Open The Gates (1998)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 02 May 2016 15:55 -

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1. *Xavier's Arrival* (7:43) 2. *My Heart Is with You I* (5:51) 3. *Invitation* (8:02) 4. *A Song for Audrey* (7:51) 5. *Open the Gates* (9:17) 6. *Big Bertha* (9:21) 7. *Into the Blacklight* (7:10) 8. *My Heart Is with You II* (5:49) 9. *Blues for Russell and Polly* (12:25) Anthony Wonsey — piano; Nicholas Payton — trumpet; Ron Blake — tenor saxophone; Gerald Cannon — bass; John Webber — bass (3,6); Nasheet Waits — drums; Willie Jones III — drums (3,6).

Pianist Anthony Wonsey's debut on Criss Cross is his third recording as a leader and also his first non-trio outing. He has joined forces with his employer, trumpeter Nicholas Payton, tenor saxophonist Ron Blake, bassist Gerald Cannon, and drummer Nasheet Waits to create a recording with that classic '60s Blue Note trumpet-tenor sound, but coming from a '90s point of view. Wonsey, who claims Herbie Hancock, Bill Evans, and Bud Powell as major influences, wrote five of the nine selections on *Open the Gates*, including the energetic waltz, "Xavier's Arrival," the burning title track, and two versions of the Shorter-influenced, "My Heart Is With You." Cannon contributed the catchy medium-up swinger "A Song for Audrey" and Payton contributed the modern "Into the Blacklight." Payton always comes to play when he guests on someone else's recording, as he contributes excellent solos throughout this recording in addition to contributing a composition, and blends nicely with front line partner Blake. Wonsey is also joined by bassist John Webber and drummer Willie Jones for two trio selections, a hip arrangement of the standard "Invitation," based on a bass-piano vamp similar to sound to what McCoy Tyner would play, and a slower-than-usual, but groovin' version of Duke Pearson's "Big Bertha." This is an excellent label debut from this fine young pianist, one of 1999s best releases.---Greg Turner, Rovi

Anthony Wonsey is a pianist who comes by way of Chicago, followed by a Berklee education,

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and now a few years cutting his teeth on the New York scene. Wonsey skillfully blends these elements on this album for Criss Cross. He has the soulful bite of the Windy City, the fully grounded academic training so prevalent in players today, and a sophistication forged in the metropolitan cauldron.

This recording consists of material from two sessions. There's a quintet side featuring Nicholas Payton on trumpet and Ron Blake on tenor sax. This group performs several original pieces that embody both an exuberant feel and an intellectual sophistication, all with a dollop of soul. Payton is searing, Blake flows like butter, and Wonsey plays with a crisp attack. Also included are two standards from a recent piano trio date. On "Invitation" and "Big Bertha", Wonsey reinvents the songs and plays with deep meaning in this standard format. --- Sid Gribetz, jazztimes.com

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