Everette Harp - My Inspiration (2007)



1 Juke Joint 2 All Jazzed Up (And Nowhere to Go) 3 In Time 4 Old School 5 Funky Palisades 6 In My Father's Eyes 7 Chasin' 8 Wait 4 U 9 Don't Look Any Further 10 My Inspiration Everette Harp: alto and tenor saxophones, keyboards, vocal; Rex Rideout: keyboards; A. Ray "The Weeper" Fuller: guitar; Alex Al: bass; Teddy Campbell: drums; Lenny Castro: percussion; Dan Fonero: trumpet and flugelhorn; Nick Lane: trombone; James Lloyd: keyboards (1); Michael Ripol: nylon acoustic guitar (3); Jeff Lorber: keyboards (5); "Big" Jim Wright: organ, piano and Fender Rhodes (6); Dwight Sills: nylon-string acoustic and electric guitar (2, 8, 10); Lauren Evans: background vocals (9, 10); George Duke: piano (7); Brian Simpson: piano (8); Doc Powell: nylon-string acoustic guitar (9).

Where does inspiration come from? For some musicians they find it in joy and others in pain. Everette Harp's My Inspiration is a tribute to his father, who passed away in February 2007.

Harp knows when to step up and lead the show and when to lay back and let his fellow players stretch out a bit. The aptly named "Juke Joint" is written by Pieces of A Dream head honcho James Lloyd, who also contributes a funky solo on Fender Rhodes electric piano, an instrument that fell out of favor with the waning of fusion jazz but now seems to be enjoying something of a return. Harp's saxophone is augmented with support from trumpeter/flugelhornist Dan Fornero and trumpeter Nick Lane.

There is a kind of back-in-the-day feel to My Inspiration, where the emphasis was often placed on going into the studio, just playing and seeing what happened instead of dutifully trying to crank out a hit. Seven of the ten tracks are originals written by Harp, and the only cover tune is "Don't Look Any Further" At this point in his career Harp seems focused on what kind of sound he can squeeze out of his alto and tenor saxophones as "All Jazzed Up (and Nowhere to Go), "In Time" and "Old School" make clear. The emphasis here is in being authentic and true to the

soulfulness of making music over crafting radio-friendly fodder.

That doesn't mean Harp isn't working hard here. He sounds inspired, liberated and downright sanctified on the lively, yet delicate, "In My Father's Eyes." Here Harp exalts and shows reverence to his late father, the Reverend Miller M. Harp, to whom My Inspiration is dedicated. Harp achieves lift-off as he blows with a fierce passion. Major thumbs-up to "Big" Jim Wright's quietly effective embellishments on organ, piano and Fender Rhodes that add to the poignancy of the track.

"Don't Look Any Further" has been covered by various artists from ex-Temptations vocalist Dennis Edwards to British dance diva Heather Small and M People, and while it does showcase Doc Powell's guitar to good effect, it seems a tad out of place here. There are no outright losers here, but after what has come before the pop sensibilities of "Don't Look Any Further" seem to belong on a different album.

Harp puts down the sax to deliver a rare vocal turn on "My Inspiration." As a singer Harp is merely adequate, but it's the last song on the album, and by this time Harp has built up a reservoir of good will. How can you be mad at a son telling the world how much he loves his father?

Back in 1962 Sonny Rollins would spend days walking the Brooklyn Bridge playing his sax and changing up his style. That was his inspiration. Harp has found his within the loss of a loved one, but My Inspiration is a celebration and not the least bit mournful. ---Jeff Winbush, allaboutjazz.com

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