Eddie Henderson – Be Cool (2018)

1. Smoke Screen (Kenny Barron) 2. Be Cool (Natsuko Henderson) 3. After You ve Gone (Turner Layton / Henry Creamer) 4. Loft Funk (Mike Clark & Jed Levy) 5. Fran Dance (Miles Davis) 6. The Moontrane (Woody Shaw) 7. Naima (John Coltrane) 8. The Sand Castle Head Hunter (Donald Harrison) 9. Nightride (Cava Menzies) 10. Toys (Herbie Hancock) 11. Easy Living (Ralph Rainger & Leo Robin) 12. Dla Juzi (Tomek Grochot) Eddie Henderson – trumpet Donald Harrison – sax Kenny Barron – piano Essiet Essiet – bass Mike Clark – drums

While being on some of the most important albums by the likes of Herbie Hancock and Billy Harper, trumpeter Eddie Henderson has lived below the radar of name recognition, which is a pity as this most recent album has the 78 year old doctor putting to shame most of the young cats around with a balance of tone, taste and pizzazz. He leads a classic sounding hard bop quintet with all stars Donald Harrison/as, Kenny Barron, Essiet Essiet/b and fellow Hancock alumnus Mike Clark/dr. The album is a textbook on how a band should, and could sound if everyone is on the right page and attitude.

Henderson takes the spotlight with his Harmon mute on a hip take of “Fran Dance” the lilts with delight, while he and Barron float on the luscious “Easy Living.” Barron jabs like Sugar Ray to Essiet’s bass on the snappy “Loft Funk” and get into a slinky bop groove on “Nightride.” Henderson with an open horn is warm and clear, creating a formidable front line with Harrison on the Latin “Smoke Screen,” showing more hip than a chiropractor on the title track and showing some moxie by digging in and kicking up the Butanes on an assertive read of John Coltrane’s “Naima.” This album is a timeless work of art. Hang it up on your wall! ---George W. Harris, jazzweekly.com

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