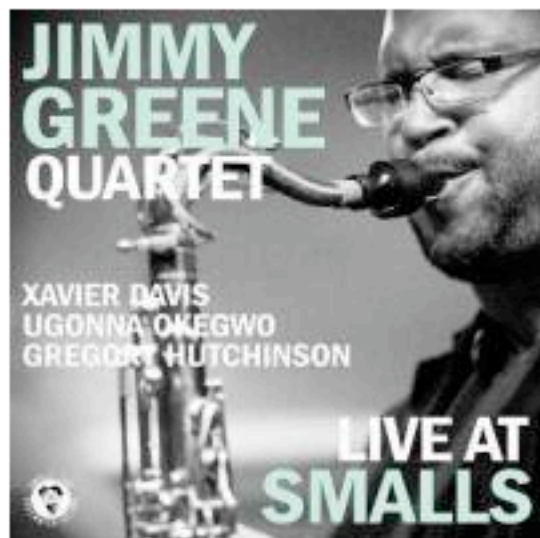


Live at Smalls (Smalls Live) Jimmy Greene Quartet

The Winnipeg-based, U.S. expat saxophonist Jimmy Greene wastes no time ratcheting up the energy with his *Live at Smalls* disc. Whereas Avital's disc began coolly and patiently, Greene's CD opens with the aptly named *Sense of Urgency*. The song is a bit like a big slingshot, with tense chords, driving bass figures and a barrage of crisp drumming all creating tension that rises for minutes until Greene, on tenor saxophone, reaches a wailing peak. The release is a hard-swinging turn by pianist Xavier Davis.



The track makes a big — and fitting — first impression. There's plenty of powerful, contemporary playing from Greene's quartet which also includes bassist Ugonna Okegwo — who has played with Greene in trumpeter Tom Harrell's group — and drummer Gregory Hutchinson. Everyone digs into the straight-eighths epic *Soul Music*, which is at first intricate and then punchy. *Self Portrait # 1* is nice, slow, swaggering piece. The group rolls briskly through the peppy *Bloomfield*, a smile-inducing closer.

On this disc, it seems that for Greene, soprano saxophone is his go-to horn when he wants to dial down the intensity and make more intimate music. The straight horn comes out for *Home*, a solemn ballad, and for a classy take of Thelonious Monk's waltzing *Ugly Beauty*.

Recently at his fine Jazztruth blog, pianist George Colligan (Greene's fellow University of Manitoba jazz faculty member) referred in passing to "[the art of New York Jazz.](#)" Colligan continued: "I say New York Jazz because I grow weary of the labels like Straight Ahead, Post-Bop, and Modern Mainstream." The pianist thinks it's more appropriate to speak of "play(ing) jazz like New Yorkers do: it's swinging, it's got an edge to it, and it's tied to the jazz tradition without sounding hackneyed." Yes, labeling music can be a necessary drag, but I hope you'll think it high praise if I call Greene's disc quintessential New York Jazz — performed at a quintessential New York venue.