



all about jazz

NEW YORK

January 2009 | No. 81

Your FREE Monthly Guide to the New York Jazz Scene

newyork.allaboutjazz.com



The Overcomer's Suite
Jimmy Greene (Nu Jazz)
by David R. Adler

If you compose a suite kindled by a big idea, it's best to front a band with a big sound. That's what tenor/soprano saxophonist Jimmy Greene does on *The Overcomer's Suite*, his sixth title as a leader and his first for the digital-only Nu Jazz label. Recorded live at Firehouse 12 in New Haven, the session documents a quartet in excellent form, well-rehearsed but ready to improvise. Bassist Luques Curtis and drummer Kendrick Scott bring torrents of rhythm and a nuanced textural palette to the five full-band tracks. Pianist Xavier Davis, Greene's longtime colleague in the Tom Harrell Quintet and the New Jazz Composers Octet (NJCO), paints a broad harmonic picture and gets to the heart of Greene's expressive intent. The recording is punchy, loud in a good way, with crisp separation and dynamics. Every detail of Scott's animated percussion pops out and fills the sonic spectrum.

Greene's thematic focus on *The Overcomer's Suite* is just that: overcoming. What we get is a series of tributes to those who beat the odds. Greene leads off with the soaring "Anthem of Hope", honors his mother with "Nelba's Victory" and then arrives at the biblically-themed core of the suite with "Song for Isaiah", "Gethsemane" and "David Undaunted". Curtis' bass solo connecting the last two movements can be said to echo the Jimmy Garrison interlude on *A Love Supreme*. Moreover, Greene's religious narrative brings to mind Xavier Davis' own "Faith Suite" from the NJCO's latest release *The Turning Gate* (Motema). When Davis and Greene pare down to close the album as a duo, playing the Bud Powell ballad "I'll Keep Loving You" (in tribute to Greene's mentor Jackie McLean), their deep affinity is even clearer.

The stint with Harrell has certainly strengthened Greene's compositional ideas and robust, three-dimensional tone on the horn. Both get a thorough airing on *The Overcomer's Suite*. The melodies are strong, the rhythms compelling, the forms extended and involved, giving the quartet plenty of room not only to stretch, but to turn together on a dime, in what is one of the finer statements of 2008.

For more information, visit nujazzentertainment.com. Greene is at Iridium Jan. 7th with Mario Pavone. See calendar.