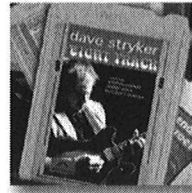


Johnny O'Neal

Hunter, and special guest Stefon Harris on vibraphone, Stryker revisits hits by Bread, Glen Campbell, and even Pink Floyd.



The Spinners' "I'll Be Around" kicks off the album with a shuffle groove.

Stryker states the melody, with appropriately greasy fills by Gold. Even better is a medley of "Pusherman" and "Superfly" taken from Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* soundtrack. Stryker's insistent lines evoke the original in a way that would make the late composer and guitarist smile.

While the disc is undeniably soulful, it's not all soul-music covers. Jimmy Webb's "Wichita Lineman" swings gently, with Stryker playing the melody while Harris' vibes supply the original's string part. The band picks up the pace with "Aquarius," taken at a breakneck tempo. Gold's and Hunter's driving rhythms push Stryker along, and everyone solos on the 5th Dimension hit.

The quartet shifts gears completely for "Never My Love," slowing things way down and never straying far afield on their solos. And, on the soul classic "Never Can Say Goodbye," Harris and Stryker take turns on melody and improvised solos, often one atop the other. Harris' penchant for vocalizing along with his vibes can be annoying, but, fortunately, it's kept low in the mix.

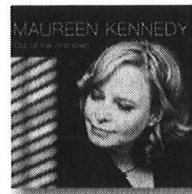
Even when Stryker and his compatriots take liberties with the original, they bring it back around to the familiar melody in a way that makes perfect sense. Generally, that's been a successful template for jazz artists from Louis Armstrong to Sonny Rollins to The Bad Plus. —**Ross Boissoneau**

### **Maureen Kennedy**

*Out of the Shadows*

(Baldwin Street)

This 13-track session epitomizes an old



formula polished to perfection. First, handpick a repertoire of melodic standards with particularly poetic lyrics. Next, add a jazz combo that keeps the vibe

at a low simmer. And finally, top it off with



Brian Blade

a vocalist who caresses the music and never jangles the nerves. Although this might seem like a recipe for boredom, quite the opposite proves true on *Out of the Shadows*, the subtly intoxicating sophomore recording by Canadian chanteuse Maureen Kennedy.

The set list shares star billing with the singer and her precisely phrased, coyly understated delivery. While most selections hail from the 1930s through the '50s — or sound as if they did — only a few will be instantly familiar to most listeners. "(I Don't Stand a) Ghost of a Chance," "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" and "Yesterdays," for example, have been covered countless

times. But somewhat lesser-known tunes emerge as the showstoppers here, including "If You Go," written by a British and French songwriting team and noted for a 1961 recording by Peggy Lee. The arrangement, featuring guitarist Reg Schwager, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Andrew Millar, is reborn as a lightly grooving bossa nova.

Another tune, associated with both Lee and '60s-era vocal temptress Julie London, "Cloudy Morning" provides the perfect vehicle for Kennedy's frosty timbre and restrained use of vibrato. Throughout this captivating track, the vocalist benefits from breathy fills by tenor saxophonist Mike

Murley. Yet another gem, "Ship Without a Sail," was written by Rodgers and Hart for the 1929 musical *Heads Up!*, and was covered by Ella Fitzgerald. On Kennedy's update, the quartet once again lays down a bossa-rooted rhythm, with saxophonist Murley sounding very Getz-like.

As pointed out in the liner notes, Kennedy's voice does indeed resemble Doris Day's. The Hollywood star was an underappreciated singer who was, in fact, a stylist of some talent. Although this is only her second recording, it's doubtful that Kennedy will be underappreciated for long. —Mark Holston