

Everette Harp, but he's exploring the additional side of funk, blues and jazz on the aptly titled *First Love*. He couldn't have selected anyone more up to the production task than George Duke, who knows something or two about overlapping genres. Harp's longtime fan base will immediately hear the change of direction, but an acoustic bass and a few drum brushes do not equal a trad-jazz project (although they sound nice on "Blossom" and John Coltrane's "Central Park West"). There's plenty of Harp's contemporary mien on display along with jazz-chop solos on "Before You Leave" and "Goin' Through Changes."

Harp shows his fans that it's not so scary on the traditional side. As he writes in the liner notes: "And to all my friends who said I should do this type of record... Thanks for your support! Now go buy it!!!!" Good luck with that.

KONSTANTIN

Smoothing (NuGroove)

Konstantin is Ukrainian native Konstantin Klash-torni, who has toured throughout Europe and South America, earned a degree at Kiev State Music College and received his master's in music from the Rotterdam Royal Conservatory in Holland. It's doubtful the saxophonist received much formalized instruction on crafting smooth-jazz ditties, but on his third CD what emerges is his effortless understanding of the genre.

From the drawn-out notes à la Dave Koz on "Stylish Walk" and "Chica Timida" (a technique he sometimes uses as a crutch) to the easy languor of "Smoothing" and "Autumn's Edge," Konstantin shows he pays attention to his American smooth-jazz forebears. "Walking Away" is a tasteful ballad, its gentle wah-wah background effects adding a splash of charm. Before the overall sound becomes too cozy, though, Konstantin throws out a touch of Euro-vibe with the subtle "Spinning Along" and appropriately titled "Let's Chill." Recommended for those who like their smooth jazz *smooth*.

MATT MARSHAK

Family Funktion (Nuance)

New York guitarist Matt Marshak, who now has five CDs of funk-rocking contemporary jazz to his credit, may finally get

some radio airplay with "Gas Lamp Groove," a seductive 3:39 powered by a steady bass beat and psychedelic guitar swirls. It's a great hit, but it doesn't reflect the rest of the CD. Marshak is too busy with his free-spirited funk, pop, rock and jazz notions to make niche music.

You can hear this on four tracks recorded live: the title track, "Uptown," "Seduction" and "I Will Be With You." There was no editing in the process, Marshak swears, and the songs are better for it. The rest is equally impressive: Vocalist Deadra Aziza gives "Real Good Time" a sexy playfulness, and "Great Soul" combines contemporary jazz with the sound of Bollywood in homage to one of Marshak's heroes, Mahatma Gandhi.

Marshak is about marrying melody and groove, but he manages to sneak in "What Would Have Been (JH's Song)," a solo guitar piece that gives listeners a tantalizing glimpse of his true jazz potential.

BILL ORTIZ

From Where I Stand (Tangent)



Bill Ortiz is one of the hardest-working Bay Area musicians around. His trumpet playing can be heard on recordings by Quincy Jones, Tito Puente, Ravi Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Beyoncé and Boz Scaggs, among many others. He's currently performing with Carlos Santana and was featured on the mega-hit singles "Smooth" and "The Game of Love."

Ortiz is a professional's professional, so what does a Bill Ortiz CD sound like? Just great, thanks, as he plays to his strengths with contemporary jazz rooted in R&B, blues, Latin, Caribbean and African music. Ortiz has a spiritual, one-world aesthetic conveyed not just by the song titles but also by the positive music itself. "Positive" does not mean "boring," though, and you can judge for yourself with "Word Play," "In Every Breath (Tribute to Donny Hathaway)" and the sexy "Slip Into This," an R&B smoothie with vocals by Monet Owens.

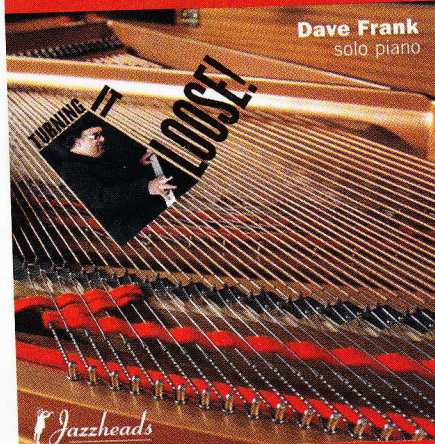
Especially fun are two instrumental reggae tracks: "Judgment Day" is a smoothed-over Burning Spear groove, and Ortiz comes back a few tracks later with "Judgment Dub (Ras Dru Remix)," with Rocker-T providing revolutionary-style toasting. *From Where I Stand* is a breezy listen, but Ortiz still gives listeners something to think about by closing

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