

# THE JAZZ BOX

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Joseph Carter III has been carving out a distinctive niche, distinguishing himself as a composer and arranger in addition to securing a reputation as a formidable guitar slinger. His current release - *In The Now* (Velvet Swan) - presents an engaging cross-section of those talents.

Tunes like "Inside Out" give a good indication of the sound of Carter's band as heard in person. Carter III writes and arranges many of his tunes to interact with the piano of



Stuart Waters, and the head features lots of "call and response" mingling. The breezy "Summer Song" is a jazz calypso. Its pulsating rhythms are fed by veteran drummer Walter Perkins (Boy, does this guy have a resume'!) and electric bassist John Abbey.

The quartet delivers a rocking blues "Baby Sweets," showing off Carter's sweet 'n' nasty tone and a style which demonstrates a firm grounding in the vernacular of the roadhouse guitarist. The ballads "Goodbye My Love" and "Dream You Awake" are offered in "straight" and alternative "radio mix" editions. Carter develops their minor themes lovingly, through a host of permutations, showing effective use of space and drama in his soloing.

The composition which gives the disc its name demonstrates Carter's facility with modern composition - both jazz and classical. Trumpeter Peter Kaufmann is added to the frontline adding a Mingus cum Carla Bley swagger and growl to the arrangement, which evolves as a series of traded statements, segging into a second movement featuring the Vanguard Chamber Players - a woodwind and brass quintet - who dab the work with impressionistic splashes of color. Wholly unexpected, but entirely effective!

"Hey Bubba" marks a return to the blues, and Carter lays down a swaggering riff that sets the toe-a-tapping a la those memorable Wes Montgomery workouts like "West Coast Blues" and "The Work Song." It is dedicated to saxman Bubba Brooks, who lends a growling, yet graceful tenor to the groove.

This effort, like its predecessor *Straight Ahead Backwards*, strikes a measured balance between innovation, accessibility and energetic fun which provides the winning ticket which I'm sure will bring Joseph Carter III's music to a wide and appreciative audience.