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## **Stebmo: Stebmo**

At first glance the name Stebmo might not ring too many bells until you realize that Stebmo is in fact Steve Moore the multi-instrumentalist known for his work both in the studio and onstage with a wide variety of artists ranging from jazz legend Bill Frisell to black metal outfit sunnO))) and fellow Seattle band Earth. Primarily known as a pianist and lover of keyboards as well as the trombone, Moore spent the formative years of his career playing and studying jazz, so it's no surprise that this ambitious, all instrumental debut effort is firmly rooted in that genre, albeit with a few twists along the way.

One cannot help but revel in the genuinely warm tones and organic vibe that runs throughout these compositions as Moore at times playfully toys with traditional jazz structures and successfully molds it into something quite unique and fresh. Remarkably all the music captured here was laid down in just a single recording session, yet nothing here sounds immediate or rushed, in fact it's quite the opposite because all of these improvised compositions come off sounding very relaxed .

To assist him in bringing his musical vision to fruition Moore brought some top notch players along for the ride, among them master session drummer Matt Chamberlain, bassist Todd Sickafoose and Doug Wieselman on clarinet, with everything assembled by producer Tucker Martine.

Things kick off in a very auspicious manner, beginning with a rhythmic backbone that could have been lifted off of one of Tom Waits' more recent compositions, the opening track "Waiting Game" features a dynamic and distinctly cinematic arrangement which is aided by Chamberlain's murky sounding drums and a layered, distorted fuzz guitar that percolates just beneath the surface. Second track "Blind Ross" shifts gears immediately, sounding almost dare I say it, commercial, as it features some buoyant piano work from Moore overtop more of Chamberlain's steady, hard hitting stick work. Funnily enough this track has such a playful feel to it that it instantly brought back to mind the music from those old Charlie Brown specials you'd see on T.V. way back when.

On songs "Holding Pattern" and "Happy Ending" is where one really begins to detect those warm tones I mentioned, as Moore mans the Wurlitzer for some absolutely dreamy and laid back playing, it's as if the notes drip out of the keys as thick as honey, while Wieselman's plaintive clarinet and Martine's subtle banjo playing on the later provide the perfect textures to fully compliment the song. "Dark Circles" which is the longest track on the disc begins with the basic melodic elements of the song before venturing off into some improvisational flights of fancy as Moore gives himself a vehicle to stretch out a bit

on the piano as Chamberlain once again lays down more busy rhythms that will have you convinced that he is really a jazz drummer at heart. Chamberlain is the ideal anchor for the music on this album and in addition to playing straight ahead drums; he also contributes the odd loop here and there, further coloring what is already a broad aural canvas.

Steve Moore has crafted a superb and utterly enchanting, modern sounding jazz album that joyfully reveals something new with each listen. Stebmo highlights an artist who is at the top of his game and is not afraid to take chances or experiment with his music, or let anything get in the way of his musical vision in order to create something truly unique. This is in a word simply, magical.

-Ryan Sparks