

"Trombone Heaven is a Molotov cocktail of fun"

The child in all of us thrives in chaos. We seek it out. The real beauty and fun in our world isn't found in homework, it's not in having a clean room, it's not in cleaning your plate before you can eat dessert. The kid in us wants a mess.

Jazz was born in a chaotic collision of disparate musical styles and has always been a stylistic home to those seeking to mix up things which, until that point, nobody thought would blend. European band music and African Spirituals. Sinatra and Basie. The Natural Three and Sharp Nine. Coltrane and Hart. Ellington and The Nutcracker. Shorter and Zawinul. Miles Davis and Gil Evans. Trumpets. These things start out separate and would probably stay that way until some wacko genius comes along and creates something truly beautiful and fun.

David Bandman's Trombone Heaven is something truly beautiful and fun. One would imagine that trombones, jazz, a little rock, and hymns are four elements that don't always attract, kind of like a little old lady riding a Harley and eating Cocoa Puffs, but that very contrast is what makes it sweet. Forget that Bandman plays all 4 tenor trombone tracks on the recording (question: did he pay himself 4 times what he paid Dudley Hinote?); forget that he plays things on the trombone that should be illegal. Trombone Heaven is a Molotov cocktail of fun.

Christ The Lord Is Risen Today was written by Charles Wesley in 1739. Mr. Wesley would have hardly approved of this version, which is nevertheless a hard-swinging entry piece. Outstanding solos by Wade Beach and Dave Bandman precede a superbly written and played acappella trombone soli.

Longtime Airmen of Note Bass Trombonist Dudley Hinote's unmatched work is evident throughout Crown Him With Many Crowns. Is that a hint of Frank Rosolino in Dave Bandman's opening statement of his solo?

Jazz vocalist extraordinaire Tracey Wright, a native of Alexandria, VA and currently the Airmen of Note's vocalist, makes a convincing case in the initial somber treatment of Were You There When They Crucified My Lord? Don't be fooled, however, as the energy is soon cranked up quite a few notches. More collisions of style: Tracey's performance is all Sunday Morning with Saturday Night attitude, and guitarist Shawn Purcell's is all Blue Note, young and pierced. If this performance had more soul, Bandman would have to be ordained on the spot.

Brothers Bandman and Hinote preach the litany in Jesus Loves Me, a beatific acappella oasis. Dave Bandman's splendid arrangement of what is one of the most widely-sung children's songs is played magnificently by what can authentically be called a "Trombone Choir".

The next cut, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God shows that there are a mighty lot of ways to get religion. Bassist Paul Henry begins the festivities by throwing down with some serious groove. Add to the stew a cup-and-a-half of drummer Todd Harrison, a tablespoon of Dudley, and four dollops of sizzling Bandman and you've got yourself a funky meal. Mighty Fortress was written by Martin Luther in 1529, a cat who himself was no stranger to pushing the envelope. Solos by guitarist Jay Jernigan and Wade shine in this funk monolith.

Tracey once again blesses us with her angelic voice in Angels We Have Heard On High, also known as Gloria, during which Dave Bandman's solo reminds us why the trombone is referred to as "God's Instrument".

A masterful Paul Henry solo highlights Stand Up; Stand Up For Jesus in a thoughtful treatment of the popular George Duffield hymn. The ongoing stylistic collision continues in Bandman's tongue-in-cheek version of Onward Christian Soldiers; if at times the musical collage seems reminiscent of a circus, rest assured the highly aerobic trombone work of Msrs. Bandman and Hinote represent the musical equivalent of the acrobats flying through the air.

Amazing Grace initially begins with a traditional treatment by Tracy Wright, but true to form soon completes a metamorphosis into an up-tempo Cajun/gospel/swing style.

Another acappella feature, Eidleweiss showcases the versatility of our trombone performers. Note our hero Bandman trading fours with himself near the end.

Wade Beach has established himself as one of the top jazz pianists on the East Coast over the last few decades, and his solo intro on Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty demonstrates why. After a medium-up treatment of the head, which segues directly into an up-up-tempo Dave Bandman solo, we are treated to an all-out showcase of Dave Bandman's prodigious trombonistic skills (WARNING TO ALL TROMBONISTS: what you are about to hear may make you want to quit).

Trombone Heaven is a tremendous feat of skilled writing and phenomenal playing; it would be difficult to prevent a project this diverse and full of variety to sound eclectic and academic. Dave Bandman succeeds in producing a recording that is not only technically brilliant, but, in the words of Count Basie, has got "deep pockets".

Joe Jackson, Trombone/Musical Director - Airmen of Note, USAF Band, Washington, DC.