

Liner Notes: *Cherry Avenue*. 400 Word Edit.

When Jason Lee Bruns asked me to write the liner notes for his new CD, *Cherry Avenue*, featuring singer Kevin Bachelder, my first reaction was, "Ah, a jazz odd couple." I knew Jason Lee as a drummer/percussionist with an irresistible groove, and Kevin as a vocal artist with a gift for telling a captivating musical story. And my question was whether they could find a way to blend their strong individual characteristics into a productive partnership.

Well, there's no cliffhanger on the answer. Check out any track on *Cherry Avenue* and you'll hear how effectively Kevin and Jason combined their creative visions.

Notice the colorful grooves Jason creates via the Cuban *son* rhythms of "Autumn Leaves"; the samba of "Waters of March"; the Afro Brazilian *afoxé* of John Lennon's "Dear Prudence." Making the most of those settings, Kevin's vividly soaring vocals brilliantly illuminate the songs' inner stories.

Add to that the effectiveness of the arrangements. Jason and Kevin, like stellar predecessors Louie Bellson and Mel Tormé, are skilled musician/arrangers. Writing for a seven piece band, they have devised a colorful array of timbres and textures, recalling the crisp vigor of Blood, Sweat & Tears on "Dear Prudence," "Send In The Clowns," "Like Someone In Love" and "It Didn't Work Out That Way."

Both Jason and Kevin are too musically sophisticated, however, to be locked into any single stylistic setting. Kevin's arrangement for the opening tune, "My Romance," blends a jaunty vocal, brisk drumming and a horn-driven climax – immediately establishing the far-ranging creative tone for the entire album.

Additional highlights trace to the way Jason and Kevin have often enhanced the arrangements by featuring soloists with the vocals. Listen to the subtle piano of Daniel Szabo on "I Fall In Love Too Easily," the juxtaposition of Kevin's scatting and Ron Blake's trumpet on "Autumn Leaves," Brazilian Angelo Metz's atmospheric guitar on "Waters of March," Kim Richmond's clarinet on "Like Someone In Love," Jacques Voyemant's trombone on "Ain't No Sunshine," Brandon Fields tenor saxophone on "Cherry Avenue."

There's more, much more, to praise in the songs that Jason Lee Bruns and Kevin Bachelder have found or written, arranged and performed for *Cherry Avenue*. But the music speaks for itself. And it remains for listeners to simply sit back and enjoy the numerous pleasures in this memorable album.

Don Heckman
The International Review of Music