

# Michael Tracy - Gusting

Featuring originals by:  
John Goldsby, Phil DeGreg and Craig Wagner.

Performers:  
Phil DeGreg - piano,  
Craig Wagner - guitar,  
John Goldsby - bass,  
Jason Tiemann - drums

Seabreeze Jazz SB-3071 Gusting - Mike Tracy Quintet

Mike Tracy is a world-class jazz educator whose work has inspired thousands of students and has had an indirect impact on thousands more. As director of the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies at the University of Louisville, and core faculty member of the Aebersold Jazz Camps, Mike's administrative gifts and teaching abilities have (almost single-handedly for much of the department's history) been the driving force behind a first-rate program that attracts students from all over the world (Delfaye Marsalis is part of the most recent graduate class).

And, as is all too often the case with gifted teachers, Mike's wonderful saxophone playing has often taken a back seat to the million-and-one details necessary to maintain an excellent jazz program.

This CD marks, at last, Mike Tracy's full emergence as a saxophone soloist firmly rooted in the best of the jazz tradition. His companions in the quintet are each world-class musicians in their own rights -- and each with connections to Mike's hometown of Louisville, Kentucky: bassist John Goldsby, Louisville-born (and one of Tracy's former students) who currently is residing in Cologne, Germany and is a member of the WDR Big Band; pianist Phil DeGreg, a professor at the Cincinnati Conservatory and frequent guest faculty at the University of Louisville; UofL jazz faculty members Craig Wagner, a virtuoso guitarist and master musician and drummer Jason Tiemann, whose propulsive swing can be heard supporting many of the region's (and nation's) finest jazz artists.

Each of the five have played together often in different combinations but never before as the group heard on this recording. Each is also a product of the highly influential jazz education system which has grown from area resident Jamey Aebersold.

Every track is an original or arrangement penned by a member of the quintet. Solidly rooted in the hard-bop tradition, each tune provides a springboard for Mike and friends to take the listener on an unforgettable journey into the essence of jazz.

The title track, Gusting, begins with a Shorter-like and inspired statement from Tracy. Then Wagner is featured as the rhythm section changes pace. Next, DeGreg gusts with a solo that clearly demonstrates his prominence as one of the region's finest pianists. Finally a brief but intense exchange between Goldsby and Tiemann brings this 'windstorm' to an end.

Jog Left is John Goldsby's rock/fusion-based feature for Tracy's soprano sax artistry. Check out the impeccable groove and layered rhythms. Notice how Goldsby and Tiemann 'talk' to one another as they support Wagner's solo. Excellent work from Tracy and DeGreg, too.

Penned by Craig Wagner, And Sometimes Why adds a pensive, gentle and thoughtful mood to the quintet's offering. Fine solos by Tracy, Wagner, and DeGreg.

DeGreg's Alone and Away has that easy familiarity that could make its way to the top of the pop charts. His piano solo is particularly outstanding.

John Goldsby's In The Hills takes us on an up-tempo ride into adventurous territory. Listen closely for a letter-perfect lesson in how to craft a bass solo that is chock-full of ideas, beautifully in tune, and deeply expressive. Wagner, DeGreg and Tracy add their inspired dialogue, building on Goldsby's strong foundation. Underneath it all, the relentless drive and tasteful commentary of the band's youngest member, Jason Tiemann, demonstrates that the art of swing is alive and well.

In Julia's Swing, Phil DeGreg has created another great vehicle -- gentle, floating melody, strong but varied groove, unusual changes. The quintet glides through this tune with an easy lyricism and authority. Wagner's solo is particularly notable. Tiemann makes the drums sing during his featured chorus.

Hello, Brazil! Tracy's extensive touring south of the border is reflected in this musical excursion, Sergio. Strong solos by all here. Close your eyes, kick back, and take a 5-minute visit to Rio.

Bern Waltz is a musical reflection by John Goldsby on the beauty of the Alps. Lyrical and lovely saxophone work, lush harmonies, sensitive ensemble. Beautiful solos by Goldsby, Tracy, DeGreg.

Wagner's whimsical Note To Self, bubbles with Monkish humor. Check out the rhythm section as it dances and sparkles under Wagner's solo. Tracy enters with a Mableyesque ease, settling into a solidly swinging statement that spans a couple decades of jazz history before turning things over to DeGreg, who brings us yet another grace-filled exhibition of his consummate musicianship and deep understanding of the blues. The singing swing of bassist Goldsby rounds out this exploration with delicacy and wit.

Sweet And Lovely offers one of the highlights of the CD. From it's funky Latinesque groove, to Tracy's bold choruses, this new take on an old standard inspires repeated listening.

Memorable originals, strong ensemble, inspired solos, a rhythm section that dances and swings -- Gusting is this and so much more. Thanks, Mike.

Harry Pickens, Pianist  
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