

Michael Tracy – Tracings (2003)

1. August 5 (1990) by Renato Vasconcellos (1)
2. Melencia (1985) by Rique Pantoja, arr by Renato Vasconcellos (2)
3. Vera Cruz (1978) by Milton Nascimento, arr by Renato Vasconcellos (3)
4. September 15 (1990) by Renato Vasconcellos
5. Favela (1963) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (4)
6. Balaio (1977) by Hermento Pascoal (4)
7. Tracing (2000) by Steve Allee (1)
8. Once I Loved (1960) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (4)

Michael Tracy - tenor/soprano saxophones, percussion
Renato Vasconcellos - piano, electric keyboard, percussion
Tyrone Wheeler - acoustic/electric bass
Terry O'Mahoney - drums, percussion
Steve Allee - piano (1)
Erivelton Silva - drums (4)
Pat Lentz - guitar (2, 3)
Kathy Jordan - vocal (3)
Greg Byrne - percussion (2,3)

Tim Haertel - engineer/mastering
Jason Clark (jason@viastudio.com) - cover design and layout
Tom Fougerousse - photography
Terry O'Mahoney - liner notes

Michael Tracy is a Yamaha Artist

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Liner Notes

Brazilian music entered the jazz *diaspora* in the early 1960s and has left an indelible mark on the world of jazz. Saxophonist Michael Tracy is not immune to this occurrence and has, in fact, made several trips to Brazil to perform and teach. So it's not surprising that Brazilian music would figure heavily in this, his latest recording. Most of the tunes have some connection to Brazil, primarily through Tracy's association with Brazilian pianist Renato Vasconcellos (who appears on the recording). Vasconcellos composed several tunes and suggested material by composers from his native land. He also brought along one of his friends, drummer Erivelton Silva from Brazilia, to add that extra touch of real Brazilian rhythm to the project.

August 5th is Vasconcellos' birthday tribute to his brother, who first opened his eyes to jazz. It vacillates between a Cuban mambo feel and driving swing and allows Tracy to burn on tenor from the get-go.

Originally recorded by the Brazilian jazz group Cama de Gato, *Melencia* features Tracy playing a lyrical soprano sax atop a funky samba feel and plenty of percussion from Greg Byrne and Terry O'Mahoney.

Vera Cruz is a famous Brazilian tune by one of the country's most well known composers, Milton Nascimento. It begins with Tracy's wispy *rubato* opening section that evolves into a sultry *baião* beat. Vasconcellos takes a melodious solo turn before relinquishing the spotlight to Tracy's soaring soprano. Guitarist Pat Lentz lends his rhythmic support and singer Kathy Jordan contributes an ethereal wordless vocal that adds shimmer to the overall sound.

September 15 is Vasconcellos' homage to jazz pianist Bill Evans, another musical idol of his who passed away on that date. It has a melancholy melody with a loose rhythmic feel. Tracy offers a lush portrait of the late pianist while the rhythm section provides a colorful, interactive underpinning. Wheeler steps up for a solo spot that displays his considerable virtuosity and sound. The tune closes with a short drum solo by Terry O'Mahoney.

On Antonio Carlos Jobim's tune *Favela* (the Brazilian term for ghetto), the great Brazilian drummer Erivelton Silva joins the formidable rhythm section of bassist Wheeler and Vasconcellos to create an energized groove on this one. The funky samba rhythmic variation, known as *partido alto*, is used as the rhythmic underlay for this freewheeling tune. Tracy, Vasconcellos, Silva and Wheeler (this time on electric bass) all split the solo space.

Balaio, by the famous Brazilian composer Hermeto Pascoal is a *toada*, or gentle *baião* feel. It connotes a relaxed stroll down the famous beaches of Rio de Janeiro. Tracy's tenor sound and solo ideas add just the right color. Its rhythmic accents keep the listener just slightly off-balance (but enjoyably so).

The title track, *Tracing* is pianist Steve Allee's contribution to the recording and is a play on Tracy's last name. It's a lush, ethereal waltz that lends itself well to Tracy's rich tenor sax tone. Drummer Terry O'Mahoney paints sweeping pictures using brushes and cymbal sounds while bassist Tyrone Wheeler propels the groove with an ever-changing bass line under both Allee's and Tracy's tuneful solos.

The jazz standard *Once I Loved* gets a modern twist here by altering the chord progression during the main part of the melody. The melody has an elegant "floating quality" atop a bubbling samba groove that transforms this gem in the jazz repertoire. Silva really propels this tune with his energetic drumming while Tracy wails above it all.

Tracy has assembled an excellent collection of tunes that evoke the exciting spirit of Brazilian music. The solos and ensemble work are first-rate and the tunes represent a great cross-section of Brazilian jazz styles. Viva Brazil!