

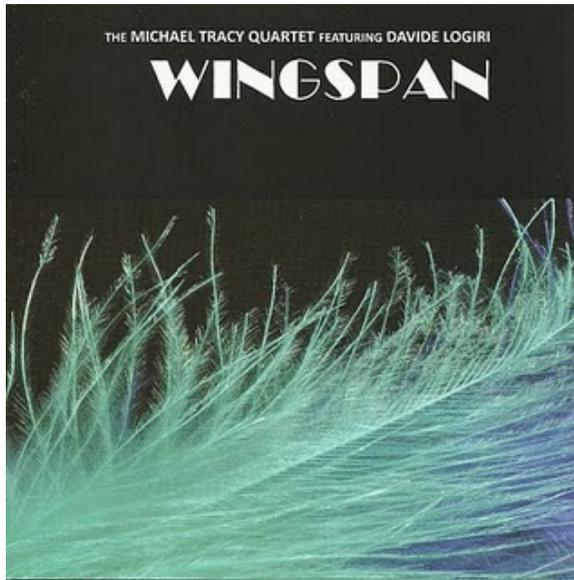
Monday, November 1, 2010

Michael Tracy Quartet: Wingspan

Sea Breeze Jazz

By Ric Bang

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Saxophonist Michael Tracy, who has played with numerous jazz artists over the years, is better known as an educator and teacher. He currently directs the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program at the Louisville School of Music, in Kentucky. He has visited and taught in almost two dozen countries during the past 35 years, and he hosts jazz workshops annually for foreign students.

This album, his fifth on Sea Breeze, features Tracy's basic quartet -- sax, guitar, bass and drums -- along with Davidi Logiri, an Italian pianist he met in London while holding a workshop.

Most of these 10 tracks were written and/or arranged by members of this group. The selection includes five "covers" of jazz standards that originated with other artists: "Cloning" is based on the chords of "There Will Never Be Another You"; "Old Folks," "Freddie Freeloader" and "Anatheme" were made famous by Miles Davis; and "Wingspan" is a redo of an arrangement by John LaBarbara's big band.

I've always felt that the use of both guitar and piano adds significantly to the "feel" of a rhythm section; such is the case here. The group swings wonderfully, and the musicians sound like they've been together for years. It's the kind of finished product you'd expect from a music professor who can select the best talents who have been in his classes.