

Dave Stryker - Eight Track II



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Guitarist Dave Stryker hit on a 'groovy' idea with 2014's *Eight Track*, his reimagining of classic pop tunes from the '70s with his working trio plus vibes. Their hip renditions of those tunes were eagerly received by audiences and critics alike. *Eight Track* was the #1 most-played CD on WBGO for the year and reached #3 on JazzWeek Radio chart. "Stryker's *Eight Track* is straight up fun," wrote Dan Bilawsky in *All About Jazz* while Steve Greenlee declared in *Jazz Times*: "Forget those Time-Life collectors' editions sold on late-night infomercials. Buy this." *Downbeat*'s Ken Micallef called it "a stone groove."

Stryker put his own personal spin on *Eight Track* and now continues that successful formula on *Eight Track II*, his 27th recording as a leader. (His previous CD "Messin' with Mister T" was #1 on JazzWeek and made many end-of-the-year lists including 4.5 Stars in *Downbeat*). Returning from *Eight Track* are Stryker's longtime right-hand man Jared Gold on B-3 and the exciting McClenty Hunter on drums. Special guest this time out is vibraphonist Steve Nelson, a longtime member of Dave Holland's quintet and big band who has also played and recorded with such giants as Jackie McLean, Kenny Barron, Johnny Griffin, George Shearing, and Mulgrew Miller.

"A lot of people like hearing these tunes that they grew up with. It brings people in and they'll go with you when they hear a tune that they recognize. But the challenge, always, is to find tunes that I can do my thing to, improvise and play as creatively and musically as I would on any jazz standard. And I enjoy the challenge."

Four years after moving from Omaha to New York in 1980, Stryker began playing on the organ circuit with bluesy Hammond B-3 organ master Jack McDuff, who had seen such great guitarists as George Benson, Pat Martino, Grant Green and Billy Rogers pass through the ranks of his band. So dealing in that earthy B-3 format on *Eight Track* and *Eight Track II* is like returning home for Stryker. But 30 years later, the guitarist's six-string expression has deepened while his blues-and-bop chops remain razor sharp.

"I'm very grateful that I had the opportunity to play with masters like McDuff and Stanley Turrentine, guys who played that style and just had it in their blood. There's nothing like being able to be on the bandstand with guys like that. Now I try to play my own way and stretch things a little bit. It's still in the pocket but I feel like I'm trying to have my own take on things with this new group."

The intrepid quartet kicks off *Eight Track II* with the Isley Brothers' "Harvest for the World," which they handle as a vibrant shuffle with some hip reharmonizations. Their beautiful take on Marvin Gaye's anthemic "What's Going On" is rendered here in 6/8. Another Gaye staple, 1972's "Trouble Man," is given an earthy shuffle-swing treatment. A mellow rendition of John Barry's evocative "Midnight Cowboy" follows, before a killer uptempo swing version of Prince's 1984 hit, "When Doves Cry." A gentle reading of Stevie Wonder's "Send One Your Love" showcases Stryker's lyrical side while the quartet digs into The Temptations' "Can't Get Next to You" with visceral intensity, spurred on by Hunter's muscular backbeat. Their rendition of The Zombies' "Time of the Season" is handled as a cool shuffle swing number. Next a driving rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Signed Seal Delivered" before they slide into the alluring James Ingram ballad "One Hundred Ways," handled with relaxed soulfulness by the crew. They close with a tough shuffle-swing rendition of Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love" that sounds like something Stryker might have played with McDuff up at Dude's Lounge in Harlem back in the day. These nostalgic '70s anthems are deeply ingrained in Stryker's consciousness. And the earthy feel of the organ quartet sound is imbedded deep in his bones after 30 years of playing on the scene. He successfully, joyfully combines the two on *Eight Track II*.

Whether you've heard guitarist Dave Stryker fronting his own group (with 23 CD's as a leader to date), or as a featured sideman with Stanley Turrentine, Jack McDuff, and many others, you know why Gary Giddins in the *Village Voice* calls him "one of the most distinctive guitarists to come along in recent years." He was voted one of the Top Ten Guitarists in the 2001 *Downbeat* Readers poll, and a Rising Star for the last 5 years in the *Downbeat* Critics Poll. His approach combining the jazz burn to a soulful blues feeling is communicating to new fans wherever he plays. His most recent CD "Blue Strike" has made many Best of 2011 lists including WBGO Jazz Radio and Tom Reney/New England Public Radio.

Dave Stryker grew up in Omaha, Nebraska and moved to New York City in 1980. After establishing himself in the local music scene, he joined organist Jack McDuff's group for two years 1984-85. When McDuff wasn't on the road (literally traveling by van all over the country) they worked a steady four-night a week gig at Dude's Lounge in Harlem. His first break, this turned out to be an invaluable experience, paying his dues night after night with the soulful jazz organist. It was at Dude's Lounge that Stryker met tenor saxophonist Stanley Turrentine, who would occasionally sit in. After leaving McDuff, Turrentine asked Stryker to join his quintet. From 1986-1995 he played with the legendary saxophonist at all the major festivals, concert halls, and clubs throughout the world. He is featured on two Turrentine CD's (Stanley recorded Stryker's tune "Sidesteppin"). With Turrentine, Stryker was able to play with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie and Freddie Hubbard. The ten years playing alongside the tenor legend helped Stryker realize the importance of having his own sound. Dave continued to work with Stanley and was with him during his final week at the Blue Note in NYC, when he passed in Sept. 2000.

Early on Stryker realized that as much as he loved playing standards and the jazz repertoire he had to have something of his own to give to the music. He feels that his writing combined with his playing is what shapes his musical expression. He has recorded and published over 130 of his own compositions. Eighteen of those compositions (from the first five SteepleChase CD's) are compiled in the book

over 100 of his own compositions. Eighteen of these compositions (from the first five SteepleChase CDs) are compiled in the book The Music of Dave Stryker (SteepleChase Music) which can be ordered on this website. Some of the other artists who have recorded his music are: Stanley Turrentine, Kevin Mahogany, Victor Lewis, and Steve Slagle. Dave continues to perform with his working unit The Stryker / Slagle Band as well as his other projects: The Dave Stryker Organ Trio, and The Blue to the Bone Band. Recent gigs for The Stryker / Slagle Band have included a recent week at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola at Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Monterey Jazz Festival, The Blue Note in Las Vegas, The Jazz Bakery in LA, and a 2003 tour of Japan.

Recent sideman work has included vocalist Kevin Mahogany's group, with Dave writing and arranging music for Kevin's Telarc release Pride and Joy and Another Time, Another Place on Warner Bros and tours of Europe, Japan, Brazil, Poland and Carnegie Hall. He also has worked with Blue Note saxophonist Javon Jackson and pianist Eliane Elias. He has appeared on over 50 CD's as a sideman. As a producer, Stryker compiled the CD The Guitar Artistry of Billy Rogers which is the only existing record of the brilliant jazz playing of the late underground legend who was his friend, former teacher and member of the Crusaders. He has also produced "A Tribute to Grant Green" on Evidence Music.

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