

Dave

Askren

True to the spirit of things: that's how best to describe the musicianship of Dave Askren. Raised by a musical family in Dayton, Ohio and now based in L.A., Askren started on guitar when he was 14 after initially playing piano, clarinet and saxophone. By high school Dave was playing rock and R&B professionally before diving headlong into Jazz at 18 when he was introduced to the masters of the jazz-fusion era. Chick Corea, The Maliavishnu Orchestra and Weather Report all led Dave directly to Miles Davis, his biggest influence. Those and some life-changing live performances by George Benson and Pat Martino in Dayton set him on the path. This newfound love brought him to the hallowed halls of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he was hired to teach guitar soon after graduation. While in Boston he studied with pianist Charlie Banacos and saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi. Further work with drummer Bob Moses and formative tenures with

commercial pop artists- including Latoya Jackson, Marilyn McCoo, Little Anthony, and The Coasters- ingrained in him the importance of establishing a foundation of synchronicity in all musical settings. This and more he brings to his latest album, *It's All About The Groove*, following his critically lauded *Re: Bill Evans* (2002), *Some Other Things* (2005), and most recently *Trio Nuevo+* (2008), in which he indulged his alter ego in Latin jazz.

Jeff

Benedict

Saxophonist Jeff Benedict has been playing professionally since the age of 14, and since 1989 has served as a Professor of Music at California State, Los Angeles. Known for his technical prowess and meticulous professionalism, Jeff has gained equal traction in both jazz and classical idioms. In the latter

capacity he performs regularly with the Orion Saxophone Quartet, which he founded, and has played with some of the world's most renowned orchestras as a soloist, often premiering new works for saxophone. On the jazz side of things he has played with many greats of the genre, including Phil Woods, Gary Burton, Dave Brubeck, and Wynton Marsalis. Jeff has also recorded two leader dates- *Castle Creek Shuffle* and *Standard Fare*- for the Resurgent Music label, and was a sideman on a recent release by the critically acclaimed Hawk-Richard Jazz Orchestra entitled *The Hawk's Out*. He was also a regular member of the HMA Salsa-Jazz Orchestra. Jeff has won four "DeeBee" awards from *DownBeat* magazine for Best Instrumental Jazz Soloist, Best Original Composition and Best

Classical Chamber Music Group. He continues to perform and teach widely. Together, Dave and Jeff previously recorded with the Latin jazz group "Rhubumba;" featuring Bobby Shew; The Orion Saxophone Quartet, with Gary Foster; Dave Askren's critically acclaimed album *Some Other Things* (4 stars in the Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings) and the upcoming release *Holmes* by the Jeff Benedict Big Band.



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Askren and Benedict have eloquently achieved the intended goal of a "groove" album, which grooves through many styles, once again showing that groove is in the heart. A very enjoyable listen throughout.

-H. Allen Williams, Jazz Times

The blending of funk and jazz was eloquently achieved, with creative arrangements of standards and well-conceived originals. Askren's goal of balancing nostalgia and freshness in equal measure is clearly unmistakable with *It's All About The Groove*. The ensemble is able to keep it all together by building around the central idea of keeping a consistent energy and flow through each style as a unit. *It's All About The Groove* shuffles tempos and styles, while alternating between original and standard compositions from both Askren and Benedict.

-Geannine Reid, All About Jazz

It's All About the Groove flows seamlessly from one track to the next resounding of a class smooth swing creating a genesis of classic and modern jazz. The phrases transition seamlessly garnished in sprigs of ruffled horn tweets and intricate fretwork. From bebop to swing and from folksy-tweaked soul to Latin rhythms, the album is cohesive being part nostalgic and part contemporary sound.

-Susan Frances, Yahoo!

Two solid musicians join together in a unity of the groove. Askren blends the best of Kesel with the modernism's of Martino, while Benedict's sound compliments and augments the overall scope to a full spectrum sound. It's hard hitting playing with listenable sensibilities, and offers much more than groove, it is mature, seasoned and venerable music.

-Emusic 5 Stars

The title is on the money as Benedict's hard hitting and clearly articulated searing sax work and Askren somewhat Wes inspired, but not slavishly so, guitar work is a pleasure. Add to that an excellent program of standards and catchy originals plus the solid bass and drum work keep things swinging without letup. This groove is a Bop winner, very hip from beginning to end.

-Robert Rusch, Cadence

This traditional jazz selection had as its goal to blend old and new and does so in a way that is unmistakable and a really good listen.

-Paul Wilson, Audiophile Review Magazine

Nothing but the absolute best can be heard in *It's All About The Groove*, a wonderful fusion of jazz originals and standards. Highlighting the perfect sax and guitar collection by Dave Askren and Jeff Benedict, the foursome authenticates that they are solid talents as they gingerly master this gem - very impressive.

-Esther Callens, The Birmingham Times

Association brings a familiarity, especially in music, and especially when that familiarity rings like bells in the minds of performers such as Dave Askren, guitar, and Jeff Benedict. Everything that flows out of every track on this upbeat CD sounds fresh to our ears. There are hits and flashes of some of the greats of jazz implanted here, but the whole session shuffles tempos and styles, and alternates originals and standards in a carefully curated collage. It's all fresh, and so fluid, and about the groove.

-Grady Harp, Amazon.com - 5 Stars - Hall of Fame, Top 50 Reviewer - Vine Voice

A mostly mellifluous boppy post-swing affair. Askren tends strongly to old school mannerisms à la Kessel and Montgomery by way of Martino, and Benedict has played with Phil Woods, Brubeck, Gary Burton, Wynton Marsalis, and others, so his street cred's as solid as poured concrete. Both wax explorational.

-Mark S. Tucker, FAME Review

A disc that should be everyone's playlist. Cool but not in a sanitized way, rather more of a groove which is what this album is all about. *It's All About The Groove* is a delicious mix of standards and originals by two great players supported by another two top notchers. Benedict's alto has a bright post Parker fluency, and Askren, is a lyrical guitarist.

-Bebop Spoken Here, Lance Liddle

Benedict has a really nice tone and sense of phrasing that provides a proper amount of energy without overplaying. Askren and the rhythm section work wonderfully together with strong and effective punches from time to time. Askren has a traditional guitar tone and a modal and modern approach to his single note lines. This is a high quality recording that certainly deserves a listen.

-Vince Lewis, Guitar International

It's totally clear that guitarist Dave, saxophonist Jeff and their compatriots Ramon Banda (drums) and John Belzaguy (drums) were riding the wave of the grooves through all 10 songs on this monster CD!

-Rotcod Zzaj, Improvizazzation Nation

They play six covers and two originals each from Dave and Jeff. We especially enjoyed "Monk's Mood", Askren's "McCannism" and Benedict's "The Weather Is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful". The music is relaxed and engaging that got better with each track. It's *All About The Groove!*

-D. Oscar Groomes, O's Place Newsletter

The arrangements are cool. There is a mix of standards and hip blowing tunes. Askren and Benedict have a limber solo ability that brings on the grits and gravy and a little brain salad, too. They swing and think on their feet.

-Grego Applegate Edwards, GappleGate Music Review

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