

ALBUM REVIEW

Christopher Burnett: The Standards, Vol. 2

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By Kyle Simpler, All About Jazz

January 2023

During its heyday, The Drum Room in The Hotel President was one of Kansas City's most popular jazz venues. Performers such as **Duke Ellington**, **Frank Sinatra**, and **Benny Goodman** all played there. The Drum Room closed during the late seventies but was brought back to life a few years later and, between 2006 and 2007, The **Christopher Burnett** Quartet performed there on the first Saturday night of each month. That was Burnett's first outing as a bandleader and his tenure there helped establish his reputation as one of the finest saxophonists in Kansas City. Some of these recordings are captured in **The Standards Volume 2 (Live at The Drum Room in Kansas City)**.

Burnett's passion for music started during his childhood and he is dedicated to jazz. When he first listened to **Miles Davis**, **Charlie Parker**, and **Charles Mingus**, he discovered something that spoke to him. He wanted to explore jazz and learn as much as possible. He later entered the armed services, and this time in the military allowed him to hone his craft even further both as a player and a bandleader. He remains devoted to jazz not only as a performer but as an entrepreneur and educator too.

The Standards Volume 2 showcases Burnett at an important point in his career. During his military service, he had the opportunity to play frequently. However, civilian life did not offer as many choices. Performing at The Drum Room opened new doors for the future, and he wanted to make the most of the opportunity.

The story behind the album is quite interesting. The material was originally recorded just for the musicians to hear how the band sounded live. Several years passed, and Burnett listened to the music again. He played it for his engineer, Bill Crain, who suggested releasing it as an album. The group featured Burnett on alto saxophone, **Mike Pagan** on keyboards, **James Ward** on bass, and **Michael Edward Shanks** on drums. They are all very talented players, and they played the gigs without using any charts. Together, they created the arrangements on the spot. The result, however, is far from a freeform, avant-garde approach. The players all listened to each other carefully and developed elegant renditions of the standards.

The standards included are not obvious choices. Instead of playing selections such as "Satin Doll" and "Autumn Leaves," they picked less obvious songs such as "Yesterdays" and "Triste." There is a refreshing sense of spontaneity from the musicians where



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everyone is in their best form. The Standards Volume 2 captures an ambiance of intimacy in the room where all the audience members were listening intently to the players.

The Standards Vol. 2 is a satisfying collection of music which exudes coolness. The level of musicianship plus the warmth of the recording gives this album a true sense of presence. It is like taking a trip back to 2006 and getting to go into The Drum Room on a Saturday night.



PHOTO: The Drum Room (2007)

Track Listing

All The Things You Are (Live) By Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II; **Yesterdays** (Live) Otto Harbach, Ronen Shmueli and Jerome Kern; **My One and Only Love** (Live) By Guy Wood and Robert Mellin; **Triste** (Live) By Antonio Carlos Jobim; **Black Narcissus** (Live) By Joe Henderson; **Invitation** (Live) By Bronislau Kaper and Paul Francis Webster; **Nefertiti** (Live) By Wayne Shorter

Personnel

Christopher Burnett: saxophone; **Michael Pagán**: piano; **James Ward**: bass, acoustic; **Michael Edward Shanks**: drums.



Album Information

Title: The Standards, Vol. 2 | Year Released: 2022 | Record Label: Artists Recording Collective (ARC)
Recorded, mix and mastered by WM Thornton and Christopher Burnett at JBT Studios LLC.
Album artwork - BurnettMusic.BIZ; Album Photo - Duane Hallock; Liner notes - BurnettMusic.BIZ.