

And So Am I

Darmon Meader | Darmon Meader Music (2007)

By Dr. Judith Schlesinger, “All About Jazz” (www.allaboutjazz.com)

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For the past 21 years, Darmon Meader has been best known as part of the multiple-Grammy-winning New York Voices; one of their two male vocalists (the estimable Peter Eldridge being the other), Meader has also been their featured sax player and customary arranger. Each Voice has solo interests, but given the group’s nearly-continuous touring schedule, independent projects can take years to produce.

This was the case with Meader’s first solo release, *And So Am I*, but it was worth the wait. The dozen tracks here include Meader’s crisp, crackling arrangements and soulful, swinging vocals; tunes range from classic (Horace Silver, Charlie Parker) to contemporary (Chick Corea, Claudio Roditi), with gems from Johnny Mercer and Rogers & Hart. The settings include big-band, quartets and trios, and small vocal groups in which all the singing is Meader’s. There are two originals: the kicking opener, “Huey’s Tune,” and the title track, a catchy, surefire hit in which Meader beat-boxes, supplies all the harmonies, and plays the sax.

All the playing here is consistently excellent, since Meader also has the ability to pick (and inspire) some top-flight bandmates. And after two decades of arranging luscious, nuanced vocal harmonies, he knows how to design the ideal cushion for a song: see “Close Your Eyes,” “My Romance” and especially the beautiful closer, “Why Did I Choose You?”

All told, *And So Am I* is a versatile, engaging, and thoroughly enjoyable debut. For fans of the New York Voices, it’s a chance to

finally grasp the extent of Meader's individual gifts. For everyone else, it's a fine introduction to a terrific "new" artist. Either way, it's highly recommended.

Track listing: Huey's Tune; Isn't it Romantic; And So Am I; Close Your Eyes; I Thought About You; The Monster and the Flower; My Romance; Yardbird Suite; Cookin' at the Continental; Skylark; Spain (I Can Recall); Why Did I Choose You?.

Personnel: Darmon Meader: alto and tenor sax, vocals, vocal percussion; Steve Kenyon: alto, tenor and baritone sax; Andy Ezrin: piano and organ; Alon Yavnai: piano; Dean Johnson: acoustic bass; David Finck: acoustic bass; Leo Traversa: electric bass; Carl Carter: electric bass; Jeanfrancois Prins: guitar; Ben Wittman: drums; Quincy Davis: drums; Marcello Pellitteri: drums; Tommy Igoe: drums; Mark Walker: drums; Barry Danielian: trumpet; Bob Milikan: trumpet; Jay Ashby: trombone; Randy Andos: trombone; Birch Johnson: trombone; Scott Whitfield: trombone; Jay Ashby: percussion.

Style: Mainstream/Bop/Hard Bop/Cool

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