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Music

Reviews



Anton Schwartz
When Music Calls
(AntonJazz)

The 30-year-old tenor saxophonist Anton Schwartz, who is living in the Bay Area, studied with Warne Marsh and Eddie Daniels. Marsh, an improvisational saxophonist best known for his work with Lenny Tristano, had a style that was all suggestion: He had a garbled tone and seemed to twist notes like licorice. Daniels, a well-known sideman and occasional leader since the 1960s, was a more straight-ahead player who decided to concentrate on the clarinet. Schwartz doesn't sound like either of them. He's a direct player whose phrases echo the sometimes impassive work of the late Dexter Gordon, an influence on Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. Schwartz's interested, he says, in "where life happens at that slower pace." (In the notes that accompany *When Music Calls*, a friend calls Schwartz "Poketown.") Among the eight Schwartz tunes on *When Music Calls* are the stomping "Too Much Pepper," the playful "Tidepool," and the nonchalantly strolling "Poketown."

Schwartz is relaxed but not tedious

or unemphatic. He plays Rollins' familiar "Doxy" in a slightly amended version. He states the melody, then solos around it intelligently, offering a stuttering downward series of notes at one point, and ending with a rhythmic phrase that directly sets up the consistently excellent pianist Paul Nagel, whose bluesy choruses are one of the highlights of the disc. Schwartz eases his way through the melody of the bossa nova "Dénouement." He's not a saxophonist in a hurry — there's no reason for him to be. When he re-enters, Schwartz takes a solo that moves away from the melody in a series of lyrical phrases played in a robust but unaggressive tone. He means to sustain the mood of his composition.

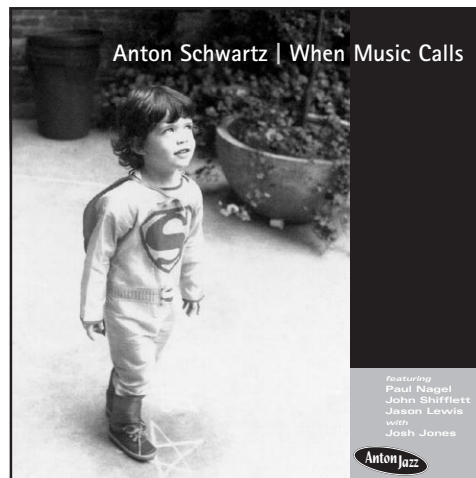
Schwartz sounds poised. He takes on the ballad "Where or When," which has been played ravishly by tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, among other giants. Schwartz's arrangement has Nagel and bassist John Shifflett repeating a thumping two-note phrase that punctuates the

A-section of the piece, and he adds a conga to the mix. The result is a fresh setting of a venerable ballad. The record has a center. Schwartz has written his own ballad, "Through the Years": It's a serene piece with a carefully etched, memorable tune. Still young by any standards, except those of the youth-oriented jazz world, the saxophonist is on his second career — previously he was getting a Ph.D. at Stanford, studying artificial intelligence. As his disc suggests, music called and he has placed academics on hold. He's still young, but more intelligent than most, and more concerned with the shape and mood of his varied pieces and

solos. The gently roving solo on "Through the Years," and the control over the instrument and the presentation that that solo displays, tells us that Schwartz is ready.

Anton Schwartz performs at a CD release party Sunday, June 7, at 5 p.m. at Star Classics, 525 Hayes (at Gough). Admission is \$5; call 552-1110.

— Michael Ullman



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