PIANIST STEPHEN MCQUARRY’S TRIO ALBUM AZURE WILL BE RELEASED BY MANDALA RECORDS ON SEPT. 3

Long known as a very skilled arranger and composer for larger groups, Stephen McQuarry recently recorded his first trio album, Azure. The Mandala label is proud to be releasing this gem on Sept. 3.

For Azure, Stephen McQuarry is teamed with bassist Ted Burik and drummer Greg German, performing a set of 11 of his originals. While connected to the modern jazz tradition, McQuarry has his own fresh chord voicings, his solos are full of subtle surprises, and he displays an original voice on the piano. His close interplay with Burik and German is consistently impressive and together they help to invigorate and modernize the traditional jazz piano trio.

The music on Azure includes selections that pay tribute to Tadd Dameron (“Little Brown House”), Bill Evans (the jazz waltz “Sunday Afternoon”) and Herbie Hancock (“Azadeh”) but in Stephen McQuarry’s own voice. Other highlights include “Blues For Jack,” “Lunar” (which is based on the standard “Solar”), the sensitive ballad “A View From My Heart” and the boppish “You Never Know.” But in reality all of the performances, which also include the complex medium-tempo ballad “Azure,” “34 Miles Away” and the Brazilian samba “Lydia” (which features the leader on electric piano), are quite rewarding and memorable. The musicians make every note count, often think as one, and bring out the beauty in McQuarry’s music.

Born and raised in Denver, Stephen McQuarry began with classical piano lessons when he was six, soon switching to jazz. He gained early experience playing with such giants as Dizzy Gillespie, Clare Fischer, Louie Bellson and Red Rodney. After studying at such institutions as the Eastman School Of Music and Berklee, he began his career as a pianist, arranger-composer and recording engineer.

Since that time, McQuarry has worked with such bands as Pangaea, Zazen (reminiscent of the Keith Jarrett Quartet with Dewey Redman), Synsor (electronica), Agharta (New Age), and the eclectic jazz octet Resonance. The latter group, comprised of improvisers on saxophone, flute, violin, vioila, cello, bass, drums and McQuarry’s piano and featured on the Mandala CD Resonance, is one of several larger projects that include his colorful arrangements and compositions.

Azure is the best all-round showcase for Stephen McQuarry’s piano playing. The fresh material and his inventive ideas make this a particularly memorable effort.

For more information on Stephen McQuarry and Azure, please contact keyzboard@yahoo.com