



Rich Perry, Saxophone

At a relatively early age - though playing professionally since the mid '70s—tenor saxophonist Rich Perry is already prolifically recorded. He rarely composes (maybe a half dozen tunes spread out over twice as many CDs released as a leader), preferring to stay with the tried-and-true modus operandi of the accomplished jazz improviser: interpreting standards and hits from the jazz canon. He has a long musical partnership with pianist Harold Danko, including a couple of piano/sax duet projects and even a CD of Eric Dolphy compositions. Put this together with the fact that he is a sought-after sideman and long-time member of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and you begin to see the portrait of a productive, sincere jazz artist.

On Jam Session Vol. 24 we hear Perry team up with other artists from the label but, perhaps most interestingly, the under-heard (in recent years) tenor sax virtuoso, Dave Schnitter. The standards agreed upon include a gorgeous ballad medley: "Skylark" (featuring altoist Jon Gordon), "You're My Everything" (a Perry feature) and "Round Midnight" (with Schnitter in the spotlight). It's particularly intriguing to hear the different tenor approaches on these ballads, from Perry's silky smooth tone and agile lines to Schnitter's equal dexterity with colorful, low-register honks. Another interesting thing is the inclusion of two Coltrane tunes (both originally from Blue Train): "Lazy Bird" - an uptempo 32-bar form with great solos by everyone including drummer Joe Farnsworth and "Locomotion" (incorrectly attributed to Monk, perhaps thinking of his "Locomotive"), another uptempo 32-bar blues with a bridge in which the rhythm section (pianist Michael Weiss, bassist Jay Anderson and Farnsworth) push the three saxophonists into some very exciting exchanges.

Perry's most recent recording as a leader is *e*motion* and features a quartet—pianist Danko, bassist Anderson and drummer Jeff Hirshfield—that has played together for almost 15 years! The openness and shared mission to make great music ensures that the nine tracks are all first-rate performances. Some highlights include a touching version of Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," a sexy, swinging rendition of "What's New," a Latin/rock groove applied to Bird's "Dewey Square" and a reading of "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" that seems to be informed by the aesthetic of '60s Paul Bley or '70s Keith Jarrett. On "Out of Nowhere" and "There Will Never Be Another You" Perry stretches out, reminiscent of some of the greatest jazz saxophonists and then pays respect to Thad Jones (after all, it was the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra before it was the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra) by turning in deep, moving versions of two of his compositions: "The Summery" (a rendering of "The Summary" from Thad's 1972 "Suite for Pops") and "A Child is Born," with enthralling solos by both Perry and Danko