



TONY “SENNY” SENATORE “HOLYLAND”

After the first listen to the newest release entitled “Holyland” from east coast bassist Tony “Senny” Senatore I realized immediately that this was just no ordinary recording by a top bassist. This was one of those CD’s that I would count as one of the “desert island 10”. Senny has taken his incredible talent as a bassist, arranger and songwriter to new heights with this recording, integrating passion, joy, pain and all the emotions we feel as humans into a sonic statement that cannot be ignored.

The project was a joint effort between Senny and New York City based platinum award winning producer and engineer Frank D. Fagnano. Together, Frank and Senny have assembled a group of musicians that gel so well it almost seems they have known each other forever. Their collective resumes read like a veritable who’s who of the music world. Steve Jankowski (Chicago, Don Henley), Van Romaine (Dixie Dregs, Kansas, Blood Sweat and Tears), Tom Brislin (Yes, Meat Loaf) and Tom Timko (Miami Sound Machine). Also, Manolo Badrena (played with Jaco in Weather Report), Marco Giovino (G.E. Smith and the Saturday Night Live Band), Lewis La Medica (sings the theme to the MTV show The Osbournes) and Luther Rix (Bob Dylan) also make appearances. Yet with all this great talent, it is Senny’s bass playing that is what makes this record stand out in my opinion. Everyone here gets the chance to shine, which just puts the frosting on the cake. It’s all about the song and Senny obviously knows that.

Holyland is a music chronicle of life, a sonic journey whose story is so true to the heart that only a brick (or rapper) could not be moved by it. In my opinion what the greatest music, the kind that is timeless, is all about. How many recordings can we name like that? Not many.

The CD is especially intriguing because though there is this ongoing theme, each song stands on it’s own, not being encumbered by any notion of “genre” or style. Yes, this can easily be categorized as jazz-fusion with progressive tendencies. However, I personally hate the closed minded implications of categorizing music into different “buckets”. There are progressive rock, jazz, blues, classic rock and even a bit of country elements here. Of course it’s the fusion which puts it all together (Webster’s dictionary defines fusion as “a merging of diverse, distinct, or separate elements into a unified whole”).

The influences here are apparent, which is what was actually desired. Senny pays his love and respect to those players that influenced him over the years.

Senny plays fretless, 4, 6 and even the 12 string bass all with style, grace and brilliance. He knows exactly what each piece of music needs. When I used to think of 12 string bass, I thought mainly of Tom Petersson (Cheap Trick). Having played one a while back, I know how difficult these can be. Yet Senny handles it as if he were born with it in his hands. Using the 12 string to layer with the fretless on “Life and Times (of the Paisan)” is brilliant. This track (dedicated to our own Maestro Dann Glenn) will inspire and excite bassists of all levels. Multiple bass parts in layers can easily descend into a sonic nightmare. This track is the opposite. It’s stunningly beautiful. Simple, and yet complex.

The CD starts out with “Money Dulls the Pain” a fusion masterpiece that is jumps right out and captures the listener never to let them go. Filled with excitement and joy, their lies underneath an almost melancholy thread. I asked Senny about this and he told me “the title of Money Dulls refers to the pain of my Divorce, selling my house, and having more money in my pocket than ever before- hence- dulling the pain of the divorce. This track to me sounds like a late night TV show theme- so I subtitled it The Tony and Frank show.” What more needs to be said?

I could go into a detailed description of each track, but that would somehow cheapen the experience. This is a recording that must be “felt” by each person from their own perspective.

Would I loan this CD to a friend? Absolutely NOT. Holyland now occupies slot #1 in my CD changer and it's going to stay THERE! My friends can (and will) buy a copy for themselves because they too will find this to be one of their top ten favorites. In fact, I'm now going to order another copy for my car.

Rating – 10/10

Jon Pomplin