

## NICOLAS BEARDE; Invitation (Right Groove)

Written by Bill B

Friday, 22 April 2016 12:30 - Last Updated Friday, 22 April 2016 12:35

---



If Gregory Porter (see review below) represents the modern side of jazz singing, then Bay area-based Nicolas Bearde keeps the flag flying for a more traditional approach to the genre. Vastly experienced (for the past 20 years he's been a member of Bobby McFerrin's innovative a cappella ensemble, "Voicestra" while in his solo guise he's shared stages and studios with countless jazz greats), his rich, smooth baritone and relaxed approach is a throwback to the great days of Billy Eckstine and Arthur Prysock, though younger listeners will, I'm sure, draw comparison with the wonderful Lou Rawls.

'Invitation' is Nicolas' fifth solo offering and the 9 tracker is master class in straight ahead jazz vocals. Most of the songs are drawn from the Great American songbook –with the obvious exception being a rare vocal treatment of Herbie Hancock's 'Maiden Voyage'. Amongst the other album highlights is the opener, 'Come Back To Me' which sets the relaxed tone for the rest of the set. This one features uplifting sax work from Vincent Herring, though it's the sax of Anton Schwarz that helps to make the cover of Billy Eckstine's 'I Want To Talk About You' another standout.

Covers of Jobim's 'Dindi' and the perennial 'Nature Boy' are equally discerning and the measure of Bearde's art is that he manages to bring something a little different to the very familiar. On 'Dindi' for instance he eschews the usual Latin setting for an intimate lounge-based approach. Producer Nat Adderley Jr's piano is delight here (indeed as it is throughout the album).

## NICOLAS BEARDE; Invitation (Right Groove)

Written by Bill B

Friday, 22 April 2016 12:30 - Last Updated Friday, 22 April 2016 12:35

---

Given Adderley's track record (especially his work with Luther Vandross), it's hardly surprising that as producer he constantly brings out the inherent soul in Bearde's remarkable voice (interestingly I-tunes classifies the set as "R&B") so soul lovers who've now connected to jazz via Gregory Porter could do worse than check out Nicholas Bearde. The invitation's out there... I'd urge you to accept!

(BB) 4/5