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# The IAJRC Journal

Vol. 44, No. 1 - March 2011

Dave Bass Quartet

*Gone*

DBQ

Ernie Watts (ts), Dave Bass (p), Gary Brown (sb), Babatunde Lea (d),  
Mary Stallings (v). Photo : Yvonne Boyd

LeGrand / Surrender / Mi Guajira / Lost Valentine / Libertango / I Bet You  
Wonder / Since I Found You / Someday / Carol / Another Ending / Gone



The multi-instrumentalist Dave Bass has led a peripatetic musical life, from studies in Boston with Madame Chaloff to tours through the Far East to a career in Latin Music in San Francisco. When the lure of a stable existence called, he went back to school and became a lawyer and has spent the last two decades working for civil rights in California. Now, with stability in hand, he is returning to a more active musical life, and this disc of his own compositions attests to a lifetime of experience – both musical and otherwise.

This 2010 CD was recorded on two dates in 2008 and 2009 with the same personnel. Saxophonist Ernie Watts is certainly the most familiar name. A long career in Jazz and Rhythm and Blues (with artists as diverse as Frank Zappa, The Rolling Stones, Charlie Haden, Marvin Gaye and Oliver Nelson) has ultimately led him back to Jazz, where his most high profile associations have been with Buddy Rich and later with the Tonight Show Band. Here, he plays tenor exclusively, demonstrating exceptional chops on the more straight-ahead swingers, *Le Grand* and *Since I Found You*, but reserving his most impressive playing for Astor Piazzolla's *Libertango* – a duet between him and the leader. A second duet, *Someday* is more reflective and its gospel feel calls forth some impassioned playing by both.

Dave Bass is a formidable pianist who also has abilities as a composer. His most florid playing comes on *Carol* – a power ballad showcasing Watts' more R&B style and a precisely played arrangement. While his style is primarily 60's hard bop of the Coltrane era, he also creates some exciting Latin textures as well as popular ballads *Surrender* and *I Bet You Wonder* featuring the vocals of Mary Stallings. Stallings is a refreshing singer – obviously influenced by Carmen McRae, she brings impressive musicality and feeling to the table, along with a sly delivery.

The other members of the rhythm section are unfortunately not featured, but they provide solid yet flexible support for the excursions of Bass, Watts and Stallings. The overall impression left by a hearing of this disc is the heartening feeling that contemporary jazz can indeed still swing when delivered by the right hands.

♫ John Clark