

Mike Stern - Big Neighborhood (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Big Neighborhood*. 7:40
2. *6th Street*. 7:49
3. *Reach*. 5:30 [play](#)
4. *Song For Pepper*. 5:43
5. *Coupe De Ville*. 4:36 [play](#)
6. *Bird Blue*. 5:44
7. *Moroccan Roll*. 7:06
8. *Long Time Gone*. 7:52
9. *Check One*. 7:39
10. *That's All It Is*. 4:52
11. *Hope You Don't Mind*. 5:18

Personnel:

Mike Stern (guitar);

Richard Bona, Esperanza Spalding (vocals, bass guitar);

Eric Johnson , Steve Vai (guitar);

Bob Franceschini, Bob Malach (saxophone);

Randy Brecker (trumpet);

Jim Beard (piano, Hammond b-3 organ, keyboards);

John Medeski (Wurlitzer piano, Clavinet, Hammond b-3 organ);

Chris Wood (electric bass);

Chris Minh Doky, Lincoln Goines (bass guitar);

Cindy Blackman, Dave Weckl, Terri Lyne Carrington, Billy Martin, Lionel Cordew (drums).

Like all the legends he ever worked for or with--from Miles Davis to Jaco Pastorius, Billy Cobham to the Brecker Brothers--this five-time Grammy nominee has learned over the course of his 26-year recording career something about the nuanced art of collaboration. Not only does it take a village to make a great, boundary-stretching jazz recording, the wild excursions on his

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second Heads Up date seem to be shouting, as it actually involves a whole BIG NEIGHBORHOOD. On this diverse 12-track set, whose styles range from blazing jazz fusion to African-tinged exotica and trippy Middle Eastern journeys, Mike Stern invites a few of his pals back who populated his similarly eclectic 2006 label debut WHO LET THE CATS OUT? Especially significant is the renewed invitation extended to Richard Bona, whose rumbling bass and spirited vocalese bring authenticity to the highly spiritual African vibes of "Reach."

Pairing the brilliant young bassist/vocalist Esperanza Spalding with drum great Terri Lyne Carrington isn't just a cool, girl-power endeavor; the two have genuine chemistry with the guitarist--"Song for Pepper" drifts dreamily with Spalding's endearing vocalizations, and "Coupe de Ville" swings playfully as Bob Malach's sax and Stern's strings weave through the rhythmic foundation forged by Spalding and Carrington. Finally, Stern swings the door open to a lot of fresh melodic and improvisational ideas via his jazz-rock cohorts Eric Johnson (playing it cool on the moody, soulful "6th Street") and Steve Vai (wailing like crazy on the searing title track). He goes artsier with "jam band godfathers" Medeski, Martin & Wood, who help spin a wild blues-rock web on "Check One" and cool to a simmer on the more pop/rock-oriented "Check One." There's also an appearance by Stern's old friend, Randy Brecker. This is one block party jazz fusion fans won't want to miss in 2009! ---Bill Milkowski

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