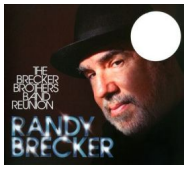
The Brecker Brothers Band Reunion – Randy Brecker (2013)



1.First Tune Of The Set 2.Stellina 3.The Dipshit 4.Merry Go Town 5.The Slag 6.Really In For It 7.Elegy For Mike 8.On The Rise 9.Adina 10.R N Bee Randy Brecker - Composer, Electric Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Trumpet Dean Brown - Guitar James Campagnola - Sax (Baritone) Chris Minh Doky - Bass Rodney Holmes - Drums Will Lee - Bass Parandroid - Rap, Vocals Oli Rockberger - Keyboards, Vocal Arrangement, Vocals Adam Rogers - Guitars Ada Rovatti - Sax (Soprano), Sax (Tenor) Dave Sanborn - Sax (Alto) Mitch Stein - Guitar Mike Stern - Guitar Dave Weckl - Drums George Whitty - Keyboards, Organ, Percussion, Producer

Though saxophonist Michael Brecker passed away in 2007, his brother, trumpeter Randy Brecker, keeps the jazz-funk fusion of the Brecker Brothers alive with the Brecker Brothers Reunion Band. While not a strict reunion of the original ensemble, the band does feature many of the players who have performed with the Brecker Brothers over the years, such as guitarist Mike Stern, drummer Dave Weckl, and keyboardist George Whitty, as well as new members including Italian saxophonist Ada Rovatti (Brecker's wife), and keyboardist Oli Rockberger. The band played several shows beginning in 2011, and in 2013 released this album, which also featured such former Brecker Brothers' associates as guitarists Dean Brown, Adam Rogers, and Mitch Stein, drummer Rodney Holmes, bassist Chris Minh Doky, and saxophonist David Sanborn. --- Matt Collar, Rovi

The backstory is that Randy Brecker was putting together a band for an engagement at the Blue Note when he realized that all of the musicians he was recruiting were alumni of different iterations of the Brecker Brothers, the renowned fusion band he and his saxophonist brother Michael ran in the ’70s. Randy decided to turn the gig into a tribute to Michael, who died in

2007, with Randy's wife Ada Rovatti (the sole non-BBB alumnus) taking on the sax role. This live DVD and studio CD resulted.

While they're not night and day, the contrast between the studio and live sets is marked: Whereas the performance video crackles, for the most part the studio session lies flat; it perks up only occasionally, mostly toward the end when the group steps out of the box it created all those years ago. Although much of the freshly written material appears on both discs, the stage brings out an extra layer of animation that seems to have been sucked up by the studio walls in the CD versions.

Brecker, Rovatti, guitarist Mike Stern, keyboardist George Whitty and bassist Will Lee find a deep pocket from the outset of the appropriately titled "First Tune of the Set," and when drummer Dave Weckl takes his first break there's no turning back: Save for a few clunkers, like Rovatti's smooth ballad "Merry Go Town" and Brecker's corny hip-hop turn "Really in for It," this isn't a rehash but a band as vital as any out there. By the time they close with a breakneck "Some Skunk Funk," the opening track on the band's 1975 debut, they've managed to serve up a formidable reminder of what made the Brecker Brothers such a significant outfit in its day.

If only that spark had transferred to the studio. There, for whatever reason, the same basic team (augmented by saxophonist David Sanborn and several other guests) seemed determined to revert to the safe, almost sterile sound of the '70s rather than take the Brecker Brothers to an edgier new place. There are, of course, moments of greatness throughout—with musicians like Brecker, Weckl and Lee, how could there not be?—but they're isolated and mostly lost amid the sameness.

"The Slag," an ambling funk jam that finds Brecker bending notes on electric trumpet (the only time he uses it on the recording), Rodney Holmes subbing for Weckl and Mitch Stein doubling up with Stern, brings a bit of much-needed grit to the set, and "R N Bee," the penultimate tune, transcends the prescribed format courtesy of Whitty's electronics. The finale, "Musician's Ol' Lady Dues Blues"—with Adam Rogers on guitars and Brecker blowing trumpet and singing as his Dr. John-like vocal character, "Randroid"—is a totally incongruous slice of Delta blues. It's also one of the best things on the album. ---Jeff Tamarkin, jazztimes.com

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