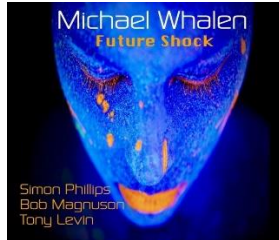


Michael Whalen

Future Shock



Pianist, composer and award winning musical mad scientist **Michael Whalen** offers up a new album called **Future Shock**. This is a hard driving, high octane, jazz fusion album of energy and force. If you play this album at three a.m. it's guaranteed that the neighbors will complain and the cops will show up. The collection of ten thrilling tunes is made out of surprising electronic elements combined with progressive jazz with a bit of avant garde thrown in for good measure. It is every bit as astounding as the cover art, a radioactive blue avatar that makes quite an impression.

The first tune is the rollicking title track, **Future Shock**. It is a funky, frenetic frolic into the future with inorganic voices, sassy sax, and great percussion. The almost 6 minute snappy instrumental is filled with enough kinetic energy to power the nighttime. I might as well mention now that the drummer, Simon Phillips is one terrific talent. Also joining Whalen on the album are the talents of Bob Magnuson on sax and other wind instruments, and Tony Levin on bass and Chapman Stick. Whalen of course is the keyboard wizard on synths and programming.

Speaking of night, the tune **La Hermosa Noche** or The Beautiful Night shimmers with lively Latin beats and a dynamic keyboard lead that is guaranteed to get you up and dancing. Magnuson's flighty flute glides around like some sort of night bird. Look at them stars.

Memories of You is anything but gentle. That's because the times you spent together were boundless days of sun and surf, wind and rain, and building that closeness that only kindred spirits can create.

One of my favorites on Future Shock is called **Poly Jam**. This is a driving, no holds barred tune that shows the talents of every member of the group. Whalen throws in a little Hammond organ vibe that is overshadowed by an electronic score of irrepressible energies. The sax pulls in the drive and takes over the show, only to be outclassed by Levin's bass. All the while poppin' percussion adds punctuation to every movement. That's a wow for me.

The lightest tune on the album is **Morning Song**. This slightly exhilarating keyboarded track is the anthem for any sunny day, interspersed by blue skies and those puffy white clouds that make animal shapes in your mind. The sax is the wind on this one and it's time to follow the leader.

The next track is **Wanderlust**, and frankly, this is more than a little traveling music. If this is a search for the unknown then it is achieved via a ride on a rocket. The tune has a lot of momentum, or I should probably say velocity. Michael's melody is intensive, urgent, and inexhaustibly purposeful. Everything goes forward and at breakneck speed.

Whalen's fresh and focused piano talents are featured in the tune **Miracle Mile**. Roll down the windows and put it on cruise as this tune smooths out the miles. Somewhere among jazz, blues,

and funk, the tune is an anthem for movers and shakers coursing along Wilshire at their own pace. Love those horns.

I liked all ten tracks of Future Shock. Michael Whelan, best known of late for romantic ballads and cinematic tinged scores has opens up a can of Moogie Woogie on this collection of high energy cross-genre fusion. The tunes have a great balance with every one having enough opportunity to have their musical say. Veteran composer, Michael Whalen's compositions have an animated intensity that gets every neuron lighting up and snapping in the brain. Highly recommended. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews