

Alex Bellegarde Quartet : Caminando

Mike Chamberlain, Coda Magazine (page 35) Nov/Dec edition 2006

“Bassist Alex Bellegarde’s quartet were the winners of the 2005 GM grand prize at the Montreal International Jazz Festival, and Caminando, their debut album, is part of the prize.

Recorded in one session at Studio Karisma in Montreal, Caminando is a completely charming debut by the group, which includes drummer Yvon Plouffe, Cuban-born pianist Yoël Diaz, and remarkable alto saxophonist Erik Hove. Guest percussionist Orlando Lavielle also appears on the album, dedicated to Montreal-based bassist Skip Bey, who died during that year’s festival.

As he states in the liner notes, Bellegarde has always been fascinated by Cuban rhythms, and explorations of those rhythms forms the core of the recording, though not the whole of it, with the bebop styled ‘Got Lip’ the notable exception. Indeed, the jazz and Cuban music are well-balanced in the writing as are the contributions of the musicians. On ‘Native,’ for instance, Diaz, with a latin touch, and Hove, with his raspy tone, slide back and forth between lead and accompanying roles almost seamlessly as Bellegarde and Plouffe gradually build up the rhythmic tension.

The triumph here is that without prior knowledge, one would think that this is anything but a debut album. Kudos all around on this one, and here’s looking forward to the next effort. “

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