

## RONNY SMITH “JUST GROOVIN’

Guitarist Ronny Smith’s mellow tone, subtle creativity, and ability to groove over catchy rhythms have made him an increasingly popular force in contemporary jazz. His three previous CDs (following his demo CD Long Time Comin’) have titles that perfectly fit his music: Got Groove, Laid Back, and Simply Stated. Just Groovin’ displays Smith’s continued growth, knack for creating powerful solos at a relatively quiet volume, and nine new compositions along with a soulful jam on Kenny Dorham’s hard bop classic “Blue Bossa.”

Born in Baltimore, Ronny Smith grew up in a religious household. He considers his early influences to have been George Benson, Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass, and one can hear touches of each of those greats in this CD along with Smith’s own strong musical personality. He gained important early experience playing in high school ensembles, at the University of Maryland, and as a member of the Army Band. After earning a Masters degree and spending a period playing backup in a variety of settings, he began his successful solo career.

Just Groovin’ teams the guitarist with a talented rhythm section and a horn section comprised of the three Martin brothers. Each of the songs is accessible, danceable and catchy so a thorough description of the music is unnecessary. To name a few highlights, “Here We Go Again” shows Ronny Smith’s love of George Benson and Wes Montgomery. “Smooth” is a hypnotic melody. On “Just Groovin’”, the guitarist demonstrates how he can create memorable music over a simple pattern. His unaccompanied solo introduction to “Forever Friends” sets up the perfect tempo for slow dancing while the closing “Blue Bossa” features Smith’s straightahead guitar chops.

All ten selections, which are full of the leader’s highly appealing guitar, grooving rhythms and tight ensembles, will satisfy Ronny Smith’s increasingly large audience.

Scott Yanow is the author of ten jazz books including The Jazz Singers, Bebop, Trumpet Kings, Jazz On Film and Jazz On Record 1917-76