

Down Beat

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Steve Million

Thanks A Million
Palmetto 2026

★★★★½

Million's second effort, recorded live to two-track in a New York studio, proves his ★★★★★ debut (see Down Beat, March '96), *Million To One*, was no fluke. In the company of the same stellar musicians as last time, the Chicagoan brings discipline, personality, imagination, talent and quiet passion to his playing and songwriting. He values swinging both in common time (the majority of his originals) as well as in more rhythmically challenging meters (e.g., the simmering Afro-Latin piece "Seven A.M.," in 7/4). Million's compositions harbor harmonic complexities, but tension gets resolved like a flash of lightning from key soloists Chris Potter or Brecker. These two are up to the demands of keeping their probes of creative musical minds related to the moods of the songs, and Million gets outstanding service, also, from bassist Michael Moore and drummer Ron Vincent, formerly of the Gerry Mulligan Quartet. The album provides a bevy of aural delights: the carefully articulated sound of Million's piano notes on "My Explanation," the lovely precision of the melody played in unison by Potter and Brecker on "Waltz For Yadda," the dignified composure of the ensemble agreement in "Mis'ry Waltz," tenorman Potter's earnest intensity in his feature spot on "Situation," the exquisite tone Brecker gets playing flugelhorn on "Page Six," the perfect fit everywhere of improvisations within preordained song structures, the pervasive freshness and immediacy of the music at all times.

—Frank-John Hadley