

Truth Is . . .

Steve Million (Palmetto)

By Jack Bowers

I love the opening of pianist Steve Million's new CD, wherein Steve and his sidemen seem to be searching for the "lost chord." Oh, yes, they find it, and a number of others too in a session that is quirky, almost Monkish at times, but always melodious and consistently rewarding. The album's title seems to imply that *Truth Is . . .* whatever one perceives it to be. In other words, the music that Million's group chooses to play is as "true" in its way as any other. That's not only profound, it's also *true*. Truth is, Million is an excellent composer/arranger within the parameters of modern post-bop Jazz and a warmly eloquent pianist whose perceptive ideas are always worth considering. We'll not try to compare him with others; the influences are there, but Million has for the most part subsumed and reshaped them to develop a manner of expression that is basically his own, which is in essence what Jazz is all about. Million has a couple of well-endowed improvisers on the front line in Brecker and Oatts, the former coolly expressive and self-assured, the latter gregarious and adaptable. Million, who wrote nine of the album's twelve numbers, employs the full sextet on five of them, a quintet (sans guitar) on four others. The leader is accompanied by Moore, Cardenas and Vincent on "Perfectly Spaced," Moore and Vincent on "Nomadrigal," and plays Monk's "Gallops Gallop" by himself. In every case, Million positions notes and phrases exactly where they should be, while Cardenas, Moore and Vincent respond to the various cues in lock-step. Together they weave an engaging tapestry of sound with enough color and variety to please anyone's ear and enrich his/her frame of mind.

Track listing: Right Place, Wrong Key; Truth Is . . .; Terror of Toni Town; Fireflies; All the Things You Are; Perfectly Spaced; Shytown (for Robert Shy); Eiderdown; Nomadrigal; Blackwater; Ain't That Familiar; Gallops Gallop (63:38).

Personnel: Steve Million, piano; Randy Brecker, trumpet; Dick Oatts, saxophones; Michael Moore, bass; Steve Cardenas, guitar; Ron Vincent, drums.

Contact: Palmetto Records, 71 Washington Place, #1A, New York, NY 10011 (800-PALM-CDS;
www.palmetto-records.com)