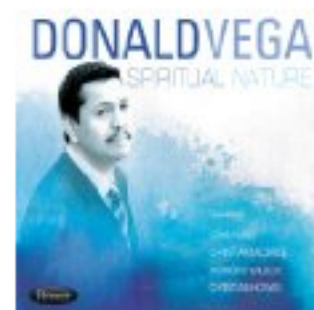


## \*\*\*\*RINGER OF THE WEEK\*\*\*\* Donald Vega: Spiritual Nature

September 13, 2012

By George W. Harris

I just can't figure out if I like Resonance Records more for their wonderful archival discs like the recent classic sessions by Bill Evans, Wes Montgomery and Freddie Hubbard, or for their forward looking original material by the likes of Tamir Hendelman, Kathy Kosins and Marian Petrescu. Either way, George Klabin's label is quickly becoming one of my favorites, and this tasteful session by LA mainstay pianist Donald Vega further cements my relationship. It's a mix of traditional, melody, style, class, elegance and improvisatory vision that is rarely seen these days.



Vega's got the right guys for this session: Christian McBride/b and Lewis Nash/dr make up the core trio, while guests Anthony Wilson/g, Christian Howes/violin, Bob Sheppard/sax, Gilbert Castellanos/tp and Bob McChesney/tb pop in and out of various songs, creating a mosaic of sounds and styles to savor. Classic hard bop on Vega's "Scorpion" has some hot horn work, while smooth as silk chamber jazz on Ron Carter's "First Trip" features cozy guitar work by Wilson. Violinist Howes' brings a warm breeze on a handful of tunes, as he skates like Sonja Henie on tunes like "River" and "Child's Play." As for Vega himself, he's got the touch of an oil painter, knowing when to give bold strokes or just a simple jot. He bops with the best on trio material like "You Never Tell Me," and can be Schubert-romantic on his reading of Jobim's "Falando De Amor." Each of the tunes feels like a part of a greater whole, with each song filling a chapter in a book that you ultimately don't want to put down. Look for this one; you'll have a good friend.

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