

Big Bang Volume 3

By

Mike Ian

Written by

Steve Sheppard

This has to be one of the most interesting and explorative reviews I have undertaken for a while, I found so much in this new offering by **Mike Ian** and I just feel a strong desire to tell you all about this latest musical sojourn right now. Ian's release is entitled **Big Bang Volume 3**, so I hope one day to also hear volumes one and two, if this one is anything to go by, I will be in for a treat.

We begin this Jazz based journey with a stunning offering called **Hole In The Universe**, this arrangement has just about everything in it for anyone to enjoy, a touch of *Windham Hill* piano, a beautiful symbiotic partnership of electric guitar and percussion, well steeped in a full bodied Jazz experience, with a little light touch of UK based jazz funk band *Level 42*, this is one fine start for us to all revel in, and one that is right down my street.

My love for Jazz has grown experientially over the last few years and I have been elated to hear some truly brilliant tracks along the way, much like this next one from the artist called **Blues In 7**. This undeniable mixture of two styles is simply addictive to listen to, the repeating energy of the piano, the subtle brass and of course the, oh so very classy guitar of the master **Mike Ian**. There was also something about this that reminded me of the great Jazz standard *Take 5*, with a little blues ethic perhaps!

Our next port of call is way out west, so let's travel to **Sedona**. A soothing narrative on piano starts our voyage within this piece; the crafted and stylish guitar of Ian adds such a colourful musical pastiche to the composition. This could easily be the theme music for a TV show, the addition of vocalisations were an added bonus, one that created an extra dimension for us all to get lost

within, and with the brass and acoustic manifestations, this has to be one of the most crafted and skilfully performed pieces off the release; this is what really good jazz is all about.

We have a fine percussive start to this next fast paced opus of Jazz called **Blues For Who?** The rhythm of this offering is brilliant; I would love to see this performed live, the brass and percussion are perfectly matched and work out a superb symbiotic partnership along the way, then just past the two minute mark, Ian's electric tornado of a guitar cuts into the dance, and the piano completes this breath-taking moment of utterly top class Jazz, a real power play of a track indeed.

Big Bang Volume 3 has something for literally everyone to enjoy, especially if you are in a Latin mood and need to sway your way through the day. If you are, then **Somewhere In Brazil** will certainly fit your mood, packed with instrumentation to fit the scene, the flute reigns supreme on this piece, one that contains a real samba feel, with whistles and a sultry percussion section, this is one of those tracks that you will find yourself playing many times over. The offering pushed the theme beautifully with a gentle piano and a stunning performance on acoustic guitar by the artist, one that reminded me a little of *Jim Stubblefield* in style.

We reach the half way marker with one of my personal favourites off the album called **Green In Blue**, this has to be one of the smoothest songs in this genre I have heard for literally ages. Ian on electric here is sublime, and then add to this the brass section and you have Jazz Heaven. There was also an interesting and quite moving energy about this track that drew some quite beautiful images for me as I listened to it; this is one extremely classy performance and certainly one to be remembered.

As the next piece entitled **Sco** emerges from the valley of sound, we are gifted an almost traditional Jazz offering, some very smart guitar is matched by a most agreeable brass section. What I like about **Mike Ian** is his ability to not only make his guitar sing, but talk as well. This rock/jazz offering is rhythmic and raw at the same time; this ultimately gives us, the always eager listener a fantastic juxtaposition of tone to enjoy.

Time to ease back now as we pretty much go long form here, as we reach the piece entitled **Streamline**. An even tempered beginning greets our ears almost in the way *Dave Brubeck* did when he took the A train back in 54. The guitar here was utterly smooth and extremely creative, and the added multi instrumental nature of the arrangement actually added a fascinating level of suspense right throughout the offering. Apart from anything else this song is a superb show case for the artist, and how I adore hearing that beautiful Trumpet blow, without doubt **Streamline** at just over nine minutes long, is one of the most inventive and addictive tracks off the album.

As we move deeper into the release we find our musical boat of choice has glided into **Still Waters**. The composition and creation of this song must have been a halcyon moment for the artist, because he has probably come up with one of the most serene, tranquil and smoothest Jazz compositions of the year. You will find you can't have favourites from this album, as each and every track is standout and as for **Still Waters**, may I float on this perfection for a life time.

The delicacy of this next composition is truly noteworthy; a fluent and charming guitar is played by Ian, one that seems to lull us into a world of calm and peacefulness. This nonchalant opus of composed brilliance is called, and quite rightly so, **Cool Blue**. With elements of Coltrane this piece offers much, and the driving but rhythmic bass in the engine room of the track, is played with such a crafted level of skill and style in a collected and unruffled performance by all.

I have been totally charmed by this album, **Mike Ian** has created something special here and with that in mind we have arrived at the penultimate offering from the release, this is called, rather amusingly, **Mini Mouse**. The build and arrangement here has a fascinating sense of movement within it and all the while Ian's guitar weaves a tale of its own, in this tantalizing tapestry of sound.

So, we're here, knocking on the very last door in the block, and this final gift from the musician is called **As You Were**. As a music writer I always feel the first and last tracks are of utmost importance and so must **Mike Ian**, as he ends this amazing album with one of the most emotional offering from the release. A beautiful flowing Latin acoustic guitar takes us home, the added vocalisations just add weight to the glory of this final composition, one that has a delightful

soft energy about its construction, this is without doubt the best way possible to leave the album.

Big Bang Volume 3 is a credit to a musician who works incredibly hard at his music and births creations like this with such skill and talent. Personally for me this has easily been the best Jazz album I have listened to this year, each track is a work of art on its own, each composition has been built, created and manifested into the world with care, attention and detail. This is one of those albums that you could recommend to anyone who loves really good music, Jazz or otherwise, it really doesn't get any better than this and has been a fantastic journey for me personally, absolutely recommended indeed.