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David Sanborn

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Presents

David Sanborn

With Special Guest
Comedian
Owen Smith

March 3, 2000
David Sanborn

Few artists have had musical careers as rich and lasting as David Sanborn. For over twenty-five years now, the veteran saxophonist has been able to navigate the pop instrumental landscape with a seemingly breezy effortlessness. Critics around the globe have hailed Sanborn as one of the most consistent American musicians working today, as comfortable with a 60 piece orchestra as he is with a New Orleans jam session, bringing to each album and project an honesty towards his craft that resonates throughout all genres. There has always been a grounded quality to Sanborn’s performances, and on his new album, Songs From The Night Before, his 14th solo effort, he melds his mesmerizing R&B chops culled from some of his earlier work with a renewed intimacy and immediacy that ironically belies the nearly thirty years of musical history under his belt.

“I’m lucky enough to really love what I do,” says Sanborn. “I get to do an album every 12 to 18 months, and it always seems to be a reflection of where I’m at musically at that particular point. I’ve been listening to more R&B pop recently, like some of the stuff that’s happening such as D’Angelo for example. It’s interesting how some of it goes back to some of the ‘70’s stuff I grew up around. The production is different, but the vibe is there.”

Sanborn says his work ethic was also different on this album than his past few efforts. “On past albums there would be a lot of rehearsal and a lot of people involved,” he says. “On this one, I wanted a more personal, more intimate feel.” Sanborn huddled in the initial stages of making the record with Producer/keyboardist Ricky Peterson, who helmed the LP. “We wrote together. We made drum loops and played around with them. He would play keyboard bass. We didn’t involve a whole lot of people at that stage. There was more of a close, collaborative effort in a sense. The last few albums have had more to do with bands. There was much more of a personal feel to this one. The color and shape and direction in a sense were all developed in the sessions with Ricky and myself – kind of a two-man operation.”

Variety is not a word used lightly by Sanborn. His incredible career is a virtual map of musical explorations. He first impacted on the music scene in the ‘70’s, contributing to the David Bowie soul classic, Young Americans, as well as working with Stevie Wonder and others. His earliest training of playing in St. Louis jazz and blues clubs with greats like Albert King and Gil Evans taught him to play with emotion at all times. His first solo album was 1975’s Taking Off Sanborn. It was this unique offering by Sanborn, as well as other emerging instrumentalists that led to record company interest in fusion music. It wasn’t until his fourth effort, however, the R&B masterpiece Hideaway, that Sanborn’s place as one of pop’s premier saxophonist’s was cemented. The album garnered Sanborn the first of his several grammy nominations.

David Sanborn eventually won his first grammy for 1982’s gold-plus Voyeur. The much funkier As We Speak followed and Sanborn continued to investigate a myriad of styles and musical passions throughout the rest of the decade. He won another grammy for 1986’s platinum and beyond Double Vision with Bob James. In all, Sanborn has sold more than six million albums, netting one platinum and six gold albums, including his 1992 Elektra release, Upfront. Critics loved it for its urban funkiness, with Entertainment Weekly calling it “a funkified, ear-twisting musical mix in which hip hop manners meet Booker T. and James Brown.” “I love what has happened rhythmically in the ‘90’s,” he says. “There are things in A Tribe Called Quest or Tony Rich, for example, that harken back to a ‘70’s feel, but of course, are very ‘90’s rhythmically.” Sanborn’s rhythms on Songs From The Night Before reflect some of those textures and nuances of contemporary urban pop. It’s quite a departure from 1995’s Pearls, which was recorded with a full orchestra.

And in the elliptical world of music, Sanborn is more than comfortable with the fact that today’s young singers and performers obviously recognize that a lot of music’s best offerings have come full circle. “There was a lot of great music that happened in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. There was a single-mindedness and a vision that a lot of artists are realizing again today.” And that’s coming from an artist whose calling card has consisted primarily of those two words, still flourishing as he crafts his third decade of music.