

L.A. Jazz Scene by Dee Dee McNeil

“You will be thoroughly entertained by this unique and beautifully played album of music featuring Jimbo Ross and his awesome 5-string viola/violin. Jimbo Ross’s virtuosity is on full display. He shines brilliantly amidst a universe full of bright stars, but Jimbo’s shine is unique.”

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JIMBO ROSS – “SO DO IT” – Bodacious Records

Jimbo Ross, five string electric viola/violin; Joe Gaeta, guitar; Stuart Elster, piano; Peter Marshall, upright bass; Ron Wagner, drums/percussion.

Jimbo Ross was a top session player and soloist for years. He’s been featured in concerts and festivals worldwide and performed with many well-known music artists including Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Horace Silver, Teddy Edwards, Michael Brecker, Herbie Hancock and many more. These are just the jazz artists he’s collaborated with, but this versatile and virtuoso violinist has added his brilliance to other genres of music too. Ross has worked with Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, The Moody Blues, Roy Orbison, Ray Charles, James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Elton John. He is also proficient as a zydeco player and a blues master as well. In the past, Jimbo Ross released four albums with his own aggregation called, *The Bodacious Band*.

Last year, in 2024, he finally recorded his first jazz album “Jazz Passion and Latin Satin.” He shines brilliantly amidst a universe full of bright stars, but Jimbo’s shine is unique. There are very few jazz viola/violin players floating around. The extra string on

his instrument gives a larger range. Jimbo Ross uses his specially made instrument to explore his improvisations and creativity.

“We recorded all these tunes ‘live’ in the studio to capture that spontaneous combustion that you can only achieve by feeding off of each other. ... With my 5-strings, I can go down to those lower viola notes, play the lovely mid-range that resonates so beautifully on the viola, and soar high in the violin register all in one phrase. I really love the range of the viola, because it’s more in the gutsy human voice range that is appealing to the ear,” Ross explained.

“Speak Low” is the popular song Ross opens this album with, using a moderate tempo jazz groove and featuring his sweet string instrument. Ron Wagner on drums and Peter Marshall on walking bass march this piece into my listening room with energy and determination. The Ross viola/violin dances upfront, improvising freely. Joe Gaeta takes an impressive guitar solo. Then, the very gifted Stuart Elster adds his inspired piano solo. This opening tune sets the tone for what is to come.

Jimbo Ross has surrounded himself with some of the finest musicians in the Los Angeles area. Each is a respected band leader in their own right. Track #2 is a Wes Montgomery composition, “Twisted Blues.” It’s actually more Straight-ahead than the blues. The title represents the way chord changes move, twist and turn to create a song structure. Another original composition by Montgomery, the guitar legend, is Ross’s title tune, “So Do It.” The viola/violin master has chosen a Baker’s Dozen of songs by respected jazz musicians and composers. Among them are Lee Morgan, Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Sam Jones.

The waltz arrangement on “The Gigolo” steps away from the groups Straight Ahead jazz energy in a mellow way. A favorite tune of mine is “Canadian Sunset.” Jimbo Ross puts his own mark on this tune, painting it with Latin flavor at first, then swinging it on the ‘hook,’ the same way I heard Gene Ammons do when he played this song back in the 50s. I also enjoyed their interpretation of “Willow Weep for Me.”

You will be thoroughly entertained by this unique and beautifully played album of music featuring Jimbo Ross and his awesome 5-string viola/violin. Also, respectful applause to some of Southern California’s best musicians. Jimbo Ross’s virtuosity is on full display.
