

Pat Martino - Stone Blue (1998)

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1 Uptown Down 4:25 2 Stone Blue 6:46 3 With All The People 9:15 4 13 To Go 7:27 5 Boundaries 8:09 6 Never Say Goodbye 3:40 7 Mac Tough 6:13 8 Joyous Lake 13:26 9 Two Weighs Out 0:33 Guitar – Pat Martino Drums, Percussion – Kenwood Dennard Electric Bass – James Genus Keyboards – Delmar Brown Tenor Saxophone – Eric Alexander

The guitar master is at it again on this collection of original tunes. Mixing up bop and funk with heavy doses of pop, he offers up a very listenable album with lots of character. Standout tracks include the fat beat of "Mac Tough" and the evocative "With All The People." --- Tim Sheridan, Rovi

One could viably look at the recordings of renascent guitar hero Pat Martino's recordings of the last few years and pose the musical question: will the real Martino stand up? His Muse releases showed an artist in recovery from his life- and music-threatening brain aneurysm operation of 1980, and his 1996 album *The Miracle* may be his boldest complete effort yet in the post-op years. Last year's Blue Note debut, *All Sides Now*, was an odd hit-and-miss affair, a set of dialogues with guitarists with whom he didn't always have much to talk about with. He gets along well with the musicians on his newest album, a quasi-reunion with drummer Kenwood Dennard and keyboardist Delmar Brown, who played with him on his legendary 1976 album *Joyous Lake*.

Joined here by the admirable tenor saxist Eric Alexander and reliable bassist James Genus, the group navigates through a set of Martino originals that revisit his own corner of the fusion

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landscape. Mostly, the playing is intense-Martino's own, instantly identifiable style, the eloquent, clean-toned scramble-and the material builds off its built-in tensions, as in the opening "Uptown Down," the fast little postlude "Two Weighs Out," and the title track. The breezy tonalities of "With All the People" may veer a bit too close to smooth jazz for comfort, but the lyricism of his ballad "Never Say Goodbye" is darkly sweet.

Ironically, Brown's overly digital sounds now sound dated, in this age when the raw beauties of older keyboard sonorities are the rage. What sounds timeless here is the leader, wailing with a kind of concurrent wisdom and go-for-broke commitment to improvisational abandon. The truth is that Martino stands up every time he plays. Hints of Martino's unique power is contained in each episode of his work, this latest chapter included. --- Josef Woodard, jazztimes.com

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