

James Saxsmo Gates – Gates Wide Open (2013)

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01. *This Day Belongs to Me* 02. *Unbreakable* 03. *Detailed* 04. *Remember the Time* 05. *I Remember* 06. *Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing Baby* 07. *Hannah's Bag* 08. *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You* 09. *Ulterior Motive* 10. *The Hood* 11. *I Cry Out for You* 12. *Rebirth* 13. *Spain* 14. *Remember the Time — Reprise* Personnel: James Saxsmo Gates – saxophone Fred Wesley – trombone Walter Beasley – soprano saxophone Freddie Fox – guitar Bill McGee – trumpet and 804Jazz Allstars

The passionate search for perfection describes James Saxsmo Gates and his career as a top Jazz Musician. From his experiences performing with Art Blakey, Larry Carlton, Jeff Lorber, Alex Bugnon, Cyrus Chestnut, Chris Botti, Billy Kilson, Terrance Blanchard and many others, comes a smooth, yet blazing style and presentation. Gates Wide Open is the third commercial release for Saxsmo as a solo artist and is the beginning of a new era for Saxsmo. The journey to Gates Wide Open has been heartfelt and emotional. Saxsmo lost both of his parents between his first and second CD's, they were his inspiration to strive for perfection and to continue making excellent music. A positive major event in his life was receiving his Masters of Jazz Studies at North Carolina Central University (Magna Cum Laude), where he worked closely with Branford Marsalis and Dr. Ira Wiggins. With that behind him he is determined to show the world that James Saxsmo Gates is Wide Open and moving on up, making intensely emotive music that will gratify, entertain, inspire and move his fans, and the general listening public. To make this happen Saxsmo has called on the great trombonist Fred Wesley, sax man and Berklee Professor, Walter Beasley, smooth jazz guitarist and Berklee classmate, Freddie Fox and the 804 Jazz Allstars to help him take this CD to another level.

The CD Gates Wide Open contains (14) fourteen exemplary selections, which are diverse in style, tempo, and timbre. One track, in particular, that deserves special mention is his outstanding and award winning arrangement of Chick Corea's "SPAIN", this was initially a graduate school project, similar to a thesis. However, it became much more when Saxsmo assembled an elite group of faculty members from NCCU and Virginia State University,

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professional musicians from Richmond, Virginia known as the 804 Jazz Allstars, the top graduate students from NCCU, and the great Fred Wesley to make this a phenomenal recording. You should immediately realize after listening to this blazing track that he received an A+ for this arrangement and recording, which is destined to turn heads and win awards. Another song that stands out is the cover of Michael Jackson's "UNBREAKABLE". produced and arranged by his former student and current Berklee College of Music standout, Brandon Lane. This track has as much magic as the original and is a sonic orgy of modern beats, outstanding guitar work by Freddie Fox and some serious Trombone performances by Brandon and his producer father Hannon D. Lane. One of the smoothest songs on the CD is "This Day Belongs To Me", a Grover Washington styled smooth jazz classic, with a classic groove and impeccable phrasing along with pristine improvisation. Given the right opportunity this track is destined for a high position on the smooth jazz charts. The track "Detailed" features Berklee Professor and former classmate, Walter Beasley. This song delivers a stellar performance by two of the most talented Alto Sax men in the country. Playing hip riffs together and trading fours, this is a song that has smooth jazz radio buzzing. Last but not least, the only vocal selection on the CD "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You" features Carlton Blount (former Lead Singer for the Main Ingredient), his presence and soulful flow, along with the distinctive interpretation by Saxsmo makes this a soul jazz classic. The entire collection of songs on the CD Gates Wide Open should be considered a fine work of art. Diverse, complex, simple, intense and smooth, it's all there for the listener to enjoy from beginning to end. This CD - Gates Wide Open is just that, a vehicle to open the doors of world wide exposure and appreciation for one of the most talented sax players on the music scene. ---Editorial Reviews

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