

Sammy Figueroa & His Latin Jazz Explosion *The Magician*

Savant
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Review by Ken Dryden



Percussionist Sammy Figueroa's second CD as a leader for Savant is a dynamic session, with a rotating cast of players in a sextet that often sounds like a much larger band. Drawing from both hard bop repertoire and originals contributed by his musicians, the leader's driving percussion powers the ensembles with a fire reminiscent of Mongo Santamaria, while he is also a fine conga soloist, especially in bassist Gabriel Vivas' explosive cooker "The Three Marias." Pianist Silvano Monasterios contributed the elegant cha-cha "The Magician," which showcases trumpeter John Norris and the composer. Figueroa's scoring of the well-known Miles Davis/Victor Feldman piece "Seven Steps to Heaven" is full of spice in a blazing uptempo setting. Likewise, the arrangements of works by Cedar Walton and Horace Silver work equally well in this enjoyable Afro-Cuban recording.

This CD was nominated in 2007 for a Grammy award as Best Latin Jazz Album.

1	<u>Together</u>	Laws	3:34
2	<u>The Three Marias</u>	Vivas	6:47
3	<u>The Magician</u>	Monasterios	5:47
4	<u>Firm Roots</u>	Walton	8:10
5	<u>Crossroads</u>	Monasterios	5:25
6	<u>Seven Steps to Heaven</u>	Davis, Feldman	6:09
7	<u>Fiestas do Norte</u> <u>[Celebrations from the Norte]</u>	Vivas	5:28
8	<u>Healing Man</u>	Vivas	6:33
9	<u>Gregory Is Here</u>	Silver	7:04