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*Imani*

Between Here and There

IFP 1099 (54:57)

The ease of producing CDs and the proliferation of small, independent labels is broadening exposure for many artists, including this divergent, rising-star vocalist supported by solid musicians. Imani, with her mature, fluent approach and well-selected material shows greatest promise for appealing to the broadest jazz audience.

Vocalist Imani commands listener attention, generating abundant excitement as she weaves her magic with a homogenous group of musicians and guests who swing and solo with classy verve. Phrasing like a seductive horn player, Imani exhibits poised, resourceful vocal maneuvering throughout the attractive 11-tune mix of standards and outstanding original compositions by her bassist Pepe González. Highlights abound throughout the diverse fare of *Between Here and There* (a follow-up to her previous IFP CD, *Collage*). Notable tracks include her uptempo rendition of Freddie Hubbard's "Red Clay," a free-wheeling take on Wayne Shorter's "Juju" and a refreshingly reverent reading of Billy Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge." Imani's insightful, all-embracing technique (including Spanish lyrics and Yoruban chants) surely merits future tracking with her surefooted adventurousness, especially if she continues to record with core musicians Jon Ozment (piano), González (bass), Rod Youngs (drums), and Ekendra Das (percussion). Playing on four tracks each, guesting reed players Chris Vadala and Paul Carr add substantially to this bewitching listen.