

PRESS RELEASE

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IT'S NOT JUST GREAT JAZZ, IT'S A WORKING DEMOCRACY

Consilience Productions announces the release of *Awake*, a new CD by the Vinson Valega Group. The recording highlights ten original compositions and continues the tradition of jazz activism, stressing the music as a vehicle to stimulate civic involvement. The project, in all of its aspects, reflects Valega's strong belief that the principles of jazz and democracy are linked. As he states in his liner-notes essay, "When We Fall Asleep, Democracy Suffers":

"Jazz is a direct by-product of the American ideal – founded upon individual expression and freedom, yet devoted through participation to the greater good. Just as the music on this CD was only made possible through the intense participation of each musician, our society is only able to function when its citizens become involved – actively involved."

The sextet features accomplished New York City musicians in a rich instrumentation, including Terrell Stafford on trumpet, Anton Denner on alto sax, flute and piccolo, Chris Bacas on tenor and soprano saxes and clarinet, Jon Cowherd on piano, Josh Ginsburg on bass and Vinson Valega on drums. Recorded in late May, 2005, it represents Valega's third project as a leader and producer.

To commence his democratic concept, Valega invited each band member to contribute a composition to the project. This approach yields a diverse and entertaining mix of musical styles. Anton Denner's tune is a bluesy, straight-eighth note groove, while Chris Bacas' "Sputnik" is a quirky melody written on the changes of John Coltrane's "Satellite." Josh Ginsburg wrote a ballad-like song, "Undertow," that moves lyrically through three different episodes, and "Fog" is a hauntingly beautiful melody with a Latin feel written by guitarist Sheryl Bailey (not appearing on this recording).

The title track is one of the first songs Vinson ever wrote, and he also includes his tunes "The Trend is Your Friend" (a fun and funky romp), "Stacked Sienna" (a ballad recreating the lines and colors from Utah's Zion National Park), and "Ed Blackwell" (a tribute to the late drummer). Chris Bacas arranged all of the compositions (except for "Luftmenschen" and "Take Time for Love," arr. by Anton Denner, and "Undertow," by Josh Ginsburg).

Valega's topical suite, "This is What Democracy Sounds Like", divided into three segments, binds the tracks thematically. It is a unique, amusing, and inspired musical interpretation of sounds Vinson heard while participating in a political rally. The jazz and politics connection is further explored in the liner notes, along with a poem by the "Poet of Democracy," Walt Whitman.

In the spirit of a true democracy where every member's voice is heard, the sum is made greater than its parts through the impeccable work of the recording engineer, Frank D. Fagnano. Recorded at Bennett Studios in Englewood, NJ, the sound is remarkably clear, while his mixing and mastering achieve a perfectly balanced ensemble blend beautifully highlighting each instrument.

Artwork is by the renowned artist, Sharon Loudon, and the dedication is to the late pianist James Williams, who is also honored on the closing track with his tune, "Take Time for Love".

The release is currently available through the Consilience Productions website or from other online vendors, such as CD Baby and iTunes.