

Album Review: For Lovers Only from Kenny Polson

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Artist: Kenny Polson

Label: Jazz Beyond Borders

Website: <https://kenneypolson.com>

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by Susan Frances

Set on the trajectory for mass appeal, saxophonist Kenny Polson's latest release *For Lovers Only* is sonically smooth and emotively sublime. Track after track is sheer bliss, featuring Polson's relaxed temperament on the sax augmented by the warm R&B-style lulls of guitarists Bruce Conte and Phil Upchurch, the sleek grooves of bassist Michael Henderson, the soft glimmer in Tom Grant's piano notes, the sparkling effects of Roger Smith's keyboards, and the charming interplay of Polson's saxophone with trumpet player Larry Gittens and trombonist Fred Wesley.

Like the title of the album leads audiences to believe, the music is designed to stir the listener's sense of romantic affection. Perhaps "La La Means I Love You" says it best blanketed in euphoric smooth jazz ethers. The flirty quiver in the saxophone is supported by a diligent arrangement of gentle keyboard swells and silky guitar progressions. The smooth sounding atmospherics created by the horns and keys through "Black Swan" give the tune an attractive vibe reminiscent of the likes of saxophonists Andrew Neu and Tom Braxton.

The romantic glint in Polson's saxophone is underscored by the balladry strokes of Smith's organ along "Passion." Upbeat and brightly colored, Polson's rendition of the jazz standard "Stella by Starlight," written by Victor Young and Neil Washington, has a scintillating luster that is inviting to audiences. The title track closes the recording with reclining saxophone notes set in a lounging rhythmic pulse.

Radio friendly from start to finish, Polson's CD is the epitome of elegant jazz. Born in Kansas City, Missouri to a musical family, Polson's grandfather, "Chubby Wayne" Harshaw (Count Basie, Cab Calloway), was a major musical influence, along with his Uncle Charles, who sang with the Coasters. Polson earned a master's in jazz composition and arranging from Howard University in 1997. Balancing traditional smooth jazz and modern R&B, Polson delivers what he knows and plays best.

Musicians:

Kenny Polson - saxophone, Bruce Conte - guitar, Larry Gittens - trumpet, Tom Grant - piano, Michael Henderson - bass, Roger Smith - keyboards, Phil Upchurch - guitar, Fred Wesley - trombone