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Truly marks the passage of Sanchez from side man to leader.

Lara Bellini 2010-08-26

Pat Metheny first heard Antonio Sanchez play in Italy back in 2000. To the guitarist it was "mind-blowing that somebody could play like that"; Sanchez "sounded like about six people, and he was absolutely killing".

Italy has played a big role in the drummer's career: his debut album as leader, the 2007 release *Migration*, came out with the Rome-based CAM label. This double-disc live follow-up – again on CAM, and recorded at New York's Jazz Standard club in 2008 – is a successful attempt to capture the live performance of the quartet at its peak. Considering the strength of the players – Scott Colley on bass, Miguel Zenón on alto and David Sanchez tenor, the latter replacing Chris Potter in the original formation – it's no surprise that it's amongst the best jazz releases of 2010 so far. From the start it's easy to understand Metheny's enthusiasm: Sanchez is absolutely everywhere, coming out from every corner and pushing his quartet through extreme passages and furious, ever-changing rhythmical progressions with extraordinary ease and indefatigable energy. The opening *Greedy Silence* is a marathon, and showcases the band's cohesiveness and improvisational flair to the maximum. *It Will Be Better*, meanwhile, is a rhythmic vortex, where different patterns are interlocked and yet the voices are kept simple, resting on bluesy arrangements. There is an oral quality to Sanchez's style, complementing his thoroughly modern, boundary pushing writing (he puts his signature on most of the pieces). Yet no matter how hard or obliquely he hits the kit, he sounds as sharp as a razor and exhibits outstanding technique. In contrast, the ballads here show a side of him effortlessly involved in the quietest of atmospherics, completely at ease with these different dynamics.

Words can't quite do justice to how superbly the quartet performs. Sanchez has built a strong rapport with his colleagues, and although he is pivotal in everything, the whole is inarguably greater than the sum. *Migration* might have featured Pat Metheny and Chick Corea, two exceptional guests who enabled him to gain his own spotlight, but the musicians here are faultless. *Live in New York* truly marks the passage of Sanchez from side man to leader.

British Broadcasting Corporation.