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BIG BAND WEIZ

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This is an album by the veteran Austrian Jazz **Big Band Weiz**, led by **Christoph Pfeiffer**. The album commemorates the Big Band's 40th Anniversary and a decade of Pfeiffer's leadership. It presents ten tracks, the first six being a three-part Indo-Jazz suite called "Far East", composed by woodwinds player / composer **Georg Gratzer**, who appears as a guest soloist on the album. The remaining four tracks include two arrangements of standards, one composition of vocalist **Wolfgang Sang**, who also appears as a guest and finally one composition of American drummer **Billy Cobham**, who appears on that track, which was recorded live.

The music and the sound of the Big Band are highly idiosyncratic, quite different from what one would expect to hear in that genre. It follows the tradition of European Big Band Jazz, which treats the mighty orchestral sound of a Big Band completely unlike the American tradition, concentrating on the multilayered possibilities a large ensemble provides, and exploring a multitude of musical sub-genres within the Big Band environment.

In the album's liner notes Gratzer mentions the Indo-Jazz explorations, which go back as far as 1950s, which means he is familiar with the legacy of the sub-genre. His approach to Indo-Jazz is quite radically different from his predecessors, concentrating more on the rhythmic aspects of the Indian Music, and using Indian scales and melody lines less prominently than earlier attempts. The fact that no Indian musicians participate in the recording also influences the final result. However, the result is very interesting and coherent, offering a new manner to treat that subject, which listeners interested in Indo-Jazz should enjoy immensely.

The rest of the music is more "conventional" and diverse, but all highly professional and enjoyable, proving that a Big Band originating from a beautiful small Austrian town can be as good as any Big Band in the world. Of course the Austrian Big Band tradition, which is incredible, helps.

Overall, this is a highly interesting, enjoyable, beautifully arranged and played European Big Band Jazz at its best, which should keep every fan of the genre happy. The Indo-Jazz suite adds additional interest to Jazz-World Fusion enthusiasts. Warmly recommended!

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