

NAJEE: Rising Sun (Label: Heads Up)

Written by Bill Buckley

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Smooth jazz sax man Najee's not the kind of artist you'll be reading about too often on this review site but I'm drawing the album to you attention for one particular reason - and that is the one, big vocal track from soul stalwart Phil Perry. Perry, I know, is a particular UK soul hero and there are Perry completists out there, and to them I say seek out the cut 'Romance The Night'. It's not the greatest song, but Perry's in fine form, swooping through the gentle, Latin-tinged quiet storm ballad as only he can. Elsewhere, the best grooves can be heard on the collaborations with the Pieces Of A Dream, team ('Come What May' and 'Out Of A Dream') and 'Smooth Sailing' (not the Maysa Leak tune, by the way). For the rest, I've always had a soft spot for the James Moody standard 'Moody's Mood' - but Najee brings little new to it, while cuts like 'Rising Sun', 'Brazilian Affair' and 'Child At Heart' are just a touch too bland ... think Earl Klugh meets Bob James on a bad day. But do, at least, grab a listen to the Perry vocal - it won't ignite but it will add to his classy reputation.

(BB) 2/5