

RONNIE 'SPORTCOAT' OVERTON: When The Smoke Clears (Label: Still In The Pocket Productions)

Written by Bill Buckley

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Ronnie Overton (diligent research has drawn a blank on the 'Sportcoat' bit) has paid his dues. A native of Pontiac, Michigan, the bassist's early musical career involved Detroit studio work and touring in the roads bands of people like Ronnie McNeir and Kim Weston. During a long jail term Ronnie "cleared his head" and honed his keyboard skills - so much so that on release he began putting together this, his first solo album. Written and produced entirely by Ronnie, 'When The Smoke Clears' will probably be filed away under smooth or lite jazz. That category however doesn't really do justice to the soulful grooves that anchor tracks like 'Just Swinging', 'Bill's Mood' and the title cut. Elsewhere 'A Piece Of Mind' is a jaunty soul-jazz piece, while there's more nostalgia in 'Time For Lavern' which echoes some of the mellower moments on Isaac Hayes' 'Shaft'. In fairness I could have done without the electro synth sound of 'Pop That Koochie' while I'd have liked 'Latin Peach' to have been more Latino than it actually is and though 'Cruisematic' boasts some scattling, all 12 tracks are instrumentals and maybe one big vocal cut could have offered the album a real focus. Indeed if someone could pen lyrics, then drop them over 'When The Smoke Clears' itself, then we'd have a truly memorable modern soul tune.

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