

Slamming with that *Other* Jordan

Jazz artist Stanley Jordan takes his time with Stolen Moments

by Robb Frederick
The Collegian

"If you're gonna have a hit you gotta make it fit / So they cut it down to 3:05."

--Billy Joel, "The Entertainer"

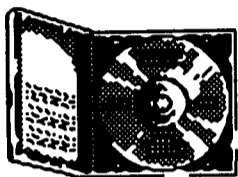
If Billy Joel played jazz, he wouldn't be plagued by such problems, for the jazz arena has no room for neatly trimmed singles, pressed and polished and ready for heavy radio rotation. Jazz artists seldom dwell on songs long enough to mold them into singles; they're too busy racing on to the next groove or following the flow into a fresh new arrangement.

That's the key to discs like *Stolen Moments*, the latest release by guitar guru Stanley Jordan. The disc, a collection of six far-reaching covers and one Jordan original, brims with immediacy, unraveling as the lengthy numbers evolve from crowd-testing intros to impassioned, almost chaotic, jam sessions.

Recorded at Tokyo's Blue Note club in late 1990, *Stolen Moments* captures the essence of live performance recordings and cements Jordan's slot as a

forerunner of jazz guitar innovation.

Jordan has long been touted as a musical prodigy, and with good reason. Schooled on his mother's piano by age six, he was lured into rock guitar after hearing records by Jimi Hendrix and Carlos Santana. He never quite let go of his piano training, however, and decided instead to let his earlier instruction shape his evolving guitar technique.



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Frustrated that he couldn't duplicate the piano's two-handed parts on guitar, Jordan began tapping the strings along the guitar neck. The result was a stylistic innovation that significantly broadened the jazz guitar spectrum, as Jordan slapped out complex, ever-shifting numbers, full of intricate rhythms and jaw-dropping counterpoint.

Stolen Moments revels in this new-found flexibility. From the

big band swing of John Coltrane's "Impressions" to the melancholy reading of "Over the Rainbow," Jordan continues to test the waters, never quite settling down with one particular groove.

With some respectable backing by drummer Kenwood Dennard and bassist Charnett Moffett, Jordan unabashedly indulges in his technique, gliding smoothly across the high end,

time the frantic solo comes around. He rages into the passage without pausing to ask for directions, and Dennard and Moffett soon follow.

By the time the number reaches the six-minute mark, each musician has tapped into his own groove and milked it for all the energy it's worth. But as soon as the arrangement strays too far, Jordan brings the number back into focus, closing it off with

live performances and the spontaneous creativity a supporting crowd can inspire. After listening to "Return Expedition," a 15 minute-plus romp through the lower register, it's hard not to see his point.

The number starts slow, warming up the crowd and establishing Jordan's niche before Dennard and Moffett charge in with equally inspired intensity. As the song plots its course, the

trio shifts directions and then doubles back again and again, each musician pushing the others into the next passage.

When the crowd picks up on certain grooves, Jordan and co. respond by pushing the arrangement up another notch, picking up even more speed before winding back down for the track's exhausted close.

It's moments like this that validate Jordan's spot at the forefront of the contemporary jazz community. His unparalleled technique aside, Jordan demands acclaim for his ability to work a crowd, to find the groove his fans want and tailor the next passage to carry them along, no matter how long the trip takes.

another of Page's signature riffs.

Jordan shows his roots on the disc's title track, a subdued version of Oliver Nelson's haunting classic. A casual listening seems to take the guitarist out of the mix; but when we realize that the delicate keyboard passages are in fact a product of Jordan's string-tapping technique we're forced to take another look at the startling range of his ever-growing bag of tricks. Jordan has said that he prefers

then dipping into the lower end of the scale for a spirited change of pace.

"Lady in my Life" builds on a funk-oriented bass line, which holds the piece together as Jordan sails through a string of feverish solos that never stray from his classical smoothness.

The fresh interpretation of "Stairway to Heaven" begins as a faithful homage to Jimmy Page's graceful finger work, but Jordan is out on his own ground by the

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