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MATT WILSON



GEORGE COLLIGAN

**IRA GITLER'S APPLE CHORUS**

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**CD Reviews:** REZ ABBASI, ANITA BROWN, WYCLIFFE GORDON, SLIDE HAMPTON, ROY HAYNES, CHUCK LOEB, GRADY TATE, VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA AND MORE!

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## Rez Abbasi

**BAZAAR** – Zoho Music #200163. [www.reztone.com](http://www.reztone.com). *Bazaar, Leather, Thin Elephant, Life Goes, You People Intro, You People, Mid-Life, Hindu-Myth, Destiny Owes You.*

**PERSONNEL:** Rez Abbasi, guitars, Sitar-guitar; Gary Versace, B3 organ; Dan Weiss, drums, tabla, rhythm scat; Kiran Ahluwalia, Indian vocals; Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto sax; Marc Mommaas, tenor/soprano sax; Guatham Siram, Mridinagam, hand drum; Naren Budhakar, whistling

By Dan Adler

*Bazaar*, is Rez Abbasi's fifth CD as a leader and his first on the Zoho Music label. It is an eclectic fusion of contemporary Jazz and Indian music all composed and arranged by Abbasi, and performed by some of the

best jazz and Indian musicians on the scene today.

Most people associate the combination of western guitar and Indian music with John McLaughlin's post-Mahavishnu Shakti era. However, Abbasi tackles this fusion of styles from a different angle altogether. While Shakti was primarily based on Indian music forms and rhythms, infused with acoustic modal jazz influences and western Guitar sounds, Abbasi's *Bazaar* sounds more like contemporary jazz music infused with some strong Indian influences. This combination results in a very unique and original sound that should appeal both to Western and Indian ears.

At the core of the album is a classic jazz organ trio format comprised of Abbasi, Gary Versace and Dan Weiss. On top of that you can hear the two great sax players Rudresh Mahanthappa on alto and Marc Mommaas on tenor, and then there are many unique Indian sound colors interweaved into the mix. This includes Abbasi's sitar-guitar, his wife Kiran's authentic Indian vocals, and a variety of Indian percussion, whistling and rhythmic syllable scatting.

The opening track, *Bazaar*, starts off with a rock backbeat with a catchy melody played by the two saxophones. The tune suddenly shifts into an Indian feel for the first solo, then a Jazzy unison figure brings the mood back to a more jazzy feel - for a wonderful sitar-guitar solo reminiscent of Pat Metheny's sound on "Last Train Home." Abbasi then trades choruses with the two saxophonists. The rhythm section keeps changing moods behind them. They all join together at the end, improvising together before returning to the theme.

The second track "Leather" affords Abbasi some room to stretch out and show his incredible chops and rock-solid jazz foundation - which he mixes freely with a few Indian-tinged bends here and there. Gary Versace, who is also the organist of choice for other notable guitarists like John Scofield and Sheryl Bailey, gets ample opportunity to shine on this and other tunes. He also chooses to tastefully intersperse some eastern modes into his straight-ahead jazz organ sound and feel, with excellent results.

"Thin Elephant" is a beautiful ballad that keeps changing moods and colors. It starts with some great acoustic guitar and organ sections, based on western harmony. Then the Tabla and Kiran Ahluwalia's vocals turn the atmosphere to Indian, on top of Dan Weiss's active and tasty drumming. This album is full of surprises and constant sound/color shifts that keep you interested even after many listens. Yet, at the core the music is familiar, pleasant, melodic and beautifully recorded and produced.

Abbasi really shines on "Life Goes," where he solos extensively on a modal vamp. Weiss and Versace keep changing the feel and the rhythms, as Abbasi masterfully builds his solo to a climax. He eventually gives way to Versace who starts over and builds up the excitement before returning to the theme.

"Mid-Life" develops into a screaming guitar/saxophone exchange before giving Versace another opportunity to show his inventiveness in a long solo. Marc Mommaas' soprano saxophone solo is another worthy highlight.

"Hindu-Myth" allows drummer Dan Weiss to trade fours with himself alternating between singing Indian rhythmic scat and his trusty western drum set. The album closes with a beautiful short song called "Destiny Owes You."

With this album Rez Abbasi demonstrates once again that he has a unique perspective on music. His compositions are engaging and catchy. They also develop in unexpected ways that bring together all of his influences. Abbasi's jazz guitar playing puts him in the upper echelon of modern-day players. Just when you think he's locked into a jazzy groove, he will suddenly pull out an Indian note bend, or lick, that takes him to a completely different place than you may have expected.



## Walter Beasley

**READY FOR LOVE** – Heads Up International. Web: [www.headsup.com](http://www.headsup.com) *Free; La Nina; Be Thankful For What You've Got; Ready For Love; Rhea's Song; She Moves Me; Miss You; Land of the Sun; Sugar Puddin'; Why Not You; Willa Mae's Place*

**PERSONNEL:** Walter Beasley, alto and soprano saxophones, keyboards, lead and background vocals; Phil Davis, keyboards, key board programming; Lil' John Roberts, drums, drum programming, vocals; Rick Watford, guitars; Joel Powell, bass; Tiffany Davis, vocals; David "Pookie" Cole, drum programming; Jeff Lockhart, guitar; Webster Roach, bass; James Lloyd, piano, keyboards, programming; Eddie Baccus, Jr., background saxophone; Orville Wright, keyboards; Anthony Steele, drums; Wayne Jones, guitar; Winston Maccao, bass; Ricardo Monzon, percussion; JT Brown, bass, background vocals; Lenny Harris, background vocals; Randy Choice, keyboards; Milton Smith, drums, background vocals; Tony Cothran, guitar; Mike Friend, percussion; Quim Quer, keyboards, programming; Dow Brain, keyboards

By Curtis Davenport

Walter Beasley is one a group of sax players that I once heard appropriately described as the "Sons of Grover." These players usually primarily played soprano or alto sax, came to prominence in the late '80's or early '90's and they all played in a style that came to be known as "smooth jazz." In case you haven't guessed, by now, the "Grover" being referred to is not a former U.S. President or a blue monster on a popular TV show for pre-schoolers, but it is the man whom many considered to be the virtual creator of so-called "smooth jazz," the late, great, Grover Washington, Jr. In addition to Beasley, some others

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