

S I D E B A R

AND ALL THAT JAZZ!

We'll See, by Sam Sherry & Ursa Major, beats the Maine winter blues.
Reviewed by Peter Sampson

Let me begin by putting my cards on the table: when I first heard about this CD, and when I agreed to listen to it and to write what may well be the first music review ever to appear in the *Maine Bar Journal*, I was ready to make the usual allowances.

Truth be told, I was thinking a lot about how I wanted to showcase the things MSBA members do when they aren't practicing law. Before I heard a note, I was ready to write one of those nice polite reviews about all the hard work done by a bunch of ambitious guys who got together and, by golly, put out a record.

With the CD in the player, however, it took me about five seconds to get past all such non-sense (Note to Sam: if you caught a whiff of it in our e-mail exchange before I received the CD, a thousand apologies). This music is, as they say, the real deal.

The life Sam has built for himself as lawyer, spouse and parent is such that he works only part-time as a musician. The music, however, makes it clear that he can move those work priorities around any way he likes. If I were writing this for the musicians' union instead of the bar association, I'd probably be trying to tell Sam that his life is upside down, and the music ought to be the day job.

You should know that Sam wrote all of the songs on the CD. He calls his music "melodic jazz," and it covers a lot of ground, ranging from the straight ahead bebop of "Earl's Pearls" to the gentle and reflective jazz waltz "It's Time." Personal favorites of mine include "Mutatis



Bassist and MSBA member Sam Sherry

Mutandis," a ballad, and the samba-inflected "Back to Back." I also really like the funky wit of "G'night Again," but every track on the album rewards repeated listenings. There just aren't any "B sides."

The members of Ursa Major are Sam on acoustic bass, Mark Kleinhaut on guitar, Jason St. Pierre on sax, Jan Van Voorst Van Beest on drums, and New Yorkers Steve

Shapiro on vibes, and Scott Reeves on trombone and flügelhorn. For those who wonder about such things, in the case of Ursa Major, no piano equals no problem. The interplay between Kleinhaut and Shapiro creates all the harmonic texture and richness anyone could want.

Overall, three points about this music are striking. First is the balance and proportionality of it all. These arrangements are structured so that everyone gets a turn in the spotlight, with no one running away with the show. You get to hear everyone play, without ever finding yourself stuck in the middle of somebody's fifteen-minute solo.

Point two is the grace and wit of these tunes. Craftsmanship and artistry abound here. There are many, many musical turns that will make you smile as you listen.

Point three is that you'll want to listen to *We'll See* again and again. The review copy that came to MSBA was passed from desk to desk from the day it arrived. I had to do some real detective work to get it back. You have fans in Augusta, Sam.

We'll See is recorded on the Invisible Music label, catalog number IM 2015, and is available in a number of Maine stores, including Borders in Bangor and South Portland and Amadeus Music in Portland. It's also for sale on the Internet at www.invisiblemusicrecords.com, priced at \$15.00, including shipping and handling. National distribution is handled by North Country Distribution of Redwood, New York, telephone (315) 287-2852.