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New on disc

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NATURE

Dave's True Story

BePop Records

Contemporary jazz albums typically focus on a single instrument - Norah Jones' piano, David Sanborn's saxophone, Branford Marsalis' trumpet - and relegate the backing musicians to second-class status. Dave's True Story, though, seems to recognize the collaborative nature that keeps the genre so fresh. The trio's latest, "Nature," combines the best efforts of all its contributing artists.

Guitarist/songwriter David Cantor, bassist/producer Jeff Eyrich and vocalist Kelly Flint have a pretty good system: Cantor's tunes are clever without being too cute, and feature his own refreshing jazz guitar progressions at their core. Eyrich guides the production with a gentle hand, never allowing the sound to lurch into lounge-like kitsch. Flint's vocals may lack Jones' breathy soul, but she compensates with an effortless precision that allows her musicians to trade the spotlight. Behind the trio, Jon Dryden contributes subtle but effective keyboard lines throughout, and Rich Zukor's Latin-inspired percussion, drive the most hummable numbers.

The music is designed to satisfy discriminating jazz traditionalists, but "Chasing the White Line Down" and "Still She Knows" stand out as bluesy ballads with mainstream appeal. "Nature" only proves that when artists share the spotlight, the stage glows a little brighter.

- JASON HAMMERSLA