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By Glen Astarita

What is it with these unassuming, clean-cut looking guys like Bill Frisell and Pete McCann? They can churn out blistering, Hendrix-like guitar licks and "out-rock" most of those thin, longhaired rock stars yet render smooth, articulate and at times difficult jazz motifs.

Pete McCann is among the new breed of jazz guitarists who demonstrate this ability. A relatively new kid on the block, McCann has appeared with Bobby Previte's 'The Horse,' Tom Varner, Kenny Wheeler, Maria Schneider Orchestra, David Liebman and many others. On his debut, *Parable*, McCann is a multitasking dynamo as he switch hits between blazing guitar pyrotechnics and clear-toned, fleet fingered jazz soloing.

On *Parable*, McCann emerges as a solid composer. "Grimlock" has an Ornette Coleman feel as alto saxophonist and NYC Downtown regular, Peter Epstein lights the house on fire prior to McCann's blazingly fast, high-octane attack featuring generous doses of distortion. "Grimlock" turns into a dancing beast as the super tight rhythm section of Matt Wilson (d) and Tim Lefebvre (b) fluctuate the tempo in mischievous fashion. On "Parable," McCann cuts his guitar to shreds and trades nifty unison lines with altoist Peter Epstein. McCann and co. display all the force of a rumbling freight train.

"Open Gate" is fairly straight ahead and clocks in at 9 minutes. On this piece, McCann prominently displays his lean, mean jazz chops and possesses a sound similar to the great John Abercrombie. Tenor saxophonist Bruce Huron takes the helm with an extended solo as Matt Wilson and Tim Lefebvre show good teamwork manhandling the shifting tempos. Drummer Matt Wilson turns in some crisp brushwork on the hard hitting, modern bop and slightly Ornette Coleman-ish, "Hoedown." Here, McCann and Epstein handle the fairly complex thematic statements as they once again effortlessly run through unison lines. "Search" is a slow tempo piece which is of an exploratory nature; hence, the title. On "Search" McCann is adept at utilizing volume control techniques and sharp toned chord progressions as this piece contains quite a bit of nuance yet develops into a climactic sequence of events. "Victim Sweepstakes" is another jazz scorcher and "Hoevenen" is a brief yet loud free jazz piece. The closer, "Sheriff Bob" is a low-key affable country blues composition.

Despite awesome technique, McCann approaches music from many different angles as he references an array of elements spanning Ornette Coleman, Fusion, Rock and Bop. Kudos to the fiery yet sympathetic ensemble work as *Parable* is also about good times and bridging the gap in modish fashion.

Add Pete McCann's name to the list of Palmetto Records booming roster of young talent. (Excellent liner notes by AAJ's contributor and noted jazz journalist, Bill Milkowski).