

Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio: *I Told You So* (Colemine)

Review of the funky three-piece outfit's third album

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Four songs into his super-funky new album, organist Delvon Lamarr makes a statement: This is about the song and the groove, not about me. How? He keeps his right hand inactive for the entirety of "From the Streets." He plays only the bass line, letting guitarist Jimmy James take the lead. And when they both drop out for eight bars to give the drummer some, Grant Schroff doesn't solo or even do fills, keeping the beat unchanged.

There are precious few solos in the traditional sense anywhere on this concise, economical album, whose pop-song approach to soul/jazz/funk recalls Booker T. & the M.G.'s, the Meters and, more recently, the New Mastersounds. It's Lamarr's third straight gem, following one studio album and one live-at-a-radio-station record. Lamarr was between drummers when he made *I Told You So* (David McGraw had left), and Schroff was recruited for this session (Dan Weiss is now the full-time drummer).

When Lamarr does solo, his approach favors soulfulness over zillions-of-notes dazzle. But the focus is on funky interplay, whether it's the punchy "Call Your Mom" or the shuffling "Hole in One." James does some shredding on "Aces," and guest guitarist Ben Bloom sits in for the insanely catchy "Right Place, Right Time." The vibe and turnaround of "Girly Face" make it sound like an homage to Jimmy Smith's cover of "Let's Stay Together." But the album's apex is its one cover: the Wham! hit "Careless Whisper." The trio's take on George Michael's breakup ballad is stop-you-in-your tracks stunning. Lamarr plays the vocal line, James takes the sax part, and it might be the most perfect slow-groove song you've heard in a decade.