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NILS SET TO RELEASE "UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL"

Up Close & Personal, the decidedly funky, brawny new smooth jazz project by guitarist **Nils** with an emphasis on some very nicely played blues, is another fine production by the artist and just shows that his consistently high standards and insistence on quality continue. This upcoming gem by one of smooth jazz's finest guitarists has nary a mediocre track, and each tune stands on its own as a high-end individual composition not at all borrowing from or piggybacking on another in the collection.

Track 1, "Soul mates," is a lazy, sweet, and soulful R&B cut trumpeting the values of being "soul mates" with nothing more by way of lyrics than a chorus of "We are soul mates, baby," but you definitely get it. The title track and track 3, "Jazz Cruise," (featuring British sax man Shilts of Down to the Bone fame) are both undeniably snappy and very "Nils" with crisp guitar riffs and solidly melodic chords. Shilts' sax, of course, adds that soulful brightness for which he is so well known. "Europa," with all the elegance and romanticism that Santana and Tom Coster captured so aptly years ago in that now-classic piece, is done to the nines here by Nils. Another funky mover—and perhaps my fav, though tough to say which is actually my fav-- is the curiously titled "60 10 29." I've no clue as to what that means, but it just adds to the appeal of the funky blues it lays down, as does the very bluesy "Until I See You Again," which immediately follows with a ton of class.

The quality just goes on and on from here, with tracks like "East Bay" and "Getting Hooked" strutting out sharp, spiffy, and jazzy hooks that never seem to stray very far from the funk and blues that clearly identify this magnificent piece of work.

Nils fans will not be disappointed with this project in the least, and those unfamiliar with this talent extraordinaire will quickly see why those fans are so dedicated. They simply know top-shelf

excellence when they hear it. *Up Close and Personal* is expected to hit stores nationwide on March 17. Trust me: You want this one.

Posted by Ronald Jackson at February 19, 2009 2:47 PM