

# Unwrapped

## Dark Chocolate

Megawave Records - MEGW0312

Available from CD Universe.

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange

by **Mark S. Tucker**

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Some crits called Spyrogyra a guilty pleasure, I saw them as a four-course meal at a restaurant that knew what its patrons wanted and stinted not a whit. Kim Stone was the bassist for that estimable ensemble, and he's plying bass on almost all the cuts here, yet this is a far cry from his old haunt. Dark Chocolate is termed a 'world music band', but that's damnation by faint praise. Nor is the "File Under Contemporary Jazz" advisory on the rear liner entirely apt. This band's actually a novo-chamber jazz outfit along the lines of a modernized Oregon. Their mental processes, so evident from the very first measure of the opening cut, are waaaaaay beyond the norms of any popularly accepted mode.

In some ways, this release is not unlike the advent of samba, bossa nova, and the like. *Unwrapped's* inspissations of accepted forms and of jazz-neoclassicalish corruptions of them into much newer manifestations are nothing less than inspired. Azymuth (the South American fusion outfit, not the Taylor / Winstone / Wheeler ECM *Azimuth*) tried its hand at something vaguely resembling Dark Chocolate's enterprise but never really got much off the ground. On the other hand, *Just Hangin'* has a defined Casiopeia vivacity by way of CTI. What this means is that the band is an omnivorous beast that has absorbed what makes it evolve.

That the unit is going largely unremarked is something of a crime. This is only its second release but stands as a masterpiece of extremely considered ruminations and jaw-dropping execution. Pianist Weber Iago is a very agile keyboard gymnast, Clay Henry's percussives are remarkable, recalling Airtio and other seminals, and Kim Stone's basswork always runs to the fluid and propulsively graceful. Then there's Aaron Stone, John Nava, Mike Shannon, Joseph Lucido, and the briefly sessioneering Brock Bradford and Xocoyotzin Moraza. So much talent under one cover!

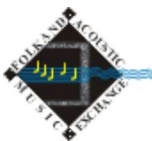
## Track List:

- Walk the Garden
- Mirror Dance
- Just Hangin'
- Le Marais
- Hunk Funk
- Muffaletta
- Warm Up Your Instrument
- Braziliero
- Falling into Your Eyes
- Your Skin is Where I Begin
- Hip Talk
- Hello Flower

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