



### Jazz in New Brunswick, NJ

Saxophonist Raiph Bowen's Quartet Wednesday, April 14. Makedas  
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## Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Gonzalo Rubalcaba

Score: **88%**  
 Rating: **Not Rated**  
 Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**  
 Region: **A**  
 Media: **DVD/1**  
 Running Time: **50 Mins.**  
 Genre: **Live Performance/TV Series/Musical**  
 Audio: **English Stereo Sound**

### Features:

#### Songs:

Prologo to el Manicero  
 Supernova  
 Improvisation #1  
 Besame Mucho  
 Yolanda Anastasia

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**Gonzalo Rubalcaba** is a powerhouse pianist, a player that has dazzled audiences and blown minds with his virtuosity since becoming widely known outside his Cuba, over the past two decades. His style draws heavily, in a traditional jazz setting, from bop traditionalists such as Bud Powell, and in a Latin setting from the likes of Eddie Palmieri. Hearing and watching **Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Gonzalo Rubalcaba**, we see more dimension to this pianist than on most of his recorded work. The closest comparison might be to a live performance, where mood and atmosphere becomes more important than laying down a perfect track in the studio. The richness of the Berkeley Church where **Solos: The Jazz Sessions** is produced might have something to do with why we get a great deal of depth and breadth from Rubalcaba. There is also a good mix of song selections here, from those tinged with Afro-Cuban influence to those filtered through years of pop music, like *Besame Mucho*.



Filmed against the incredible backdrop of the Berkeley Church in Toronto, the series **Solos: The Jazz Sessions** is like having a private ticket to see some of the most incredible jazz musicians living today. Rubalcaba isn't a name that will spring to your lips when you think about key contributors to the music, but it should. **Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Gonzalo Rubalcaba** demonstrates the incredible range of Gonzalo Rubalcaba, beginning with his pecking, almost-stride approach to the tune, "Prologo to el Manicero," which is full of halting but rich harmonics. "Supernova" shows that powerful left hand, very strongly influenced by players like McCoy Tyner, but also filled with the machine-gun right hand plucking single-note lines out in rapid succession. "Improvisation #1" sounds as spontaneous as its title, but it betrays the structured approach to improv that this young player takes; it is full of phrases that Rubalcaba seems to have running directly from his head to his hand, as he sings to anticipate what's coming, ending up toying around with musical quotes from the US national anthem. When Rubalcaba first hit the scene, he was undeniably virtuosic, but the final tunes on this session, "Besame Mucho" and "Yolanda Anastasia," give a look at more subtle reharmonization, playing the former tune in a very ethereal fashion, but not at all ironic, with just a few interruptions from those signature staccato right hand lines. He ends on a soft note, with a deliberate, melodic ballad.


**Solos: The Jazz Sessions - Gonzalo Rubalcaba** is a better introduction to the pianist's style than most of his early work, simply because it shows off the maturity he's gained over the years. It also sounds like he's become more than a collection of borrowed styles, which was a quick-and-dirty assessment of the music he, like many jazz musicians, was playing

when he first arrived on the scene. **Solos: The Jazz Sessions** offers jazz fans a vehicle for appreciating their music that feels big budget and highbrow, rather than relegating us to smoky bars or nosebleed lawn-seats at an annual festival. The high quality production, thoughtful and brief interview moments, and focus on letting these players showcase what they love and do best, is what makes this a special feature series.

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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