

DIEGO RIVERA
WILLIE MORRIS

LANGSTON HUGHES II

ART HIRAHARA BORIS KOZLOV

ALTIN SENCALAR

RUDY ROYSTON

Jazz is powered by many things. Perhaps most notably, the expansive variety of independent record labels representing some of the more inspiring aspirations of the idiom. Reflecting the grit, passion and often sheer audacity to exist within an industry that makes little room for Jazz, independent labels have established an expanse of music that exemplifies the very essence of the art form. For the past 30 years, Positone Records has championed this independent spirit, shining a light on a rich variety of world-class artistry that has shaped its own exquisite brancof Jazz.

Legacy artists, monumental eras, mercurial sub-genres and young lions have always shaped the long-tail of Jazz and its recorded history. And while capturing a listening audience's attention can feel like a moving target, Positone has consistently demonstrated a keen ear for positioning itself within a pantheon of labels that truly understand the past, present and future of Jazz. Within its clever alchemy of old school philosophy and new school aptitude for cultivating elite modern talent, Positone's musical topography has evolved into a critical map for listeners navigating the panoramic byways of Jazz.

Like so many musical adventures before it, Positone began in a garage. Marc Free, then a busy working musician, converted a spare space behind his mother's home in Venice, CA, into a makeshift recording studio. One DYI thought led to another and soon Free had built an underground label producing albums for the community of artists he routinely collaborated with. Ten years, and many records later, the music industry shifted and so did Free. Producing shows

eventually led to the fateful introduction to Nick O'Toole, a fellow music connoisseur and sound engineer who remains his partner to this day.

Within this special combination of "insanely good chemistry, shared values and aesthetics," a unique, enduring partnership flourished. Settling on the musical principle and business sensibility of "positive, tone, and experience," Free and O'Toole revved up Positone Records, quickly moving their recording process to Jazz's epicenter in New York City, while mixing the results at O'Toole's Woodland Studio in Lake Oswego, OR. Nurturing holistic partnerships with their artists, Positone albums are produced through conversations about content, form, style and artistic expectations. For Free, "it's not really about having all the answers. It's about asking the right questions in the right order and then getting the music and story together with the right players that will take advantage of the opportunity at hand."

And those opportunities have been bountiful, with now more than two hundred releases featuring a remarkable variety of gifted musicians, leading to *Something Blue*; a majestic 30th anniversary album constructed with the latest cadre of veteran artists supporting Positone's position as one of the most vibrant independent labels in the business. Featuring saxophonists Diego Rivera, Willie Morris and Langston Hughes II, trombonist Altin Sencalar, pianist Art Hirahara, bassist Boris Kozlov and drummer Rudy Royston, *Something Blue* is a quintessential Positone release: smart, swinging and complete with the kinds of musical plot twists that make for an intimately rich listening experience.

Something Blue re-explores several songs originally composed and released on Posi-Tone in the 1990's by artists Edwing (*Trapdoor*), John Nau (*Undercurrents*), Phil Farris (*Sun Sound*) and Joe Gaeta (*Art of the Workingman*). This composite speaks to Positone's ritual of surrounding itself with broad minded composers whose arranging and orchestration explore some of the more fascinating vantage points within Jazz. Managing relationships, crafting music that's hip, uplifting and timeless, Positone has established a voice, spirit and brand that continues to resonate with artists, critics, programmers and audiences alike.

Positone's ascendency as a premier independent label in Jazz has been collaborative, savvy, and well earned. The mere fact that Positone still stands tall after thirty years is and of itself a testament to how much Free and O'Toole care deeply about Jazz and how it's culled, curated and presented to the world. "I'm very satisfied with the work that we've done. I think it's sincere and has grown exponentially in terms of its depth and artistic merit," Free shared. Positone continues to thrive because of the sparkling breadth of imagination its founders envisioned when they first contemplated bringing their Jazz record label to life. *Something Blue* celebrates this as the latest manifestation of the artistic excellence, musical curiosity and creative ingenuity Positone brings to everyone who enjoys and cares about a future for Jazz.