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By Glenn Astarita

Jazz pianist/arranger Ted Howe's 2005 Ellington and 2006 Elton John, Elton Exposed releases, garnered positive reviews and accelerated his stature within jazz circles. With this newly issued endeavor, the pianist prophesizes the Arlen, Porter and Van Heusen songbooks, where love is the first order of the day. Howe's penetrating and sharply focused performances once again convey the steadfast commitment he injects into his respective projects.

On this effort, Howe employs famed vocalists, Lainie Kazan and Giacomo Gates. And his piece titled, Ill Remember Your Smile, is a sterling gem, where Gates imparts a mark of authenticity via his understated lyricism, wondrously contrasted by an memorably melodic hook. As Howe's compositions seamlessly intertwine with standards such as Cole Porter's True Love, and James Van Heusen's, Moonlight Becomes You.

Enamored by a sparkling production featuring a standard rhythm section, strings, percussion and a french horn, the pianist professes love with a ritualistic mindset sans the customary sweeteners.

Simply stated, Howe avoids muzak-like clichés here. And its all executed with finesse and eloquent vibes, all imprinted with a perceptible touch of "class."