For those of us who enjoy a lifelong love affair with the saxophone, any opportunity to indulge in the warmth, beauty, power, and agility produced by masterful saxophonists is most welcome. Throughout *On A Warm Summer’s Evenin’*, Mark Watkins, Brent Jensen, Sandon Mayhew, and Jon Gudmundson, seamlessly harness the musical energy of the saxophone in settings ranging from quartet to orchestra with comfort and elegance. On this CD, FOUR engages listeners via effortlessly skillful execution of concrete and improvised musical ideas that produce a diverse, vivid, and enjoyable performance.

Soprano saxophonist, composer, and arranger Mark Watkins creates frameworks that excite, indulge, and challenge the musicians and listeners alike. Exploring a wide scope of articulations, rhythms, and melodic and harmonic structures, Watkins establishes and develops a driving contrapuntal conversation between and within the quartet and jazz ensemble throughout *With Friends Like These*. Featuring the alto of Brent Jensen, *Of Things Hoped For* showcases the romantic nature of the saxophone as a solo and ensemble instrument in a traditional jazz setting. Illustrating their musical diversity, Watkins’ *Felices Para Siempre* takes us on a clave-fueled ride while his arrangements of *Moment’s Notice*, *Chim Chim Cheree*, and his *Sunset in Sperlonga* showcase FOUR’s jazz roots.

Beyond their diversity and flawless ensemble work, two of the most appealing dimensions of FOUR’s offering are Watkins’ pen and the virtuosity of each individual. Watkins’ diversified, fresh, and engaging writing results in new discoveries with every listen. As individuals, all FOUR deliver stirring *descargas* on *Felices*, Watkins swings and weaves improvised tapestries in his *On the Other Hand* and on *A Warm Summer’s Evenin’*, Mayhew burns on *Moment’s Notice* and *Jack the Giant Killer*, Jensen charms on *Of Things Hoped For* and *Sunset in Sperlonga*, and Gudmundson excites with contagious and bluesy energy on *Chim Chim Cheree* and *Peas in a Pod*.

Supported by rock-solid jazz and orchestra ensembles, *On a Warm Summer’s Evenin’* is a celebration of diverse musical styles by an inventive writer and FOUR outstanding saxophonists who are as equally at ease unselfishly serving the demands of an ensemble as they are navigating the rigors of solo duties. To all involved, thank you for the music and the artistry. Godspeed FOUR.

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