

# George Brooks with Zakir Hussain

*Night Spinner* (Moment!)

**A**LTHOUGH John Coltrane pioneered the metaphorical modern jazz pilgrimage to India in the mid-1960s and his widow, Alice Coltrane, took the journey several steps further by integrating East-West instrumentation, Indian-jazz fusion has made relatively few breakthroughs in the ensuing 30 years. Shakti—with John McLaughlin, Zakir Hussain, Ravi Shankar, and others—took the greatest leap forward in the mid-'70s, but in that ensemble and others, the musical balance typically tipped toward the Asian subcontinent.

In 1987 Hussain's *Making Music* LP set a standard for the melding of idioms that few could approach—at least until Bay Area saxophonist George Brooks released his 1997 debut CD, *Lasting Impression*. He has followed that recording with the even more absorbing *Night Spinner*, which highlights his compositional skills, and a group that does justice to both the African American jazz and the Indian traditions.

Certain tracks emphasize one flavor over the other: Aashish Khan's sarod introduction on "In the Grotto" and Sultan Khan's sarangi on "Water Dance" and "Midnight Meeting," for instance, make the music suitable for any world-music radio show; "Hymn" and "Romance" would comfortably fit into straight-ahead jazz programming. But the essence of *Night Spinner* is the improvisational dovetailing of Indian music's complex rhythmic pulses and modalities with the harmonic structures and colors of jazz. On that score Brooks (tenor and soprano saxes, bass clarinet) and Hussain (tabla, other percussion, and voice) are the stars, but pianist Jack Perla, bassist Dave Belove, drummer David Rokeach, and the guests (including vibist Tommy Kesecker and singer Molly Holm) make crucial contributions, providing a dazzling musical upside to globalization. *The George Brooks Group with Zakir Hussain and Krishna Bhatt performs Thurs/16 at Yoshi's, Oakl. (510) 238-9200.*

Derk Richardson