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Charged Particles

Sparks

BOPO

When fusion first crawled from the primordial muck it was an experimental hybrid of jazz and rock that had huge crossover potential. That crossover never took place; fusion was either too jazz for rock fans or too rock for the jazz crowd. Eventually it fell out of style, though fusion recently found new life with bands that up the rock content and call it “jam.”

Columbus' Charged Particles have been staying the fusion course for 11 years. Their self-titled debut was a tribute to the genre's gods, Chick Corea, Mike Stern and Jaco Pastorius. Eight years have passed and the band has grown in confidence and technique, releasing a new album of original compositions which, coincidentally, sound like Corea, Stern and Pastorius. Don't think of these as knock-offs, though; the songs are merely reminiscent of their heroes. The standout tracks are two pieces: “Three Groups Of Three,” a vaguely Phillip Glass by-way-of Corea piece by keyboardist Caleb Huslar, and the Latin-flavored, all-percussion “Oziferacacion-amientito.” On the downside, “In Peace” is treacley and “Shrubbery” is a tribute to Monty Python that sounds like the band has never actually seen Monty Python.

Charged Particles is a talented group, and *Sparks* is more challenging in structure than smooth jazz, but yet with commercial appeal.

—Zachary Bodish