

Bittersweet Album

Listener Review by [Keith Keller](#)

Sumitra Nanjundan's new recording, *Bittersweet*, sends a vibrational memo directly to the music appreciation center in the middle of my brain. It is a collection of ten relatively short song/compositions that stand alone, yet possess the coherence of a finely executed multicourse meal. Most satiating...

Sumitra's vocals possess a range of timbre and tonality, and her delivery is passionately direct; her piano periodically steps to the forefront, yet blends perfectly in the context of the jazz rhythm section. Seven of the ten tracks are original compositions with solid arrangements and soulful, clever lyrics. The ensemble playing is impressive, with crafty, inspired instrumental performances. Much more than mere accompaniment, Brian Blade's drums and Carlitos del Puerto's bass stylings are crafty and totally within creative context. One peak moment is del Puerto's solo turn in *Take the Reins*; Blade's drumming is precise and imaginative, his cymbal work multi-textural.

The production is flawless. In addition to producing, Alex Machacek makes several contributions with guitar that is recognizable and in character to anyone familiar with his work, yet completely serves and enhances the music. The effect, particularly in songs *Recall* and *Settle Down*, is delightfully subtle.

I purchased the recording directly through Sumitra's website, and recommend the album highly.

Keith Keller