

BRAND NEW RELEASE FROM JAZZ-FUNK-SOUL BAND

# Times 4



## Item Summary

Artist: Times 4  
Title: Eclipse  
Label: Groove Tonic Media/IODA  
Catalog No: GTM-1092  
Format: CD/Digital Download  
Street Date: June 1, 2010  
File Under: Instrumental Jazz



## Track Listing

1. Eclipse (8:53)
2. Sine Language (6:04)
3. Crosswinds (9:13)
4. Did I Say That Out Loud? (8:30)
5. Naima ( 6:52)
6. FSJ (4:39)
7. What They Don't Tell You (8:48)
8. Eighty One (3:36)

## Musicians

Lincoln Adler (saxophones)  
Greg Sankovich (keyboards)  
Kevin Lofton (bass)  
Maurice Miles (drums)

With their third album release, *Eclipse*, San Francisco-based contemporary jazz quartet **Times 4** puts forth a fresh Bay Area blend of uplifting modern jazz with urban flavor. Along with six new original songs collectively composed for the project, *Eclipse* also features fresh interpretations of classic tunes by John Coltrane and Ron Carter/Miles Davis.

Seven years of collaboration has culminated in this new release showcasing Times 4's strength in melding its individual voices into a dynamic and balanced ensemble. With their joyful musical interplay, driving grooves, captivating melodies and dynamic improvisations, Times 4 continues to inspire audiences to tap their feet and feel dance in their bones.

Recorded and mixed at legendary Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California, the tracks combine high energy live ensemble performances with the stellar sonic quality that has become a trademark of Fantasy.

Times 4 features Lincoln Adler (saxophones), Greg Sankovich (keyboards), Kevin Lofton (bass), and Maurice Miles (drums). Their artful and intense musical conversation is steeped in the history of friendship and common roots. Miles and Lofton have been friends and musical collaborators since high school; likewise, Adler and Sankovich continue a musical dialogue that also dates back to their teen years.

Times 4 has shared the stage with many esteemed artists including Anita Baker, Al Jarreau, Bob James and Fourplay, Chris Botti, Dave Koz, Patrice Rushen, Patti Austin, Boney James and Jonathan Butler. The group has performed at many fine venues, including the JVC Jazz Festival, Yoshi's, Mountain Winery, Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, Fillmore Jazz Festival, North Beach Festival, San Jose Jazz Festival, and the Boom Boom Room.

*"Times 4 has become one of the finest jazz-funk-soul combos in California."*  
- San Jose Mercury News, Oakland Tribune

*"The quartet often thinks as one. They succeed as both funky dance music and a fine example of the funkier side of jazz."*  
- All Music Guide

*"Characterized by cohesive improvisation and filled with the spirit of hip-hop rhythms and a groove-based approach, 'Relations' surges with a mesmerizing power and charms accordingly."*  
- AllAboutJazz.com

*"These guys come flying out of the gate, and they don't stop until the finish line. Constant interaction, mood swings, and surprises galore make this recording a thrill a minute."*  
- JazzReview.com

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## Biography

The first time the members of **Times 4** got together to play, says keyboardist **Greg Sankovich**, “We just hit the zone and ran flying from the get-go.”

Fast-forwarding seven years, Sankovich, soprano and tenor saxophonist **Lincoln Adler**, bassist **Kevin Lofton**, and drummer **Maurice Miles** continue reigniting those spontaneous jazz-meets-funk sparks every time they perform. The distinctive **Times 4** sound, which, in the words of *eJazzNews* reviewer Glenn Astarita, “skirts that fuzzy space between radio-friendly contempo jazz and ballsy, in-the-pocket groove-laden motifs,” has made the quartet a favorite at clubs and festivals throughout its home base in the San Francisco Bay Area and points beyond.

The backbeat-anchored edge that has marked **Times 4**'s music since its inception remains evident on ***Eclipse***, the group's third CD, yet the disc represents a step up in the group's musical evolution with its more carefully crafted original tunes and the clarity of the recorded sound. Many of the compositional collaborations on the two earlier CDs - 2004's ***Seductivity*** and 2007's ***Relations*** - were outgrowths of open-ended jams created on the bandstand. For ***Eclipse***, the four musicians took their time coming up disc's five collective compositions: the sultry “Crossroads,” the swing-overlaid “Did I Say that Out Loud?,” the funky, feel-good “FSJ,” the bass-and-drums-driven “Sine Language,” and the title track, which drummer Miles describes as being like “an emotional journey.” The haunting ballad “What They Don't Tell You” was penned by Adler alone.

“***Eclipse***,” the saxophonist says, “is much more about the band's refinement and coming into its own as a performing entity. After seven years of playing together, the communication between the members has become much stronger. There is a real unity in the way we support each other in both solos and ensemble playing.”

The CD also includes, for the first time on disc, the group playing non-original numbers. Both are jazz classics: “Eighty One,” written by Ron Carter and Miles Davis, and John Coltrane's “Naima.” “We just did them **Times 4**'s way,” says Miles.

The eight selections on the CD also benefit from the sonic excellence of having been recorded at the legendary Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California. Besides allowing for better sound separation between the instruments, the facility afforded Sankovich the opportunity to utilize several of its vintage, well-maintained keyboard instruments: a Hammond B-3 organ, a Fender-Rhodes electric piano, and an acoustic grand piano that had once been played by the great Bill Evans. “I kissed it first,” Sankovich quips about playing the grand.

Coming up with a simple tag to categorize **Times 4**'s style isn't easy. Miles calls it “contemporary with an edge.” Bassist Lofton says it's “a nice hybrid of cerebral jazz with more of a backbeat.” Sankovich describes it as “funk meets jazz, peppered with hip-hop and soul.”

“**Times 4** has ended up between genres,” Adler observes. “Because we just decided to play the music that comes from our hearts, we didn't turn on the style filter when it comes to composing, so there's funk, there's jazz, and there's a lot of improvisation. I've always been a bit frustrated with the urge to classify music by style. My favorite mixes will go from jazz to classical to Afro-Cuban to R&B to pop to African to tango to lots of things in between.”

“It's a Bay Area concoction,” adds Sankovich.

Indeed, **Times 4** is made up of two sets of longtime friends and musical associates from opposite ends of the San Francisco Bay. Adler and Sankovich are from the Berkeley area. Lofton and Miles grew up in San



Jose. The fact that the saxophonist and keyboardist both had extensive formal training, while the bassist and drummer are self-taught, has much to do with the group's unique sound, Lofton feels.

Adler began playing various instruments at age five, focusing on clarinet before switching to saxophone while in high school after being inspired by **Grover Washington Jr.**'s "Mister Magic." He later studied with the legendary **Joe Henderson** and Bay Area hero **Hal Stein**.

Sankovich started banging on the upright piano in his parents' El Cerrito, California home - "That was my go-to thing to calm stress," he recalls - before they hired a teacher. He subsequently studied with noted jazz pianists **Al Zulaica**, **Art Lande**, and **Mark Levine**.

Adler and Sankovich played together in the UC Berkeley Jazz Ensembles, with which they toured Europe in 1980. The saxophonist later moved to Los Angeles, where he became in-demand as a session player and composer for television and film and recorded four albums of his own and one with the band Rain-bo Tribe before returning home to Berkeley. During the same period (1983-94), Sankovich spent more than a decade in Tokyo performing with the fusion band Taikun, playing for television and radio productions, and working in an art gallery. While at the gallery, he met Chinese artist Lu Hong, whose striking paintings would years later grace the covers of all three **Times 4** CDs.

Lofton's initial bass inspiration was **Bootsy Collins**, and Miles taught himself to play drums by playing along with Prince's "Lady Cab Driver." The two musicians met at a high school party in San Jose in the late 1980s. "He was the only black kid playing with a Filipino Top 40 band," Miles says of Lofton. "I introduced myself and let him know I play drums." The two musicians would go on to perform together in the Bay Area funk band **Protégé**, then in a rhythm section backing Oakland rapper **Kofy Brown**, and now in **Times 4**.

The tightly locking grooves that underpin **Times 4**'s sound are to a great degree the result of the time Lofton and Miles have spent together on bandstands.

"We know each other's ways and stay out of each other's way," Lofton says. "It's intuitive."

"We can anticipate what each other is doing," Miles adds. "Now that **Times 4** has been playing together for seven years, I know what Lincoln and Greg are probably going to do, just like they know just what Kevin and I are going to do."

The birth of **Times 4** can be traced to a chance meeting between Adler and Miles at a 2003 Steve Coleman performance at Bruno's in San Francisco. "He came and stood right by me," Miles says of the saxophonist. "We were grooving to the music, and we broke into a conversation." Miles invited Adler to see him play in Kofy Brown's band, which also included Lofton.

Adler, Lofton, and Miles hit it off the moment they first played together. They tried adding a guitarist to the group, but when he didn't work out, Adler called his old friend Sankovich, who mostly had been doing recording sessions with deep house DJs since his return from Japan a decade earlier.

"When Greg came in, it was like we had been playing together for years," Miles recalls.

The four musicians began gigging almost immediately, even though they knew only six songs as a unit at the time. In order to fill out a three-hour gig, they had to improvise many new numbers on the spot. Those improvised jams would serve as the basis for some of the tunes on **Times 4**'s first two CDs.

"We started as an improvising band, and we just kept going," Miles says. "What we came up with was really cool."



Most of the music on ***Eclipse*** is more tightly structured than that on the quartet's previous CDs, yet the new release retains the spontaneity and excitement that have been **Times 4** hallmarks since the group's beginning. "We didn't want to lose that," Sankovich explains. "You want to be able to deliver that at a point when you're playing, but we were a lot more conscious about creating space and balance."

"This one is more thought-out," Miles says of ***Eclipse***. "We're more mature as writers."

**Times 4** functions as a democracy in which in each member has an equal voice. The group's uncanny musical cohesiveness is an outgrowth of that process. "As musicians," Sankovich says, "we try to listen to the spaces of conversations, more than to the actual words. Words are wholly inappropriate to describe feelings and ideas on some levels. We try to listen to the groove. When everybody is firing on all cylinders, then we know we've got a decision."

So far, the musical democracy that is **Times 4** has worked extremely well for the band and its growing legion of fans. "I feel that our music really grooves well and it really feels good," Miles says. "I think that's what people really like about us." •

## **Times 4: *Eclipse***

(Groove Tonic Media)

**Street Date:** June 1, 2010

**Web Site:** [www.times4music.com](http://www.times4music.com)

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Mountain Winery	Saratoga, CA
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North Beach Jazz Festival	San Francisco, CA
Oakland City Center Concert Series	Benicia, CA
Paragon Lounge	San Jose + Berkeley, CA
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San Francisco Legion of Honor	San Francisco, CA
San Jose Jazz Festival	San Jose, CA
San Jose Jazz Society Concert Series	San Jose, CA
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## Bay Area jazz band Times 4 breaking new ground with latest CD 'Eclipse'

By Jim Harrington  
Oakland Tribune  
Posted: 01/11/2010 01:00:00 AM PST  
Updated: 01/11/2010 05:42:44 PM PST

There may come a day when Times 4, the popular Bay Area groove-jazz quartet, can operate at a somewhat leisurely pace in the studio. But that definitely wasn't the case while recording the band's third CD, "Eclipse."

"We recorded it all in two days — just blasted through it," says Times 4 saxophonist Lincoln Adler. "We just played the songs as we would live. We realized that the band sounds best when the band plays live."

So it's appropriate that Times 4 will celebrate the release of "Eclipse" by doing what it does best — playing live. The group is set to perform Monday at Yoshi's at Jack London Square in Oakland, the first chance for fans to pick up copies of the new album. (The CD is also available to order through the band's Web site, [www.times4music.com](http://www.times4music.com).)

"Eclipse" is another step forward for one of the Bay Area's premier jazz outfits. For one thing, it was recorded at a major league venue, Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, which gave the group access to top-tier recording equipment. That factored most strongly into Greg Sankovich's performance, who had used a basic synthesizer on the group's prior two studio efforts — 2005's "Seductivity" and 2007's "Relations" — but used a variety of keyboards, including a choice Fender Rhodes, on "Eclipse."

"Greg was in heaven," laughs Adler, who, like Sankovich, grew up and still lives in the Berkeley area. "And I think that affected the



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band's whole sound."

This was also the first CD the band produced on its own.

"It's just another step in our learning process," said bassist Kevin Lofton, a San Jose native who now lives in Oakland. "Another couple of notches on the belt as far as becoming complete musicians."

There are some potential downsides to self-producing a record — there's no third party to blame if the disc doesn't turn out well. On the other hand, says Lofton, "You are in complete control. You get to really put yourself out there. You have the freedom to do what you want."

Times 4, which also includes San Jose native Maurice Miles on drums, is one of the relatively few local jazz acts known for performing mostly original compositions. In that aspect, "Eclipse" marks another turning point for the band as it includes Times 4's first two recorded cover songs: a rendition of John Coltrane's famous ballad "Naima" and the Miles Davis-Ron Carter modal blues number "81."

"We definitely wanted to put a different spin on those," Lofton says of the tracks. "There are certainly recognizable, but they are the Times 4 versions."

#### Back in Time

The origin of Times 4, group's origin can be traced back to 2003, when Miles, who now lives in Menlo Park, and Adler met at a contemporary jazz concert in San Francisco. The two players started talking music, found that they shared similar tastes, and quickly decided that a jam session was in order.

They invited Miles' friend Lofton and Adler's pal Sankovich to the party and Times 4 was born. The band's first regular gig was at Straits restaurant in San Jose's Santana Row, where the players spent two years refining their instrumental, improvisational mix of funk, soul, R&B, Latin, hip-hop and contemporary jazz sounds.

With the release of two records and countless live shows, Times 4 was able to build a sizable following in the Bay Area. Some of its more impressive accomplishments include headlining Yoshi's in San Francisco, performing at the Mountain Winery in Saratoga, appearing at the Mount Diablo Jazz Festival at Concord's mammoth Sleep Train Pavilion and sharing the stage with such big-names acts as Al Jarreau, Chris Botti, Dave Koz and Patti Austin.

Those types of bookings aren't easy to get for an unsigned local jazz band. But Times 4 got help from the legendary (and now defunct) Bay Area smooth-jazz radio station KKSF, which championed the group for years. Yet the group's success mostly has to do with old-fashioned hard work and fine musicianship.

Also, something's very appealing about the collaborative nature of this band. There's no leader in Times 4 (a factor that separates the group from the majority of jazz combos on the planet), just the collective joy that comes from making music among friends. The mood is set with the songwriting process.

"We are really very democratic in the way we write songs," Adler says. "We just sit down together, all four of us, and we write the tunes."

Now, the group has a new batch of material to showcase from "Eclipse." Times 4 hopes to tour in support of the CD, at least through the Pacific Northwest, and expand its fan base past the Bay Area. The recent loss of KKSF, as well as several other contemporary jazz radio stations, will hurt. Yet, as Lofton says, the band members can't worry about that.

"We feel like our resume is really strong," he says. "We are just waiting to see what the environment is, and then how we want to position ourselves. The main thing is for us to keep putting out quality products."

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Read Jim Harrington's Concert Blog at <http://blogs.mercurynews.com/aei/category/concerts/>.

#### PREVIEW

- WHO: Times 4
- WHEN: 8 p.m. Monday
- WHERE: Yoshi's at Jack London Square, 510 Embarcadero West, Oakland
- TICKETS: \$16; 510-238-9200, [www.yoshis.com](http://www.yoshis.com)

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## Interview by Joe Montague for JazzReview.com

"San Francisco has always been a melting pot for great music. A lot of the reason is it is also a melting pot for culture. We have people of all origins, colors and flavors. You have to be pretty open-minded to live here, and it definitely reflects in the music," says Greg Sankovich the keyboardist for the San Franciscan jazz/funk quartet Times 4. "Compared to other places, there is definitely a lot more groove happening here. Whether it is Mariachi music, soul or jam down music, the various dance elements blend together into a funky stew. We (Times 4) like to think that we epitomize that in our sound, and the approach that we bring to the music," concludes Sankovich.

The words "a funky stew" can also be applied to the music of Times 4, as the members of the ensemble have brought together an eclectic background of R&B, hip-hop, jazz, rock, fusion and contemporary music to create their debut album *Seductivity*, and the outstanding sophomore CD release *Relations*.

Lincoln Adler, the saxophonist for the quartet says, "One of the things that is really interesting is even though we didn't end up playing the same music, we all grew up listening to the same kind of R&B, like Earth, Wind & Fire, and funk such as "Bootsy" Collins. It is interesting to see how our lives have (evolved). Greg and I wound up being a little more straight ahead, while Kevin (Lofton/bass) and Maurice wound up being more R&B and rock. It somehow, however, all comes together in our music."

That funky stew is what keeps Adler stimulated and involved with Times 4. During the 1990's he was a member of a group known as the Rainbow Tribe, which he says, played a similar type of music and first whet his appetite for this type of musical venture.

All the band members concur that it is difficult to apply a label to the music of Times 4. Drummer Maurice Miles says, "I think it is really the dynamic of our music. Some parts can be considered contemporary, and I think other parts have a jazz overtone. Our music has a groove-oriented backbeat. I think it is a mixture of a few genres. Some things that we do, such as "Full Moon," is more contemporary, but then you get into a little more funky stuff with "M.O." I don't think that we do just one type of music."

Sankovich's cultural and musical influences extend beyond San Francisco, and even beyond the shores of America. After university, he spent ten years living in Tokyo, Japan. He says, "When you are separated from your family, familiar surroundings and your culture, there is a point where you stand on the edge of the cliff and ask, 'Who am I? What am I? What do I want to accomplish and express? What does my creativity mean to me? What does all of this mean to me?' There are moments when there are pangs of loneliness that creep in and you wonder what you are doing, and what your life means. When you look inside and try to express from your heart that which you love most, that is the biggest lesson that you learn. I think that we are always learning, and that we are always confronted with that. We get involved in the day-to-day kind of things and tend to forget (about those lessons) and gravitate away from them. It is only in those critical moments that we are reminded of them."

Times 4 has been together now for a little more than four years and the current project *Relations* marks their maturity as a band. Lofton notes, "I think there is a definite difference between *Seductivity* and *Relations*. When we are on stage together, we are always learning from each other and growing as musicians, but I think that we have come a long way since the first album. We did a lot more writing and put a lot more thought into the songs this time around. Last time, we came up with some ideas and we were happy with them. We wanted to get that CD done, and we did. It worked out really well and was a good stamp for where we were at, at the time, but, I think there is quite a bit of difference as far as the writing goes on this second set of songs (*Relations*)."

The maturity and tightness of the group also is evident in the way *Relations* came together. Miles says of the creative process, "It was pretty much all improvisation. We pretty well create all of our music in that way. When we first got together (as a group), we didn't have any material and just started jamming together. We



bring out our ideas through our playing. A lot of our music comes from an emotional perspective. It is what we feel at the time. We like to keep it that way because the music is more stimulating. Somebody will start a groove and then everybody will put their little bit into it. As we listen to each other, different ideas begin to (emerge). Once we have the basic idea, then we sit down and start to structure it."

A discussion of the group's songs reveals that although their music can be described using superlatives, their creative process is really quite simplistic and inspired in the moment. Lofton's explanation for the origins of the song "Cell Phone" serves as a good example of what I mean. "Initially when we got together (as a group) we only had about six songs. All of the gigs were three hours long and six songs doesn't go very far (at this juncture he is interrupted as the rest of the group breaks into laughter). At one point, we decided we would like to record some of the songs, but none of us ever remembered to bring a recording device. We really liked this particular song and either Greg or Maurice brought out a cell phone to record it using the memo mode. Since we were not creative enough to come up with a title, we named the song "Cell Phone."

If you think, the naming of "Cell Phone" was quite rudimentary, but it is nothing compared to the way the quartet came up with the song "Mojito." Adler explains, "We used to play in some bars that had really good mojitos (an alcoholic beverage) so we named the song after the drink." While they were on stage at a gig, Miles started playing a samba beat. The song eventually evolved from the group's improvisation. Miles hints that the imbibing of a few mojitos may also have contributed to the creative process.

The song "Full Moon" developed from a gig in which the quartet was forced to play very quietly in the venue. "Sometimes when we have to play quietly like that, it forces us to listen really differently and really take in what each of us are doing. It just came out of our heads the way that you hear it on the CD," says Adler.

Times 4's debut album, *Seductivity*, received widespread radio play and if the guys calling the shots at corporate radio America have their heads screwed on straight, we should soon be hearing songs from *Relations* on the airwaves, as well.



## Press Reviews

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### All Music Guide - Scott Yanow

Times 4 is an excellent and tight funk/jazz group. Both tenor saxophonist Lincoln Adler and keyboardist Greg Sankovich are expert at setting danceable grooves and, although Adler's originals are generally pretty basic, the music develops well and holds onto one's attention. The bass-drums team of Kevin Lofton and Maurice Miles is tight and the quartet often thinks as one. The live group improvisation "Down Low" is a solid and coherent change of pace. Seductivity succeeds as both funky dance music and a fine example of the funkier side of jazz. Fours stars!

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### ejazz news - Glenn Astarita

This San Francisco area quartet's second endeavor skirts that fuzzy space between radio-friendly contempo jazz and ballsy, in-the-pocket groove laden motifs. With drummer Maurice Miles' snappy backbeats steering the flows, the frontline soloists generate cool grooves amid some polytonal unison choruses. Saxophonist Lincoln Adler's yearning and soulful lines are underscored with catchy hooks and mainstream jazz-like phrasings. Meanwhile, keyboardist Greg Sankovich implements synth treatments while acting as a strong foil for the saxophonist. On the piece titled "Enterlude," bassist Kevin Lofton executes a harmonically attractive ostinato vamp as a foundation for the soloists lower register explorations.

In addition, the musicians' self-penned comps serve as rock-solid underpinnings for their tightly-woven exchanges. The ensemble's nicely designed crossover of expansive soloing coupled with memorable themes and airy frameworks should hypothetically, yield a wide-ranging fan base. Its contemporary jazz that projects an up-tempo vibe, accentuated with an irrefutable edge!

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### Midwest Record - Chris Spector

Standing on the corner where progressive jazz meets contemporary urban, this well versed SF based crew does their genre splicing with grand style. The kind of set that will bring younger tastes into the jazz tent, there's a smartness and style here that percolates and bubbles and ultimately bubbles over with the kind of enthusiasm that wins new fans over. A tasty date that breaks new ground and opens the ears.

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### All About Jazz - Woodrow Wilkins

Math made simple. Put two and two together, and you get Times 4, a San Francisco-based jazz group that mixes the old with the new, and lots of stuff in between. Drummer Maurice Miles and bassist Kevin Lofton were friends and musical collaborators in high school. Likewise, saxophonist Lincoln Adler and keyboardist Greg Sankovich were musical friends as teens. Together, the two pairs of old friends form a quartet that is as diverse as it is original.

The group's sophomore release, Relations, is a blend of old-school improvisation with modern influences. This is evident on the first track, "M.O.," a title derived from the word play between the group's modus operandi and Miles' nickname, "Mo." Naturally, Miles sets the pace with superb stick handling, skillfully using the bass, snare, toms and complete array of cymbals. Adler leads for much of the piece with his bluesy tenor sax. While Sankovich and Lofton are mostly in the background, they still make their presence felt. Lofton takes point on "Thickness," with a funky bass line worthy of Marcus Miller. Sankovich applies background keys but also enhances this groove with a bit of piano play.



All players are in the moment, and it's easy to tell they're enjoying it. The group later stretches out on the eight-minute title song and another improvised piece, "Central Park." Other noteworthy tracks include "Mojito," "Full Moon" and "Herricane."

Relations is a collection of ten original tracks that offer something familiar without giving the listener a sense of "been there, done that." At times, the music sounds like a throwback to the days of Tom Scott and the L.A. Express and Return to Forever. However, the music is all new, and the band delivers its own sound.

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### **AllAboutJazz.com - Jim Santella**

Progressive jazz keeps us fresh and aware of what's happening around us. As its hip rhythms get inside you, things start to happen. For one thing, you start to realize that you're not alone. This isn't grandfathers' music; but it certainly could be. It takes one to know one, and I do feel that I can call the music that Times 4 lays down on its debut album my music.

West Coast saxophonist Lincoln Adler gives the ensemble a warm, fuzzy quality that places Times 4 in the forefront of our "talent deserving much recognition" category. His fluid phrasing and relaxed improvisation carries the day. Alongside equally creative inventions from organist Greg Sankovich, the tenor saxophonist gives his audience a performance to remember.

Times 4 has found a happy medium. The quartet's exciting program grabs you like a magnet and never lets go. These players can hold your enraptured attention for marathon sessions, as they do on the album's live track, "Down Low," or they can provide you with music to make your day a whole lot brighter, as they do on this highly recommended album.

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### **JazzReview.com - Sheldon Nunn**

The passionate embrace of jazz as an art form is often obscured by the inability of commercial interests to see this genre of music as an art form of immense importance. Instead, many consultants, record labels and radio stations choose to relegate artistic intent with a perceived idea of what is commercial and what is not. But every now and again, a jazz artist or group is given an opportunity to convey the intuitive creative spirit that comes from within minus the bottom line input of bean counters, many of whom could care less about artistic expression or intent. In the case of Times 4 a San Francisco based contemporary jazz quartet, they have recorded a sizzling CD with all of the bells and whistles of stylized intuitive creativity.

Times 4 latest CD entitled 'Relations' is a release that embraces rhythmic expression and all of the improvisational characteristics of what jazz interpretation should be about. In addition, the group has recorded 10 original tracks that criss-cross the boundaries of the so-called urban influence on jazz. The musical chemistry attached to 'Relations' provides a cornucopia of individual expression and talent; however, no voices are ever alike as the influences of soul, Latin, R&B hip-hop and funk music permeate each associative track. Each one of the ten tracks provides a commonality of purpose that drives the dynamic influences of interpretive melodies and syncopated rhythms. By all accounts, Times 4 explores the landscape of jazz with creative intent and a variety of musical interludes.

Collectively, Times 4 has recorded an album that is filled with a high degree of first rate enthused ideas. Seldom is there an opportunity to explore the remnants of improvised jazz with the dynamics and zeal of previous influences. Times 4's ability to incorporate the provocative urban flavors of everyday music with jazz provides an artistic catalyst that titillates the senses. In the end, 'Relations' is an album that provides a backdrop for contemporary jazz as a setting for further exploration of jazz as an art form. By most standards, this CD is not one you will hear everyday; however, 'Relations' and Times 4 will surely open the doors for further examination as time goes by.



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## ContemporaryJazz.com - Jeff Charney

Saxophonist Lincoln Adler is no stranger to me. Having enjoyed his music first with the group Rain-bo Tribe and then his solo projects, he is back with a new group Times 4. The debut CD is titled Seductivity and what you should expect from this disc is some massive, creative jazz, fusion funk. Tracks like "Delicious" and "Distracted" just smell of it. Ladies and gentlemen it smells good. It is like the Average White Band meets the Headhunters meeting Down To the Bone. All ten tracks are originals. Adler surrounds himself with three unknown, but talented musicians. Greg Sankovich, Kevin Lofton and Maurice Miles. The right musicians to pull off what this group is trying to sell is key here. They play like they have had their lessons and it is now time to show off what they have learned. A smoky jam session, but with direction. I found the music to be complex enough that other musicians should listen to this project and give it some consideration for their players. No fluff, just mind exploring...extremely fun, rhythmic music.

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## JazzReview.com - John Marcus

These guys come flying out of the gate, and they don't stop until the finish line. This is a very hot fusion band, and let me give you my impression of what "fusion" is (because the clinical definition may vary). Fusion is a type of Jazz that incorporates sounds, rhythms, and sensibilities of other styles of music. Times 4 fuses Jazz primarily with a soulful sound. It seems that they are playing from someplace nearby, and all their pieces have a "live", spontaneous sound. This is what keeps fusion firmly rooted in its Jazz heritage, and it is often what keeps "Smooth Jazz" somewhere on the outskirts.

A 4-piece band (hence the name), with constant interaction, mood swings, and surprises galore makes this recording the musical equivalent of a weekend at Six Flags. A thrill a minute. Everybody gets some. That makes it hard to determine who the dominant musician within the group is. But then, nobody ever said there has to be just one. A great name for a promising group of musicians: Times 4. Recommended for those seeking a Jazzy change-of-pace.

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## Southbound Beat Magazine - Dave Howell

Times 4 place themselves between smooth jazz and funk on this CD. Lincoln Adler's tenor saxophone does not have many rough edges, and keyboardist Greg Sankovich keeps to a light tone. But bassist Kevin Lofton and drummer Maurice Miles never let up on their funk beats, even on the softer tunes like "Sacrifice." Adler takes most of the leads, with Sankovich filling in and occasionally soloing. Lofton is always upfront, and in fact, he often doubles the melody parts.

At their best, like on the title track, the quartet has a bit of a mysterious sound. "Seductivity" has Adler playing hard, but always with a melodic touch. Lofton and Miles push him to keep up the tension of his sax attack. Sankovich flavors his solo with a Middle Eastern feel.

In the live cut "Down Low", Adler slowly builds his attack over Lofton's fast picking and the insistent rat-a-tat of Miles's drums. Sankovich then takes over, with an ethereal solo that includes a bit of jagged organ. Adler finishes the track with fast runs and a few squawks and squeals.

This CD might be a good choice for jazz fans that would like smooth jazz without all the rough edges edited out. Each player here has an individual style that leads to collaborations that soar at times, while staying firmly in the groove.