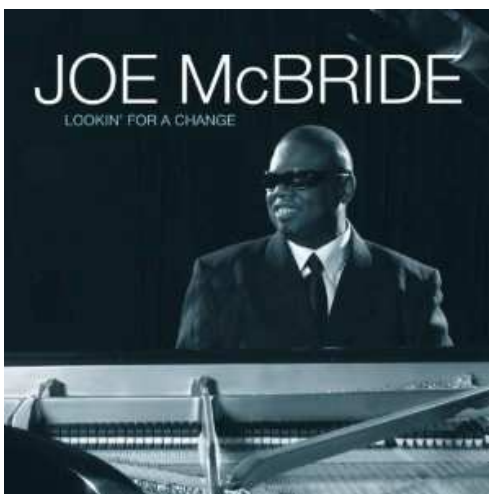


Joe McBride: Lookin' for a Change

By Alex Henderson



It isn't hard to figure out why pianist / keyboardist / vocalist Joe McBride decided to call this 2009 release *Lookin' for a Change*. On most of his albums, McBride has functioned as a soul-jazz/smooth jazz instrumentalist who occasionally sings. But there are no instrumentals on *Lookin' for a Change*; McBride sings on all of the tracks, favoring a gritty yet sophisticated vocal style that is greatly influenced by George Benson but also contains hints of Al Jarreau. If McBride wanted a change, he got one -- and the interesting thing is that while *Lookin' for a Change* is less produced and more acoustic-oriented than McBride's albums typically are, it is also his most R&B-oriented effort. *Lookin' for a Change* isn't jazz with R&B elements; it is really vocal R&B with jazz overtones. So it is best to judge this 66-minute CD by R&B standards rather than jazz standards -- and from

an R&B standpoint, *Lookin' for a Change* is pleasingly solid.

McBride soars as an R&B vocalist on his own material as well as on intriguing arrangements of Vanessa Carlton's "1000 Miles," Cameo's "Word Up," and Seal's "Kiss from a Rose." The Missouri native has no problem taking "1000 Miles" out of adult alternative and making it sound like something he heard on one of Benson's R&B vocal albums of the '80s, and his interpretation of "Word Up" is funky but in a much more bluesy and low-key way than Cameo's original 1986 version. Some of McBride's albums have been uneven, but there are no weak moments on *Lookin' for a Change* -- which turns out to be one of the most consistent releases in his catalog.