



Reviews of Recordings

DUO--Timeless 283; released 1989. Timeless Records, P.O. Box 201, 6700 AE Wageningen, Netherlands. Tel.: (31) 317-413440; Fax: (31) 317-421548; Website: www.timeless-records.nl; e-mail: info@timelessjazz.com. *Gone With The Wind; What Am I Here For; A Child Is Born; Wee; Like Someone In Love; Mean To Me; I'll Remember April; But Beautiful.*

PERSONNEL: Hank Jones, piano; Red Mitchell, bass.

By John Barrett, Jr.

"perfect 'reactors' to each other"

The piano/bass duo is a difficult format--unless both musicians are perfect "reactors" to each other, it will sound like a drummer is missing. That's what makes this line-up intriguing: one of the best accompanists ever, paired with a driving, propulsive bassist who helped pioneer that style of playing. On "Gone With The Wind," Mitchell starts with a big twang, loaded with overtone--it sounds like a horn riff, blaring behind Jones' intro. Hank takes it easy, gliding with chords and adding soft bleeps in between. Red's walk is enlivened by showy swoops; his solo is feathery and sounds like falling leaves. Hank ambles back for a chorus, turns warm when restating the theme, and closes with a glittering triumph of romance. No mistake--there is *nothing* missing here.

After a little stride on "What Am I Here For," there appears to be a conflict of interest. Hank plays the tune richly, as if he were alone; Red moans and stretches in isolation, with little relation to what Hank is doing. His part is more involved than a walk, but contains no melody; he also seems faster than Jones. At first I think it's a distraction, but soon the halves meet: when Hank turns to fast single notes, Red marks time...and adds slippery slides for good measure. His solo is *thick*, a mass of low groans and attitude. The final theme finds Mitchell "drumming" his phrases; he tried this at the beginning, but is more successful here.

It is followed by Thad Jones' "A Child Is Born," and his brother pours the emotion, in broad layered notes. Red thumps his notes, then slides while the string still vibrates; it's like a deep steel guitar. (His solo could be a single note, stretched by technique to unheard lengths.) Hank tiptoes in the background, and is light-hearted in his chorus. (Red hardly lowers his volume, so you get two soloists at once!) Mitchell slaps through the start of "Wee," as Jones plays two parts by himself. His left hand runs a phrase, and the right repeats it a few seconds later. The solo is a tad simple, with single notes and moments of blue; for much of this tune Red plays *above* Jones! He next taps a bossa on the body of his bass for "Like Someone In Love." Hank picks up the rhythm when Red states the theme. With curved, silky notes and jagged comps, Mitchell's tone here may be his

best. Jones is dainty, and something on the quiet side. After a funky solo, Red gets frantic for a moment, then stops...and the air is filled with the twinkling of distant pianos. What's not to love?

Hank is friendly on "Mean To Me," and his warm chords are the complement to Red's theme. Woody and bold, his notes *rattle*...and form sour chords on the bridge. Hank stays in the back, glowing softly; come his solo, Red helps with a chunk-chunk rhythm guitar part. They're not fighting for attention--this is true interplay, often sought and rarely caught. The men move as one on "I'll Remember April"--Red hits high, vibe-like overtones, to which Hank reacts. This is the fastest of the tunes; Mitchell is a fury, responding to every note of Hank--who ain't too shabby himself. A guitar-like effort from Red is followed by Hank's best, suave and speedy. And the bar closes with a ballad: Hank gives "But Beautiful" all the grace it deserves, and Red zooms in behind him. When Jones plays isolated notes, Mitchell imitates the sound; when Hank twiddles between notes, his partner does the same. They walk the same steps on the bass solo, and both seem to quote "If You Could See Me Now"...at different times. Their final chorus is intricate splendor, and that final chord is a dream. If this format rarely succeeds, here is the solution: find musicians like these.



Jonathan Katz

CONTINUANCE--JHK-CC881; released 1999. Info: 7-5-48-306 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052, JAPAN. email: jonathan@jkat.net

PERSONNEL: Jonathan Katz, piano and all arrangements; Peter Washington, bass; Yoron Israel, drums.

By Jan Klineciewicz

"inventive and swinging"

Jonathan Katz belongs to a growing class of talented young pianists who have clearly absorbed lessons of the previous generation of masters, most noticeably Bill Evans. Although it could be easy to dismiss him as yet another incredible prodigy to come down the pike, the fact remains that he plays fresh, inventive and swinging jazz.

This is his second CD, having just released *Live In Tokyo 2000*. In his early thirties, this

adopted son of Japan has been playing piano since the age of six. A Yale grad who went to Tokyo to master the Japanese language before returning to Eastman for graduate studies, Katz does not lack the intellectual sophistication to bring a pensive, studied approach to his improvisations.

The *Continuance* CD mixes standards with interesting originals, wonderfully recorded and well mixed. The balance among Peter Washington's rich upright, Yoron Israel's crisp drums and cymbals, and Katz's well-in-tune, bright piano makes this very easy to listen to. The transition from ballads to bossas and even an ersatz disco-funk intro to "Green Dolphin Street" keep the flow smooth. Katz's arrangements in general are pretty unique, and hold a listener's interest even on the most shopworn standards. Originals such as "Mose-Monk" (more Mose than Monk) and the title track show promise in Katz's compositional abilities. While these pieces seem a little studied ("Continuance" was done for a composition class), they are well-architected harmonically. I expect J.K. to grow as a composer as he matures and relaxes.

It seems like Peter Washington and Yoron Israel are on every other jazz release you hear these days. This is with good reason. They listen, they complement, and make the pianist sound like he has a well-rehearsed working band even if they are not.

There is nothing not to like about this CD. If you enjoy trios, this is as good as any, and better than a lot.



Steve LaSpina

DISTANT DREAM--SteepleChase 31448. Released 2000. SteepleChase Productions, P.O. Box 35, DK-2930 Klampenborg, Denmark. Website: www.steeplechase.dk. *The Clouds; First Light; Distant Dream; As Time Passes; No Exit; Serenity; New Day; And Then; When It's Time Again.*

PERSONNEL: Steve LaSpina, bass; Billy Drewes, soprano and tenor sax, clarinet; Fred Hersch, piano; Ben Monder, guitar; Jeff Hirshfield, drums.

By John Barrett, Jr.

"...good composition"