



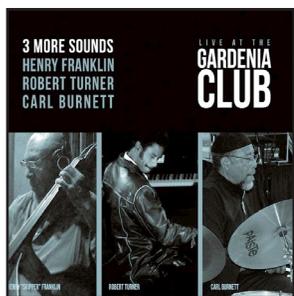
Let My People Go
Archie Shepp/Jason Moran (Archieball)
by Tyran Grillo

Living as we now do in a world that feels orphaned from its ancestral histories, there's no more appropriate space to cry out for resurrection than the womb-like expanse of traditional Negro spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child". Saxophonist Archie Shepp turns this melody inside out as salvific blood drips along the keys of Jason Moran's piano.

Thus, the duo establishes the rhythm of a hymn trapped somewhere between Earth's crust and the magma churning beneath. If we don't already feel the words coursing through our ears from the first note, we find them unraveled in Shepp's own singing voice, of which hints of reed hang in the air like a signature fragrance, as also in Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" and another traditional spiritual, "Go Down Moses". In both Duke Ellington-Billy Strayhorn's "Isfahan" and Moran's "He Cares", the listener is greeted by truth while John Coltrane's "Wise One" unfurls a territory limited only by our imagination to map it. Here, voices of the past hit the open air of the future, only to find they need oxygen masks just to inhale. Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" reminds us that only in the darkest hours can our thoughts churn in an ocean free of pollution—water for its own sake, primed for the vessels of our attempts to make sense of it all.

In light of all this preaching of ebony, ivory and everything in between, it would be unwise to think of the album as a catharsis, for a catharsis implies that we have transcended the bonds that necessitate thoughts of escape. No. We must gaze upon the fetters and chains until they burn after-images into our brains, so that we may never forget what the world would have us deny: many had to die for us to stand here, poised on the cusp of a tide that could just as easily turn in our favor as against it. Though still a long way from home, we strive to see that candlelight in the window telling us: Just one more leg of this journey and the doors of relief will spread their wings to receive you. At least here, we have a feather to hold to our hearts as we press on.

For more information, visit archieball.com



Live at The Gardenia Club
3 More Sounds (Skipper Prod.)
by Pierre Giroux

The Three Sounds—pianist Gene Harris, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Bill Dowdy—recorded prolifically for Blue Note between 1956-74. Harris was a multifaceted and enthusiastic performer. 3 More Sounds is a high-energy trio with pianist Robert Turner, bassist Henry Franklin and drummer Carl Burnett (who turns 80 this month) and in many ways The Three Sounds personified (Franklin and Burnett were hired by Harris after The Three Sounds disbanded in 1973).

In this February 2020 live recording from the

Gardenia Club in East Hollywood California, before an attentive and enthusiastic audience, the trio runs through a set of well known popular and jazz standards that jump off the disc. Starting with the Burton Lane composition "On A Clear Day" the trio swings out, led by Turner. He covers the keys with abandon, has formidable technique and uses block chords, cadences and embellishments with a sure-footed spirit of inquiry. Ahmad Jamal's "Night Mist Blues" is next up with a knock-out groove as Turner digs a trench through the blues theme. Franklin has a terrific solo turn showing he has a soulful instinct and imposing fluency. For the Charles Lloyd song "Sombrero Sam" and the John Lennon-Paul McCartney classic "Eleanor Rigby", flutist Louis Van Taylor adds fluid coloration to the proceedings. The former has a Latin vibe with flowing rhythmic undercurrents and Van Taylor shows he is an assertive partner in the mix. The latter is a full-blown tour de force running just over 11 minutes. The number is anchored in the rhythm of its pop roots, with Franklin taking an early resourceful turn, before Van Taylor joins the fray. He offers a rough and ready solo in keeping with the character of the arrangement. From start to finish the number is filled with precocious swagger. The Erroll Garner opus "Misty" is a perfect fit for the pianistic talents of Turner, who delivers a lovely lyrical take on the theme by providing evocative harmonic gradations as he ruminates over the keyboard. He fills the arrangement with his big two-handed sound and nimble technique.

The set closes in appropriate fashion with a stellar rendition of the Miles Davis standard "Milestones", with each band member getting a chance to strut his stuff. Burnett opens the frame with an extensive and bustling workout, Turner then states the theme using his fluid technique to show his command of the material and Franklin takes the number to a close with his clean big tone and nimble playing.

For more information, visit sprecords.com



Nothing But Love: The Music of Frank Lowe
Various Artists (Mahakala Music)
by Steven Loewy

Tenor saxophonist Frank Lowe was a force from the '70s through the end of the century (and a bit beyond) before his untimely demise and the way his sound and style evolved left an important mark on the world of avant garde jazz. Make no mistake: Lowe could be as intense and wild as they come, but he also exhibited a love of the jazz tradition and some of his best work came when he worked in small groups with fellow giants such as trombonist Joseph Bowie, cornet player Butch Morris and violinist Billy Bang. Lowe was an exciting performer and while John Coltrane exercised a considerable influence on his playing, over time he shifted, never giving up his ability to thrash and burn, but focusing more on melody and longer syncopated lines. His music was full of surprises.

Nothing But Love: The Music of Frank Lowe brings together a group of musicians who had each recorded or otherwise played with Lowe and were influenced by his music, although they had never before performed together. The seven pieces written by Lowe are tightly performed and, in the best tradition of successful tributes, the album does not have the feel of a retrospective but instead properly uses Lowe's tunes and soloing as an inspiration without losing the

essence of his sound.

There is good playing throughout, with Chad Fowler (soprano and tenor saxophone) and Christopher Parker (piano) continual standouts. On the opener, "Decision in Paradise", soprano aggressively hovers above the intense group playing, propelled hard by Anders Griffen's muscular drumming, with help from wild piano and bassist Bernard Santacruz. Similar patterns emerge elsewhere, often with surprising twists. The opening bass and drums duo on "Addiction Ain't Fiction" segues to a lilting, though sometimes aggressive, saxophone solo, which leads to a hard-hitting contribution by Parker, then joined by expansive saxophone, with tricky rhythms advanced by Griffen. There is also a shorter alternate track that gives some insight into the improvisational process of the group, as the arrangement and solos follow a different tack.

"In Trane's Name" is true to its namesake and Fowler, no less than Lowe, mines it for delicious chunks of fluid, powerful blowing, backed by the energetic rhythm section, making for a compelling interpretation and often exhilarating experience. The alternate take adds Bobby Lavell on tenor saxophone, with similar exciting results, as the horns ride the melody in unison.

Lowe often used expanded small riffs as building blocks and on "Fuschia Norval", the group takes the simple melody and expands it through a lengthy, scintillating saxophone solo, which progressively moves outside. Talented vocalist Kelly Hurt, a cousin of Lowe, is featured on the pop-infused title track, with Fowler's explosive sound giving the piece some needed weight. Hopefully, this recording will not be the last from this very gifted group.

For more information, visit mahakalamusic.com

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